

Software solutions MAIN

by Rabeya Begum

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CertHE Computing Skills for the Workplace

Software Solutions for Business

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University of Wales Trinity St David – Quay place

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Introduction

In today's dynamic business environment, organizations are constantly seeking innovative strategies to enhance productivity, foster creativity, and improve decision-making processes. One powerful technique that has gained significant recognition is mind mapping. This essay aims to explore the concept of mind mapping, its inherent benefits, and its application in business operations.

Mind mapping is a powerful technique for visually organizing information and generating ideas. It offers a structured approach to capturing and representing complex concepts, facilitating a deeper understanding of the subject matter. By creating a visual representation of concepts, ideas, and relationships using diagrams, symbols, and keywords, mind maps enable individuals to grasp information holistically.

The central idea or theme is placed in the center of the map, with branches extending outwards to represent subtopics or related ideas. This spatial arrangement helps individuals visualize the connections and interdependencies between different elements, fostering a more comprehensive and interconnected understanding. As a result, mind mapping enhances critical thinking skills by encouraging the exploration of multiple perspectives and promoting the discovery of new insights.

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One of the key benefits of mind mapping is its ability to stimulate creativity. The non-linear nature of mind maps encourages free-flowing thinking and encourages individuals to make connections between seemingly unrelated ideas. By allowing thoughts to branch out organically, mind mapping provides a fertile ground for generating innovative ideas and solutions. Moreover, the visual nature of mind maps engages the brain's visual and spatial processing, enhancing memory retention and recall of information.

In the context of business operations, mind mapping offers numerous applications. It can be used to brainstorm ideas for new product development, plan and organize projects, facilitate strategic decision-making, and streamline communication and collaboration within teams. The versatility of mind mapping makes it a valuable tool for individuals at all levels of an organization, from executives and managers to frontline employees.

Throughout this essay, we will delve deeper into the various aspects of mind mapping and its impact on business effectiveness. By understanding the principles and applications of mind mapping, organizations can harness this technique to unlock creativity, improve problem-solving capabilities, and foster a more efficient and innovative work environment.

1

Task 1 - E-Commerce Website builders/software solutions

There are several contemporary e-commerce website builders and software solutions available that provide businesses with user-friendly platforms to create and manage their online stores. Here, we will discuss three popular options: Shopify, WooCommerce, and BigCommerce.

1. Shopify:

Shopify is a leading e-commerce website builder that offers a comprehensive platform for businesses of all sizes. It provides a range of customizable templates, allowing users to create visually appealing and professional online stores. With its intuitive drag-and-drop interface, users can easily add products, manage inventory, process payments, and handle shipping logistics. Shopify also offers built-in marketing tools, analytics, and integrations with third-party apps, making it a robust solution for entrepreneurs and established businesses alike.

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2. WooCommerce:

WooCommerce is a popular e-commerce plugin for WordPress, which transforms a WordPress website into a fully functional online store. It offers extensive flexibility and customization options, as it leverages the vast ecosystem of WordPress themes and plugins. WooCommerce provides features for product management, inventory control, payment gateways, and shipping methods. With its powerful extensions, businesses can enhance the functionality of their online stores according to their specific requirements.

3. BigCommerce:

BigCommerce is a scalable e-commerce software solution designed for businesses looking for a robust and feature-rich platform. It offers a range of professionally designed templates and themes, enabling users to create visually appealing online stores. BigCommerce provides comprehensive features for product management, inventory tracking, secure payment options, and seamless integration with popular marketplaces like Amazon and eBay. Additionally, it offers built-in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) tools, analytics, and marketing features to help businesses drive traffic and increase conversions.

These contemporary e-commerce website builders and software solutions empower businesses to create professional online stores without the need for extensive technical expertise. They provide intuitive interfaces, various customization options, and essential e-commerce functionalities to support businesses in establishing a successful online presence.

Task 2, A - ¹Benefits of using mind mapping in business operations include:

Enhanced Creativity and Idea Generation: Mind mapping stimulates creativity by allowing individuals to freely brainstorm and generate ideas. (Buzan & Buzan, 2018). The non-linear structure of mind maps encourages unconventional thinking and facilitates the exploration of new connections and perspectives.

¹⁹**Improved Organization and Clarity:** Mind maps provide a clear overview of complex information, making it easier to understand and remember. The visual nature of ²⁷mind maps helps to organize thoughts, concepts, and tasks in a structured and hierarchical manner, enabling better comprehension and decision-making. (Rüggeberg, H., & Bergmann, J. 2019).

¹**Efficient Problem Solving and Decision Making:** Mind maps can assist in problem-solving and decision-making processes by breaking down complex issues into smaller, manageable components. By visually representing the relationships between several factors and potential solutions, mind maps help identify the most effective course of action.

Effective Communication and Collaboration: Mind maps serve as effective communication tools, enabling the concise and visual representation of ideas. They facilitate collaborative brainstorming sessions, as team members can contribute their thoughts and perspectives to the mind map in real-time, leading to more comprehensive and innovative solutions.

Enhanced Learning and Information Retention: The visual and associative nature of mind mapping aids in information retention and recall. By organizing information in a structured and interconnected manner, mind maps engage both the logical and creative aspects of the brain, leading to better comprehension and long-term retention of knowledge.

Effective Planning and Goal Setting: Mind mapping serves as a powerful tool for planning and goal setting. By visually mapping out tasks, deadlines, and dependencies, organizations can create comprehensive plans that ensure efficient resource allocation and progress tracking (Novak & Cañas, 2008). Mind maps also provide a clear visualization of goals, helping teams stay focused and aligned towards achieving desired outcomes (Novak, J. D., & Cañas, A. J. 2008).

Enhanced Meeting Management: Mind mapping can revolutionize the way meetings are conducted within organizations. By using mind maps as an agenda or discussion guide, meeting participants can easily follow the flow of topics, contribute ideas, and capture action

items in real-time. This approach promotes more productive and structured meetings, resulting in better collaboration and decision-making.

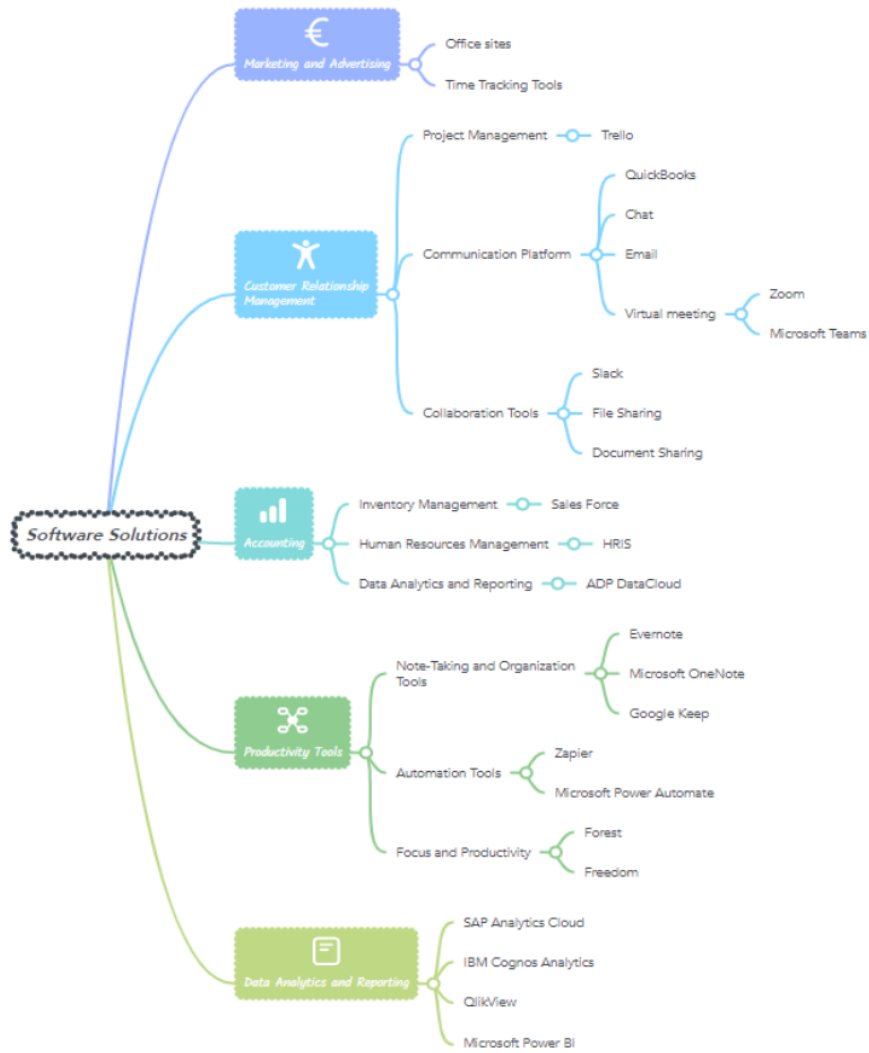
Effective Knowledge Management: Mind maps serve as valuable tools for knowledge management within organizations. They can be used to capture, organize, and visualize valuable information, making it easily accessible and digestible for team members. Mind maps facilitate the creation of knowledge repositories, allowing individuals to quickly retrieve and share relevant information, leading to improved efficiency and collaboration (O'Connor, P. 2018, Lin, L., Li, Y., Zhou, Y., & Zeng, D. 2020)

Streamlined Project Management: Mind mapping can significantly enhance project management processes. Project managers can utilize mind maps to outline project scopes, identify milestones, allocate resources, and track progress. Mind maps provide a holistic view of the project, enabling effective planning, delegation, and coordination, leading to successful project execution (Rüggeberg, H., & Bergmann, J. 2019).

Enhanced Problem Identification and Analysis: Mind mapping aids in the identification and analysis of complex problems. By breaking down problems into smaller components and visually representing the relationships between them, mind maps enable a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues. This approach facilitates deeper analysis, root cause identification, and the development of effective solutions.

Task 2, B - Mind map of contemporary software applications used to support day-to-day business operations

I created a mind map of various software applications used in businesses.



Task 3, A - Office Applications for creating, storing, presenting, and analysing information/data

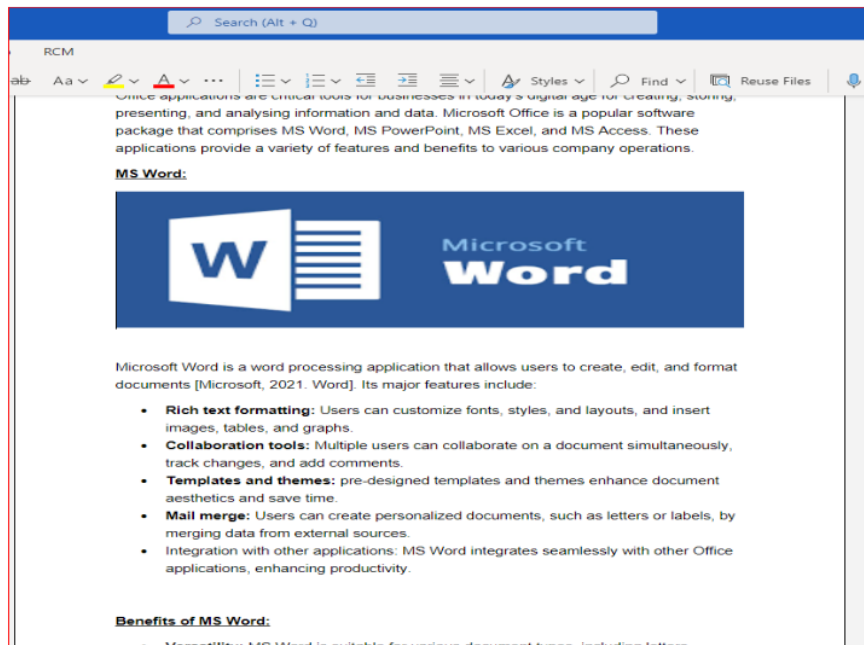
Office applications are critical tools for businesses in today's digital age for creating, storing, presenting, and analysing information and data. Microsoft Office is a popular software package that comprises MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Excel, and MS Access. These applications provide a variety of features and benefits to various company operations.

MS Word:



Microsoft Word is a word processing software used for creating, editing, and formatting documents. It offers a wide range of tools and features to help users compose professional-looking documents with ease. With Word, you can customize fonts, styles, and formatting, insert images and graphical elements, and create tables and charts. It also provides spelling and grammar checking, collaboration features for multiple users, and the ability to track changes and add comments. Word is widely used in various industries and academic settings for creating documents such as letters, reports, resumes, essays, and more. (Microsoft Word, 2021). Its major features include:

- **Rich text formatting:** Users can customize fonts, styles, and layouts, and insert images, tables, and graphs.
- **Collaboration tools:** Multiple users can collaborate on a document simultaneously, track changes, and add comments.
- **Templates and themes:** pre-designed templates and themes enhance document aesthetics and save time.
- **Mail merge:** Users can create personalized documents, such as letters or labels, by merging data from external sources.
- **Integration with other applications:** MS Word integrates seamlessly with other Office applications, enhancing productivity.



I used Ms word to do my assignment.

Benefits of MS Word:

- **Versatility:** MS Word is suitable for various document types, including letters, reports, resumes, and newsletters.
- **User-friendly interface:** It offers an intuitive interface with familiar features, making it accessible to users of all levels.
- **Compatibility:** Documents created in MS Word can be easily shared and opened across different platforms and devices.

MS Word's limitations:

- **MS Word has limited data analysis capabilities:** While it can perform simple calculations, it lacks MS Excel's advanced analytical functions.
- **Document corruption dangers:** Complex formatting and high file sizes can occasionally result in document corruption.

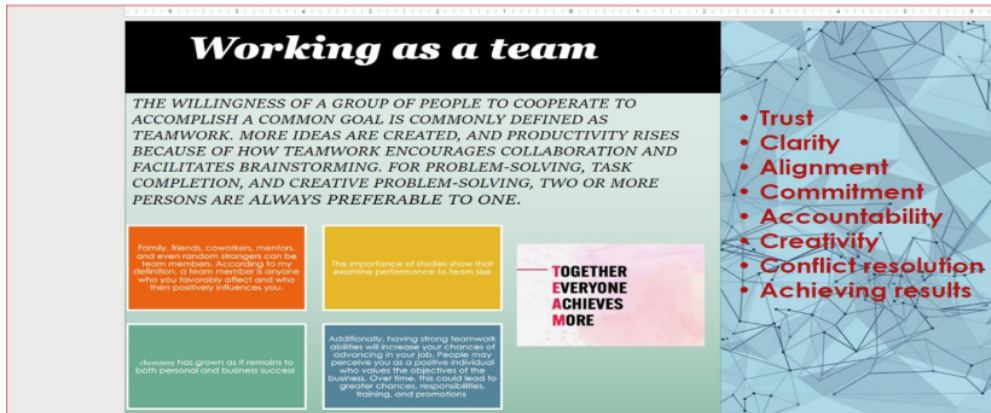


PowerPoint

Microsoft PowerPoint is a powerful presentation software developed by Microsoft. It is widely used for creating professional and visually appealing slideshows, presentations, and interactive content. PowerPoint offers a range of tools and features that enable users to effectively communicate information in a structured and engaging manner. With PowerPoint, you can create slides that incorporate text, images, charts, graphs, tables, multimedia elements, and various visual effects. The software provides a user-friendly interface where you can easily arrange and format content on individual slides. You can also add transitions between slides to create smooth and seamless presentations. (Microsoft PowerPoint 2021.). Its major features include:

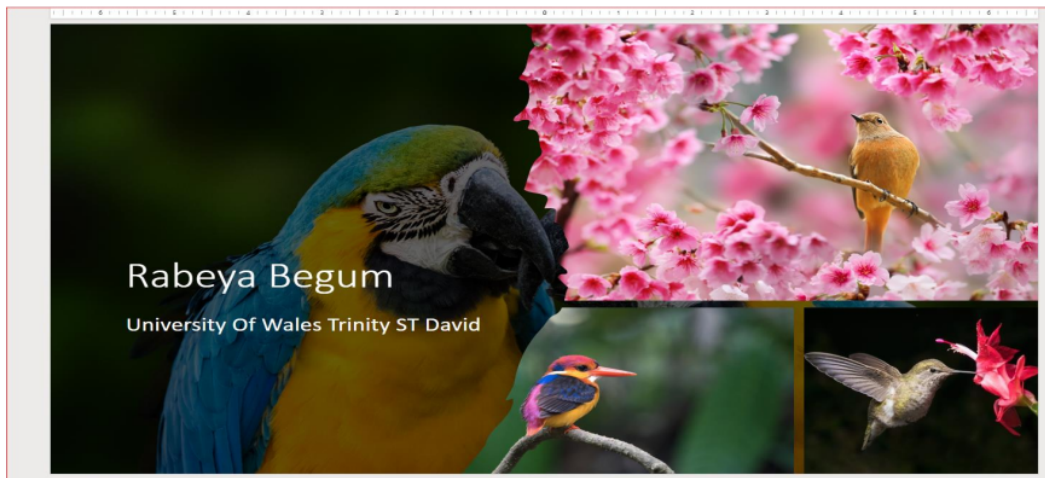
- **Slide templates and themes:** A wide variety of pre-designed templates and themes enable users to create professional-looking presentations.
- **Multimedia integration:** Users can embed images, videos, and audio files to enhance the visual and auditory impact of their presentations.
- **Slide transitions and animations:** Dynamic transition effects and animated elements make presentations engaging and visually appealing.
- **Presenter tools:** PowerPoint offers presenter view, notes, and annotations to assist speakers during presentations.
- **Collaboration and sharing:** Multiple users can work on the same presentation simultaneously and share it easily.

Benefits of MS PowerPoint:



I created a poster on Ms PowerPoint, I used several types of backgrounds

- **Visual communication:** PowerPoint enables effective communication through visually compelling slides and multimedia integration.
- **Customization options:** Users can personalize presentations with their branding, style, and layout preferences.
- **Easy to learn:** PowerPoint's user-friendly interface and intuitive tools make it accessible to beginners.



I used MS PowerPoint to create this presentation.

MS Excel:



Microsoft Excel is a powerful spreadsheet application used for data analysis, calculations, and financial modelling (Microsoft Excel, 2021). Its major features include:

- **Data organization and manipulation:** Excel provides a grid-like structure for storing and managing data, along with sorting, filtering, and searching capabilities.
- **Formulas and functions:** Users can perform calculations, create complex formulas, and utilize built-in functions for data analysis.
- **Charts and graphs:** Excel offer a range of chart types to visualize data and identify trends or patterns.
- **PivotTables:** This feature allows users to summarize and analyse large datasets quickly.
- **Macros and automation:** Excel allow users to automate repetitive tasks using macros, improving efficiency.

Benefits of MS Excel:

- **Data analysis capabilities:** Excel's robust functions and formulas enable users to perform complex.
- **Data Visualization:** Excel provides a wide range of chart types, including bar graphs, line graphs, pie charts, and scatter plots. These visual representations make it easier to interpret and analyse data, enabling users to identify trends, patterns, and outliers.
- **Data Security:** Excel offers various security features to protect sensitive data. Users can encrypt spreadsheets with passwords, restrict access to specific cells or ranges, and use digital signatures to ensure data integrity.
- **Conditional Formatting:** Excel's conditional formatting feature highlights specific cells based on user-defined rules. This helps draw attention to critical data points, identify trends, and make data visually appealing.

- **Data Integration:** Excel seamlessly integrates with other data sources, such as databases, web services, and external files. This capability enables users to import and export data, perform data analysis, and generate reports efficiently [13].

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Here I used the PMT formula to work out the monthly payment.

Ms Access

4

Microsoft Access is a relational database management system (RDBMS) developed by Microsoft. It is part of the Microsoft Office suite of applications and provides a user-friendly interface for creating and managing databases. Access allows users to store, organize, and retrieve substantial amounts of data and create custom applications for data management.

1

MS Access is a database management system that allows users to create and manage databases (Microsoft, 2021. Access). Its major features include:

- **Database creation:** Users can create custom databases to store and organize data.
- **Data entry and manipulation:** MS Access provides an intuitive interface for entering, editing, and deleting data in tables.
- **Querying:** Users can create queries to retrieve specific information from the database based on criteria.
- **Forms:** MS Access allows users to design custom forms for data entry, making it easier to collect and input data.
- **Reports:** Users can generate professional reports based on the data stored in the database, making it easier to analyse and present information.
- **Integration:** MS Access integrates with other applications in the Microsoft Office suite, allowing seamless data sharing and manipulation.

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Benefits of MS Access:

- **Easy to use:** It provides a user-friendly interface that is relatively easy to learn, making it accessible to users without extensive database management knowledge.

- **Rapid application development:** MS Access allows for quick database creation and application development, reducing the time and effort required to set up a database system.
- **Customizability:** Users can customize the database structure, forms, and reports to meet specific business needs, making it highly adaptable to various industries and purposes.
- **Scalability:** MS Access can handle small to medium-sized databases efficiently and can be upscaled with the Microsoft SQL Server for larger databases.



Limitations:

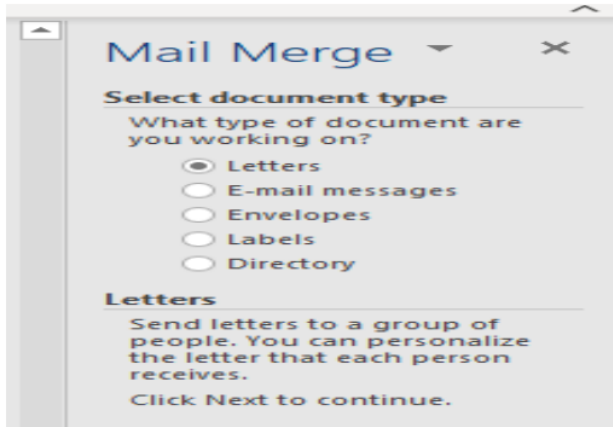
- **Limited multi-user capabilities:** MS Access may face performance issues when multiple users access and modify the database simultaneously.

Task 3, B – Office Applications

1

Mail Merge (Microsoft Word):

Mail merge is a feature in Microsoft Word that allows you to create personalized documents such as letters, envelopes, or labels by merging data from a data source (e.g., Excel spreadsheet, Access database) into a template document. It is commonly used for sending personalized marketing materials, customer communications, or generating bulk mailings. By merging the data, you can save time and effort while ensuring the content is tailored to each recipient as shown below.



VLOOKUP (Microsoft Excel):

6

VLOOKUP is a powerful function in Microsoft Excel that allows you to search for a value in a table and retrieve a corresponding value from a different column in the same row. This function is commonly used for data analysis and management tasks. For example, you can use VLOOKUP to find product details based on a product code, match customer names to their corresponding IDs, or retrieve pricing information from a price list as demonstrated below.

Date	Category	Description	Amount
01/01/2022	Utilities	Electricity Bill	£100
05/01/2022	Groceries	Weekly Grocery Shopping	£75
10/01/2022	Transportation	Gasoline	£50
15/01/2022	Utilities	Water Bill	£50
24/01/2022	Entertainment	Movie Tickets	£30
25/01/2022	Groceries	Monthly Bulk Shopping	£150
30/01/2022	Dining Out	Dinner with Friends	£80

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	
1	Employee ID	First name	Last name	Date of birth	Date of empl	Departme	Age	Salary							
2	1024	Abigail	Aalderink	05/02/1981	08/04/2013	Sales	34	£60,569.00							
3	1025	Sanford	Bartolo	16/02/1955	03/01/2009	Sales	60	£81,603.00							
4	1024	Samuel	Bartnick	29/06/1985	29/03/2010	Sales	30	£86,281.00							
5	1026	John	Dumas	27/10/1980	15/12/2011	IT	34	£84,186.00							
6	1024	Kristi	Hines	13/07/1962	25/09/2014	Productio	53	£85,775.00							
7	1027	Apple	Lyn	18/05/1983	18/01/2015	IT	32	£75,144.00							
8	1024	Lee	Nazal	21/03/1979	15/10/2011	HR	36	£82,162.00							
9	1028	Lindsay	Kline	21/02/1991	02/10/2013	Marketing	24	£98,915.00							
10	1029	Vicky	James	06/05/1955	06/01/2015	HR	60	£83,207.00							
11	1030	Bradley	Sack	30/07/1956	16/10/2010	IT	59	£64,717.00							
12	1031	Steven	Lamar	31/12/1982	06/07/2011	Sales	32	£64,931.00							
13	1032	Tom	Briones	27/09/1981	24/05/2010	IT	34	£70,988.00							
14	1033	Mike	O'Neil	08/02/1974	19/11/2014	HR	41	£72,254.00							
15	1034	Elly	Kam	22/09/1975	12/06/2015	Administr	40	£63,434.00							
16	1035	Steven	Davidson	24/02/1966	26/03/2014	Administr	49	£62,637.00							
17	1036	Nate	Harris	26/12/1989	11/05/2014	HR	25	£70,556.00							
18	1037	Bryan	Sloane	16/10/1982	03/07/2010	IT	33	£74,243.00							

Your job

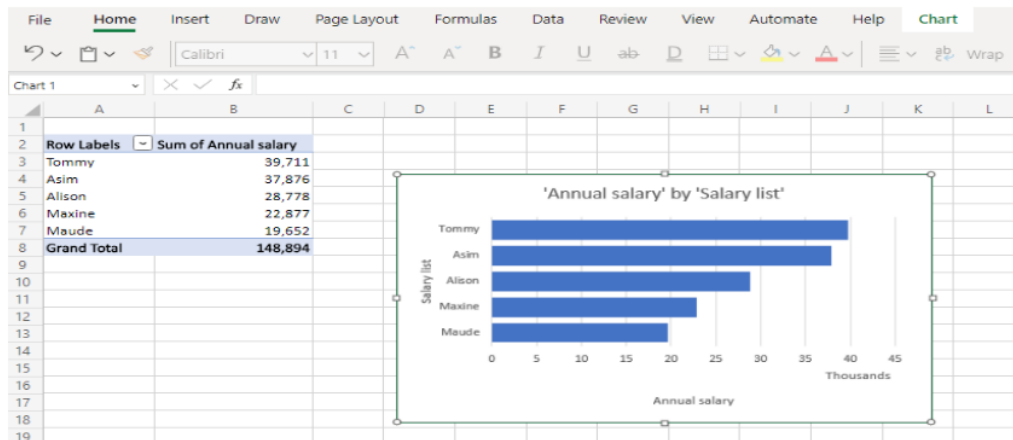
Use VLOOKUP to return the Salary of the employee with ID = 1030.

Your job
Use VLOOKUP to return the Salary of the employee with ID = 1030.

I used VLOOKUP to get the salary of employee 1030.

Pivot Table (Microsoft Excel):

A pivot table is a data summarization tool in Microsoft Excel that allows you to analyse and extract insights from large datasets. It enables you to reorganize and summarize data based on different criteria, such as grouping data, calculating totals, averages, or other mathematical operations. Pivot tables are valuable for generating reports, analysing sales data, examining financial information, and gaining a deeper understanding of your data as demonstrated below.



Goal Seek (Microsoft Excel):

¹ Goal Seek is a feature in Microsoft Excel that helps you find the input value needed to achieve a specific goal. ²⁸ It allows you to set a target value for a particular calculation, and then Excel will automatically determine the input value required to achieve that goal. Goal Seek is commonly used for financial forecasting, analysing scenarios, and performing "what-if" analyses. For example, you can use it to determine the necessary sales volume to reach a desired profit margin.

Database concept using MS Access:

Microsoft Access is a database management system that allows you to create and manage databases for storing and organizing business data. With Access, you can create tables to store data, define relationships between tables, create queries to retrieve specific information, design forms for data entry, and generate reports for data analysis and presentation. It provides a user-friendly interface for building custom database applications to meet specific business needs.

Task 4, A - Communication and Collaboration applications

Communication and collaboration applications are software tools designed to facilitate effective communication and seamless teamwork within organizations. These applications provide a range of features and functionalities that enhance productivity, streamline workflows, and promote collaboration among team members. With communication and collaboration applications, team members can communicate in real-time through instant messaging, chat rooms, or channels. These tools allow for quick and efficient exchange of messages, sharing of files, and even video or audio calls. Users can collaborate on documents, projects, and tasks, making it easier to work together and ensure everyone is on the same page. These applications often provide features such as file sharing, version control, and document co-authoring, enabling teams to work simultaneously on shared files. They may also offer task management capabilities, allowing users to assign tasks, track progress, and set deadlines, ensuring efficient project management and accountability.

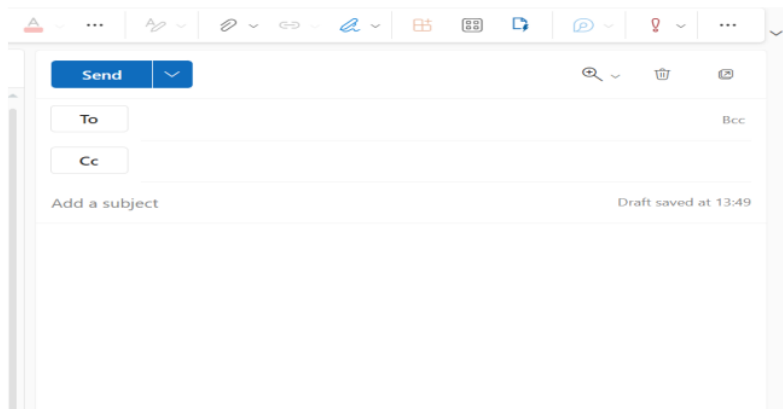
Here is an analysis of several contemporary communication and online collaboration applications/tools used frequently in the modern business world.

Email Applications:

Email remains a fundamental communication tool in the business world. Here are a few popular email applications

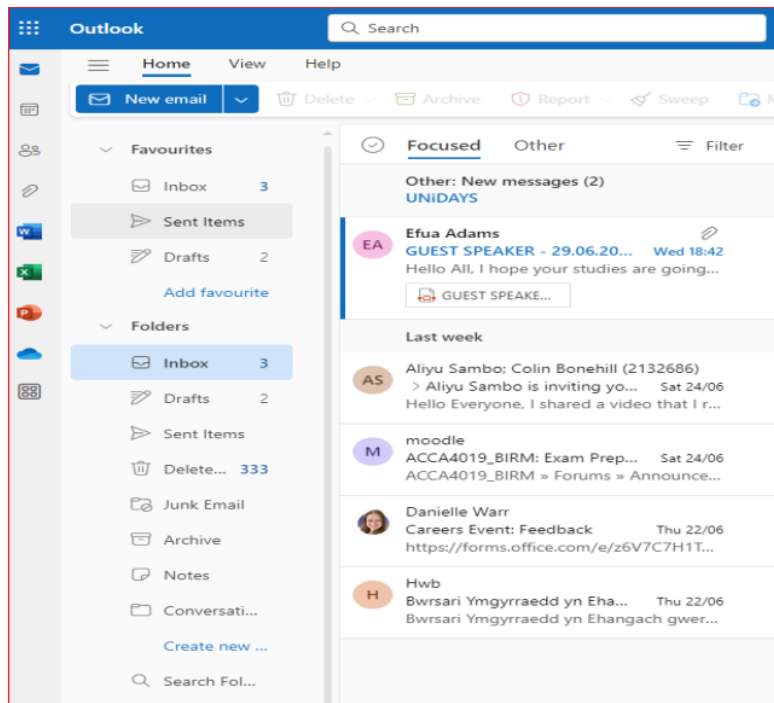
²⁹ Microsoft Outlook:

¹⁵ Microsoft Outlook is an email client and personal information management software developed by Microsoft. It helps users manage their emails, calendars, contacts, tasks, and more in a single interface. Outlook allows you to send, receive, and organize emails from multiple accounts, schedule appointments and meetings on a calendar, store and manage contacts, create to-do lists and tasks, and take notes. It integrates with other Microsoft Office applications and provides features like spam filtering and security measures to protect your information. Outlook is available as a desktop application, web-based version, and mobile app, offering flexibility and accessibility across various devices and platforms. (Microsoft Outlook 2021).



I selected the new email icon to send a new mail.

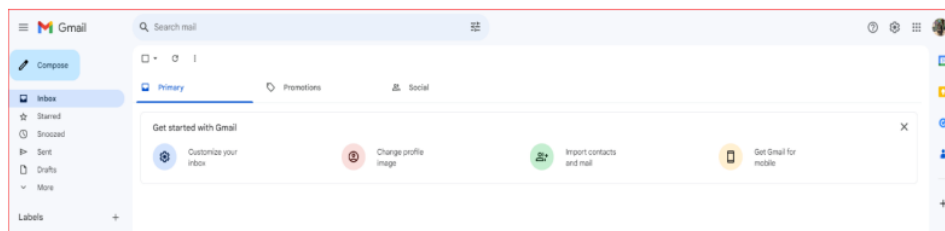
- **Email organization:** Outlook allows users to manage multiple email accounts, create folders, apply filters, and use search functionalities for efficient email organization.



- **Calendar integration:** Users can schedule and manage appointments, meetings, and events directly within the application, with options for reminders and meeting invitations.
- **Task management:** Outlook provides a task management feature that allows users to create to-do lists, set reminders, and track progress on assigned tasks.
- **Collaboration:** Users can share calendars, folders, and delegate tasks to colleagues, enhancing team collaboration.

Gmail:

Gmail is a popular email service offered by Google. It provides several features designed for efficient communication and organization:



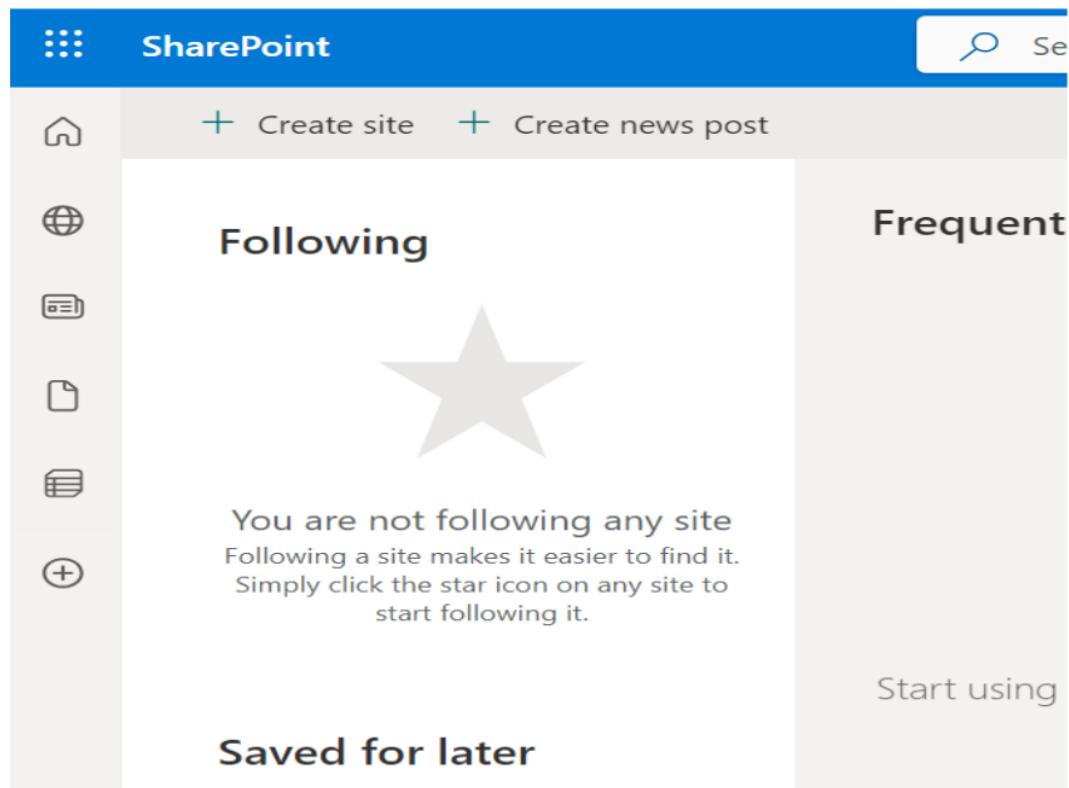
- **User-friendly interface:** Gmail offers a clean and intuitive interface with threaded conversations, making it easy to navigate and manage emails.
- **Advanced search:** Users can perform powerful searches using filters, keywords, and labels, enabling quick access to specific emails.
- **Integration with other Google tools:** Gmail seamlessly integrates with other Google applications, such as Google Drive and Google Calendar, allowing for easy file sharing and event scheduling (Microsoft Gmail 2021).

Online Collaboration Applications/Tools:

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Microsoft SharePoint:

Microsoft SharePoint is a web-based collaboration and document management platform that facilitates team collaboration and content sharing within organizations (Microsoft SharePoint 2021). Key features include:



- **Document management:** SharePoint allows users to create, store, and share documents, with version control and permission settings for secure collaboration.

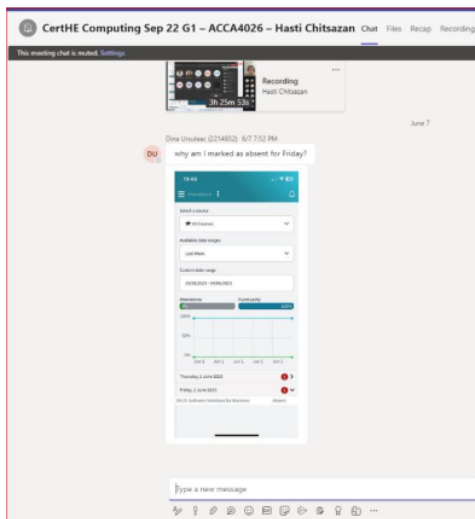
- **Team sites:** Users can create dedicated team sites to centralize content, communicate updates, and collaborate on projects.
- **Workflow automation:** SharePoint offers workflow capabilities to automate business processes, such as document approvals or content publishing.
- **Integration:** SharePoint integrates with other Microsoft tools, such as MS Teams and MS Office, enabling seamless collaboration and data sharing.

10

Microsoft Teams:

Microsoft Teams is a collaborative communication platform that brings together chat, video meetings, file sharing, and app integrations into a single workspace (Microsoft Teams 2021). It allows teams to communicate and collaborate in real-time, regardless of their location. With Teams, you can chat with individuals or groups, schedule, and conduct video meetings, share and collaborate on files, and integrate with other Microsoft and third-party applications. It provides a centralized hub for team communication and collaboration, making it easier to work together efficiently and effectively. Teams is available across devices and platforms, enabling seamless collaboration from desktops, laptops, smartphones, and tablets. Key features include:

- **Chat and video meetings:** Teams provide real-time chat and video conferencing capabilities, allowing teams to communicate and collaborate from anywhere as shown below.



- **File sharing and collaboration:** Users can share and co-edit files in real-time within the Teams interface, enhancing collaboration and productivity.

- **App integration:** Teams integrates with a wide range of third-party applications, enabling users to access tools and services directly within the Teams platform.

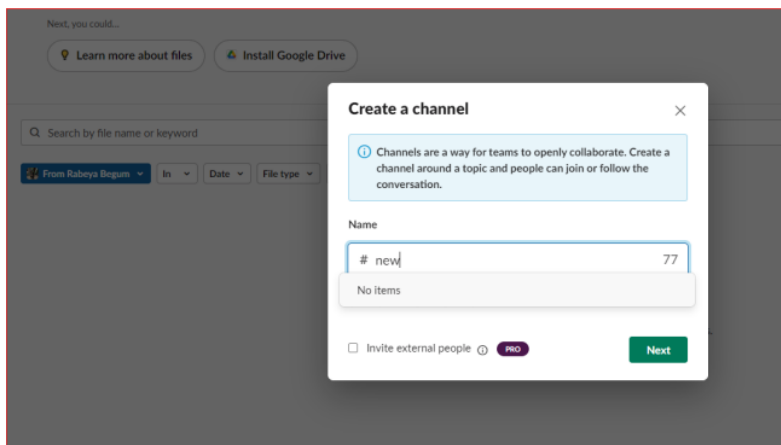


Task 4b - Communication and Collaboration applications

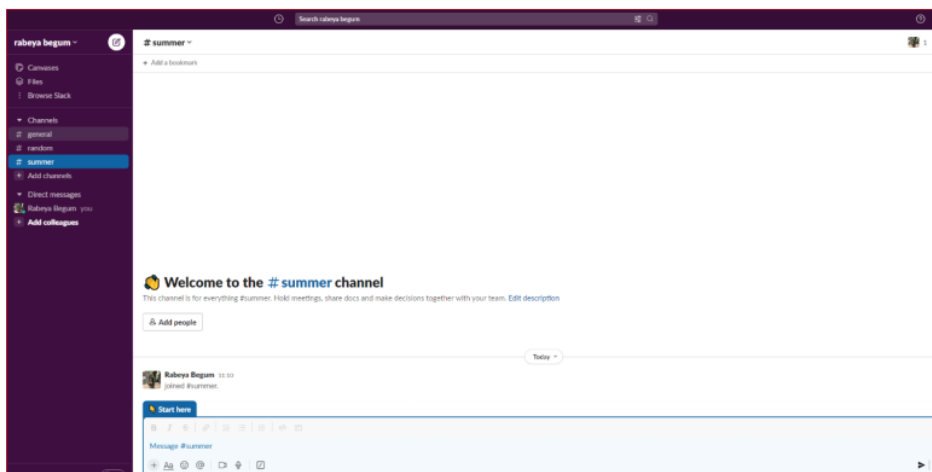
Communication Application: Slack

Slack is a cloud-based collaboration platform that enables teams and organizations to communicate and collaborate effectively. It provides a centralized hub where team members can exchange messages, share files, and integrate with various tools and services. Here are some key features:

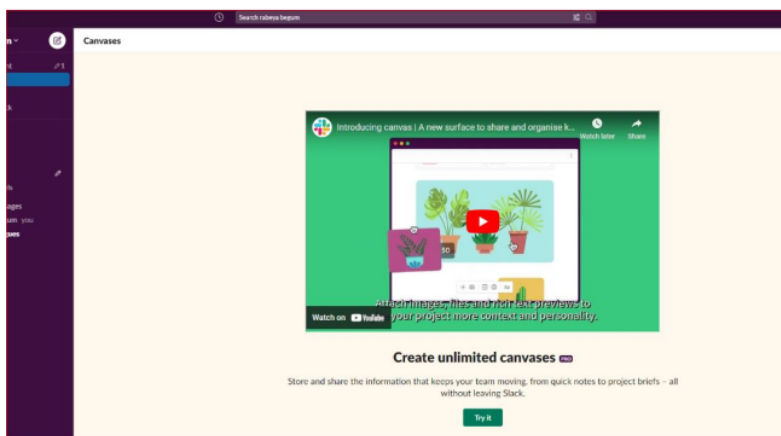
Channels: Users can create channels based on different projects, teams, or topics, allowing members to collaborate in a specific context. Channels can be public or private, depending on the intended audience as shown below.



Direct Messaging: Users can send direct messages to individuals or create group conversations for efficient communication. It allows for private conversations that are not visible to others as shown below.



File Sharing: Slack allows users to share files, documents, images, and other media directly within conversations or channels. This makes it easy for team members to access and collaborate on shared resources.



I used slack to create canvases

Notifications: Slack provides customizable notification settings, allowing users to control how they receive alerts for mentions, direct messages, and activity in channels. Users can receive notifications via desktop or mobile devices.

Collaboration Application: Google Docs

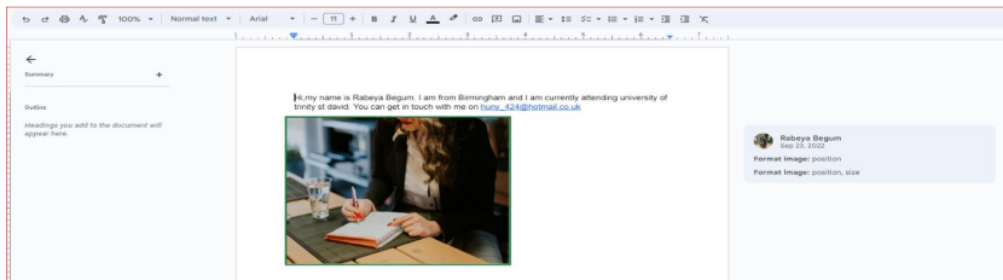
Google Docs is a collaborative word processing application that enables multiple users to edit documents simultaneously. It offers real-time collaboration features, making it suitable for teams working on shared documents. Here are some key features:

Real-time Editing: Multiple users can work on a document simultaneously, with changes appearing in real-time. This allows for seamless collaboration and eliminates the need for version control.

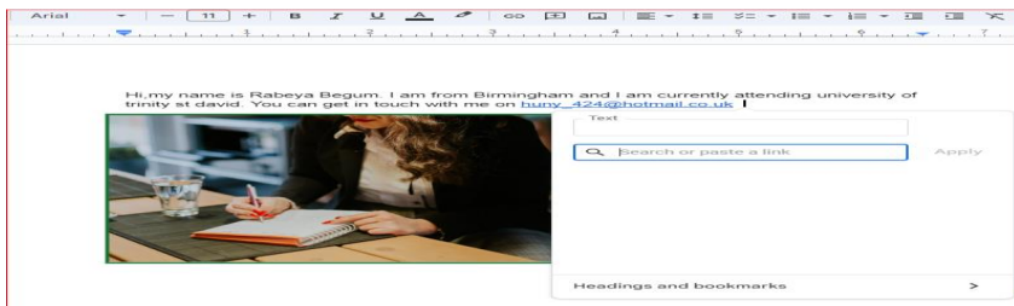
Comments and Suggestions: Users can add comments or suggestions to specific sections of the document, providing feedback or engaging in discussions. This feature facilitates effective collaboration and revision processes.

Revision History: Google Docs automatically saves the revision history of the document, enabling users to track changes made over time. It also allows users to revert to previous versions if needed.

Offline Editing: Google Docs provides an offline mode where users can continue working on documents even without an internet connection. Changes made in offline mode are synchronized once an internet connection is established.



I used google docs to create this document.



Over here I used the link icon to attach a link.

11

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