

Executive overview

The last 50 years have witnessed significant developments in the systems used by companies in the provision of services and products. Many of these involve computer applications to the fundamental tasks within the operations process and have taken the form of hardware and software improvements and the essential links between the two.

Although several of these developments have been referred to elsewhere in the book, the purpose of this chapter is to provide an outline of the more important ones as a way of offering an overview of these changes, both in themselves and how they link to one another. In terms of layout, the chapter is divided into two parts. The initial sections are oriented towards service applications while developments in manufacturing are reviewed in the second half of the chapter, as shown below:

Technology applications in services describe the general uses made in basic activities such as data processing, transmission, storage and presentation. In addition, this section illustrates specific uses in a wide range of service fields from education and healthcare to leisure and travel.

Technology applications in manufacturing concern both the software (systems and procedures) and the hardware (products and processes) dimensions of a firm. These range from computer-aided design (CAD) through to a whole range of computer-aided manufacturing developments.