

Networks

Electronic Data Interchange (**EDI**) describes the use of computers to exchange information. For this, computers need to be linked in the form of a **network**. This has advantages for business, e.g. some documents can be transmitted from one business computer to another via a data link instead of on paper.

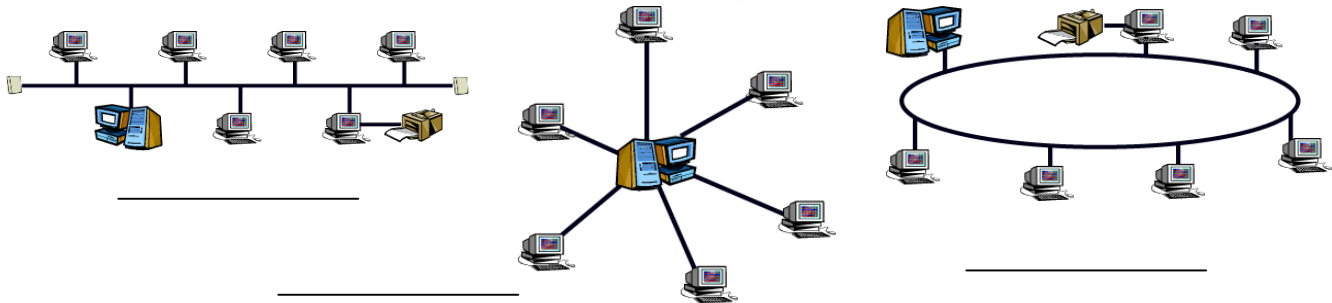
The technology company *Oracle* prides itself on being almost completely paperless. Communication, wherever possible is by EDI.

Types of network:

- client / server – a powerful **file server** with a large **hard disk** holds software and user files. **Workstations** access the data on the server in order to function.
- peer to peer – computers are linked together in small networks and each has its own **hard disk**. Files on one computer can be **accessed** from other computers on the network.

Client / server networks

There are three types of network: star, bus and ring. Can you point out each one below?



Computers can be linked in small areas. These are Local Area Networks (**LAN**). Can you think of an example?

Sometimes they are linked over many thousands of miles. These are Wide Area Networks (**WAN**). Can you think of an example of this?

Advantages of Local Area Networks are that:

- a user can access his / her own work from any **workstation**;
- individual workstations have lower specifications than standalone computers, so are **cheaper**;
- it is easier to **backup** all the data on the network;
- all users can access not only all data on the server but also external sources such as the **internet**;
- information can be communicated between **users**.

Disadvantages are that:

- building a network can be **expensive** due to the cost of servers and the data links;
- if the **server** crashes all computers are out of action.

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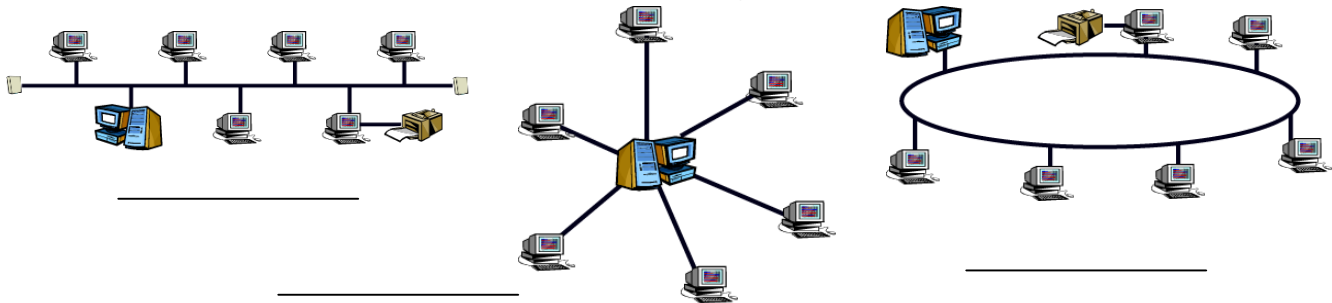
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