programs designed to drive results. These fun, results-oriented programs are made possible by the same level of commitment to technological innovation and customer service that drives all of the company's other innovative programs. What are the results of all these efforts? A client list that reads like the who's who of corporate America.

How does Wyndham Jade stay on the cutting edge? By combining the skills of seasoned travel industry professionals, challenging the status quo, and tapping the benefits of the latest in communications technologies, it draws on the creative talents of its diverse team to provide tomorrow's travel service needs today in one convenient virtual location.

Introduction

Technology, which we broadly define as the use of new knowledge and tools to improve productivity and systems, has created both challenges and opportunities for tourism service providers. Nowhere have technological advances been more evident than in computing capabilities. As data storage capacities expand, processing speeds seem to grow exponentially, all at lower and lower costs, permitting the power of information technology to be within the reach of almost every organization. The same technology that is driving the information revolution has spawned other innovative uses from point-of-sale (POS) systems to enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems.

In this chapter, we will explore the challenges posed by technological advances and innovations as well as the benefits being derived as they are adopted by tourism service suppliers, both large and small. For a glimpse at how technology affects these suppliers, take a look at Figure 5.1.

Even with the demonstrated benefits of technological advancements, some tourism service providers have been reluctant to embrace new technologies, but competitive pressures and rising labor costs are breaking down these barriers. Fears of losing human connectivity that has historically been the foundation of hospitality, learning new skills, and the costs of technological applications have been the typical reasons voiced for this reluctance. Although early adopters did experience some of these problems, they soon progressed through the learning curve (slowly at first and then more rapidly with time and experience) and achieved many benefits, both financial and operational, from their commitment and investment. The outcome from these investments? Enhanced productivity, improved communications, and enhanced

FIGURE 5.1

Technology's impact on tourism service suppliers.