

AC.1.1

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) involves using the most reliable and relevant information in combination with critical thinking to inform decision-making (Rousseau and Barends, 2011). EBP employs a structured approach to thinking, encompassing six key steps: asking, acquiring, appraising, aggregating, applying, and assessing. In summary, EBP involves identifying and assessing credible evidence from a range of sources to address specific questions; these include scientific literature, organisational data, professional expertise, and input from stakeholders (CIPD, 2025b). The insights gained are incorporated into decision-making, followed by a critical evaluation of the outcomes (CIPD, 2025b). EBP is therefore crucial in ensuring decisions are deliberate, objective, and justifiable, allowing practitioners to implement and argue their ideas (Woodhams and Perkins, 2022), while avoiding bias or a need to follow trends (CIPD 2025b).

Importantly, EBP helps organisations like Technivara make informed, data-driven decisions, reducing uncertainty and preparing them for future challenges (Rousseau & Barends, 2011). For example, by analysing employee responses to surveys based on the Quality of Work Life Index, organisations have been able to identify the root causes of absenteeism, allowing them to forecast and implement preventative strategies (Huttunen, 2018). EBP can also be used in change management by helping to determine if a problem truly exists and requires intervention. This ensures that any implemented change is both necessary and effective in contributing to business success (Jacobs, 2015). For example, NatWest successfully restructured its HR department into a modern, employee-focused model using market research and customer insights. The adoption of new technology, including an AI chatbot, resulted in simpler digital systems that saved employees 32,000 hours (CIPD, 2024b). EBP would therefore be crucial to Technivara's modernisation journey.

Nevertheless, while beneficial, EBP can be challenging to implement due to organisational resistance. This often stems from pressure to make quick decisions (Rousseau and Barends, 2011), a reluctance to commit financial and resource costs to research (Woodhams and Perkins, 2022a), or a simple preference among traditionalists for established methods (Severson, 2018). EBP can also prove unpopular as it disrupts power dynamics, allowing data to have more influence over decision making than the authority of appointed leaders (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006). Moreover, academic literature is often difficult for non-academic to access and understand, a point that leading EBP advocates in HR have criticised (Jacobs, 2015). To counter this, EBP is reliant on practitioners learning to effectively challenge the status quo by learning how to 'raise these questions in socially effective ways' (Rousseau and Barends, 2011, p.226). Briner (2018, p.70) also stresses that despite existing barriers, EBP should not be seen as an 'all-or-nothing thing.' For effective decision-making, employing some evidence is always better than using none at all.

AC 1.2

The PESTLE tool analyses the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors that can impact upon a business (CIPD, 2021). By gathering information on these domains, companies can plan for future challenges and opportunities (Armstrong, 2014). This proactive approach gives businesses a competitive advantage by identifying market risks and demands (Marmol et al, 2015). For instance, Technivara could use the 'Technological' domain of PESTLE to forecast innovations, ensuring their products remain up to date. PESTLE allows businesses like Technivara to continually evaluate whether its systems are fit to withstand external challenges (Marmol et al., 2015). To aid its modernisation, Technivara could use PESTLE to identify obsolete systems, such as its paper-based ones, and determine what would better equip the business to deal with new challenges. Beneficially, PESTLE encourages information sharing from specialists to make the most informed decisions, with company lawyers, for instance, offering guidance on legislative changes within the 'Legal' domain (Cadle, J., Paul, D. and Turner, P., 2010). However, PESTLE analyses can generate overwhelming amounts of information causing organisations to overlook critical factors and leading to 'paralysis by analysis' (Marmol et al, 2015; CIPD, 2021). Furthermore, it cannot quantify the impact of these factors or fully account for how rapidly they can change (Marmol et al, 2015; Tingsager and Smith, 2022). To counter this, consistent PESTLE analyses are crucial for maintaining a current understanding of external factors (CIPD, 2021). Combining the model with tools like SWOT can help maintain focus, aligning external factors with internal capabilities and preventing information overload. (CIPD, 2021).

Benchmarking is a key analysis method for businesses to evaluate their products, services, and practices against competitors. It enables organisations to continuously improve through self-evaluation, setting goals to meet current market standards. This allows businesses like Technivara to compete effectively and meet customer needs (Ionescu and Bigioi, 2016). The exercise is particularly beneficial to an organisation like Technivara who are considering expansion; it enables them to investigate existing standards in unfamiliar markets before entering them and gain fresh insights for reorganising their structure (Zielinski, 2018). Drawing on this data, HR professionals can establish a strong context for justifying strategic or cultural changes (Zielinski, 2018). Despite this, it is important to remember that 'best practice' does not always equate to 'best fit'; Armstrong (2014) highlights that organisational changes must align with the specific needs of the business to be appropriate and beneficial. Benchmarking may also hinder continuous improvement if organisations become complacent after meeting the market average (Zielinski, 2018). Accessing competitor data for benchmarking can also be challenging as organisations may be unwilling to share confidential information (Ionescu and Bigioi, 2016), or may measure their outcomes in different ways (Mattox, Hall, and Parskey, 2020). Despite this, the internet offers quick access to a vast amount of data through free or low-cost global survey tools (Mattox, Hall, and Parskey, 2020). By combining this resource with clearly defined and continuously reviewed objectives, thorough and critical benchmarking can be ensured.

AC 1.3

According to Buchanan and Huczynski (2023, p.25), 'Critical thinking is a perspective that encourages criticism, debate, and challenge'. This involves 'polite doubt'; being sceptical about how information is sourced, interpreted, and used to draw conclusions (Cottrell, 2023, p.2). Critical thinking asks us to cross-examine the basis on which arguments have been formulated, including the author's background and expertise, the wider context in which the information was written, and the methodology used to investigate the subject (Cohen, 2015). Triangulating evidence helps professionals avoid taking things at face value, encouraging them to draw conclusions from multiple sources instead of relying on a single piece of evidence (Cohen, 2015).

In professional settings, this allows us to identify and challenge when others attempt to mislead us, for example, by using red herrings or through the selective use of evidence, to advocate for a particular decision (Lamb, P. and Howlett, W., 2019). It is also a powerful tool in recognising underlying biases and assumptions that can influence individual perspectives, often driven by personal interests such as financial gain or power (Cameron, 2021). Critical thinking therefore requires courage, as it may mean having to go against the views of the majority (Hanscomb, 2023) or having to challenge views that individuals identify with closely, such as religious beliefs (Cottrell, 2023). A simple way to embed this culture within an organisation could be to establish feedback channels that empower employees to voice their views.

Critical thinking requires us to be open minded by listening to the views and opinions of others and recognising how our own judgements can be flawed or influenced by our own confirmation bias (Hanscomb, 2023). Our own views should be open to criticism and challenge as this will allow them to develop over time (Thompson and Thompson, 2023). This could be facilitated by the use of cross-sectional project groups ensuring a diverse range of views are considered before decisions are made. This could assist objective debate within Technivara by embedding what Cottrell (2023, p.11) terms a 'non dualistic' approach; an understanding that not everything is simply right or wrong and that we need to consider a range of perspectives rather than just our own to make a well-rounded judgement. As people professionals, critical thinking is key to ensuring we remain humble and that our viewpoints are grounded in a strong knowledge base. This prevents overconfidence in our own capabilities (Thompson and Thompson, 2023).

AC 1.4

To ensure more efficient decision-making, Technivara could utilise De Bono's Six Thinking Hats. When faced with a decision, teams are assigned a coloured 'hat', each representing a particular direction of thought (Black Hat: barriers/challenges. Yellow Hat: benefits/value. White Hat: facts/information. Red Hat: feelings/emotions, Green Hat: innovation/new ideas, Blue Hat: process control) (Merrotsy, 2017). By dividing responsibility for each element of the decision-making process, the model helps people professionals ensure meetings are focused and productive. This prevents them from being time-consuming, guided by ego, or from reinforcing the status quo rather than bringing about real change - a common challenge for organisations like Technivara that tend to avoid changes to existing work practices (Patre, 2016). Particularly beneficial to Technivara is the model's Yellow Hat, as it encourages even the most pessimistic individuals to consider positive outcomes, facilitating the acceptance of data-driven solutions such as HR analytics which would have otherwise been dismissed (Patre, 2016). Roles can be swapped, meaning every team member has the chance to role-play a hat and see an issue from a variety of angles (De Bono, 2017). This encourages a well-rounded understanding of an issue and its potential impacts, fostering more informed decision-making.

As Technivara grows and its stakeholder base expands, a stakeholder analysis could also prove to be a useful decision making process. This involves mapping stakeholders along two axes: one representing their influence on decision-making, and the other the impact the decision will have on their interests (Gambles, 2017). The position of stakeholders on the map indicates the appropriate level of stakeholder engagement and communication required in the decision-making process; whether this is to manage, engage, consult, or simply inform (Gambles, 2017). Crucially, the process guides decision-making to meet the diverse needs of various stakeholders and allows businesses to prioritise those that are of higher importance (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2023). This ensures the appropriate allocation of time and resources, leading to realistic decisions that best contribute towards the success of the business. This also helps HR professionals maintain the right balance in their decisions to manage employee relations and ensure fairness. For instance, while a decision to implement a pay increase will positively impact employees, it could negatively affect shareholders who profit from the organisation (Woodhams and Perkins, 2022b). Taking this proactive approach would enable Technivara to anticipate the expectations of its priority stakeholders, thereby averting future conflicts and unforeseen challenges (Winter, 2023).

AC 1.5

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist ethical framework that evaluates actions based on their outcomes, advocating for decisions that generate the greatest good for the majority of individuals (Armstrong, 2014). Utilitarianism views all individuals as being equally important, encouraging people to work collectively for the common good. An example of how this could be adopted by Technivara is through shared leadership, leading to more balanced business decisions and preventing individuals from prioritising their own views and interests over those of other stakeholders (Dion, 2012). Utilitarianism's focus on collective welfare could help Technivara ensure their decisions are wellbeing-focused. For example, implementing business practices like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and policies that promote environmental sustainability that benefit the majority (Burnes and By, 2011). Nevertheless, implementing utilitarianism in people practice can be challenging as its principles are not aligned with how HR traditionally operates. Instead of promoting the greatest good for the majority, HR often works on a case-by-case basis; for instance, promotions and wage increases are usually provided to a few rather than the collective (Klikauer, 2014). The model also has ethical problems; its focus on the happiness of the majority can neglect the needs of vulnerable minorities, and its outcomes-based approach can be used to justify unethical means to achieve positive outcomes (Armstrong, 2014). The outcomes of a utilitarian approach are also hard to measure, as happiness is difficult to quantify (Dion, 2012).

Conversely, Deontology asserts that decisions must adhere to universal moral rules, regardless of their outcomes. No exceptions should be made, even if a decision that contradicts established rules results in more favourable outcomes (Forsyth, 2020). Beneficially, this results in practices that prioritise people over profit; for instance, while a business may save money by keeping wages low, over 16,000 UK employers pay the real living wage, evidencing their commitment to moral duty over business consequences (Living Wage Foundation, n.d.). Utilising this approach at Technivara would mean basing decisions on a robust code of ethics and clear company policies on equality and diversity. For instance, during the recruitment process, the company could evaluate candidates by using ethical questions and scenarios in interviews (The Institute of Business Ethics, 2014). A deontological approach could also be applied to the disciplinary process. This would ensure a more straightforward approach to decisions regarding behaviour and misconduct, as they would be based on an agreed set of principles and values (Marchington, 2021). Despite this, applying a universal, duty-based approach to a diverse workforce is challenging as moral standards can vary depending on an individual's culture and beliefs (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2013). Furthermore, the failure to consider the consequences of decisions could result in unintended harm.

To ensure balanced decision-making, it is therefore important to consider both ethical perspectives. This allows for a solid basis for evaluating both the intent and the consequences of our decisions.

AC 1.6

Revenue is the income a company receives from its regular business activities, such as selling goods and services, and is a frequently referenced metric for evaluating a company's financial performance (Marr, 2012). Beneficially, revenue offers a clear indication of business growth and customer demand (PNC Insights, 2025). For Technivara, this is a particularly advantageous measure, as it directly aligns with their goal of continuing 15 years of uninterrupted growth. Another upside is that revenue is a simple and easily comparable metric. This allows analysts to compare current sales figures on a year-over-year basis to assess performance (Marr, 2012). However, revenue is not a complete measure of financial health, as it is a gross figure and does not account for a company's costs. A company can, for example, have high revenues but still be unprofitable if its costs are not well managed (PNC Insights, 2025). Sole reliance on financial measures like revenue can also foster a 'sales-driven mindset', leading management to overlook broader risks like customer dissatisfaction (Andreychuk, 2024). For an accurate assessment, revenue must be viewed alongside profitability, cash flow, and other key financial and non-financial indicators (Andreychuk, 2024).

In contrast, a Balanced Scorecard (BSC) offers a more holistic evaluation of a business's overall success, extending beyond just financial results to include intangible assets like talent, relationships, and customer loyalty (Cote, 2023; Awadallah and Allam, 2015). The model asks businesses to set targets and evaluate performance from four key perspectives: Financial, Customer, Internal Business Processes, and Learning and Growth (Cote, 2023). Businesses select the specific metrics they intend to use to evaluate their progress in each of the four perspectives (Cote, 2023). This customisable approach allows organisations to select specific metrics to align their performance evaluation with their unique strategic objectives. For instance, the UK government's Procuring for Growth Balanced Scorecard evaluated the 'customer' perspective by assessing community benefits such as employment, which aligned with its broader strategic goals of economic growth and taxpayer value (Gov.uk, 2016.). Nevertheless, the BSC's flexibility in metric selection can lead to confirmation bias, where managers may selectively focus on metrics that align with their desired outcomes (Awadallah and Allam, 2015). The potential for using numerous KPIs for each perspective can also result in an overwhelming amount of data (ACCA, n.d.). Furthermore, the model has been criticised for its strong emphasis on internal factors, often neglecting the broader external environment (Awadallah and Allam, 2015; ACCA, n.d.). To address these limitations and ensure relevance and focus, organisations like Technivara can customise the model, as others have done, by adding or removing evaluation areas to suit their specific requirements (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, n.d.). For example, as well as 'customers', Technivara could add a 'competitor' analysis to benchmark its performance against others in the technology sector.

AC 1.7

Effective people practices enhance business value through a range of HR strategies that directly support overall business objectives (Holbeche, 2022; Armstrong, 2014). As Technivara seeks to further expand into sectors such as medical and automotive, HR can add both long and short term value through learning and development initiatives, equipping employees with the skills needed for current business goals as well as anticipating future workforce needs and developing internal talent (Holbeche, 2022). Workforce planning, for instance, would pinpoint demand and competency gaps to inform targeted recruitment and tailor training at Technivara to ensure competitive advantage (Armstrong, 2014). Beyond capability-building, people practices add value by shaping a motivated and resilient workforce through wellbeing initiatives and reward mechanisms that can increase retention and improve discretionary effort, thereby supporting Technivara's aims for sustained business growth (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2020). Similarly, HR's role in change management is critical to Technivara's modernisation strategy; for instance, the establishment of communication channels to inform employees of the transition from paper-based to digital workflows (Taylor and Woodhams, 2022).

Measuring the impact of these people practices requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. One method is Return on Investment (ROI), a vital metric which can calculate the financial gains from HR initiatives relative to their cost ($ROI = (\text{Net Profit} / \text{Cost of Investment}) \times 100$) (Stobierski, 2020). This allows HR to justify spending, build a strong business case for future investments, and apply lessons learnt across business areas (Stobierski, 2020). Although ROI is often criticised for failing to capture intangible benefits, it can be adapted to measure indirect gains. For instance, Technivara could evaluate its L&D activities by measuring improvements in employee knowledge, skills, and attitude, and their impact on the business through higher sales or retention. These benefits can then be converted to a monetary value by looking at cost savings or customer satisfaction metrics (Harper, 2021).

A complementary method is the use of exit interviews to gather qualitative insights into employee experiences of people practice (Taylor & Woodhams, 2022). Beyond measuring the success of retention initiatives, this process can gather feedback on various aspects of people practice that other metrics might miss, such as workplace culture, personal motivation, or well-being (Bardsley, 2020). For instance, Technivara could tailor the interview to gather feedback on whether employees felt supported in adapting to new industry requirements or changes in work practices. Collecting data at this stage is particularly valuable, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of HR's influence across the entire employee lifecycle. Interview responses may be biased by emotion or fear of consequences (Broadbent & McGuire, 2023) therefore confidentiality must be guaranteed, and external facilitators may be used to encourage honesty (CIPD, 2025a). This fosters open and honest communication, enabling a more authentic evaluation of HR's value to the organisation.

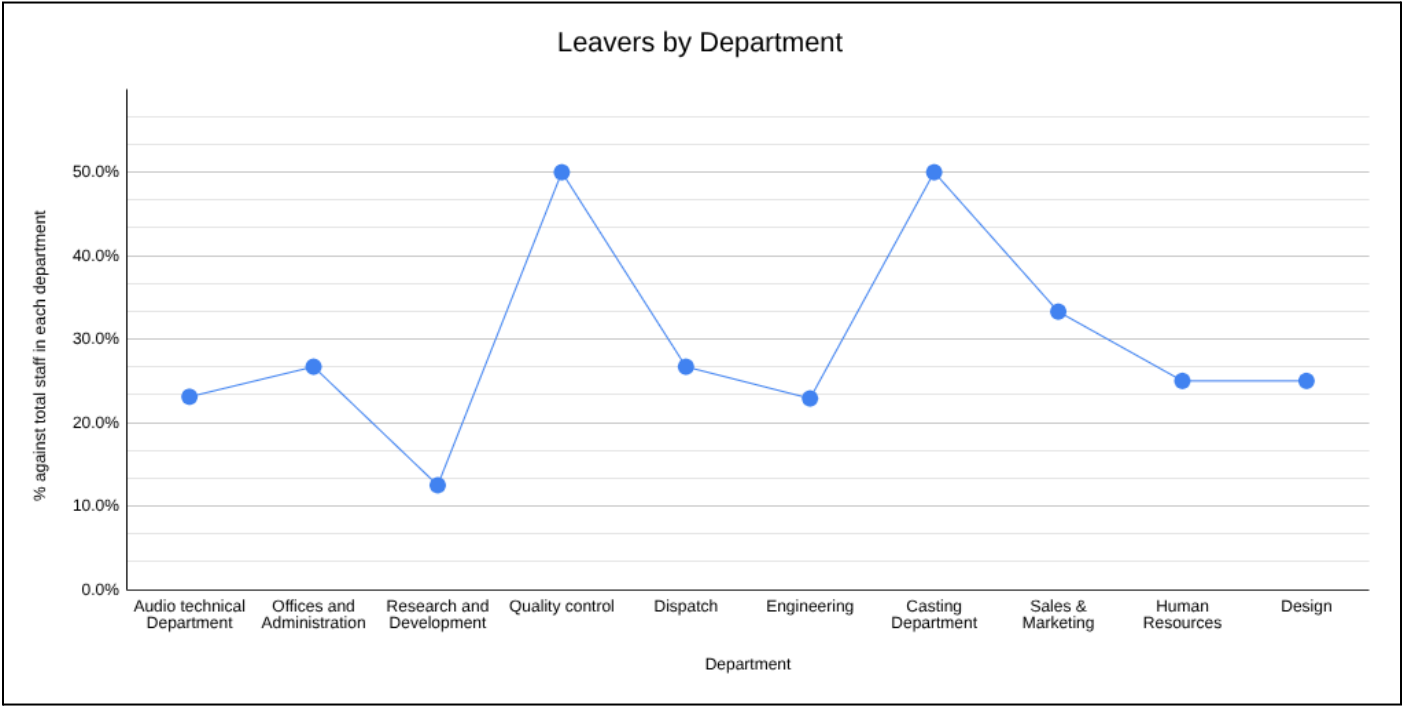
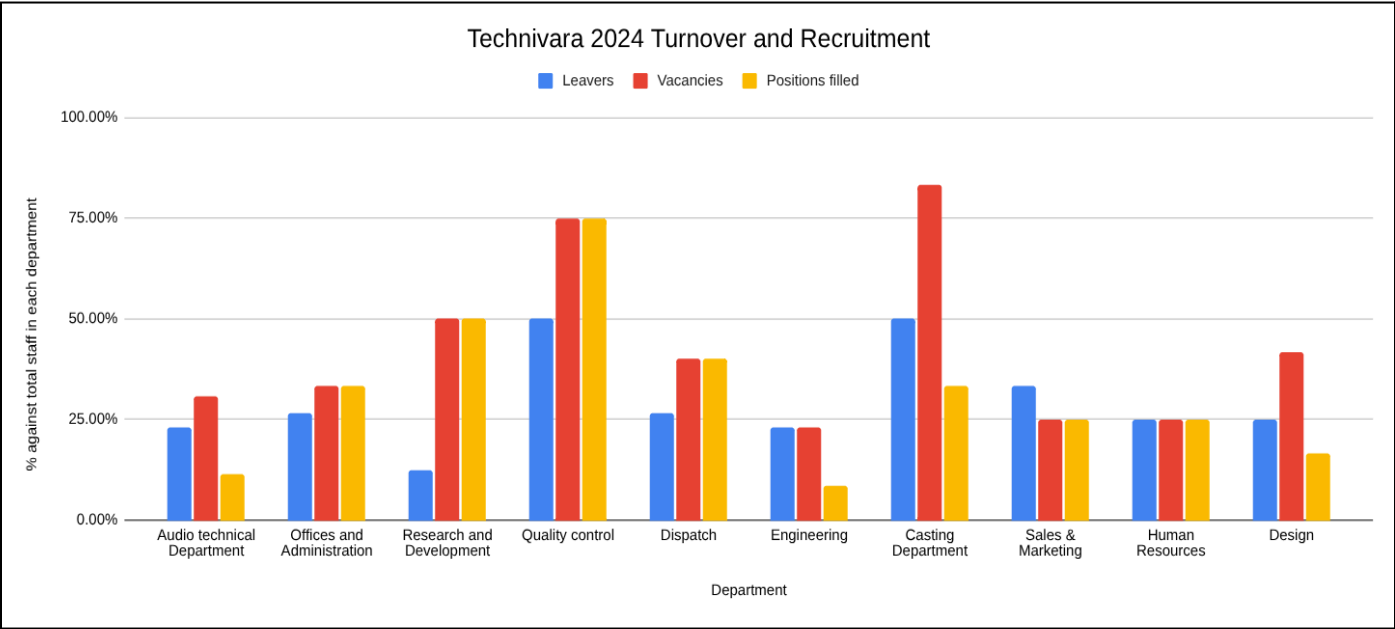
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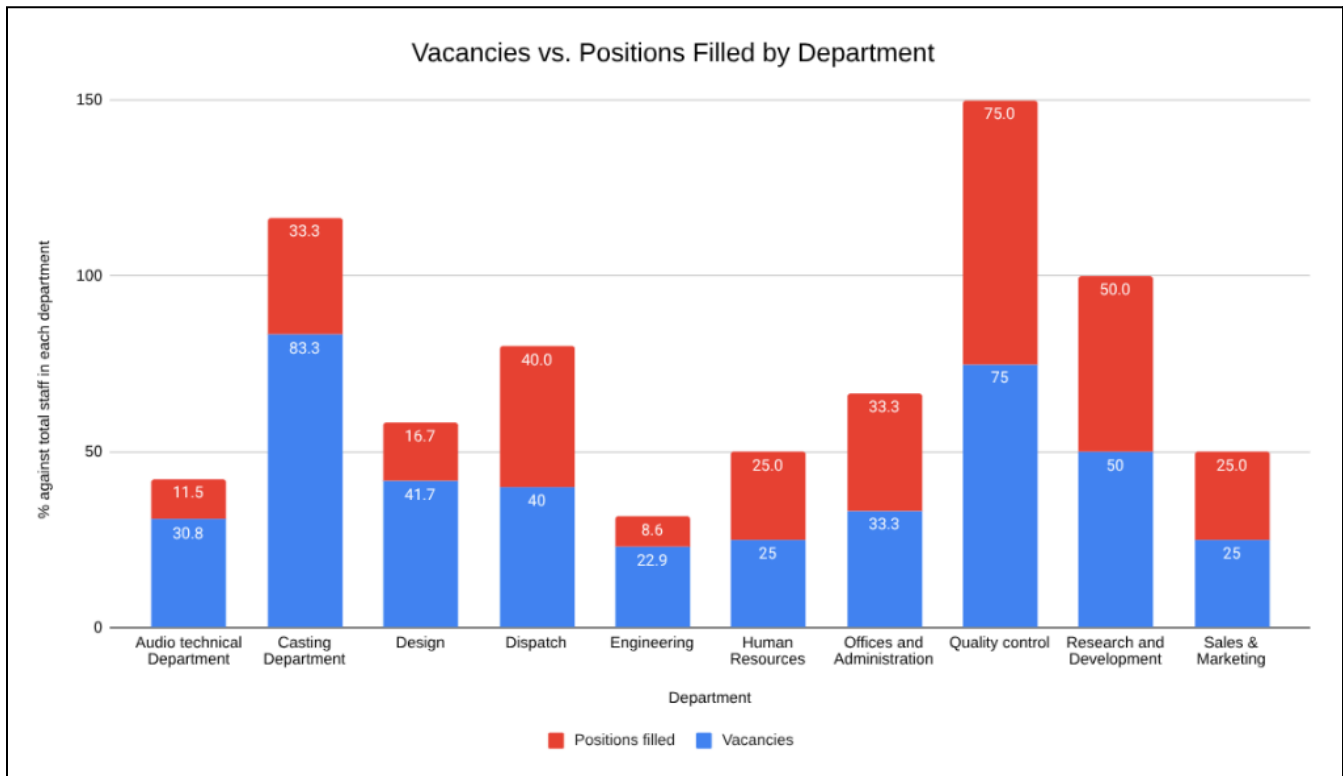
Turnover and recruitment take up for Technivara 2024							
	Total in Department 2024	Leavers for 2024	Leavers as a % against total in each Department	Positions vacant	Vacancies as a % against total in each Department	Positions filled	Positions filled as a % of total in each Department
Audio technical Department	26	6	23.1%	8	30.8%	3	11.5%
Offices and Administration	15	4	26.7%	5	33.3%	5	33.3%
Research and Development	8	1	12.5%	4	50.0%	4	50.0%
Quality control	4	2	50.0%	3	75.0%	3	75.0%
Dispatch	15	4	26.7%	6	40.0%	6	40.0%
Engineering	35	8	22.9%	8	22.9%	3	8.6%
Casting Department	6	3	50.0%	5	83.3%	2	33.3%
Sales & Marketing	12	4	33.3%	3	25.0%	3	25.0%
Human Resources	4	1	25.0%	1	25.0%	1	25.0%
Design	12	3	25.0%	5	41.7%	2	16.7%

Percentages were calculated using Excel and formatted to one decimal place. The following formulas were applied:

- Leavers as a % against total in each Department = $(\text{Leavers} \div \text{Total in Department}) \times 100$
- Vacancies as a % against total in each Department = $(\text{Positions vacant} \div \text{Total in Department}) \times 100$
- Positions filled as a % of total in each Department = $(\text{Positions filled} \div \text{Total in Department}) \times 100$

AC 2.2





AC 2.3

Structure and Delivery

An overview of the feedback from the Technivara learning activity shows that learners overwhelmingly agreed (92%) that the facilitator was knowledgeable, and a significant majority (66%) felt the topic was clearly explained. This indicates that the individuals selected to lead these sessions are well-suited for their roles. Feedback indicated that the session had a strong evidence base, with 85% of participants agreeing that the resources used were of good quality. This demonstrates that factually sound learning was delivered to employees. However, a notable concern was the lack of meaningful engagement. 64% of participants felt they were unable to engage in questioning and answering. This suggests either a failure by the facilitator to create sufficient opportunities for interaction or that learners themselves were not sufficiently engaged in the session to be able to contribute to the discussion. According to Marchington (2021), active learner involvement is crucial for the full benefit of organisational training. This disengagement may explain why 71% of participants were unsure or disagreed that the session's learning objectives had been met, as they might have struggled to retain knowledge without active participation.

Relevance

Negative feedback was received in regards to the relevance and applicability of the learning activity to individual's job roles. Specifically, 52% of respondents were unsure whether the training was applicable to their working role, while 57% were unsure whether the activity was linked to their performance targets.

This suggests a disconnect between the training's stated objectives and what employees perceive their job roles and performance goals to be. Armstrong (2014) highlights that learning and development should be performance-related and align with broader business strategy to enhance work quality, job satisfaction, and commitment to organisational objectives. The CIPD (2025f) also stresses the importance of clear expectations for performance management as it provides employees with direction, motivation and ensures individuals are accountable for their work. Although feedback indicated training materials were well-sourced and objectives clearly stated, the session unsuccessfully reinforced organisational expectations and did not align with broader performance measures. This trend could negatively impact the return on investment in training; if employees do not perceive the learned skills as valuable for their role enhancement within the organisation, the organisation may find it difficult to justify the roll out of future training initiatives (Armstrong, 2014).

Accessibility

A significant number of participants felt their learning preferences were not considered before the activity; specifically, 43% were unsure and 33% disagreed that this had happened. This demonstrates Technivara's failure to tailor its learning opportunities to the specific needs of its employees. As the CIPD (2025d) highlights, an organisation's L&D strategy must promote fairness and equity, including providing resources for underrepresented groups. Organisations must consider that individuals learn in diverse ways, and may benefit from a variety of learning types such as learning on the job, blended learning, or collaborative learning (CIPD, 2025e). Learning preferences may also be impacted by neurodiversity, where individuals may process information differently to their peers (CIPD, 2024a). Marchington (2021) notes that learners may carry "baggage" from past experiences, making them anxious about their ability to learn. This includes individuals with below-average digital or numeracy skills who may lack confidence in a learning environment (Wright, 2025). By failing to consult with learners beforehand, Technivara may miss these critical factors, which could create barriers to employee development.

Recommendations:

To ensure that future learning activities are purposeful and effectively reinforce wider expectations of employee performance, it is recommended that Technivara undertake a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA). This process entails collecting data from employees, managers and other stakeholders to analyse the organisation's current skills and capabilities against what is required to achieve organisational goals (CIPD, 2025c). Using this information, Technivara can develop learning activities that directly address knowledge gaps, preparing employees to meet expected performance standards. This will clarify performance expectations and ensure training is directly applicable to employees' job roles. Extensive research, utilising methods such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys, is essential for a comprehensive LNA. This is vital because employee training needs differ according to their roles and the business interests they serve (Page-Tickell, 2014). Consequently, Technivara will need to assign a dedicated researcher to conduct a thorough analysis. To align with budgetary constraints, this initiative could be implemented as an internal secondment for a current member of the L&D team, thereby reducing costs. Alternatively, Technivara could hire an external consultant at a maximum daily rate of £1,000 to complete the work, ensuring the L&D team's capacity is not reduced (Gaskin, 2017). Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the analysis due to the sensitive nature of collecting data on individuals' knowledge and capabilities (CIPD, 2025c). Once finalised, the LNA offers long-term advantages, as it can be routinely reviewed to align with evolving learning requirements (Page-Tickell, 2014), ensuring employees consistently receive relevant, goal-oriented development opportunities.

To better accommodate individual learning preferences and incorporate essential consultation, it is recommended that Technivara collaborate with its employees, including those with neurodiversity, to co-produce learning materials (Sniderman, Buffi, Holdowsky et al, 2023). To facilitate the selection of a representative co-production group, the business could invite staff from each department to submit an expression of interest. This opportunity could be advertised with dedicated time allocated during working hours. The business might also consider offering additional allowances as an incentive to encourage participation. This extensive consultation process will be time-consuming, potentially causing operational delays in the rollout of L&D activities. The cost of implementing the group's recommendations for improved accessibility will vary, requiring the organisation to budget accordingly. For instance, developing custom e-learning courses could cost up to £10,000 (Learningpool, n.d), while simpler solutions like video captioning can be achieved more affordably, with subscriptions such as Canva costing around £100 per year (Canva, nd.). Nevertheless, these will be valuable investments that will prevent potential barriers to employee development. Taking this approach will empower the organisation to adopt more innovative and impactful methods of engaging learners. For example, moving from a traditional 'sage on the stage' model to one that actively promotes collaboration and participation of learners (CIPD, 2025e). This improved insight and attention to employee's needs will ultimately boost their performance and contribute significantly to the business's overall success.

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