

University of Wales Trinity Saint David



ACADEMIC REPORT

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Performance: Evidence from Pret A Manger

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1. Introduction

Communication plays an important role in how Pret A Manger operates. In busy stores, staff need to share information clearly, support each other and respond quickly to customer needs. Poor communication can slow service and affect customer experience, while effective communication helps employees understand their responsibilities and work towards shared standards (Robbins and Coulter, 2021).

This report focuses on communication in Pret A Manger and its impact on daily store operations. It examines communication methods used by managers and employees, identifies common communication issues and explains how these affect teamwork and service quality. The report also provides recommendations to improve communication and support consistent service across Pret stores.

2. Communication in the Business Environment

2.1 Definition and Importance of Communication

In a business context, communication refers to sharing information clearly so work can run smoothly and tasks are completed effectively (Cole and Kelly, 2020). It also involves ensuring that employees understand instructions and know what is expected of them. According to Robbins and Coulter (2021), communication is effective only when messages are received and clearly understood.

In Pret A Manger, effective communication is particularly important because daily operations depend on fast and clear exchanges between team members and managers, especially during busy periods (PwC, 2024). Staff need to communicate information about product availability, customer requests and changes during shifts to avoid mistakes and delays. Clear communication helps teams work efficiently and supports cooperation in fast-paced environments (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2019). Clear communication also supports effective management and problem-solving. Mullins and McLean (2019) argue that good communication improves cooperation and overall

organisational performance. In Pret A Manger, this means smoother teamwork and more consistent customer service during daily store operations.

2.2 Communication Methods in Organisations

Pret A Manger uses different communication methods to ensure information is shared clearly between managers and staff during daily operations. In busy stores, communication is essential because employees work at a fast pace and need to support each other to maintain service quality. At the start of each shift, managers deliver short team briefings outlining daily targets, product availability and customer service expectations. These briefings help employees understand their responsibilities and prepare for busy periods (Pret A Manger, 2024).

Communication also takes place between colleagues working on the same shift. Staff share quick updates, ask for support and pass information to each other while serving customers, especially during peak times. Communication between employees at the same level, known as horizontal communication, helps daily operations run smoothly (Robbins and Coulter, 2021).

Informal communication is also common in Pret stores. Employees regularly communicate to solve small problems, remind each other about tasks or support new team members. Pret also uses digital tools such as email and scheduling systems to share information between stores and managers. Clear communication through these systems helps reduce errors and maintain consistent service standards across locations (Pret A Manger, 2024).

2.3 Communication Practices in Pret A Manger

Communication practices in Pret A Manger are closely connected to daily store operations and customer service. In Pret, staff rely on clear instructions from managers to prepare food, serve customers and follow company standards. Regular team briefings and direct communication help employees understand their tasks and work efficiently during busy periods.

Communication is also important when new services are introduced or store operations change. A clear example is the launch of the coffee subscription service, which allowed customers to receive up to five drinks a day for a fixed monthly fee of £20 (The Guardian, 2020; The Guardian, 2023). This service changed customer behaviour and required staff to understand the offer and deliver consistent service across locations.

Effective communication practices in Pret help maintain service quality, support teamwork and allow the company to respond to changes in behaviour. According to Robbins and Coulter (2021), clear communication helps employees understand expectations and perform their tasks more confidently in fast-paced service environments like Pret.

3. Common Communication Issues

3.1 Miscommunication and Information Distortion

Miscommunication is a common issue in busy Pret A Manger stores, where employees must react quickly and follow instructions during service periods. For example, if a shift leader gives unclear instructions about product availability or task priorities, employees may prepare wrong items or repeat tasks, slowing service and frustrating customers.

In Pret A Manger, communication often happens quickly between team members and managers. When messages are passed under pressure, there is a higher risk that information will be misunderstood or incomplete. This can lead to mistakes, delays and reduced service quality, directly affecting customer service and store operations.

Another issue is information distortion as messages move between different levels in Pret. Managers may simplify information, while employees may hesitate to report problems. This can result in important details being lost, making it harder to maintain consistent standards across stores (Robbins and Coulter, 2021). Miscommunication can have a direct negative impact on efficiency and customer satisfaction during busy periods.

3.2 Cultural and Language Barriers

Cultural and language differences can create communication challenges in Pret A Manger, where staff come from different countries and backgrounds. Earlier reports showed that Pret employed people from more than 100 nationalities, which means teams in many stores are multicultural and need clear communication to work effectively. In busy Pret stores, employees may understand instructions differently, especially during peak periods, which can lead to mistakes or delays in service. Previous reporting highlighted that Pret A Manger relied heavily on workers from across the EU, resulting in culturally diverse teams that require clear and inclusive communication to work effectively (The Guardian, 2017).

Communication in Pret is not only about words. Tone of voice, body language and confidence in speaking English can influence how messages are understood by team members. For example, a new employee may hesitate to ask questions if they are not confident using English, which can create confusion during busy periods.

Mullins and McLean (2019) explain that cultural differences can affect teamwork and how employees respond to feedback. In Pret A Manger, managers may need to repeat instructions or check understanding to make sure tasks are completed correctly. According to Pret A Manger (n.d.), teamwork and clear communication are key values in

the company's culture, helping staff work together and provide consistent customer service.

3.3 Structural and Managerial Communication Challenges

Communication challenges in Pret A Manger are often linked to how information is shared between head office and individual stores. In Pret, decisions about products, promotions and service standards are usually made centrally and then passed to store teams. If managers do not explain instructions clearly or messages are delayed, staff may misunderstand tasks, affecting service and customer satisfaction.

Store managers in Pret play a key role in communication because they organise shifts, guide employees and respond to problems during busy periods. Their communication style directly influences staff confidence and how smoothly the team works during peak hours.

A recent example reported in the press shows how important managers are in maintaining safe store environments. Pret introduced body-worn cameras for team leaders and managers in some stores to support staff safety and manage difficult situations, showing the importance of clear leadership and communication in daily operations (The Guardian, 2024). This example demonstrates how communication at management level can directly influence service quality and staff confidence in daily store operations.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Strengthening Upward Communication

Pret A Manger should place greater importance on communication from employees to managers. Staff who work directly with customers often notice problems first, such as product shortages, delays or repeated customer complaints. When employees feel

comfortable sharing this information, managers can react more quickly and improve daily operations.

Store managers should encourage staff to speak openly during team briefings or short discussions at the end of shifts. Creating a supportive atmosphere where employees feel listened to helps build trust and reduces misunderstandings. Strong upward communication allows problems to be identified early and helps maintain consistent service standards across stores.

4.2 Making Communication Part of Managerial Responsibility

Communication should be treated as an important part of a manager's role in Pret A Manger. Managers organise work, support staff and deal with challenges during busy periods, so clear communication is essential for effective teamwork. According to Men (2020), strong leadership communication helps build trust and increases employee engagement.

Pret could place greater focus on communication skills when evaluating managerial performance. Managers who give clear instructions, listen to employee feedback and communicate regularly help reduce confusion and improve daily store operations. Clear managerial communication supports teamwork, boosts staff confidence and contributes to better service quality.

4.3 Developing Practical Cross-Cultural Communication Skills

Given Pret A Manger's culturally diverse workforce, developing practical cross-cultural communication skills is essential for improving teamwork and reducing misunderstandings. Employees from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds may interpret instructions differently or feel less confident asking questions, especially in fast-paced service environments.

Pret could address this challenge through targeted communication training focused on clarity, inclusion and checking understanding. Short, practical workshops or on-the-job coaching sessions could help managers and team leaders adapt their communication

styles to diverse teams. Emphasising simple language, clear instructions and supportive feedback would improve shared understanding during busy shifts. Strengthening cross-cultural communication would reduce operational errors, support collaboration and help maintain consistent customer service standards across different store locations.

5. Conclusion

Communication plays an important role in how Pret A Manger operates and delivers service. This report shows that communication is not only about passing information, but ensuring people understand each other and work towards the same goals. Clear communication supports teamwork, service quality and consistent customer experience. At the same time, problems such as miscommunication, cultural differences and structural barriers can affect daily work and performance.

Strengthening communication between employees and managers, encouraging managers to take responsibility for communication and improving cultural understanding can reduce misunderstandings and support better teamwork. In a fast-paced environment like Pret, clear communication is essential for maintaining service and organisational performance. Effective communication builds trust and maintains consistent service standards.

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