

Component I -Individual Presentation

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Developing and Managing Individuals and Teams (LCLM5002)
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Introduction to Marks & Spencer (M&S)

- **The Corporate Profile:** Marks & Spencer plc is a major UK-based multinational retailer specializing in clothing, home products, and food products.
- **The Transformation Mandate:** Under its "Reshaping M&S" program, the firm is undergoing massive **digitalisation, process improvement, and restructuring**.
- **Target Roles for the Transformation:** 1. *Lead Digital Transformation Manager* (To oversee agile software deployments). 2. *AI & Automation Supply Chain Specialist* (To improve logistics and forecasting inventory). 3. *Head of Retail Change Management* (To guide workforce restructuring and cultural alignment).

Overview of the Strategic Recruitment Process

- **The "Right Candidate, Right Time, Right Role" Philosophy:** Aligning talent acquisition with strategic business milestones. This requires moving beyond reactive hiring to proactive planning (Taylor, 2018).
- **The Lifecycle Model:**
 - **Right Role:** Established via rigorous job architecture mapping out future state capabilities rather than past duties.
 - **Right Time:** Synchronized with M&S's software and restructuring rollout schedules to minimize operational downtime and reduce time needed to hire someone.
 - **Right Candidate:** Filtered using validated competency assessment tools.
- **Academic Grounding:** Incorporates **Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)** vertical alignment theory, ensuring HR operations directly deliver on executive corporate strategy (Boxall and Purcell, 2016)

Job Design Architecture: Job Analysis & Specification

- **Job Analysis (JA):** Utilizing critical incident techniques to determine the exact cognitive and behavioral requirements needed to lead an a huge enterprise level digital shift.
- **Job Description (JD):** Clear focus on output-based deliverables
- **Person Specification (The Rodger 7 Point Plan or Fraser 5 Point System):**
 - *Essential Attributes:* Agile project methodology expertise (SCRUM/Prince2), advanced emotional intelligence, and data literacy.
 - *Desirable Attributes:* Prior experience navigating corporate turnarounds within UK retail sector.
- **Academic Support:** Correctly defining the person specification reduces role ambiguity and helps employee retention (Armstrong and Taylor, 2020).

Strategic Sourcing & Advertising Platforms

- **Sourcing Strategy:** Transformation roles demand passive candidate sourcing rather than relying solely on active job seekers.
- **Platform Mix for M&S:**
 - **Professional Networks (LinkedIn Talent Solutions):** Highly targeted searches to find already established digital change agents across the UK.
 - **Niche Tech Platforms (TechUK, CWJobs):** Used to reach specialized AI and automation professionals.
 - **Internal Talent Marketplace:** Promoting internal mobility to retain institutional M&S knowledge.
- **Academic Grounding:** Employer Branding Theory (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004) dictates that M&S must market itself as a "digital innovator" to compete against pure tech companies for high-tier technical talent.

Interview Type 1: Structured Competency Interviews

- **Overview:** Standardized interviews where every candidate is asked the exact same questions mapped against defined behavioral parameters (Torrington et al., 2020).
- **Application to M&S:** Primarily used for the Head of Retail Change Management role to measure past resilience, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Academic Evaluation:**
 - *Pros:* Predictive validity and high legal defensibility under the UK Equality Act 2010 due to standardized scoring matrices (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2010).
 - *Cons:* Can feel rigid or transactional and may restrict candidates from showcasing unique experiences.

Interview Type 2: Technical & Case-Study Assessments

- **Overview:** Candidates are given a live real world business problem to solve or a technical exercise to complete under timed conditions.
- **Application to M&S:** Essential for the AI & Automation Supply Chain Specialist. Candidates are tasked with identifying bottlenecks in a simulated, disrupted retail logistics data stream.
- **Academic Evaluation:**
 - *Pros:* Directly tests actual working capability rather than theoretical knowledge or rehearsed talking points (Search, 2021).
 - *Cons:* Can induce high stress, potentially masking a candidate's broader collaborative strengths.

Interview Type 3: Situational Judgment / Scenario-Based Interviews

- **Overview:** Presenting hypothetical, future focused corporate crises to analyze a candidate's problem solving strategies.
- **Application to M&S:** Perfect for the Lead Digital Transformation Manager ("Imagine a critical software rollout is boycotted by regional store managers 48 hours before launch. What is your immediate action plan?").
- **Academic Evaluation:**
 - *Pros:* Effective at assessing real-time strategic agility and situational leadership qualities in uncertain corporate environments (Latham and Sue-Chan, 1999).
 - *Cons:* Assesses what a candidate says they would do, which does not always correlate with how they will actually perform under real pressure.

Justification of Questioning Techniques

- **Core Recommendation:** A combined framework utilizing the **STAR Methodology** embedded within **Competency-Based Questioning**, supplemented by **Probing Questions**.
- **Academic Justification:**
 - **STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result):** Forces candidates to provide quantifiable metrics of success, minimizing theoretical false information.
 - **Probing & Socratic Questioning:** Crucial for senior transformation roles to verify authenticity. It systematically strips away rehearsed answers (*"Why exactly did you select that framework over Agile? What alternative did you discard?"*).
- **Bias Mitigation:** Standardizing this framework guarantees that candidates are evaluated strictly on their transformation capability, eliminating unconscious affinity bias (Marchington et al., 2021).

Delivery Medium: Face to Face vs. Virtual Interviews

- **Comparative Matrix:**
 - **Virtual Interviews (MS Teams/Zoom):**
 - Advantages: Drastically reduces time needed to hire and eliminates geographical barriers. Is cost efficient (Chapman et al., 2005).
 - Disadvantages: Makes it hard to spot non-verbal communication, micro expressions, and can feel cold or impersonal.
 - **Face to Face Interviews :**
 - Advantages: Provides a deep assessment of cultural fit, natural leadership presence, and physical stakeholder management capabilities (Blacksmith et al., 2016).
 - Disadvantages: Prone to scheduling issues. Introduces higher potential for structural/ regional demographic biases.

Conclusion & Strategic HR Recommendations

- **Executive Summary Action Items:**

1. **Implement a Hybrid Assessment Funnel:** Execute Stage 1 virtually to maintain speed. Progress to Stage 2 face to face .
2. **Mandate clear Evaluation Rubrics:** Train all senior M&S interview panellists on objective scoring matrices to eliminate unstructured "gut feel" selection.
3. **Immediate Next Steps:** Approve budget allocation for targeted LinkedIn sourcing campaigns to fill the Lead Digital Transformation Manager role.

Reference List (Academic Sources)

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