

Student ID:2438986

Student Name:James Oyibo

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Lecturer Name:Dr Samson Oladejo

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Introduction

This report examines the main human resource issues that Marks and Spencer Group plc (M&S), a significant UK retailer working in a fiercely competitive and quickly evolving business environment, is currently dealing with. Significant organisational change is now taking place at M&S, with a focus on supply chain modernisation, technology transformation, and the creation of a more flexible and forward-thinking company model. Due to these changes, human resource management is becoming more crucial because the success of a company relies not only on its strategy and systems but also on its capacity to draw, cultivate, and keep the right people while keeping a diverse and motivated workforce.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate three key HR concerns that have an impact on M&S: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), adjusting to technological innovation, and talent acquisition and retention. These problems are very important because they affect long-term sustainability, employee engagement, and organisational effectiveness. If these variables are not adequately addressed, a large retail company like M&S may see a decline in employee dedication, productivity, and the company's capacity to compete in a changing market.

The first section of the paper will discuss these three aspects in terms of the organization. After that, it will assess modern HR techniques that can be applied to solve issues, such as workforce planning, digital HR platforms, inclusive hiring, and employee retention tactics. Lastly, with a focus on leadership accountability, communication, organisational culture, and equal opportunity in the workplace, the report will critically assess how departmental managers may guarantee that these practices are implemented successfully and urgently.

1. Explanation of Key Factors

As it continues its organisational change in a strongly competitive retail environment, Marks and Spencer Group plc (M&S) is confronted with a number of modern human resource difficulties. Adapting to technological innovation, attracting and retaining people, and diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) are three particularly important problems. These elements are significant because they affect the organization's long-term viability, employee engagement, and business performance.

The first aspect is adjusting to technological advancements. M&S has identified technological transformation as a significant corporate priority, and its future development is connected to improved use of digital systems, data, and AI in

everyday operations (Marks and Spencer Group plc, 2026a; 2026b). This puts pressure on the business to ensure that its employees and management have the skills and confidence to operate effectively with new technology. According to Cascio and Montealegre (2016), technological development reshapes employment, communication patterns, and organisational structures, requiring HR to help people via constant learning and adaptation. Failure to keep up with technology advancements may impair productivity, impede decision-making, and degrade customer service at M&S. Successful digital adaptation, on the other hand, may boost productivity, increase agility, and help businesses transition more effectively.

The second aspect is talent acquisition and retention. M&S must attract and retain workers with the appropriate combination of retail, digital, analytical, and leadership capabilities to enable change. This is becoming increasingly challenging in a competitive labour market, where talented people frequently have many companies to choose from. Taylor (2021) contends that talent management is critical to organisational success because businesses must hire individuals who can satisfy both present and future strategic demands. This issue is especially important for M&S since transformation necessitates not only replacing employees when needed but also developing a workforce that can adapt to change and contribute to innovation. Poor talent acquisition can result in skills shortages, whilst poor retention can raise recruiting expenses, impair continuity, and put additional strain on existing employees. Torrington et al. (2020) further claim that retention is highly connected to the entire quality of the working experience, which includes growth opportunities, managerial assistance, and workplace justice. As a result, talent acquisition and retention are critical to operational success and employee engagement.

The third aspect is equality, diversity, and inclusion. M&S has publicly announced its commitment to developing an inclusive culture and fostering equal opportunity within the company (Marks & Spencer, 2022). DEI is significant because it influences how people see their workplace and whether they feel appreciated, represented, and able to advance. According to Shen et al. (2009), diversity management is most effective when it is integrated into HR activities like as recruiting, development, and promotion rather than being handled as a standalone policy problem. This indicates that DEI should have an impact not just on employment decisions, but also on leadership behaviour, career advancement, and organisational culture in M&S. Employee engagement and retention are likely to decrease when individuals from diverse backgrounds feel excluded or encounter impediments to opportunity. In contrast, an inclusive workplace may boost morale, creativity, and business reputation.

Overall, these three elements are interconnected. Technological innovation alters skill needs; talent acquisition and retention affect whether the organization has the people required for transformation; and DEI influences whether the workplace is fair, inclusive, and sustainable. Together, they reflect significant HR initiatives for M&S in an era of constant organisational transformation.

2. Evaluation of Contemporary HR Practices

To respond to technological transformation, M&S should implement digital HR solutions backed by people analytics. Digital solutions may enhance recruiting, learning, performance management, and communication, whereas analytics can assist HR detect skill shortages, track attrition, and more precisely analyse workforce trends (CIPD, 2023; McCartney and Fu, 2022). This is especially beneficial for a company like M&S, where digital transformation is key to strategy (Marks and Spencer Group plc, 2026a; 2026b). The strength of this technique is that it allows for faster and more informed judgements. The issue is that statistics alone cannot explain employee motivation, stress, or reluctance to change, therefore HR must use both analytics and human discretion.

A second effective technique is strategic workforce planning, which is tied to talent acquisition and retention. This includes anticipating future skill requirements and arranging recruiting, development, and succession accordingly (Taylor, 2021). For M&S, this would assist the corporation in determining if it requires more digital, analytical, or change-oriented staff, reducing reactive recruiting. It also helps to retain staff by demonstrating that there are obvious chances for advancement. The strength of workforce planning is that it is proactive, integrating people strategy with business transformation. However, it is dependent on accurate forecasting, and in a fast-paced retail environment, projections may need to be revised on a frequent basis.

A third practice is a staff engagement and retention plan. This might include development opportunities, recognition, wellness assistance, internal mobility, and frequent contact with management. Torrington et al. (2020) contend that retention is influenced not just by compensation but also by the quality of management and the employee experience. These techniques in M&S would assist to decrease uncertainty during change while also strengthening commitment. Their strength is that they boost morale and minimise turnover; nevertheless, their weakness is that they might fail if managers do not use them regularly. Engagement activities must

thus be integrated into daily management rather than considered as separate HR projects.

The most significant current approaches for DEI are inclusive recruiting and inclusive leadership development. Inclusive recruiting entails broadening attraction channels, employing fair selection processes, and minimising hiring prejudice. Managers who get inclusive leadership development are better able to establish environments that are courteous, egalitarian, and psychologically safe. M&S has already stated its commitment to inclusion and diversity, thus these policies are consistent with its public principles and workplace reputation (Marks & Spencer, 2022). Their strength is that they diversify the talent pool and promote equitable opportunity. The restriction is that if leaders are not held responsible and results are not monitored, DEI may become symbolic.

Overall, the most successful HR response for M&S is a mix of digital HR tools, workforce planning, engagement methods, and inclusive recruiting. When combined, these strategies can improve corporate success, employee dedication, and organisational sustainability. They are most effective when they are linked to real-world managerial action rather than being considered as standalone projects.

3. Critical Evaluation of Managerial Implementation

Departmental managers have a critical role in ensuring that modern HR practices are properly and rapidly implemented at M&S. HR can create rules and protocols, but managers are accountable for implementing them on a daily basis. This necessitates leadership responsibility. Managers should be held accountable for results including staff development, technology adoption, employee retention, and inclusive practice. According to McCartney and Fu (2022), HR systems and analytics only boost organisational performance when managers actively use them to make decisions.

Communication is also essential throughout implementation. Employees may feel unsure or hesitant when businesses adopt new technology, recruitment strategies, or DEI projects. Managers must thus clearly explain the goal of change, listen to concerns, and offer frequent updates. According to Cascio and Montealegre (2016), technological change influences how people work and interact, therefore poor communication can lead to less engagement and slower adaption. Effective

communication would assist M&S personnel realise how transformation helps both the business and the workforce.

Managers must also assess progress and promote an inclusive culture. This involves evaluating the effectiveness of HR procedures using metrics including as turnover, training completion, engagement levels, and representation statistics. However, data alone are insufficient; managers must also solicit input from employees in order to better understand working experiences. Shen et al. (2009) argue that diversity and inclusion are most effective when they are integrated into daily management practice. The biggest impediments are time constraints, aversion to change, and uneven leadership, which may be mitigated with training, HR assistance, and clear expectations. Overall, immediate execution is dependent on managers converting HR strategy into consistent action throughout their organisations.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to this analysis, M&S has three primary modern HR challenges: adjusting to technological innovation, acquiring and retaining people, and promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. These characteristics are extremely important since they influence organisational effectiveness, employee engagement, and long-term viability. As M&S continues to develop, HR must play a strategic role in ensuring that the organization has the skills, leadership, and culture required to adapt effectively.

The study found that modern HR methods such as digital HR platforms, people analytics, workforce planning, engagement tactics, and inclusive recruiting may assist solve these issues. However, their performance is greatly dependent on how successfully they are executed by managers throughout the organization. To achieve real results, these approaches require strong leadership responsibility, good communication, regular monitoring, and a true commitment to equal opportunity.

First, M&S should continue to invest in digital training so that staff and management can utilise new tools confidently and effectively. Second, the organization should improve personnel planning to better identify future skill requirements and avoid reactive recruiting. Third, retention should be encouraged through staff development, recognition, and clear internal career paths. Finally, M&S should ensure that DEI is integrated into recruiting, advancement, and leadership practices, so that equal opportunity becomes a part of everyday corporate culture rather than a one-off policy. Taken collectively, these changes would assist M&S in developing a more capable, inclusive, and sustainable workforce.

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