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Developing and Managing Individuals and Teams. LCLM5002

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Introduction.

This report examines important factors that human resources are facing in Pret A Manger - food and coffee retailer founded in London in 1983. Although the company now trades internationally, this report concentrates on its UK operation. The factors considered are meeting technological advancement, talent acquisition and retention, and diversity, equity and inclusion. Each is explained in terms of why it matters to a business built on speed of service and on staff recruited for personality rather than previous experience. The report then evaluates contemporary human resource practices used across other organisations to address problems of this kind, using published researches and experiences of comparable employers. Finally, it considers how departmental managers can put the most effective of these practices into place at business, followed by recommendations at the end.

Meeting technology advancement.

Pret A Manger operates over 700 shops across more than 20 markets worldwide, employs around 12,500 people and intends to reach over 1,000 shops by the end of the decade (Pret A Manger, 2025). Pret is supported by a digital workplace app through which its frontline teams now complete over 65,000 tasks every month (Retail Technology Innovation Hub, 2024). Technology has reshaped the product as well as the process. The subscription launched during the pandemic offered five free barista-made drinks a day, although it was withdrawn in July 2024 and replaced from September with a cheaper half-price scheme (Marketing Week, 2024), the volume it created led Pret to install custom-built La Cimbali S60 machines, which are operated entirely by touchscreen, use fresh milk and beans, and can produce over 600 espressos a day (British Baker, 2021). Pret's Oracle MICROS Symphony system alongside with the Eagle Eye loyalty platform now runs purchases and personalise rewards app (Eagle Eye, 2025).

The S60 automates a large part of what a barista used to do by hand, since the machine now controls extraction and milk texturing to a consistent standard. This changes the job rather than removing it. As a result, time that was once spent physically making a drink is released for serving the customer. This is beneficial for a business whose reputation rests on speed at peak trading and on staff who are warm and quick under pressure. It is important that staff is confident and trained with new technology.

Pret employs a young, multilingual workforce with high turnover, so a touchscreen machine or a task app is only as effective as the training behind it. Meanwhile important recruitment skill for staff towards service is communication and pace rather than technical craft. Supervision changes in the same way, because managers now review completion data instead of watching work as it happens, it improves consistency but risks a faster pace and a sense of being monitored. The ICO (2023) requires employers to be transparent about such monitoring and to consult workers before introducing it. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) argue that HRM should be tied directly to business strategy, so Pret's expansion plan cannot be separated from whether its people are able and willing to use the technology that makes it possible.

There is, however, a clear downside to advancing at this pace. Pret's own subscription app failed in spring 2024, leaving customers unable to log in and forcing the company to issue refunds (Restaurant Online, 2024), and it was shop teams rather than head office who had to absorb the frustration at the counter.

The wider evidence points the same way. The TUC (2026) reports that technology tends to intensify work rather than lighten it, producing workload creep and fatigue, and that junior roles

absorb the heaviest job losses, with employment in highly exposed firms falling by 5.8% for junior staff against 4.5% overall. Since Pret's workforce is made up almost entirely of junior, customer service roles, this is a issue the company has to deal with.

Talent acquisition and retention.

Pret recruits for personality and a genuine interest in customer service rather than for previous experience, selecting against behaviours such as being kind, honest and generous. This makes hiring harder, because attitude is more difficult to assess reliably than a CV and once found it makes looking after and keep the staff members far more important. The company supports this with structured training and clear internal progression, including apprenticeships and a route from team member through barista to shop manager, which is central to how Pret positions itself as an employer. Research found that 64% of organisations struggled to attract candidates, 56% said talent was harder to retain than a year before, and 41% had new recruits resign within their first twelve weeks (CIPD, 2024). The business also depends heavily on commuter footfall, which affects how many hours it can reliably offer which is a huge factor for employees. Meanwhile there are other pressures, such as shift work, early starts and the physical demands of a busy shop. So HR team first task to hire right people is as important as keeping them satisfied and productive.

Diversity, Equity and inclusion.

Diversity is covering the mix of gender, ethnicity, age, disability, religion and other beliefs among the people that the company employs. Equity is about whether the rules and rewards treat those people fairly, which sometimes means offering different support to different people meanwhile making sure that everyone can reach the same outcome. Inclusion is about what happens once people are there, and whether they feel able to speak about issues, be themselves and take a full part in the team. *Equality and Human Rights Commission* (no date).

Pret highly values diversity, equity, belonging and wellbeing. As example candidates can request adjustments before interview, employee ran groups gives staff an opportunity to discuss what matters to them. The Rising Stars programme recruits people affected by homelessness. According to HR Magazine 106 nationalities work in Pret shops that clearly shows that Pret is working hand in hand with DEI standards and deal with any issues.

An evaluation of contemporary HR practices

Automation raises the question of what the saved time is for the coffee sector is has already produced an answer. Starbucks installed its Siren Craft System to speed up drink production, then halted the rollout in 2025 and invested in hiring more baristas instead, with its chief executive concluding that the equipment alone does not deliver the customer experience, whereas staffing supported by that technology does (CBS News, 2025). The lesson for any business introducing machines such as the S60 is that automation only pays if the time it releases is deliberately built back into the customer service. The practice that achieves this is job redesign, which means rewriting the job around service, product knowledge, and recovery when a queue builds, then retraining staff for those skills. Where that step is skipped, employers tend to cut hours instead, and the time saved simply disappears or goes in profit instead of customer experience.

Managers reviewing reports rather than watching work is part of a wider shift towards data-driven people decisions, and the evidence here is mixed. Unilever has replaced early-stage screening with gamified assessments and automated video interviews. Saving over 50,000 hours and around £1 million a year while producing its most ethnically and gender diverse intake to that point, although the same study raises concerns about privacy, algorithmic bias, and whether the process is procedurally fair (Hu, 2023). The risk is inventible, since Chen (2023) reports that Amazon withdrew a machine learning recruitment tool after it downgraded applications containing the word “female”, having been trained on the profiles of a largely male workforce. The key difference lies in using data to pinpoint issues like which shops are losing staff the fastest or where inductions aren’t being completed. This approach requires human oversight for every decision the software informs. Conversely, letting software judge people requires constant human oversight.

Diversity, equity and inclusion are daily management concerns not annual reporting exercises. London employers share a common benchmark in the Mayor’s Good Work Standard. This accreditation covers fair pay and conditions, workplace wellbeing, skills and progression, and diversity. Specifically, employers are expected to prevent discrimination, collect workforce data on pay gaps, advertise through diverse channels and actively seek applicants from under-represented groups. At the highest level, anonymous recruitment and community outreach are also expected. These are process changes rather than shifts in attitudes, which is important given the weak evidence supporting awareness training alone. Furthermore, an external accreditation from an independent body is more convincing than an internal statement of values for employers with a diverse workforce. (Greater London Authority, no date)

How departmental managers can implement these practices

Technology is advancing quickly enough and adapting to it is not optional for a business competing today's market. However, there is a risk that a company adopts the tools, but loses the character that made customers choose it in the first place. Balance is therefore the core principle. Leatherbarrow and Fletcher (2019) observed that most HR policies are communicated to employees via their line managers rather than the HR department. Consequently, departmental managers effectively manage this balance. For example, a shop manager decides whether machine downtime is spent interacting with customers or absorbed into a shorter shift and whether completion data supports a team or serves as a performance check. Similarly, Starbucks reached a commercial conclusion, retaining its technology but placing people at the centre of its service.

The next step is to harness AI's clear benefits while retaining human judgement where it truly matters. Automated tools excel at handling volume tasks like sorting applications, scheduling interviews and answering routine candidate questions. This frees up managers during peak times. However, they lack the reliability to assess personality – a crucial factor for businesses seeking warmth and attitude. The practical solution is to blend the two. Software can manage initial administrative tasks while a manager conducts the conversation that determines team fit. This division also provides the human oversight demanded by evidence of algorithmic bias. Ultimately, a person remains accountable for the final decision.

Retention should motivate people to stay rather than simply deterring them from leaving. Growth within the company is most valued through a clear path from team member to shop manager. This is supported by funded qualifications and apprenticeships that make the promise tangible rather than just aspirational. Mullins and McLean (2019) found that development and recognition sustain motivation more effectively than pay alone. Recognised workplace standards create an external commitment to this dedication. Research by Cardiff Business School for the Living Wage Foundation revealed that 94% of accredited employers experienced benefits from accreditation. Specifically, 62% reported improved recruitment and 60% improved retention. Work-life balance is crucial with predictable rotas and genuine choices over hours; currently, these are more valuable to employees than most benefits packages.

HR managers of diversity, equity and inclusion should advertise through diverse local channels. They should also allocate shifts and development opportunities based on transparent criteria. Clear, multilingual communication is essential, and managers should visibly act on staff concerns, which is a key component of accreditation against recognised standards.

Conclusion and recommendations

Pret A Manger's future success functions on effectively balancing technology, people and organisational values. Technological advancements like automated coffee machines, digital workplace tools and loyalty platforms can enhance consistency, efficiency and customer convenience. However, these benefits are only realised if employees receive adequate training and automation supports rather than replaces the human interaction. Furthermore, transparent monitoring systems should avoid excessive work pressure.

Talent acquisition and retention are equally crucial. Pret values warmth, energy and genuine customer interest over technical expertise. Structured recruitment, predictable rotas, recognition, apprenticeships and visible progression opportunities can attract and retain suitable staff.

Finally, diversity, equity and inclusion should be acknowledged in everyday management. Inclusive recruitment, reasonable adjustments, transparent shift allocation and development opportunities, along with meaningful employee feedback will result in a fair and supportive workplace. Departmental managers play a key role in translating HR policies into daily employee experiences. Pret should pursue balanced growth by embracing useful technology while investing in capable managers, engaged employees and an inclusive culture. This approach safeguards its unique brand while supporting sustainable expansion.

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