

## Pret A Manger

Esther O'Halloran is having problems making an 'All Day Breakfast Sandwich' with egg, bacon and tomato. This is the first time she has worked in a Pret kitchen, despite having been with the company for the past year and a half. Her role as the head of recruitment and retention doesn't normally call upon her sandwich-making skills, but this is part of a Pret initiative to send all managers into an outlet each quarter to familiarize themselves with the daily operation of their stores. The belief is that a good knowledge of how products are made, how customers are served and the interface between customers and Pret's service delivery system will lead to better decisions in all aspects of the business.

O'Halloran reflected:

It really helps you keep your feet on the ground. You get to know your team and find out if there's anything you could be doing better, anything you could change. Head offices often lose sight of what it's like on the shop floor and what their staff are exposed to on a daily basis. It's keeping in close communication with the team that helps motivate them.

And this is just one of the ways in which Pret inspires the 2200 employees who work for it worldwide. Whether they are preparing a sandwich, serving up Pret's famous chocolate brownie or pouring a drink, the important contribution of staff at every level is acknowledged, as illustrated by its 'reward and recognition' programme stretching across its 140 stores, predominantly in the UK, but also in New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

### Background

Pret A Manger was described by the UK's *Times* newspaper as having 'revolutionised the concept of sandwich making and eating'. Sinclair Beecham and Julian Metcalfe, two college friends, founded Pret in 1986. They saw an

opportunity in London to introduce a sleek, healthy fast-food concept designed to offer an alternative to the hamburger–fries–shake menus around at the time and took the name Pret A Manger, French for 'ready to eat', from a restaurant in Hampstead, a London suburb that had tried to keep McDonald's from setting up business in the area.

Since the first store opened, Pret has been hugely successful, expanding rapidly in the UK and more recently abroad. Corporate policy is to own and manage all new shops so as to provide maximum control of the brand and ensure a consistently high standard in all shops. In fact Beecham and Metcalfe believe:

If there's a secret to our success so far, we like to think it's our determination to focus continually on quality. Not just our food, but in every aspect of what we do. Quality fresh food is our passion. We go to extraordinary lengths to avoid the chemicals, additives and preservatives common to so much of the 'prepared' and 'fast' food on the market today.

This factor is reflected in the Passion Facts (see Exhibit 1) found in shops and on packaging, which document their continual search for what they feel are Pret-quality ingredients.

### Store environment

One of the things that really make Pret stand out from its competitors is the industrial chic decor within its shops. Each store has a crisp, clean environment comprising reflective brushed aluminium walls and diamond-shaped floors. All equipment has that stainless-steel modern look, from refrigerated cases to cash registers and coffee brewers, with a few touches of colour here and there that add to its overall, distinctive nature; for example the yellow wall and orange ceiling with suspended, exposed pipes and the burgundy Pret star logos found on entrance mats, packaging and menu boards.

**Exhibit 1 Some examples of Pret A Manger's Passion Facts**

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- 2** New Pret ham comes from Farm Assured farms, which guarantees the pigs are reared on a vegetarian diet. The colour, texture and taste of our ham is a world apart from the skinny, slippery, square stuff commonly found in most sandwiches. All our hams are hand-glazed with cloves and then baked in the oven. As a final touch we now hand trim 95% of the fatty white bit – leaving just enough to provide the perfect flavour.
- 11** Only Pret's Oat and Fruit Slice is stirred by hand with a four-foot long oar. Strange as it may seem, we've found that mechanical mixers turn the ingredients into a horrid pulp. Hand mixing the ingredients adds a lot of work but greatly improves the flavour. It is partly for this reason that the texture and taste of the product is so good.
- 14** The never-ending development of our Brownie is typical of Pret. We've improved the recipe 33 times over the last few years. Each change is miniscule but detectable. John J Hess said, 'A race horse that runs a mile a few seconds faster is worth twice as much. That little extra proves to be the greatest value.' Same with our Brownie we think.
- 24** Our freshly pressed Carrot Juice is part of our range of 100% natural juices. It is packed full of vitamins and nutrients and, unlike so many of today's trendy health drinks, contains no chemicals or additives. Apparently fresh Carrot Juice enjoys a bizarre reputation for helping to fight the effects of jet lag... Something to do with antioxidants? Anyway, we sell it because it tastes good!
- 9** If you agree that our Lemon Cake is fantastic, we've got Alan Miles to thank. Alan is the blacksmith who invented and manufactured the huge metal grid, which drizzles fresh lemon juice on each and every slice we make. Pret cakes really are handmade with superb natural ingredients; they always have been and always will be.
- 12** Our Pecan Pie is covered with pecan halves. Curiously enough this fact speaks volumes about its quality. Pecan halves are juicy and have more flavour than pecan bits. It is this attention to detail that makes Pret food worth coming back for time and again. Pret cakes really are handmade with superb natural ingredients; they always have been and always will be.
- 25** Mr Sheepshanks is fanatical about mayo. This is just as well, as he makes ours. He insists on using fresh eggs (never dried or reconstituted), but the real secret to great mayo is the size of the bubbles after mixing. They should be tiny. Sheepshanks uses a microscope to check his.
- 41** Of all the ingredients we use, our avocados have to be the most temperamental. Treat them badly and they just don't taste right. That's why they have a huge ripening room all to themselves and why our avocado chap turns each one of them by hand, every day. It makes sure they ripen evenly and that every bite of avo is a perfect one.
- 57** Our unique fruit and onion chutney has something spiritual about it. Mark Lake, a blender of Port and Calvados, discovered the bizarre recipe, which uses balsamic vinegar rather than the cheaper stuff. Bubbling away gently for hours and hours in small chutney pans, this nectar does something to Bramley apples, onions and spices which we think makes our Double Cheddar Sandwich really special. Sorry it took us 12 years to discover Mark. Better late than never.
- 38** Basil's a nightmare in sandwiches. It's a delicate herb that bruises easily, so most people use pesto instead. Pesto is OK, but it's just not as good as fresh basil. We like our basil tasty and whole. So we order it in handpicked bunches and have it delivered daily. We add the leaves to sandwiches one-by-one.
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## Menu

Pret sells a variety of items including sandwiches, baguettes, wraps, sushi, salads, yoghurt pots, cakes, deserts, crisps and a range of bottled beverages, brewed coffees and teas. The breakfast menu differs slightly from the lunch menu, although the majority of the items offered are the same (see Exhibits 2 and 3). Up to 31 types of food are offered in each store. Of the menu items available about 12 repeat, with the rest changing on a daily basis. In fact, nearly 70 new items were introduced last year into each store.

### Exhibit 2 Typical breakfast menu

#### Bakery

Low Fat Blueberry Muffin  
Plain Croissant  
Chocolate Croissant  
Almond Croissant  
Pretzels  
Seville Orange Muffin  
Mixed Berry Muffin  
Breakfast Baguette  
Smoked Salmon, Egg & Cress Breakfast Baguette

#### Cakes and Desserts

Toffee Waffles  
Chocolate Cake  
Chocolate Goddess Cake  
Oat & Fruit Slice  
Pret Brownie  
Carrot Cake  
Banana Cake  
Apple Cake  
Lemon Cake  
Raspberry Carnage  
Blueberry Carnage  
Chocolate Fudge Cake

#### Pret Yoghurt Pots

Honey and Granola Pret Pot  
Raspberry Pret Pot  
Pret Brownie Pret Pot  
All Day Breakfast Bowl  
Very Berry Breakfast Bowl  
Pret Fruit Salads Fruit Salad

#### Fresh Fruit

Banana  
Large Granny Smith Apple  
Pink Apple  
Seedless Grapes

#### Drinks and Juices

Pure Pret – Lemon  
Pure Pret – Orange (sparkling juice drink)  
Pure Pret – Apple  
Pure Pret – Ginger Beer  
Pure Pret – Iced Tea  
Pure Pret – Yoga Bunny Detox  
Vitamin Volcano  
Mango, Pineapple & Lime Yoghurt Drink  
Blood Orange Juice

Large Size Orange Juice  
Pret Still Water  
Pret Sparkling Water  
Coke – 330ml Can  
Diet Coke – 330ml Can  
Pure Pret – Cranberry  
Pure Pret – Grape & Elderflower  
Orange Juice  
Apple Juice  
Carrot Juice  
Vanilla Yoghurt Drink  
Strawberry Smoothie  
Mango Smoothie  
Apples & Pears Smoothie

#### Pret Coffee

Cappuccino  
Latte  
Mocha  
Espresso  
Macchiato  
Filter or Americano  
Hot Chocolate  
Tea

As the operations director explains:

Our customers want to be able to purchase a variety of different products, so to keep our menu exciting and innovative, we're constantly introducing new products and flavours. Even though probably only one idea in every 20 makes it through our testing process, on average a new product goes on sale in our UK shops every four days. Existing products are continually being improved. For example, the recipe for the chocolate brownie has been improved 33 times over the last few years. Each change is miniscule but detectable.

**Note:** A typical meal of something from the Bakery, a Pret Yoghurt Pot and a drink will cost between £3.50 and £5.50.

## Service delivery system

The first Pret A Manger shop had its own kitchen where fresh ingredients were delivered early morning and food was prepared throughout the day. Every Pret store since has followed this model. All the sandwiches, wraps, baguettes, deserts and salads are made one by one in every shop each day. A set

number of products are assembled at the beginning of the day and stocked in the shop front from where the customers select and pay for their meal (see Exhibit 4). This stock level is then replenished during the day in line with demand. The aim is to continually meet the high quality and freshness standards set. As a result, if any of the products assembled that day have not sold by the time the

**Exhibit 3 Typical lunch menu****Sandwiches**

More Than Mozzarella  
 Mature Cheddar & Pret Pickle  
 Gourmet Prawn  
 Coronation Chicken  
 Kippered Salmon & Horseradish Dressing  
 Three Cheese & Roasted Tomatoes  
 White Crab & Crayfish  
 Wheat Free Open Salmon & Egg Mayo  
 Humous & Oven Roasted Tomatoes  
 Egg Mayo  
 Egg and Tomato on Rye  
 Tuna Mayo Sandwich  
 Wheat Free Open Avocado & Italian Cheese  
 Big BLT  
 Chicken & Avocado  
 Chicken Caesar  
 Ham Cheese & Pickle  
 All Day Breakfast  
 Super Club  
 Ham & Eggs Bloomer  
 Black Pepper Chicken Bloomer  
 Smoked Salmon  
 Crayfish & Rocket

**Baguettes and Wraps**

Avocado Salad Wrap  
 Three Cheese 'n' Chutney Baguette  
 White Crab, Crayfish & Rocket Baguette  
 Tuna Mayo Baguette  
 Brie Tomato & Basil Baguette  
 Ham & Cheese Baguette  
 Humous Salad Wrap  
 Tuna Nicoise Salad Wrap  
 Chicken Salad Wrap

**Sushi and Salads**

Prawn Cocktail Salad  
 Basil Pasta & French Dressing  
 Crayfish & Sweet Chilli Dressing  
 Tuna Salad  
 Humous & Pitta Salad

Chicken & Bacon Caesar Salad  
 Vegetarian Sushi  
 Deluxe Sushi

**Bakery**

Low Fat Blueberry Muffin  
 Seville Orange Muffin  
 Mixed Berry Muffin

**Pret Yoghurt Pots**

Honey and Granola Pret Pot  
 Raspberry Pret Pot  
 Pret Brownie Pret Pot  
 All Day Breakfast Bowl  
 Very Berry Breakfast Bowl

**Fresh Fruit and Fruit Salad**

Banana  
 Large Granny Smith Apple  
 Pink Apple  
 Seedless Grapes  
 Fruit Salad

**Cakes and Desserts**

Caramel Crunch Cheesecake  
 Lemon Cheesecake  
 Chocolate Mousse  
 Pret Shortbread  
 Toffee Waffles  
 Chocolate & Orange Baked Cheesecake  
 Raspberry Carnage  
 Blueberry Carnage  
 Chocolate Cake  
 Chocolate Goddess Cake  
 Oat & Fruit Slice  
 Pret Brownie  
 Pecan Pie  
 Carrot Cake  
 Banana Cake  
 Apple Cake  
 Chocolate Fudge Cake

**Crisps**

Organic Popcorn: sea salt flavour

Organic Popcorn: honey flavour  
 Nut Munch  
 Hand cooked Pickled Onion Crisps  
 Hand cooked Lightly Salted crisps  
 Hand cooked Salt & Vinegar crisps  
 Hand cooked Sea Salt & Black Pepper crisps  
 Hand cooked Cheddar & Chive crisps  
 Pret Vegetable Chips

**Drinks and Juices**

Pure Pret – Lemon  
 Pure Pret – Orange (sparkling juice drink)  
 Pure Pret – Apple  
 Pure Pret – Ginger Beer  
 Pure Pret – Iced Tea  
 Pure Pret – Yoga Bunny Detox  
 Vitamin Volcano  
 Mango, Pineapple & Lime Yoghurt Drink  
 Blood Orange Juice  
 Large Size Orange Juice  
 Pret Still Water  
 Pret Sparkling Water  
 Coke – 330ml Can  
 Diet Coke – 330ml Can  
 Pure Pret – Cranberry  
 Pure Pret – Grape & Elderflower  
 Orange Juice  
 Apple Juice  
 Carrot Juice  
 Vanilla Yoghurt Drink  
 Strawberry Smoothie  
 Mango Smoothie  
 Apples & Pears Smoothie

**Pret Coffee**

Cappuccino  
 Latte  
 Mocha  
 Espresso  
 Macchiato  
 Filter or Americano  
 Hot Chocolate  
 Tea

**Note:** A typical meal of something from Sandwiches, Cakes, Crisps and a drink will cost between £3.50 and £7.50.

store closes, they are given to local charities rather than being stored and sold the following day.

Service in the shop is fast and friendly, with members following strict service guidelines, such as serving every customer within 90 seconds. The challenge of providing a fast, efficient and professional service to the customer is exciting and there is a buzz among the staff. To ensure that this hap-

pens, store managers tend to spend about 80 per cent of their time on the shop floor and hold team meetings twice a day to help ensure that every member knows what to do.

**People**

A key element of Pret's success is the way it recruits, motivates, trains and develops its staff. As the gen-

## Exhibit 4 Typical Pret service delivery system in the kitchen and the storefront

### Kitchen

Fresh ingredients are delivered to each store on a daily basis. Chilled foods are placed into a back-of-house walk-in cooler, while a small amount of frozen goods, including part-baked croissants, baguettes and cookies, are stored in a reach-in freezer. Staff in each outlet begin food assembly at 7 am, and refresh the food supply throughout the day as needed.

In a large outlet, 10 stainless-steel prep tables and refrigerated ingredient display units are arranged so employees can assemble fresh ingredients into sandwiches (on average 1500 are made daily), then wrap and package them in logoed boxes (inscribed with the Pret logo and message 'handmade in Pret today' and listing natural ingredients) for presentation in refrigerated display units located in the store area.

Certain designated sandwiches are made at specific tables. Assembly instructions, along with photographs of how each ingredient is positioned, are available at each station for employees' reference. Deserts and salads are assembled here, as well.

Also in the kitchen are coffee brewers, a bean grinder, a tea brewer and a countertop slicer for cutting meats and vegetables. The only product heated on the premises is soup. These are delivered to each unit in one gallon sealed plastic bags and rethermalized in a 10 gallon electric steam-jacketed kettle before being taken out front and placed in tureens for holding and serving.

Each kitchen is equipped, as well, with sinks for washing the cutting boards, scoops and other utensils, and for sanitizing fruit and vegetables. Overhead steel shelving units are positioned throughout the kitchen, while floors are protected by water-resistant, non-stick vinyl.

After preparation and assembly, all items are taken to the front of house for display. Refrigerated items, including bottled beverages, are placed in one of five floor-to-ceiling refrigerated cases that have been positioned side by side near the entranceway.

A set number of products are assembled at the beginning of the day and stocked in the storefront. This stock level is then replenished during the day in line with demand. The store manager is responsible for connecting the demand and stock levels in the storefront with the work completed in the kitchen. This also includes items such as sushi, drinks, juices or yoghurt pots that are brought in pre-assembled and stored in the kitchen before being moved into the storefront.

### Storefront

In the storefront, customers help themselves to the products they want and bring them up to the counter to pay. All products apart from hot drinks and soup are stored in the shop front and replenished from the kitchen in line with demand. When customers come to the counter to pay for their products, they can order hot drinks or soup, which are then either made or served-to-order.

A centrally positioned serving counter is situated perpendicular to the refrigerated cases. During busy periods of the day, eight cashiers are positioned shoulder-to-shoulder to offer a quick and efficient service to their customers. The aim is to serve customers in 90 seconds or less.

Behind the unit from left to right are a reach-in refrigerator used primarily for milk storage, two tea dispensers, a drip coffee dispenser, coffee machines that produce cappuccino, latte, mocha and espresso drinks, two soup tureens and a convection oven for baking croissants and cookies, as well as tomatoes, almonds and pine nuts.

Products made in the oven are placed either into take-out bags or on 12-inch aluminum round trays. Seating is available at larger units with up to 72 stools with aluminum bases and vinyl cushions placed at bar-counters lining the walls and at round tables with marble tops.

**Note** The above is based on Boss, D. (2002) 'Pret A Manger: Chain profile', *Foodservice Equipment and Supplies*, June, p. 49.

eral manager of one of the London stores in Oxford Street says:

The interview process was so lengthy I knew it was a good company, they won't take just anybody. We get so many job applications each week and it is important that we select the right people for the business. The company has a reputation for being a great employer and that means that many people want to work here.

In fact Pret takes the recruitment process so seriously that, as part of the second interview stage,

candidates work in a shop for part of a day and the team they have worked with then decide if they get the job. Pret believes this approach is one of the reasons why the organization reduced staff turnover threefold last year, to less than 60 per cent of the industry average. As Esther O'Halloran comments:

We're incredibly privileged that so many creative, hard working and talented people have chosen to work for us. We're often asked about the secret of our customer service training. There is no secret. In fact, there is no customer service training. Instead,

## Exhibit 5 **Examples of Pret's reward and recognition training and development programmes**

### Reward and recognition programmes

The objective of the Pret reward and recognition programmes is to motivate employees to serve good food with a positive attitude. As a result, more than 80 per cent of all Pret workers receive recognition rewards each week.

Examples of these activities include:

- **Buddy system** – Pret's initiative to send all its management into a Pret outlet each quarter as a 'buddy' to better familiarize themselves with the daily operation of their stores. It allows office staff to keep in touch with the shop floor and what their team is exposed to on a daily basis. It also serves to motivate the staff working on the shop floor.
- **'Mystery Shopper' reward** – once a week, one staff member wins a 'Mystery Shopper' reward, a gift card worth £50 in cash. In shops that score nine or more, every team member earns a bonus of 75p per hour for every hour they have worked that week.
- **'Star Team' awards** – once a month a few store managers are awarded with a cash reward to take their team out on the town. During quarterly meetings, the head office picks the top 20 retail locations and gives those employees an extra week's vacation and a party, compliments of Pret.
- **Staff parties** – when the work is done there is still fun to be had. Pret A Manger spends £250,000 on staff parties twice a year and subsidizes Friday night drinks at bars each week.

we employ people with personality who we think have the potential to give genuinely good service – people who like mixing with other people, who are good humoured and like to enjoy themselves.

This reduction in staff turnover has helped to pave the way for the firm's planned expansion over the next three years, from 118 shops employing 2300 staff to 163 shops employing around 3400 staff. It is these carefully chosen team members who will be responsible for its transformation into a leading sandwich shop chain. In return, it aims to offer its staff a fun and open working environment, reward, recognition, training, development and career opportunities. Exhibit 5 shows some examples of these initiatives. The result has been that over the last few years Pret has won a number of awards including being voted #10 in the *Sunday Times* 50 Best Companies to Work For in the UK in 2001, while in 2002 *Fortune* magazine rated it as one of the top ten places to work in Europe.

- **Staff appraisals** – each store manager completes staff appraisals every four months. This is an opportunity to talk to team members about their performance, give praise where appropriate and identify future career and development opportunities. It also helps to foster good relations between managers and their team.

### Training and development programmes

There are systematic and extensive training and development programmes for both managers and workers:

- **Managers** – three months' training, starting from the bottom up, with two weeks as a team member, four weeks as a team leader and six weeks management training, including modular courses on health and safety, employment and human resources.
- **Workers** – a 12-week probationary period during which they are first trained as team members. Afterwards, they can move to team leader, trainer or barista if they choose. Once they reach each level, they are given a pay rise and a £50 gift card. They are also given some £50 vouchers which they pass on to colleagues who have helped them attain promotion to encourage team building.

### The future

With its ambitious plans for expansion over the next few years, Pret continues to refine the formula that has led to its current success. Key to this will be not only the suppliers and outlets it selects, but also, more importantly, the people it recruits. As Esther O'Halloran points out:

We had over 5000 applicants last year so the training and incentives that we use seem to be working. It is crucial though that we continue to use the right recruitment policies to create a culture in which people will want to stay. Despite the industry's reputation for high staff turnover, we don't currently seem to have a problem and there are some instances where members have remained at the same store since it opened more than three years ago.

As well as expanding its number of sites, Pret is also expanding the range of services it offers its cus-

## Exhibit 6 Pret's breakfast and lunch delivery service

### Steps involved in the delivery service

As well as coming into the store to select and pay for their food, customers can now also order fresh, handmade breakfast or lunches for their next business meeting. Orders of £20 or more are delivered free of charge within Pret's delivery zone.

The breakfast and lunch menus are the same as those available in the shops, apart from the hot drinks and soup. However, in addition to the normal products on offer, customers can also choose from a range of sandwich platters, as shown below.

Customers wishing to receive either a breakfast or lunch delivery service initially have to open an account with Pret. Once this has been done, they can select what they want from the online menu. As long as they order before 10am, the food can be delivered that day. Alternatively, food can be ordered up to seven days in advance if required.

After the order has been placed, a confirmation is sent by email before one of the Pret team members delivers the food directly to the desired location, ready to serve in smart presentation

boxes. If necessary, there is a customer services helpline telephone number to assist with any queries.

### Typical delivery service platters

As well as the breakfast and lunch menus available in the shops, customers can also choose from a range of sandwich platters:

Breakfast	Lunch
Croissants Selection Box	Pret Selection Platter
Breakfast Baguette Platter	Pret Variety Platter
Breakfast Sandwich Platter	Veggie Platter
Muffin Platter	Meat Platter
Cake Platter	Fish Platter
Brownie Bag	Pret Baguette Platter
	Muffin Platter
	Cake Platter
	Brownie Bag

**Note** Breakfast platters and lunch platters typically cost between £5.00 and £15.00.

tomers. Last year it introduced a delivery service that means as well as coming into the store to order food, customers can also have food delivered direct to them (see Exhibit 6). As the head of marketing explained:

Our customers tend to be young professionals who want a fast and efficient service with a variety of high quality products. To date, we have been able to offer that to them when they come into one of our stores. However, given that they are often very busy and short for time we felt that a delivery service might often be a more convenient solution for them. The challenge for us is to try to recreate the Pret experience in a different service environment.

[www.pretamanger.com](http://www.pretamanger.com)

## Questions

- 1 In which market does Pret A Manger compete?
- 2 Review the service delivery systems used in a Pret outlet.
- 3 How well do the service delivery systems meet the needs of the market?
- 4 What is the role of operations in Pret's success both now and in the future?