

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent





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Forward

Without the talent of the hospitality workforce, there wouldn’t be an industry. Investing in our people and future hospitality professionals by providing greater prospects, development opportunities and benefits is of paramount importance to the future of the sector.

This year has shown us all that it is possible to provide platforms for growth in this industry, despite the challenges that may be thrown at us. At Nestlé Professional and with our partners at Footprint Intelligence, we are hopeful that the information and expert insight within this report can enable more organisations in the foodservice industry to develop career pathways that are both attractive to young aspiring professionals and mutually beneficial.

Attracting, nurturing and supporting the very best talent is something that Nestlé Professional® remains committed to in order to provide young professionals with the tools needed to learn and adapt to the changes in the hospitality industry. Each year we host our Toque d’Or competition to put these principles into action, and the creation of this report with Footprint Intelligence is an extension of that.

Katya Simmons

Managing Director, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

Defusing the talent timebomb

Even before the ravages of Covid-19, the foodservice sector was facing a talent timebomb. Widespread negative perceptions of the industry, a shortage of incoming talent and the Brexit-related loss of EU workers have combined to create a worsening employment crisis.

Urgent action is needed. From developing a diverse talent pool from which to recruit, to communicating the full range of opportunities in the sector and creating environments that retain their people, work needs to be done to ensure that businesses and the industry remain viable. This report aims to provide a blueprint for responsible employment and improved talent management.

The sector has much to offer. It can provide fulfilling and varied opportunities. It is welcoming of a diverse workforce. It prizes soft skills over academic qualifications, and it is a true meritocracy: people who are willing to step up can quickly progress from an entry level role to develop a varied career that could take them all over the world.

There have been successful efforts to target young people and encourage them into the sector, to celebrate and develop diversity in the workforce, and to adapt recruitment, working practices and opportunities to have greater appeal to employees with families and caring commitments.

Meanwhile, responsible businesses which align with workers' own values and concerns around issues such as food poverty, plastics and the climate crisis have been found to increase engagement, motivation and loyalty whilst reducing staff turnover and absenteeism.¹

In a Covid-19 world, some of the challenges around staffing may be different, and the role of a responsible employer has shifted, but at its core, the need to value our workforce and shift perceptions of the industry to one that is flexible, fair and full of opportunity, remains.

Defusing the talent timebomb examines the sector's employment challenges and offers a guide to being a responsible employer that will help tackle recruitment issues and reduce churn; providing tips and advice from industry thought-leaders to position foodservice as an exciting and rewarding industry that offers excellent career flexibility and longevity.



Developing talent: a checklist for action

1



BE A RESPONSIBLE EMPLOYER

- Be equitable
- Value people
- Create a positive working environment
- Ensure progression

2



ATTRACT TALENT

- Rebrand as food heroes
- Highlight the breadth of job roles
- Showcase the breadth of businesses
- Emphasise creativity and innovation
- Woo young people
- Create positive first experiences
- Recruit for soft skills
- Bring the sector to school children

3



ENSURE DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

- Foster an inclusive culture
- Target disadvantaged people
- Work to increase women in management
- Commit to recruit people with disabilities
- Increase opportunities for people with a BAME background
- Create a welcoming environment for LGBT people



Developing talent: a checklist for action

4



PROVIDE TRAINING AND OPPORTUNITY

- Invest in training programmes
- Harness digital training
- Take on apprentices
- Create career pathways
- Use mentoring programmes
- Work to people's strengths, skills and interests
- Encourage and support skills competition

5



EMBED SUSTAINABILITY AND FAIRNESS

- Improve retention and engagement through sustainability action
- Use values to attract talent
- Align yourself as an employer with the SDGs
- Treat people fairly
- Recognise employee efforts
- Practice good communication
- Commit to the Living Wage
- Build in more flexible contracts

6



MAINTAIN HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Look after mental health
- Be proactive to protect environmental health
- Deliver a coherent Covid strategy
- Tackle workplace bullying



1

Be a responsible employer



The challenge: Globally, (pre-Covid) the hospitality industry was recognised as a growth industry, employing - with tourism - 10% of all people worldwide.² Internationally, the sector is largely viewed in a positive light, with evidence to suggest a boom in young people seeking hospitality qualifications.³ Yet in the UK, hospitality suffers from negative perceptions of low pay, poor progression and long working hours.

Take action: Underpinning all the themes in this report are four basic principles which ensure responsible employment. Embedding these values into your business will cultivate a positive working environment for employees where they feel safe, valued and respected and can envisage a career pathway for their future.

These values can also help you address the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ which call for no poverty or hunger, quality education for all, gender equality, decent work and economic growth and reduced inequalities.

BE EQUITABLE

- Fair pay, hours and contracts
- Work/life balance
- Job security
- Ability to report issues and be listened to
- Good communication

CREATE A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- Secure and safe
- Founded on dignity and respect for all employees
- Employees have rights, including right to organise/join a union
- Non-discriminatory

VALUE PEOPLE

- Ability to reach full potential
- Jobs are felt to be important
- People have the ability to work to their strengths
- Individual contributions are recognised and rewarded
- Employees feel part of an ethical, responsible and sustainable organisation

ENSURE PROGRESSION

- Access to training and skills development
- Opportunity to progress/clear career path
- Leadership development
- Opportunity for involvement in local community/volunteering
- Opportunity to participate in career-enhancing competitions to further their skills development

INSIDER INSIGHT: NURTURING POTENTIAL



"When you embark on a career in hospitality, the company should show talent where they could potentially end up. Organisations should take time to emphasise the variety and versatility from a professional and personal development point of view."

Katya Simmons, Managing Director, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

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How foodservice can attract and retain talent

2

Attract talent



According to UK Hospitality, the hospitality industry is the UK's 3rd largest private sector employer - with 3.2 million people or 10% of the workforce in over 180,000 businesses across the UK.⁵ But there have always been skills shortages: pre-Covid figures suggest that at any one time there were 100,000 hospitality vacancies.⁶ Compared with other countries where pride in the profession is commonplace, in the UK foodservice roles are often disdained as low skilled and undesirable. It is sometimes seen as a stop-gap profession. With fewer EU workers to rely on, the sector needs to make careers more attractive to would-be employees.

INSIDER INSIGHT: ROUTE TO THE TOP



"Show would-be recruits that they can progress quickly through a business and earn really good money and have a good work/life balance."

Vince Kelly, Lecturer in Culinary Arts, Westminster Kingsway College



Rebrand as food heroes

The challenge: The UK Hospitality Workforce Commission 2030 report highlighted the need for a campaign to tackle the negative perceptions around careers in hospitality.⁷ This helped nudge the government to announce a Tourism Sector Deal and Industrial Strategy.⁸ This commits to the formation of a Hospitality and Tourism Skills Board, promoting hospitality as a career of choice, supporting and funding a three-year industry-led skills and recruitment campaign, and a pledge for the sector and government to work together to promote the hospitality and tourism industry as a great one for growth, employment and skills development. However, this work has been disrupted by Covid-19.

Take action: Now the public has experienced life without pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants, there is greater recognition of the rewarding role foodservice plays in bringing friends and family together, nurturing relationships and mental health. Additionally, for the first time, national recognition of those key workers who helped keep care homes, schools and hospitals running - and staff fed - has fuelled a wider understanding of all the essential workers who made personal sacrifices to do their jobs. People who were called 'low skilled' before are now being recognised as key workers and heroes for making a difference and having a crucial part to play. This gives foodservice an opportunity to totally rebrand, with campaigns tapping into people's newfound appreciation for catering and foodservice.

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INSIDER INSIGHT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE



“We have had the proudest few months of our careers. Over the Covid period, our health care and care home caterers have stood up to the plate. Our teams have gone into work every day knowing that they’ve been in an environment that isn’t particularly safe. And it has been recognised by the general public that anybody who is stepping into the care environment is a hero.”

“We’ve got to capitalise on and not lose focus on this because we want people to think ‘Wow, this is something that is making a difference.’ It’s why so many people are long-serving in this environment because you can really say, ‘I made a difference there’ and that just makes you feel very proud.”

Craig Smith, Head of Corporate Affairs - Public Sector, ISS and Chair, Hospital Caterers’ Association (HCA)

Highlight the breadth of job roles



The challenge: Because people regularly interact with the front-of-house side of the hospitality industry when they eat out or stay away, and they see commercial kitchens on culinary programmes, people think they know the industry and what it can offer. There’s an enduring belief that anyone going into a foodservice or hospitality role will work long hours in pressured environments flipping burgers, waiting tables, making beds or cleaning pots. Yet many people are unaware of the huge array of departments and roles that exist within each hospitality, restaurant or catering business.

Take action: The industry and individual businesses must showcase the diversity and range of roles on offer, especially in the management of larger operations such as restaurant groups or contract caterers. People can work in marketing, menu design, sustainability or procurement, all of which need different skills. Inspiring people to see the possibilities is essential. Programmes like Umbrella Training’s Hospitality Superheroes⁹ can help. It spotlights real people’s journeys through the industry from lowly first jobs to HR Manager to Vice President and from waiter to AA Inspector to Head of Operations.

INSIDER INSIGHT: RANGE OF ROLES



“Highlighting the different career pathways and types of employers to the next generation of workers is an important step in tackling the skills shortage within the industry. When most people think of jobs in hospitality, they will envisage a chef in a restaurant or a cocktail mixologist and whilst these roles are fantastic, they’re not all that’s on offer. For example, at Nestlé Professional, we have a team of expert development chefs who use their wealth of experience to develop new products for the sector. A recent example of this is our plant-based Garden Gourmet range, which has been developed to help the industry provide high-quality and delicious tasting meat alternatives.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

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INSIDER INSIGHT: A POSITION FOR EVERY PASSION



“There’s such a variety of different roles, not just the obvious chef, bartender, waiter, but also behind the scenes. You can be a digital marketer in the industry, you can be a financial whiz, an innovator, you can work in HR, in maintenance and engineering, in painting and decorating or interior design. We need to get that excitement and interest going and then you see the lightbulb moment when people think ‘I know what I really want to do, I can do that in this sector!’”

Anne Pierce, outgoing CEO, Springboard

Showcase the breadth of businesses

The challenge: Foodservice is not one entity and the many and varied business types within the sector offer a raft of experiences and careers. It’s time to show would-be recruits that contract catering is a very different working environment to a high-pressure pub kitchen, a local patisserie delivering afternoon tea, or a cruise ship taking guests around the world.

Take action: Showcasing the range of businesses that can exist within foodservice and hospitality helps people envisage a career pathway. Not everyone will suit the hours of a high street restaurant, but some parts of the industry – for example contract catering in education or corporate environments – have hours that fit in easily with having a family or social life. Knowing there are opportunities in contract catering, events, banqueting, concessions and street food as well as everything from cafes, sandwich bars, coffee shops, quick service restaurants and casual dining to silver service and fine dining means there’s a role – and a lifestyle – for everyone.

INSIDER INSIGHT: THE MANY FACES OF FOODSERVICE



“When I came into the NHS from the hotel sector, I halved my hours and I doubled my money. Hospital catering is an environment where you have standard shifts. As a hospital caterer, you don’t have to work into the early hours and there are no split shifts or late-night bar work.”

Craig Smith, ISS and HCA

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Emphasise creativity and innovation

The challenge: If people have the skills, the industry is one where innovation and entrepreneurship can thrive. One of the things Coronavirus helped highlight was the adaptability and ingenuity of the sector. Many restaurants and pubs adapted to offer takeout and delivery services providing everything from meals to groceries and enjoy-at-home pub experiences. Some became kitchens that helped feed key workers. Across the sector, people identified a niche during lockdown and set up businesses that met those needs.

Take action: There are many success stories throughout the sector of people who took their unique street food or their craft ale and turned it into a successful business. Some of the best-known names on the high street started out as one small sandwich shop or pizza restaurant. Amplifying these stories to young people will help them see that if they have a great idea and the right skills, the industry can support them to start out on their own.

INSIDER INSIGHT:



"I've seen loads of my students setting up their own little businesses. They're doing deliveries and they're making more money than in a restaurant. They're thinking 'why do I need the overheads? I can make the same food, put it in boxes and send it out.' Coronavirus has created a new wave of entrepreneurs. They've used their skills in a different way without the overheads of a big restaurant, but they can still have a business selling their food."

Molly Shafer, Programme Leader MA Hospitality & Tourism Management, Middlesbrough College and Chair, PACE

Woo young people



The challenge: Positive attitudes towards hospitality work are less common amongst young people in the UK, compared to Europe. Research reported in the Morning Advertiser¹⁰ found that more than half of all 16 to 20 year-olds would not consider a career in hospitality, "with Generation Z viewing jobs in the sector as a 'stepping stone to another career', having 'limited career prospects' and as a 'part time job while studying'."¹¹

This was echoed in the UK Hospitality Workforce Commission 2030 report which noted how few young people contemplate long-term hospitality career choices due to the conception that it is "low paid and low skill".

Even when young people are considering a job in the industry, research suggests parents would discourage them, with just 17% seeing the industry in a positive light,¹² though this does appear to be changing.¹³ With parents one of the top three influences for career choices for 16-20 year olds,¹⁴ this negative view needs to shift to one which reflects the sector's capacity to build long, diverse and fulfilling careers.

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Take action: 60% of 16 to 20 year-olds already know what they want to do as a career, according to research by HIT Training.¹⁵ Thus, to attract young people to hospitality, they need to be reached earlier. This should be done in a variety of ways.

- **Work experience** that demonstrates the breadth of roles and skills within the industry is key. It influences 45% of 16-20 year-olds' career choices, whilst a third of foodservice apprentices say their decision to go into the industry was influenced by work experience.
- **Partnerships with schools** – from providing cookery demonstrations to offering site visits and careers workshops – help open young people's eyes to foodservice opportunities and are a key route to recruiting new talent (see also **Bring the sector to school children**). 28% of 16-20 year olds said school influenced their career choice¹⁶ but outreach should be focused on all year groups, including primary. This is because the youth census indicates that many pupils decide on their career path before they receive careers advice at secondary school. Partnering with and supporting schools can also be a vital part of community outreach.
- **Highlight flexibility, responsibility and progression.** Although decent pay and job security are important, research from the World Economic Forum¹⁷ found that younger workers also want flexible working, they want their job to be meaningful and to benefit society, and they want training opportunities and the chance to progress to leadership positions. They also want to experience a range of roles and to have more than one career. Highlighting these aspects of a business, its CSR credentials and the career pathways they could follow will help make careers in the industry more attractive to young people.
- **Think digital.** Harness social media, influencers and virtual reality to get the message out about the range of opportunities, experiences, training and progression available. These channels can also be used to highlight company values and a responsible business culture, for example showcasing how you help those in food poverty, or are tackling issues such as food waste or plastics will draw people to your brand.

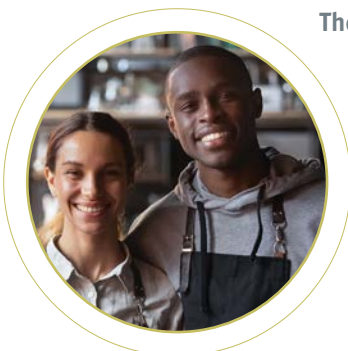
INSIDER INSIGHT:



“The most important factors influencing career choices is to have a really good quality work experience, or some exposure to the industry that is meaningful and makes young people feel valued, inspires them and excites them.”

Anne Pierce, Springboard

Create positive first experiences



The challenge: Many young people's first experience of work is in hospitality and foodservice. A 2019 survey revealed that 16% of those employed in hospitality in the UK were aged 16-24 and 44% of all employees in the sector were 34 or younger.¹⁸ Meanwhile, 43% of full time undergraduates and 81% of part-time students were working in 2018,¹⁹ many of them as bar or waiting staff.

These experiences can be negative, with the young person feeling they are poorly treated – sometimes bullied – and with no opportunity to see what lies beyond their own entry-level role. This can put them off the sector for life.

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Take action: Companies need to ensure that young people are offered a meaningful first experience of work in the industry. People can still feel valued and included in a part time or entry level role, if managers and teams make the effort and ensure everyone's contribution is appreciated. Training, opportunity and support for progression is also key as it provides skills and gives a wider understanding of future opportunities. Allowing young workers the chance to shadow colleagues and managers in other departments can show them the diversity of roles within the business and highlights potential career paths that might be open to them.

INSIDER INSIGHT: FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT



“When that entry level job isn’t attractive, then your experience of the industry is wholly negative and you don’t bother making a career in it.”

Dave Turnbull, Regional Officer, Unite the Union

Recruit for soft skills



The challenge: Employers often look for the most qualified candidates, and would-be recruits assume that if they don't have the qualifications, they won't stand a chance. But what makes a good staff member in foodservice and hospitality is their approach to customer service, their ability to work in a team, their way with people and their capacity to step up and think on their feet. Most other skills and knowledge can be developed or taught on-the-job. But how to convince people who believe they're unemployable that foodservice could offer them a rewarding career without the need for qualifications?

Take action: Be creative in your approach to recruitment. Some companies have started holding events that invite people to apply on the basis of their soft skills rather than their qualifications. Radisson Red in Glasgow held a Casting Day that sought people more in tune with the brand's philosophy than the content of their resumé.²⁰ People without qualifications may still have valuable skills – including people, leadership and organisational skills. Foodservice recruitment and messaging must highlight they are looking for these talents and abilities.

INSIDER INSIGHT:



“Hospitality gives you the opportunity that very few other careers give you. Could you go and be a bricklayer on a building site and end up as the Chief Executive of the building company? But you can start in the pot wash in a club company and end up as its Chief Executive or its Chairman.”

Greg Mangham, CEO, Only A Pavement Away

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Bring the sector to school children



The challenge: It's hard to inspire the next generation of chefs or restaurant managers if a young person's only experience of foodservice and hospitality is as a customer. Although cookery is back on the curriculum, in practice it's so few hours that students have no meaningful opportunity to appreciate the sense of pride that comes from preparing and cooking a tasty dish. Added to this, careers advisors don't typically suggest the sector as one for students to consider building a career in, but instead as a catch-all for those with poor grades.

Take action: Many in the sector understand the need to expose young people to more meaningful experiences of cooking and foodservice (see also, **Woo young people**).

Celebrity Maître D and General Manager Fred Sirieix²¹ is one of many who has championed pop up restaurant experiences in primary schools, run by industry professionals, with children performing cooking and serving roles to help teach and give children a fun taster experience.

Careers Hubs exist around the UK as a chance for businesses to showcase their opportunities to schools. Organisations like Springboard and My Hospitality Life take chefs and ambassadors into secondary schools to teach young people skills and talk about the opportunities a career in the sector can offer. Supporting these initiatives can help them to reach more schools.

INSIDER INSIGHT: INSPIRING CHEFS OF THE FUTURE



"Our FutureChef programme puts food curriculum delivery in schools. That engages with over 16,000 young people. We've got a thousand volunteers from the industry trained as ambassadors to go out and give careers presentations. The problem we have is there are five and a half thousand secondary schools and we engage with about 800. We haven't got enough chefs to team them with. We need more engagement."

Anne Pierce, Springboard

3

Ensure diversity and equality



The foodservice sector is one of the most welcoming of difference. Manifestations of self-expression such as coloured hair, piercings, tattoos and gender identity that may be stifled in more formal corporate settings are rarely given a second thought in the foodservice frontline, and employees from overseas and with black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds are commonplace.

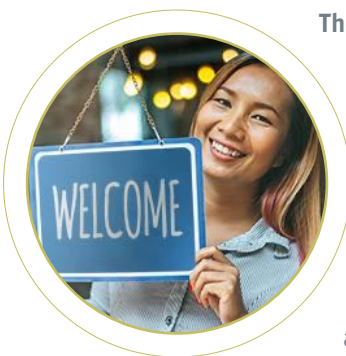
INSIDER INSIGHT: EMBED DIVERSITY INTO LEADERSHIP



“Understand the leadership practices that help to bring diversity into the workforce, building in different cultural groups. We need to work across the board to understand what sits behind diversity – how can we change the dial, how do you engage with people in the early stages of their education and development so they consider you as a company and as a career path?”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

Foster an inclusive culture



The challenge: The 2020 annual report on diversity in Hospitality, Travel & Leisure²² notes how “the industry has made fantastic progress on the journey to creating more diverse and inclusive workplaces. Over the past 12 to 18 months in particular, the industry has stepped up significantly in its quest to build diverse talent pipelines, with more women joining the ranks of direct reports to Executive Committees and being promoted to senior roles.”

Nevertheless, there is still a disproportionate representation of white men in senior positions and this needs to be challenged if the sector wants to be taken seriously as an equal opportunity employer.

Take action: With so many elements to diversity, “actively prioritising inclusion over individual aspects of diversity” is an approach some companies are adopting to ensure all groups are respected and supported, with approaches “built on principle, not policies – so that it becomes part of the company DNA and values, rather than something that you have to do.”²³

Adopting inclusion as a culture should help ensure a more diverse workforce where everyone feels recognised and included, and where policies, such as flexible working, that may have been originally designed to benefit one group, such as working mothers, are able to benefit a whole range

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INSIDER INSIGHT: CULINARY MIXING POT



“Foodservice is a very welcoming industry full of friendly and open-minded people. One of the joys of the industry is that it translates all over world. It attracts people from very different backgrounds and mixes them all together. It’s a great tool for teaching people how to be more inclusive. You meet so many characters and it opens your mind.”

Vince Kelly, Westminster Kingsway College

Target disadvantaged people



The challenge: Because the foodservice sector can recruit for soft skills rather than qualifications, it is ideal for welcoming people from a disadvantaged background. There may be many reasons why someone had a poor start in life or has taken a wrong turn, but the industry can help those who want to change their lives to get back on track. Some foodservice settings can seem daunting for someone who feels on the edges of society. The sector needs to demonstrate that anyone who wants to work hard as part of a team can find a home.

Take action: Many organisations support those who might need a helping hand and they can train and deploy people who have become known for working hard, being reliable and remaining loyal, improving employee retention. Partnering with and supporting such organisations is a win-win; developing a valuable talent pool for foodservice businesses whilst providing meaningful jobs and opportunities to those who need them.

Some examples of such organisations are listed below:

- **Only A Pavement Away** matches supported and vetted ex-service men and women, former homeless people and ex-offenders with job vacancies in hospitality.
- **The Clink Charity** gives prisoners the opportunity to train and work in active kitchens, moving them into paid work on the outside and dramatically reducing reoffending rates.
- **The Springboard Charity** helps unemployed people into hospitality in the UK.
- **The Pret Foundation’s** Rising Stars programme offers opportunities to homeless people.
- **Change Please** helps train homeless people as baristas.
- **The Yes Chef!** initiative in Scotland helps former prisoners work in catering, and several breweries also offer opportunities to those leaving prison.
- **The Prince’s Trust** partners with Marriott and Whitbread to offer young people the opportunity to train and work in the sector.

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INSIDER INSIGHT: FROM PAVEMENT TO PAID WORK



“We’ve got four guys who are with the Ivy Collection. One who’s been with us over a year spent 18 months on the street, and he’s now a chef de partie. We’ve got another who has just been promoted and gone to Scott’s in Mayfair, and another at Fullers. Another lady was homeless: she had come out of the military and now she’s the first female concierge at Corbin & King. Our retention is higher than the industry norm. Our members stay longer and have a strong work ethic.”

Greg Mangham, Only A Pavement Away

Work to increase women in management



The challenge: Women often represent a larger percentage of the foodservice workforce, yet are less likely to progress to more senior roles. Whilst the industry has made “significant overall progress,” the 2020 annual diversity report concludes that 84% of individual FTSE 350 businesses are not on course to reach the target of 33% female representation across all three senior leadership levels (board, executive committee and direct reports) by the end of 2020.²⁴

The report found that between 2018 and 2019, there was a 5% increase in women at board level and all surveyed companies had a diversity and inclusion policy that targets gender equality. Yet only 6% of companies have an inclusivity policy that targets the caring responsibilities which predominantly fall to women. Consequently, less than 30% of positions at board or executive committee level are filled by women, and less than 40% are direct reports.

Research by People 1st showed that whilst the career trajectory of men and women in the sector is similar until the age of 22, the number of women in the sector then starts to fall slightly followed by a steep decline at the age of 33.²⁵ Women who choose to have a family are still being held back from career progression, so the sector needs to act to ensure they are not disadvantaged.

Improving gender equality has a clear business benefit. Gender-balanced management teams perform better on key business objectives, as research by Sodexo has shown.²⁶ In gender balanced teams, operating margins increased by 8%, client retention by 9% and employee engagement by 14%. The research analysed data from over 50,000 managers from 70 entities worldwide, with management teams from a diverse range of functions, ranging from top leadership to site management included.

Take action: Devise shifts that better fit around family commitments, allow job shares or flexible working (see also **Build in more flexible contracts**). These can help women return to the sector after starting a family or enable them to fulfil other caring responsibilities whilst working.

Build flexibility into the company approach and create inclusive policies which are supported by leadership who recognise and support those who are caring for others. Provide role models, clear entry routes and structured career development. This should improve retention and progression of women in the company.

Policies should set firm targets for women in leadership. For example, Sodexo’s gender strategy includes a target of 40% women among senior leaders by 2025 and a commitment to increasing women in the talent pipeline.

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INSIDER INSIGHT: KEEPING WOMEN IN WORK

“Hospitality organisations need to be promoting opportunities for women to work flexibly after coming back from maternity leave. We should have clear employee-focused policies, benefits and support that advances gender equity – childcare vouchers, flexible working and empathetic leadership.”



“We need more role models in management levels and to be advocating the development of clear entry routes for women into leadership positions. Establish clear leadership commitment and accountability for gender equity – question it, discuss it and acknowledge it. The last, and most important point is that we should be providing structured career development for women and doing it through flexible, meaningful programmes like apprenticeships.”

Adele Oxberry, CEO and founder, Umbrella Training

Commit to recruit people with disabilities



The challenge: Government figures show a 28% employment gap between working age disabled people and the population at large, with the employment rate of 82% for those who were not disabled versus 54% for disabled people.²⁷ The sector can be especially understanding of disability, having often to accommodate guests and customers with disabilities.²⁸ The actual number of disabled people working in foodservice is hard to pin down. But with only 14% of foodservice personnel able to identify anyone amongst their leadership teams with a disability²⁹ (when 19% of the working age population in the UK is disabled), there are indications the sector is not representative.

The biggest challenge disadvantaged groups face, according to Adele Oxberry, CEO and founder, Umbrella Training, is a lack of confidence to apply for positions, to fight for jobs and promotions.

Take action: Recognising the value that those with disabilities can bring to the sector, some companies seek specifically to recruit people with disabilities who, with support, thrive in a service setting.

According to Oxberry, the priority is to have clear policies and procedures that support disabled workers. Role models are also needed to provide hope that people with disabilities can succeed and have a career in hospitality.

It's also key to be transparent about where the organisation is at: acknowledge it if there is a lack of diversity, celebrate where it exists and highlight efforts to support it.

The Institute of Hospitality champions the successful recruitment of staff with disabilities, highlighting the high quality of applicants available who can bring additional skills to the business – like British Sign Language - whilst providing a more diverse workforce which reflects its customers and community.³⁰ The benefits to participants - providing them with valuable life skills, independence, and an income - are significant.

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There are many industry examples – both local and international. The Hilton T5 at Heathrow Airport runs a Supported Internship Programme for 18 – 24-year-olds with special educational needs.³¹ The Park Inn by Radisson Cape Town won a Guardian Sustainability Award for its recruitment of deaf employees³² and Lemon Tree hotels won a World Responsible Tourism Award for inclusive employment of staff with a range of disabilities.³³ These examples show that with fairly minor adjustments, the sector can be a welcoming and supportive environment for staff with disabilities, who bring new skills and experiences to the customer service offering.

INSIDER INSIGHT: ROLE MODEL REWARDS



“Work to understand the community that you want to attract and pick the right role models to talk to people from those communities to attract recruits to apply for positions. It is about valuing people with different life experiences and bringing them into the business with a view that they will add value because of that different upbringing.”

Adele Oxberry, Umbrella Training

Increase opportunity for people with a BAME background



The challenge: There has been strong progress across the industry on representation of people with BAME backgrounds at senior levels in companies.³⁴ Between 2018 and 2019 their representation at Board level grew from less than 2% to more than 6%. Nevertheless, the 2020 Diversity Report found that “more than 40% of HTL businesses have no BAME representation at all amongst their Direct Reports – the most populous leadership level. Almost twice as many companies have no BAME leaders on their Executive Committee”.³⁵ As people with a BAME background represent more than 12% of the working age population, there is still a long way to go before they are properly represented in senior positions.

Take action: Gather good quality data on staff ethnicity and use this to create specific incentives to improve representation. Better tracking will help determine meaningful action.

Identify BAME role models and train them to help younger staff to follow in their footsteps and rise through the ranks: people with a black, Asian or minority ethnic background often point to a lack of role models, making it harder for them to see themselves in the roles they might aspire to.

Examine recruitment criteria to ensure there is no unconscious bias or discriminatory practices and create mentoring programmes to help boost employee diversity.

INSIDER INSIGHT: THE RIGHT ROLE MODEL



“I go in as a woman in hospitality and a woman of colour and I tell everybody: ‘you can do whatever you want’ because they can, but only if they see people like me in that role.”

Molly Shafer, Middlesbrough College and PACE

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Create a welcoming environment for LGBT people



The challenge: For a long time, the kitchen environment was portrayed as laddish and somewhat bigoted, but in many ways the hospitality sector is ahead of other industries in its direct marketing to the LGBT community. This has helped the industry to evolve to drive more respectful and inclusive employment.

Whilst just under 7% of the population identify as not heterosexual,³⁶ tracking of LGBT employees is often poor making it harder to understand their representation in the workforce. The challenge for employers is to continue this culture shift to find ways to ensure LGBT staff feel supported and safe from discrimination.

Take action: Organisations such as Stonewall advocate explicitly including LGBT people in policy wording on topics such as pensions and health insurance to ensure these are inclusive and fairly applied.

Create and support LGBT champions or groups to foster a supportive culture and to enable staff to freely discuss issues that affect them. Keep workplaces free from homophobic language and ensure policies and practices take a strong line on any discriminatory behaviour so staff know it will not be tolerated.

Provide appropriate facilities such as changing rooms and toilets whilst retaining single sex spaces to ensure everyone feels secure, since there are indications that some women avoid using mixed sex spaces.³⁷

INSIDER INSIGHT: MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



“The industry has changed a lot over the last decade. Diversity is still an issue but we’re very keen to show that the BII is a forward-thinking organisation. It’s all about culture and getting the right person for the job and if the skillset is there, it doesn’t matter about gender, ethnicity or orientation.”

Molly Davis, Head of Communications, BII

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Provide training and opportunity



The opportunity to develop and progress is integral to building a fulfilling career. It keeps work interesting, makes people feel appreciated and is a cornerstone of responsible employment and valuing your workforce. Having a standardised programme with training and development embedded in the culture ensures staff have the skills they need to provide consistent and high-quality service. It also provides a pool of excellent talent that can feed through the business, pre-empting skills shortages in the future.

Invest in training programmes



The challenge: In a busy foodservice environment it can be hard to justify giving staff the time for training, especially if their colleagues are stretched to provide cover. Day release courses mean paying for someone not to be at work and when profit margins are tight, that can be a disincentive. And, in some cases, staff may not value compulsory training.

Take action: Build the business case for an annual, budgeted plan for standardised training. Elements can be taken online and learning can be balanced with shifts and on-site learning to summarise skills (see also **Take on apprenticeships**).

This can be justified by factoring in the return on investment of training. “Recruiting, interviewing and screening is time consuming and expensive,” notes Paul Mannering, Chef Academy Principal, HIT Training. “Training and developing your talent pool means when you’re looking for the next sous chef or management team member, you have it in your own ranks. And when you look at fundamental issues – wastage, gross profit, effective teams – these all impact on the customer and the business. By offering training, you mitigate against these issues.”

Engage staff in the benefits of training by helping them realise the importance of keeping their skills up-to-date and how training opportunities demonstrate the value the company places in them.

Fit training around their lives, such as when service is finished, in quiet periods, or in an online session that can be completed when convenient. BaxterStorey have had success in using coffee-breaks. The company has devised peer-led sustainability training which focusses on topics such as water and food waste. ‘Green Flash’ modules provide facts, figures and prompts that can facilitate a green-themed discussion of working practices, challenges and solutions over a 20-minute break. This relaxed, informal and staff-led approach has helped inspire staff to find and implement solutions.

The apprenticeship levy and other forms of government assistance exist to incentivise companies to invest in staff training, so tap into these. Even businesses that don’t pay the levy may be able to access funds by approaching their contacts, such as suppliers, who can transfer 25% of their levy pot to a business outside of the sector.

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

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Training can also help staff develop more flexible skill sets so they can assist in a variety of roles, something that is important as Covid-19-related working practices favour fixed-teams or partnering, where each team member works with only a few others.

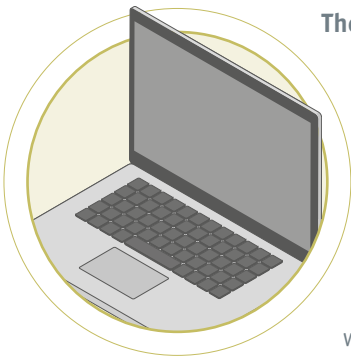
INSIDER INSIGHT: SUPER SKILLS



“Ongoing professional training is great for upskilling. It benefits staff personally but also the employer who benefits from increased skills and from staff keeping themselves current.”

Vince Kelly, Westminster Kingsway College

Harness digital training



The challenge: It can be hard to find time to undertake training in every day working life, and challenging to keep staff motivated and engaged during unusual times such as furlough (when they are legally not allowed to work) or during a localised lockdown.

Take action: The Covid-19 lockdown of 2020, when many in foodservice were unable to work or furloughed, led to the creation of a wealth of online training – some of it free – and a shift in the training mindset to digital solutions. This enabled staff to upskill and feel engaged with the business whilst they couldn't work. This online training revolution must be harnessed.

This shift to digital means training is now accessible to a wider range of staff, in a more flexible form which can fit in more easily around working and personal life. It means that even when foodservice is able to operate, or during future lockdowns, staff can more easily access upskilling opportunities and this must be embraced.

Organisations like UK Hospitality, the Institute of Hospitality and the British Institute of Innkeeping (BII) have adapted their training to an online offer, making it more flexible for employees to fit around their working day. Free level 1 training is also available through the newly launched Careers in Hospitality Talent Hub.³⁸

INSIDER INSIGHT: USING DOWNTIME TO UPSKILL



“Now is the time to invest in upskilling workers. For example, workers who speak English as a second language can be in the lowest paid jobs. Investing in ESL and key skill training during a downtime like furlough means these staff will be ready to step into apprenticeships: this will help operators develop the talent they need for the service provision they will be providing this time next year.”

Dave Turnbull, Unite the Union

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

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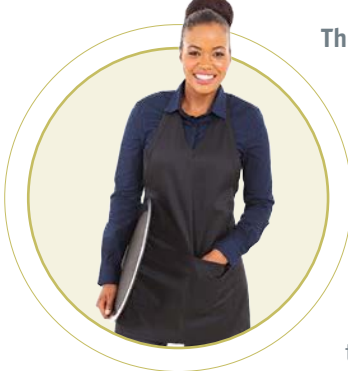
INSIDER INSIGHT: EMBRACING DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES



“This year the industry has really adopted the term ‘going digital’ and during lockdown we saw many examples of businesses innovating online to either further their teams’ development or to keep providing a service to consumers. At Nestlé Professional, we too have embraced the power of digital, both through our Plant to Plate video series during lockdown, which saw our development chefs provide tutorial videos and inspiration for plant-based dishes to add to menus, and by turning our long-standing Toque d’Or competition virtual, so that aspiring back of house and front of house stars can continue their skills development.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

Take on apprentices



The challenge: With fierce competition for jobs among post-graduates and the high levels of debt most people accrue with a degree, increasing numbers of young people are turning to apprenticeships as a route into a career. Apprenticeships are meaningful development programmes that allow trainees to acquire not just knowledge but also the skills and behaviours needed to perform a particular job.

The diversity of apprenticeships is better than ever but many employers avoid them, believing they are onerous to set up and run, populated with those who failed their exams, that they are a short term solution to recruitment, or that training prevents apprentices from doing their job.

Take action: Forget negative preconceptions: employers involved in apprenticeship schemes overwhelmingly report that they help with the quality of their service, productivity, staff morale, retention and their image.³⁹ This is because apprentice programmes support people to develop practical and transferable skills such as communication, leadership, and complaint handling. They also grow confidence and develop relationship building skills. Because of government funding mechanisms, they are also cost effective (see **Invest in training programmes**).

Supporting apprentices demonstrates your business offers a clear career path for staff, helping challenge negative views of the industry. This is particularly relevant for young people. According to HIT Training research, 89% of parents and 79% of teachers would recommend an apprenticeship as an effective career route for young people when they finish school.⁴⁰

The societal shift to experiences is being felt in the job market too with young people expressing a desire for “experiential-based learning”.⁴¹ This can be used to draw young people to the industry. HIT Training research indicates that the combination of on-the-job training and the opportunity to be paid whilst learning attracts a large proportion of young apprentices to the sector.

Apprenticeships are not only appropriate for new recruits, they can help upskill existing staff, with government funding available to support this. They are also one of the fastest ways to help make people career-ready.

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

INSIDER INSIGHT: FOUNDATIONS TO A FULFILLING CAREER



“Our industry has always had a skills shortage, but apprenticeships give people knowledge, skills and support so they have a strong foundation on which to build a fulfilling career with the skills the industry so urgently needs.”

Paul Mannerling, HIT Training



Create career pathways

The challenge: Hospitality and foodservice is one of the best industries for people with the right skills to progress quickly into roles with more responsibility and broader skillsets. But it can be hard for potential employees to see the possibilities that exist beyond entry level roles.

Employees become disheartened and are likely to move on if they see no opportunity for progression, contributing to poor productivity as well as costly churn and recruitment costs.

Take action: Foodservice needs to change its language to talk about careers, not jobs. This tackles the preconception that hospitality is a transition or stepping-stone whilst looking for something else, and shows it instead as an industry to build a career in. Nurture and inspire talent by highlighting clear career pathways and offer training and development to aid recruitment and retention.

Effective progression programmes, “need mentoring, coaching and exposure within the wider organisation”, according to Jim O’Brien, HR Director, Aramark Northern Europe. As well as formal programmes, “shadowing, observing and casual mentoring catch-ups are equally essential.”

Use regular appraisals to explore the aspects of a job that people enjoy and to highlight the roles they could progress to with the skills they have or could develop. Highlight the routes that others have taken through the company and use internal communications to share success stories.

INSIDER INSIGHT: FAST TRACK TO LEADERSHIP



“For many blue-chip companies, getting to a position of leading 30-40 people might take decades, but in hospitality you can get into leadership and be inspiring people much faster.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Use mentoring programmes



The challenge: Mentoring can improve employee wellbeing, decreasing stress and increasing job satisfaction, reducing turnover. It also promotes a learning culture and shares knowledge throughout the business. Mentoring programmes can help bring different perspectives to the fore, improving a diversity of view and approach. But programmes can achieve little if not properly implemented and structured, which requires investment. Mentoring itself also requires a particular skillset. Additionally, increased working from home for office-based roles or fixed teams can reduce opportunities for shadowing and one-on-one interactions.

Take action: Start by understanding the company goals you want mentoring to help you achieve. This could be to support the induction of new staff, help better retain staff with BAME backgrounds or other minority groups, develop leadership skills, or to progress women through the organisation. Mentoring can work for people of all ages and work stages and benefits both people in the relationship.

Set a framework to outline roles, responsibilities and the nuts of bolts of how the scheme will work in practice, such as how often meetings are scheduled, and to manage expectations. Mentors and mentees should be paired based on what they hope to achieve personally and professionally and training should be provided to ensure they understand the nature of their relationship. Mentors can also be sourced from outside the business to provide inspiration whilst expanding mentees world-views. Providing mentors to those who are being made redundant can also provide valuable support.

INSIDER INSIGHT: MENTORING SUPERHEROES



“Our Superheroes mentoring scheme allows industry greats to share their experience with apprentices. The webinars have been centred on developing skills to become a great leader and further a career in hospitality. Superheroes also offer 1-1 coaching to all our apprentices who have been made redundant.”

Adele Oxberry, Umbrella Training

Work to people’s strengths, skills and interests



The challenge: When people are hired to a specific role, particularly in a lower level job, they need to perform their duties to the best of their ability to keep the business working efficiently. There might appear to be little scope for allowing people to try new tasks that test their aptitude and skill, or to pursue activities that chime with their passions. But repetitive jobs in pressured environments can sap motivation if staff can’t explore their capabilities and experience new things.

Take action: Develop a team ethos that encourages employees to develop new skills, gives them varied workloads and different responsibilities and which enables them to engage with issues or activities for which they have real passion. This will recoup the benefits of a more productive workforce, whilst developing skills that can enable staff to move up the ranks.

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How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Encouraging a kitchen porter to try their hand at food prep, a waiter to take on some management tasks, or empowering staff to take the lead on sustainability issues such as plastics or food waste will help them feel valued and used to the best of their abilities. Not only will the business benefit from new initiatives and staff with more skills who can work more flexibly – a valuable skill in an era of Covid-secure fixed teams – but engaged staff are likely to stay longer.

“As contractors, we have an opportunity of offering staff a taste of what it’s like in fine dining, or in business and industry catering or in a large factory,” says Craig Smith from ISS and HCA. “They can go and spend a couple of weeks to see what it’s like. Giving people the opportunity to see other places is always positive.”

INSIDER INSIGHT: THINK MULTI-TASK AND MULTI-SKILLED



“Offering people the training and opportunity to participate in working groups on a subject they are passionate about can contribute to the overall agenda of the company. Build in more flexibility, more job shares and these will provide stronger personal development but also encourage a broader spectrum of people with wider knowledge. Younger people are good at multi-tasking and multiple directions.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

Encourage and support skills competition



The challenge: Taking time out to participate in competitions might seem like a distraction from the essential day-to-day running of the business, but local and national competitions showcase the fantastic skills and artistry present in the industry, which is vital to help people see it in a different light. Staff may be reluctant to put themselves in the spotlight. They might struggle to believe in themselves and their abilities, or they might feel that a competition is setting themselves up to fail.

Take action: Supporting competitions – or holding competitions within the business – helps staff develop their skills, achieve more and see the possibilities of where they could take their expertise.

They also help employees see the value the company places in them, no matter who wins. Seeing the work of other competitors opens them up to new ways of doing things, gives them insight on trends and helps them create networks with peers and the wider industry. It can be a huge boost in their confidence and perception of themselves.

There are many regional and national competitions that showcase the breadth of skill in the industry. These range from Nestlé Professional’s Toque d’Or to National Chef of the Year and School Chef of the Year and the many barista championships and cocktail competitions. The value in competitions like Toque d’Or, according to Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland, is that they “give contestants relevant skills for today which support talent to thrive so they leave ready for the industry of tomorrow.” The skills and experience also help with future job prospects, putting them “head and shoulders above the competition”.

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How foodservice can attract and retain talent

INSIDER INSIGHT: UNBEATABLE CONFIDENCE AND CAREER BOOST



“Toque d’Or has given me self-confidence and pushed me into learning more about my trade. It opens doors and equally opens your mind in to how far you can take a career in hospitality. When I left my job to become an apprentice at the Ned, I would never have imagined that I would be cooking at the level I am now.”

Drew Dawson, Winner of Toque d’Or 2019

INSIDER INSIGHT: INSPIRING HOSPITALITY STARS OF THE FUTURE



“Nestlé Professional’s Toque d’Or® is one example of a competition which helps nurture and retain talent. Apprentices and college students in back and front of house roles undertake real-life challenges in a series of national heats to inform, inspire and test them in exciting and innovative ways.

This year, in response to the pandemic, the Toque d’Or 2020 Finals and Awards were delivered virtually. Each task was devised to enhance the next generation of hospitality stars’ skill set, so that they can play a key role in helping the industry to thrive in a post Covid-19 world and enrich their career development. As such, there was a mix of practical, service-based and business-focused challenges, in areas such as social media, business management and sustainable food and drink.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland



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Embed sustainability and fairness



Before Covid-19, the hottest topic across the hospitality and foodservice sector was sustainability. Although the Coronavirus has shifted industry perspectives, sustainability is still key – particularly in tackling the climate and obesity crisis. The pandemic has shown the myriad ways in which man’s behaviour – from our food choices and systems to our impact on nature – can have unexpected, negative consequences. Meanwhile, the link between obesity and poor Covid-19 outcomes has been established,⁴² with foodservice in the spotlight as an industry that controls so much of what goes into people’s mouths.⁴³

There is also an urgency because food has such a substantial climate impact. Food – including production, land use change for farming and distribution – is responsible for up to a third of UK and global emissions.⁴⁴

Through its supply chains to its operations, foodservice is helping to meet the targets of the Paris Accord. Many companies have embraced the SDGs⁴⁵ and are working to achieve real change by 2030. Collectively the sector is working to support sustainable development, with efforts to prevent hunger, make food healthier, support sustainable diets, reduce waste, save water, energy and other resources.⁴⁶ These efforts can be harnessed to address talent challenges.

INSIDER INSIGHT:



“An employer’s ethos is really important to people, especially young people. It can be a massive influence in how they choose their employers.”

Julie Barker, Managing Director, Julie Barker Associates, non-executive director of CUBO

INSIDER INSIGHT: MAGNIFYING POWER



“One way to highlight your sustainability commitment to current and future employees is by aligning your business with likeminded and sustainable associations, partners or suppliers. A great way of getting employees involved in a business’ sustainability targets is through encouraging them to participate in sustainability-focussed competitions, where they can learn new skills that they can bring back to the workplace.

“Sustainable practices are intrinsic to the hospitality industry and therefore, a core part of the Toque d’Or® competition. Each year the competition highlights the need to tackle food waste, focus on social sustainability and the importance of attracting and keeping young talent.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Improve retention and engagement through sustainability action



The challenge: Thanks to events like the climate strikes, Extinction Rebellion and Blue Planet documentaries, people are very aware of our need to be more responsible with the planet's resources. Increasingly they want to see companies acting to reduce their carbon and water footprint, they want more plant-based eating, they want to see less waste - including food waste - and they appreciate companies that have programmes which benefit society or tackle social issues. Increasingly, the public and employees are alert to greenwashing and can spot when initiatives are spun for good PR or primarily to reduce costs.

Take action: Build a coherent corporate social and environmental responsibility strategy that makes sense for your business. It should chime with what the company does, who it interacts with and where it can have the most impact in operations and along the supply chain.

Employees today want to feel part of an organisation that acts responsibly and with a purpose beyond profits for shareholders. So, "be really clear on the narrative and how staff are making a positive contribution to society," advises Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional. "This means employees feel engaged and have a greater value and purpose in what they do. This has a strong, positive impact on team morale."

Staff appreciate the opportunity to have an active role in sustainable actions, either by driving the strategy forward as part of a steering group, taking practical actions during their working role or by using volunteer days to make a difference in the community. A recent study showed that companies can reduce their staff turnover by 50% and increase employee engagement and satisfaction with good CSR policies.⁴⁷

INSIDER INSIGHT: DRIVING MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

Sustainability programmes can keep staff motivated on a number of levels. With food made fresh on site every day, Pret A Manger has seen how redistributing surplus food can help keep staff motivated.



"Knowing it [surplus food] is going to a charity which needs it is satisfying as it means none of the food, or the time and effort taken in preparing the food, is wasted."

Isabel Bradbury, Food Donations Coordinator, The Pret Foundation

Use values to attract talent



The challenge: Foodservice's poor image might mean it struggles to recruit, facing a constant skills shortage. Yet more and more people – especially young people who make up a large proportion of the foodservice workforce – wish to work for a responsible business. Building purpose beyond profit into your strategy and company ethos will have wider positive impacts for the business.

Take action: Make your values central to your recruitment strategy, and ensure that ethos and sustainable practices – such as food waste reduction and tracking - are highlighted during inductions. Use social media and other digital platforms

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

to share the good work being done in areas such as plastics, food poverty and with your supply chain to attract young people to your brand so they hone in on you as a responsible employer they'd like to work for.

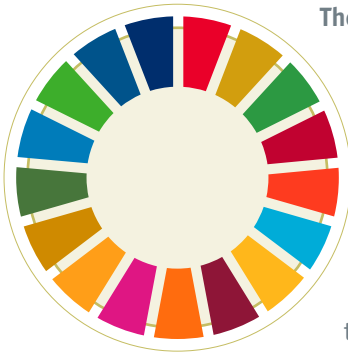
INSIDER INSIGHT:



"It goes back to ethics. Our research showed that younger generations want to work for businesses who care about the environment, from offering a vegan menu to thinking about where they source ingredients."

Molly Davis, BII

Align yourself as an employer with the SDGs



The challenge: One trap that businesses can fall into is that whilst they connect the SDGs to their products and operations, setting targets for better use of resources and supporting their supply chain, they can fail to apply them to their own employment and recruitment practices.

Take action: Being a responsible employer includes looking at the ways the company is contributing to the social SDGs. This means ensuring roles are fairly paid for reasonable hours, opening opportunities up to disadvantaged groups, promoting equality and diversity, and ensuring young people and employees have access to skills training and qualifications. The upside is that the company will not only be supporting a more equal society, but it will also benefit from building brand loyalty whilst developing a more sustainable talent pool to recruit from.

INSIDER INSIGHT: ETHICAL ATTRACTION



"One of our new area managers was desperate to come and work for us because of our values and ethos. Now he's pleased to be here and doing fantastic work."

Michael Hales, Managing Director, Juniper Ventures Ltd

Treat people fairly



The challenge: Treating employees fairly sounds like a basic tenet of being a responsible employer but it can be hard to fully achieve. Treating people fairly is not the same as treating them equally. "Fair means that everyone gets what they need or deserve while equal means that everyone gets the same regardless of need."⁴⁸

When people feel they've been treated unfairly it can have a devastating effect on employee morale. It damages trust and productivity and contributes to high turnover. It can leave the company exposed to tribunals and legal costs.

Conversely, being recognised as a fair employer can elevate a brand's reputation. Several foodservice and hospitality companies are listed in the Top 100 places to work.⁴⁹

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How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Take action: To treat people fairly a company needs to:

- Have fair pay, hours and contracts
- Communicate and be transparent
- Allow workers to unionise or have a clear route for reporting concerns
- Avoid favouritism
- Reward based on individual merit

The system and culture must ensure that staff feel they are listened to and that their concerns are acted upon. They need to feel that they have access to opportunities based on their performance. Failing to do this damages employee trust.

INSIDER INSIGHT: VALUES IN ACTION



“Culture is very important when people are working in a relatively low paid environment with long, anti-social hours. It’s key to the industry to get the culture right. People vote with their feet and will go to places that have a better culture.”

Molly Davis, BII

Recognise employee efforts



The challenge: Foodservice environments can be pressured and stressful, but when staff perform well, or when they do something which supports the business values, such as fundraising for their local community, it can be taken for granted, or managers may be too busy to make time to acknowledge it.

Take action: Create a culture that recognises and rewards employees’ contributions to the team, as well as to the community and society. This can be informal – such as when managers and teams acknowledge and thank people throughout everyday interactions, for example in team meetings. Or these can be more formalised, such as through awards or recognition schemes.

INSIDER INSIGHT: REAPING THE REWARDS



“Our sickness levels have reduced by two days per person per year as a result of how we communicate with our staff and let them know we value them and their efforts for us and their community. We have termly and annual awards that recognise what people have achieved in the past 12 months: chef, KP, cleaner of the year etc. One member of staff raised £25K for childhood cancer, another member of staff volunteered at NHS Nightingale London Hospital. It’s about recognition of their efforts INSIDER and outside of work.”

Michael Hales, Juniper Ventures Ltd

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Practice good communication



The challenge: In a busy working environment, everyday communication is vital, but the bigger messages from head office can get lost or deprioritised. Constant strategic communication can feel irrelevant or overwhelming and add to the pressure on stressed staff. Conversely, a lack of communication can make people feel isolated and overlooked, leaving them to fill in the gaps with speculation. Getting it right is increasingly important during an unprecedented economic environment, where the sector is having to make tough decisions in order to continue operating.

Take action: From the pictures on the walls, to newsletters, meetings, informal catch-ups and training, good communication is central to building company culture. Use all channels to communicate with staff, but customise each one to recognise the reality of employees' working days and their preferences: how do they want to be contacted, how often, how do they want to listen?

Rather than bombarding them with messages and updates throughout the day or week, send a weekly newsletter or noticeboard email summarising team achievements, corporate changes and news. Use management structures to filter important updates through to team briefings, allowing employees the opportunity to ask questions. A regular town hall event which gives staff access to senior management is valuable. Use technology like company intranet and apps like Yammer to roll information out to staff, keeping them up to date, but also making it fun so people feel part of the wider brand and family.

Communications help people remember the brand standards and company strategies which they play a part in maintaining – for example if reducing food waste is a target, people will need clear, regular messages to remind them of their role.

Be upfront and honest about any changes and challenges the company faces, to maintain trust and goodwill amongst staff. This helps them feel valued whilst enabling them to support and understand any unpalatable changes, such as reduced hours, pay or redundancies.

“Communication is an important thing to learn from Covid,” notes Molly Davis, BII. “We recognised a difference in attitude towards businesses who did the same things but who communicated with their staff better. Keeping in touch at every stage so people feel the company is doing everything they can to protect people’s jobs is vital to giving staff confidence.”

INSIDER INSIGHT: BE OPEN AND HONEST



“Transparency is always very important but becomes critical during uncertain times. Without it, people don’t know what is going on and start to speculate. Even if management doesn’t have all the answers, share it openly, share what you are thinking, what are possible options. Ask: ‘will you embark on this journey with me?’. Transparency provides authenticity and helps people trust.”

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Commit to the living wage



The challenge: Perceptions of poor pay and terms, such as zero hours contracts, can put people off considering the sector.

The numbers of workers in poverty in the UK is increasing. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation says just under half of all workers – across all sectors – in poverty are full time employees.⁵⁰ The Trussell Trust say one in seven people visiting a food bank are employed.⁵¹ This is unacceptable.

Within foodservice, pockets of the industry still exist where people are faced with unreasonable requests, unsocial shifts and minimum wages. This needs to change urgently.

Take action: Companies that pay a fair wage for reasonable hours recoup this investment through more productive staff. Research by the Living Wage Foundation shows that when companies move to pay the real living wage - £9.30 per hour, £1.10 more than the minimum wage - over half of employees (54%) felt more positive about their workplace, 52% felt more loyal and staff leaving rates fell by 25%.

Employers reported the reputational benefits of paying the living wage helped them attract new business and customers, and that top recruits cited it as a key reason for applying for roles. There are wider economic benefits too, as employees have more disposable cash and more time to spend with their families. According to the report, the cost to companies of introducing the living wage was just 6% of the contract because they were able to introduce more efficient working practices.

These benefits were echoed by foodservice insiders, such as Michael Hales, Juniper Ventures Ltd, who observed that how paying the London Living Wage and also providing access to a local government pension scheme meant his staff were paid well compared to other commercial businesses, improving retention and recruitment.

“Pay and hours needs a huge rethink,” agrees Vince Kelly, Westminster Kingsway College. “People get burned out working too hard for too little money compared with other trades and professional businesses. Basic wages need to rise and they need to stop making tips part of people’s pay.”

INSIDER INSIGHT: EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK



“We’ve been pushing for the youth rate on the minimum wage to be abolished. Where’s the motivation if you’re 20 and doing exactly the same job as somebody who’s 27, but only getting a proportion of their wage? The rate for the job is crucial. That and being treated with respect.”

Dave Turnbull, Unite the Union

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Build in more flexible contracts



The challenge: Perceptions of long hours, inconvenient shifts and zero hours contracts put people off from considering the sector for work. One of the main reasons that almost half of those employed in the foodservice and hospitality industry are aged 34 or younger is that the industry – with long shifts and antisocial hours - is felt to be incompatible with family life, caring commitments or other priorities. But older people are a valuable resource to the sector. They're often more reliable, likely to stay longer with the company, are dedicated workers who bring experience and life skills to the role.

Take action: Look at the demands you're making of employees and the kinds of hours and contracts you're offering. Are you struggling to fill roles and if so, why might that be? What kind of contracts are offered? What is the work/life balance like for your employees? Do they get reasonable leave allowances and can they take holidays when they want them? Is there any room for flexibility in the way they work their hours?

Use flexible working hours, rotas and shift patterns to allow people time outside of work to relax and recharge (see also **Work to increase women in management**). Consider whether hours can be divided between multiple roles, avoiding the need for split shifts. Technological solutions can help with planning working hours – helping both managers and their teams to get the shifts they want and to have better visibility of their schedule.

It is worth reconsidering the business model and hours of opening, focusing on busy times rather than the pre-Covid-19 'always open and available' model which has been so affected by dramatically altered footfall. "People shouldn't be afraid to shut on a Monday or only open at peak times when they're busy," suggests Vince Kelly, Westminster Kingsway College. "Shutting at quiet times can mean staff can get time off and improve their work/life balance during periods when the business doesn't make much money."

Contract catering can be the ideal environment for people who need to work around school age children or caring responsibilities. B&I contracts or schools catering where the day ends after lunch service are an ideal fit for working parents, and companies could be marketing roles to this demographic. Some people will be open to early mornings or late shifts but unable to commit to both because of responsibilities at home. Hours could be organised around a job share to support staff with specific needs, or flexibility could be built in to accommodate staff who might have to occasionally work around a family emergency.

INSIDER INSIGHT: TWO-WAY CONVERSATIONS

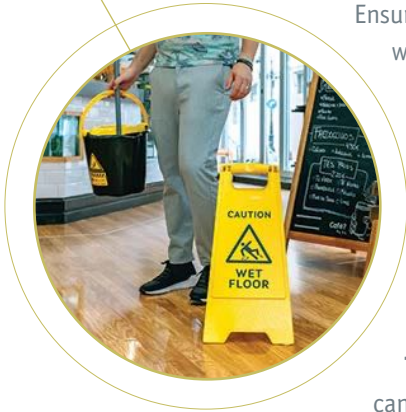


"It's the responsibility of the employer to offer flexibility. It's important for employer and employee to be clear about what they want, working together to meet both their needs."

Katya Simmons, Nestlé Professional UK and Ireland

6

Maintain health and safety



Ensuring the health and safety of employees is vital to maintain trust and a safe working environment for staff. As well as keeping the workplace safe – which is especially important when staff are working in the kitchen around sharp tools and implements, highly heated equipment and chemicals, and after the onset of Covid-19 – the responsible employer will also dedicate programmes to support employees' health and wellbeing.

Look after mental health

The challenge: It's well recognised that a fast-paced kitchen environment can be a stressful workplace. Research in 2018 suggested that 64% of hospitality employees suffer with workplace stress but that the majority of employers did nothing to address this. For the survey, one in three employees reported losing sleep and 39% said that they suffered from anxiety. 51% said they suffered from depression due to overwork.⁵³

In addition, the hospitality industry ranks very high for employee alcoholism and drug addiction. The adrenaline buzz after a busy shift can be hard to switch off and a work hard/play hard attitude is prevalent, encouraging after hours drinking. Increasingly people are reporting overuse of energy drinks to get through shifts, leading to insomnia and heart palpitations. Mental ill health and addictions cost businesses money in sick leave, absences and reduced productivity, so proactive support for employees helps tackle issues before they come to a head.

Take action: Get behind campaigns and highlight the support there is available both within your organisation and from charities and industry bodies. Engage experts to provide training, workshops and support to foster a culture where speaking about wellbeing and mental health is encouraged.

There are a number of campaigns focused on improving mental health in the sector. The Pilot Light Campaign founded by chefs Andrew Clarke and Doug Sanham aims to tackle mental health stigma, and works with foodservice providers to bring in training and workshops allowing people to talk about any problems they may be experiencing and to seek help.

Hospitality Action also works on mental health and offers advice and support to tackle addiction, including a confidential action line for employees to call. Many businesses have their own wellbeing support lines that employees can access for support when needed, or apps that guide people to advice like My ISS which supports ISS employees.

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

INSIDER INSIGHT: SUPPORTING GOOD MENTAL HEALTH



“ISS has been very good at protecting employee wellbeing from the outset of Covid, and Serco, Compass, Sodexo and many others have all been on top of this too. We have an app called My ISS with a section which gives you links to all kinds of advice, plus counselling. That’s available to everybody. It is also linked to some NHS initiatives because there will be people who suffer because of Covid, and we have to address that.”

Craig Smith, ISS and HCA

Be proactive to protect environmental health



The challenge: Providing a safe and healthy working environment is vital for employees in a workspace prone to greasy floors, trip hazards, sharp implements and high temperatures.

Take action: The Health and Safety Executive says employers must provide an environment that is safe for everyone, including people with disabilities.

That means providing:

- welfare facilities – the right number of toilets and washbasins, drinking water and having somewhere to rest and eat meals
- a healthy working environment – a clean workplace with a reasonable working temperature, good ventilation, suitable lighting and the right amount of space and seating
- a safe workplace – well-maintained equipment, with no obstructions in floors and traffic routes, and windows that can be easily opened and cleaned.⁵⁴

It’s important that kitchens and other foodservice environments are well lit and ventilated, are well maintained, have appropriate workstations and waste facilities and appropriate storage for employee clothes and personal belongings.

These things incur a cost but a lawsuit for an employee accident could be much more expensive.

Perform an audit of working environments to check they are meeting safety and cleanliness standards. Take note of any equipment that needs replacing and design a schedule for rolling out replacements, prioritising as appropriate. Check with staff that the space is working for them or what needs changing. Ensure cleaning schedules and processes are being followed and upgrade training if it is falling below par. Make sure all staff have had the appropriate training on workplace safety and elements like lifting and carrying – this can be conducted online.

If equipment needs replacing this could be an opportunity to invest in more efficient and environmentally friendly items, for example induction hobs which dramatically reduce the need for ventilation and air conditioning, and reduce energy consumption, or taps and toilets that use less water.

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Deliver a coherent Covid strategy



The challenge: With research showing that over 62% of hospitality employees are concerned about their safety in a post-Covid environment,⁵⁵ being a responsible employer includes a duty of care to minimise the risk of infection for both employees and customers. In a business founded on interactions with and between people, it's vital to get this right or employees will feel unhappy at work and customers will be afraid to return, costing the business more.

Take action: Companies need to have excellent policies, practices and training that keep staff and customers safe and feeling confident about being together in the foodservice environment. Conduct an audit of all the spaces where exposure could be heightened and draw up practices to help mitigate the risk. Outline new protocols for cleaning surfaces more regularly and ensure staff have access to appropriate PPE. Ensure training is rolled out so that staff understand their new responsibilities, particularly around gathering customer details for track and trace, and how to protect that data to remain GDPR compliant. "If the staff are lacking confidence in the process and systems, it just won't work," notes Alistair Sandall, Head of Professional Development, Institute of Hospitality. "So that's about training the staff and giving them the confidence." This confidence will in turn be relayed to guests.

The need to keep customers at least one metre apart means tables may have to be moved. Make the most of any outdoor space where infection risk is lower. Provide plenty of hand sanitiser for customers and strong messaging on behaviour expectations. Build your measures and provisions into communications to help customers feel confident to return. Full guidance on expectations and up-to-date advice for foodservice environments is available from the government.⁵⁶

INSIDER INSIGHT: CARE IN A COVID-19 WORLD



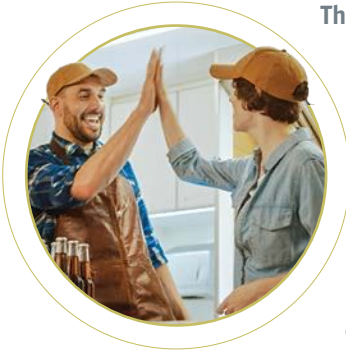
"Managing Covid procedures is critical from the start because there were examples where staff were saying 'I don't want to go to work because I'm not safe' and it was a justifiable fear. It was critical right from the outset that all of our staff were properly trained and that they had the right protective equipment, but most importantly that they had things explained to them. So they know what the measures are, why they're there and if you carry out everything as you've been shown, then you will be safe."

Craig Smith, ISS and HCA

DEFUSING THE TALENT TIMEBOMB

How foodservice can attract and retain talent

Tackle workplace bullying



The challenge: It's an unfortunate fact of life that because the industry is so customer facing, its staff can face abuse and harassment. Many reports in recent years from charities and unions have detailed the widespread levels of abuse faced by employees – particularly women – just trying to do their job. Hotel workers in particular often have to regularly deal with unacceptable levels of sexual harassment.

In addition, there can be a culture of workplace bullying in the sector. We've all seen rude and aggressive chefs on TV, but bullying behaviour left unaddressed creates an unhelpful environment of fear and resentment. Left unchecked, managers can go on to replicate the bullying behaviour they experienced when they were in junior roles, creating a cycle of poor behaviour and misery.

Unite the Union says too often bullying is ignored, complainants are offered money and a non-disclosure agreement to leave, and the behaviour persists, but this is highly detrimental to people and the company in the long term.

Take action: It's vital that a culture exists throughout the company that prevents bullying from thriving. Ensure everyone knows bullying is unacceptable and that it will be acted upon. Create a workplace where staff feel empowered to report bullying behaviour. Give managers training to help them develop people management skills. Understand that promoting skilled chefs or other foodservice staff into management positions does not mean they automatically have the ability to successfully manage people, so support them with line management, training and mentoring.

INSIDER INSIGHT: BANISH BULLYING BEHAVIOURS



“Workplace bullying is still the biggest issue that people are aggrieved by; the complete lack of respect when they're spoken to. That's a cultural thing within the industry. It's ingrained but this culture must be changed.”

Dave Turnbull, Unite the Union

About this research

Footprint Intelligence was commissioned by Nestlé Professional to conduct research which examines the sector's employment challenges and opportunities in order to create a guide to being a responsible employer to tackle recruitment issues and reduce churn.

The research for this project comprised a mix of in depth, semi-structured interviews with foodservice experts, desk-based research, involvement in industry events and forums, as well as comment and insights gathered from other opinion leaders linked to industry. Thanks to all those in the industry who are always so generous in sharing your knowledge from the coal face.

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About Nestlé Professional

At Nestlé Professional®, hospitality is more than just a business. It is our business.

For the hospitality industry, this means inspiring the next generation of culinary talent through Nestlé Professional® Toque d'Or®; striving in the field in nutrition, health and wellness; and collaborating with the Industry for a more sustainable future. From coffee to cocoa, and from food waste to water, we work with farmers, chefs and operators continually to help make strides towards sustainability.

After all, for our partners and for the Industry, hospitality is our business.

About Toque d'Or

Nestlé Professional® Toque d'Or® is an annual competition which provides real life challenges that inform, test and push both students and apprentices in the most exciting ways. By linking education with industry, Toque d'Or presents a series of unique experiences which bridge the gap between the classroom and the exciting reality of industry.

About Footprint Intelligence



The ever-shifting sustainability debate makes it vital for businesses to have accurate intelligence to make informed decisions. Footprint Intelligence is Footprint Media Group's research and analysis division, helping companies develop successful strategies in the context of responsible business practices.

Footprint Intelligence aims to drive, promote and share best practice by helping the industry resolve pressing sustainability issues. It asks tough questions and finds answers. It uses research and industry insight to bring businesses together to identify challenges, opportunities, trends and solutions.

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