



WHITEPAPER

COMPETING FOR HOSPITALITY TALENT WHEN CANDIDATES ARE SCARCE



Finding talent when everyone is hiring, and no-one is looking for a job

Sourcing and retaining the right staff remain the biggest obstacles to the sector's post-pandemic recovery. In June 2022, we at MAPAL Group in conjunction with COREcruitment, conducted our *Talent retention and hiring survey* among 30 UK hospitality businesses. Our research included larger groups with more than 50 sites right through to independent restaurants. At that time, on average, respondents still needed to fill 16% of their entire workforce vacancies. The survey also revealed that, compared to 2019, staff retention levels have somewhat decreased, from 60% to 55%.

In creating this whitepaper, we interviewed hospitality HR leaders in the UK to hear their best practice tips and strategies for finding talent when everyone is hiring and no-one is looking for job; what are the top things employees are currently looking for in their ideal employer; how to retain talent, and how to curate the hiring process to include people with different backgrounds and capabilities.



MEET OUR CONTRIBUTORS



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NEW SOURCES OF TALENT

The UK hospitality industry has lost 200,000 international workers since 2019, according to a report by the Caterer. It revealed that as many as 120,000 European workers have now left the sector, compared to 90,000 EU drop-outs last year. More than 70,000 workers from non-EU countries have also left the industry. Many local workers have left the industry in search of a more stable position in the light of the sector's inability to function without interruptions in recent years.

Over the last few months, some operators have turned to hiring overseas staff in an effort to combat worsening talent shortages. Chefs are eligible for a Skilled Worker Visa following changes made by the UK government. But apart from searching beyond our borders, there are other strategies for sourcing talent at home: for example, groups who have been displaced through Covid, women who have left the labour market, and older generation of workers.

McDonald's is a good example: the brand has recently kick-started a recruitment drive to hire more people over 50. The fast-food chain has developed a new campaign targeting older workers, promoting adverts featuring a grey-haired worker 'who isn't the retiring type' enjoying their job at the restaurant chain.



WM PEOPLE have been at the forefront of progressive and inclusive ways of working since 2006, offering digital spaces for employers and candidates to connect, communicate and engage.

Their vision is to improve the world of work, by sharing and disseminating best-practice, offering employers a platform to promote their progressive employment policies and advertise quality employment opportunities. They are data and insight led, generating unique insights in candidate attraction and curation.

For jobseekers, they provide news, advice, and inspiration through their websites [workingmums.co.uk](https://www.workingmums.co.uk), [workingdads.co.uk](https://www.workingdads.co.uk) and [workingwise.co.uk](https://www.workingwise.co.uk).



"Our most productive channel in terms of where we get the most applications is still Indeed job board, this has not changed after Covid. However, we have been successfully able to find great talent from groups who have been displaced with Covid like older generations of workers as well as being open for part-time staff." says Tori and adds "we have worked with WM People - a platform that gives brands the chance to promote their family and age-friendly policies and advertise quality job opportunities."



HAS YOUR HIRING PROCESS BEEN DESIGNED WITH NEURODIVERSE APPLICANTS IN MIND?



Neurodiversity refers to the different ways that our brains may be wired. Broadly speaking, it encompasses autism, dyslexia, ADHD, and other neurological conditions. Although many neurodiverse individuals have exceptional talents and other superior attributes, unfortunately, they remain poorly understood and stereotyped. This is particularly true when it comes to hiring, leading to high rates of unemployment or underemployment.

So, what does neurodiverse in the workplace mean? The fact is that the behaviours of many neurodiverse candidates contradict common notions of what makes for a good job interview and a solid hire. Strong communication skills, persuasiveness, confident body language, interpersonal skills, and adherence to social cues are criteria that systematically screen out neurodiverse applicants in conventional interviewing formats. People who see things differently and act differently struggle to get past traditional assessment tests, or to fit the profile that prospective employers are usually seeking.

There are countless studies that show that businesses that hire neurodiverse workers often have a broader variety of strengths, higher levels of innovation and creativity, contain a wider range of opinions and background, and are generally more ethically responsible organisations.

But how do businesses ensure that their hiring and onboarding processes are accessible to neurodiverse people?

1. The job advert

First of all, take a good look at the language that you use. Write job adverts using plain and concise language, avoiding jargon or superfluous information.

Instead of using 'generic' words and phrases, narrow down the skills that you are actually looking for and be explicit about them, instead of listing broad skills. Presenting them in bullet points can be very helpful. Clearly outline which criteria are must-haves, and which are desirable.

2. The application process

What does your application process look like? Are you asking candidates to fill lengthy forms to apply for back-of-house or front-of-house positions which actually don't require great written skills? If so, a dyslexic person with great social skills, who would be perfect fit for a role in waiting tables, might be discouraged from applying at all.

3. The interview

Hospitality HR teams place a lot of importance on how a candidate presents themselves during an interview, but this metric can be unrelated to actual performance on the job. For example, a highly skilled neurodiverse employee may struggle with social anxiety. They may have trouble making eye contact which goes against traditional interview advice but doesn't hinder performance unless it's a consumer-facing role.



FACTORS THAT MAKE PEOPLE JOIN AND STAY IN YOUR COMPANY

Our May 2022 survey among UK hospitality companies revealed four main factors that employers feel have the biggest impact on retention: salary (33.3%), company culture (22.2%), working and shift patterns (18.5%) and opportunities for career progression (14.8%). While salary is still tops the list, people are placing almost the same value on flexible work schedule and opportunities for career progression.

“It used to be that the number one question was about salary when coming to the interview. Now it’s about hybrid working, benefits, about what the employer has to offer them. Employers need to be on trend and know what the competitors are offering if they want to be competitive. People are willing to take a lower salary if they can sometimes work from home office”

Krishnan Doyle, COREcruitment



BrewDog reports that job applications across its business are up by more than 75% as it delivers the first of its ‘blueprint’ profit share bonuses to bar staff.

It has also experienced a reduction in staff turnover and absenteeism. Earlier this year, BrewDog announced that it will give 750 members of its staff shares worth £120000 as well as share half of its bar profits with all bar workers. Co-founder James Watt also said he will give away 3.7 million shares in the company that will be distributed evenly among all salaried team members, amounting 5% of the company. “This radical new initiative is about

ensuring we win collectively and fully recognise all of the hard work that our fantastic team puts into our business. The road ahead is definitely going to be exciting but it’s fair to say it is not going to be easy - high growth and striving to redefine an industry never is. Our Hop Stock programme will ensure that we are all in this together as we build the future of BrewDog” he added.





HIRE FOR ATTITUDE AND CULTURAL FIT

When thinking about employee retention, the first step should be looking at your hiring process and identifying whether your hires are a great match for your company culture and the specificity of your business. Failure to consider this may mean the new hire won't fit in at their new job and will either leave, or stay and underperform.

“At Pizza Hut, we use a pre-screening tool called Chemistry. Candidates are first asked to fill out a questionnaire after which they receive a bespoke report about how they work and what their opportunity to be great is. If their motivations and attitude do not match our company culture, they can't proceed to the application stage. It will cut the number of applications we get significantly but ensures that candidates' expectations are aligned straight away. Our goal is to hire for behaviours and motivations, not for experience.” Tori Anderson, Senior Resourcing, Training & Development Manager, Pizza Hut



“As a leader it's important to recruit for attitude. It's very hard, especially now when we're up against the wall trying to recruit people and really struggling. Be open with your team and explain why you are doing this, especially when they need new team members immediately. Tell them why you, as a leader, are holding out to recruit someone for the right attitude. The benefit is that the person really fits your culture and you're able to get off the treadmill of recruiting people who are not staying with you. Include your team in this conversation. It also helps you think about where you can get the new recruits from, what type of people, what type of industries, how you can really think differently to the way you have done in the past. “

Sue Farnie, Director of Talent Management,
Wyndham Hotels and Resorts



THE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE IS VITAL FOR STAFF RETENTION

When starting at a new company, people make a subconscious decision about whether to stay within the first two weeks. First experience is crucial and ensuring it's a great one will save so much time (and money). Research shows that when people pass the 90-day mark, they are more likely to stay for 1-2 years on average.

In MAPAL's recent *Successful onboarding of hospitality talent* webinar, Richard Leverton, L&D Manager of Whitbread, shared one factor that directly influences how long new hires stay in their company: the Tiny Noticeable Things (TNTs). TNTs are extra touches that Premier Inns give during a new hire's first week. These include a welcome pack and uniform on the first day; a £20 gift voucher to enjoy the guest experience at breakfast; a tour, meeting the team and a two-week shift and buddy schedule. All of these things increased employee confidence and happiness, but the most positive influence on staff retention was a coffee chat with the hotel manager. Feedback surveys revealed that removing this from the TNTs would have resulted in a staggering 26% of new hires leaving the company earlier than those who did.

The onboarding experience will also determine if people will carry on searching for a better opportunity, and leave should the opportunity arise.

"Just because an employee gets the job doesn't mean that other companies and recruiters will stop calling. So, when the induction process is not ideal they could very easily leave you".

Krishnan Doyle, COREcruitment



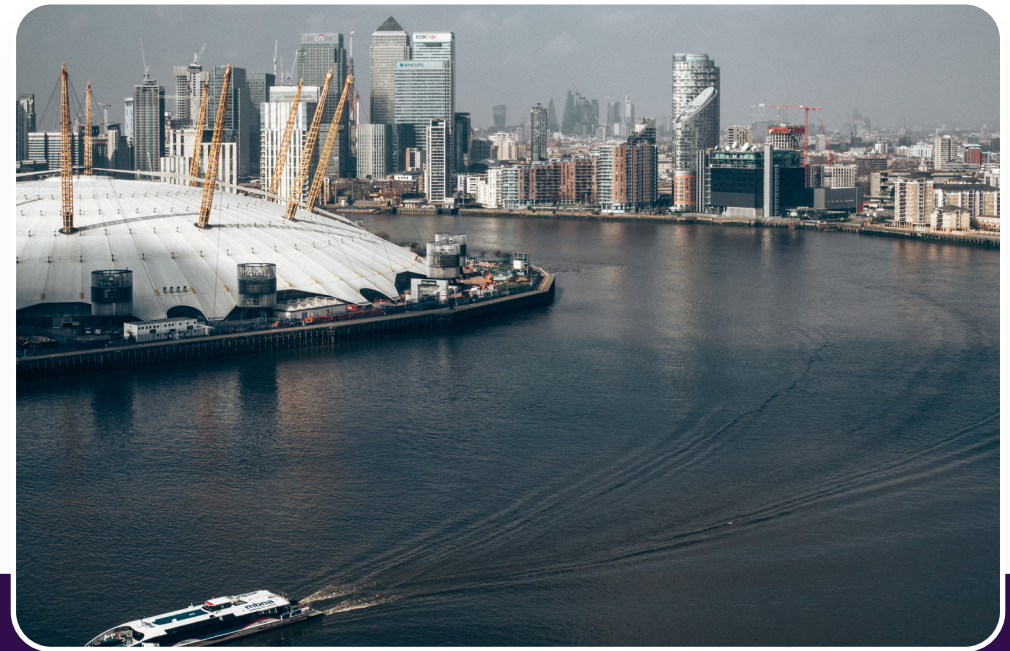
"We want to make sure that we keep people engaged from as early as possible. On the first day, all new starters at Pizza Hut or itsu will receive a four-hour induction that covers everything from health and safety to the company structure and processes. In addition, we mandate that the restaurant manager does the meet and greet on the first five days to make sure the new starters feel welcome and cared for".

Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut



TECHNOLOGY CAN MAKE THE ONBOARDING EXPERIENCE SMOOTHER

While the team meet and greet and a tour around the venue is important, it's equally crucial that new hires become familiar with company processes and complete compliance courses during onboarding. This is essential to ensure the employee has all the tools they need to perform at their best. Learning management technology solutions like Flow Learning enable you to make this process engaging for the new starter while also ensuring that they are accessible enough so that courses are completed during the first days of employment.



CONSTELLATION AT LEVY UK

Part of the Compass Group, Levy is the official food and drink partner at legendary sporting stadiums, historic venues, conference centres and arenas. They focus on providing delicious food and excellent service, providing uniqueness to each of its clients, including Wimbledon, The O2 and Twickenham.

The company onboards thousands of new starters at a time, who will later be assigned to different venues in different settings. As one can imagine, a huge

onboarding effort is required to ensure they can deliver on their promises to clients.

They made the most of the pandemic downtime by implementing a project to take their face-to-face training programme onto an online training platform. Together with Flow Learning, they streamlined their processes and moved everything online to prepare for a new, more efficient future.

This highly streamlined and automated process meant that all candidates are now contacted within 48 hours of application, with a reduction in the average onboarding process from five days to one. With Flow, Levy also created shorter, more engaging online and mobile-friendly courses that their team could fit around their schedules.



CAREER PROGRESSION

People want growth opportunities and progression if they are to stay in your company. Well-defined, clearly communicated pathways for advancement can encourage employee satisfaction and retention.

One way that companies can establish a culture of transparency is by designing skills- and competency-based career paths. Leaders should explain clearly how talent can move from entry-level to higher-wage roles within the organisation. Creating strong career paths starts with outlining the required skills and competencies to reach various roles or career stages. The L&D team can then identify available training and professional development resources to help employees gain those skills. The next step is to communicate this information clearly and consistently to employees to help them make informed decisions and pursue growth opportunities at the company. In essence, make people feel like they are part of the company's growth and give everyone a chance to progress. Sharing stories of fellow employees who have progressed from entry level jobs to manager positions will also help to inspire your team.

“At Alchemist we harness everyone’s talent individually and look after it because we want to make sure people feel they are part of our growth. In addition, as a leadership team, telling authentic and honest stories about how people have progressed is important too.”

Hannah Plumb, Culture & Talent Director, The Alchemist



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION PROGRAMME

Employee recognition means highlighting positive behaviour and efforts in the workplace, both in terms of personal traits and professional achievements. Building a positive feedback culture in this way can take two forms: manager to employee recognition, or peer-to-peer recognition.

By recognising your employees regularly, you can foster a sense of engagement and create a workplace where employees feel truly motivated to work hard and stay with the company. And this can go a long way in improving your retention rates.

A survey by Achievers found that the lack of recognition and engagement is driving 44% of employees to switch jobs. Some 69% even said that better rewards and recognition would encourage them to stay on at the company. These statistics clearly highlight the potential benefits of implementing performance management tool like Engagement by MAPAL, which enables you to monitor performance and highlight exceptional cases. Another best practice is to show appreciation for employees both publicly and privately. It's also a good idea to recognise employees via weekly feedback meetings, even if there hasn't been an instance of exceptional performance. This will keep your average performers motivated and eager to do better.

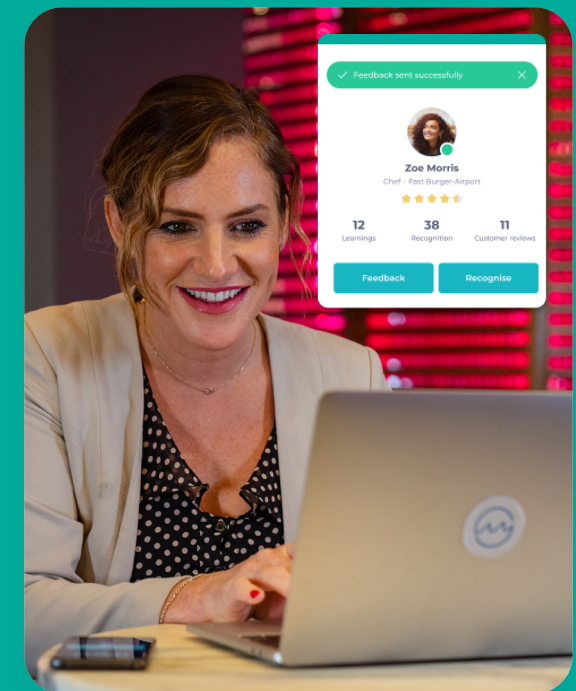


Engagement by MAPAL is a hospitality employee engagement solution designed especially for hotels, restaurants, bars, coffee shops, pubs, and catering companies who want to put people at the centre of their business. Encourage and gather valuable 360° feedback, promote employee recognition, send company surveys, and improve employer branding with our easy-to-use digital app.

Improving the employee experience with our solution reinforces your company culture and values and fosters team spirit. This easy-to-use app fits perfectly into your people strategy by integrating with other tools and requiring very little of your time.

The result is a win-win for you and your team because the tool helps you:

- Reduce employee turnover as your team feels heard, values and more motivated
- Increase employee happiness, confidence, and productivity as a result
- Direct peer-to-peer recognition enriches your 360° feedback process to boost employee development
- Improve your company's eNPS score, earning you a reputation as a good place to work and improve your recruitment perspectives





RETHINK AND CHANGE THE WAY YOU OPERATE TO TACKLE THE TALENT CRISIS

The MAPAL *Talent hiring and retention survey* revealed half of the (51%) hospitality businesses surveyed have had to reduce operations as a result of staffing crisis. In addition to changing the operating structure (47%) and change of opening hours (43%), businesses have also used technology to automate processes (43%), change service and order flow (39%) and reduce menus (34%).

The pandemic triggered high demand for remote working, and employees now expect greater flexibility. Globally, the share of job searches for remote work opportunities grew by 360 percent between June 2019 and June 2021 and is continuing to rise. While only around a fifth of job postings offered the option to work remotely five years ago, nearly 80 percent do so now.

Not all hospitality roles provide options for remote working, but hybrid models are in constant development. Some examples include positions in social media management, event planning, accounting, marketing and public relations, customer support, and virtual concierge services.

However, many hospitality roles, such as housekeeping, server and kitchen roles will continue to be performed in person. To meet employees' expectations, employers could still offer flexibility by rethinking how hospitality career paths are designed. For example, employers could consider innovative formulas that incorporate flexibility (such as part-time positions, and flexible working hours within certain timeslots). Employees could also rotate between different jobs or locations.





“At Stint we are building a pool of workers who want to come in and do basic tasks for as little as two hours at a time. And what we are seeing is that we are very easily able to find people for these jobs because people want flexibility. In my previous role running Sonder we shrunk down our core team and topped it up with the basic staff from Stint. We got students to come in for two hours. Housekeeping minutes went down from 45 mins to 21. And the team was happy because they were not doing the tasks they hated. Stint allowed me to protect our core team, offer them flexibility and give them the chance to mostly do the tasks they enjoyed doing.”

Jeremy Rawlinson, Chief Operating Officer, Stint

ST:NT

Founded in 2018 by brothers Sam and Sol Schlagman with the goal of making student life better, Stint is the safe, flexible way to earn money. For businesses, their short-shift student workforce unlocks a more efficient operating model that's better for customers, teams, and profits. In sites around the country, from local pubs to multi-national chains, Stinters complete basic but vital tasks, freeing up the core team to focus on what they're trained to do: creating brilliant experiences for even more customers.

USE FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE TO COMPLETE BASIC TASKS

Another option could be to bring in part-time employees to do the basic tasks your full-time team enjoys less. A growing number of hospitality companies in the UK are using a flexible workforce company Stint for this.



UPSKILL AND CROSS-TRAIN YOUR EMPLOYEES

In times of labour shortages, fewer people have more tasks to perform. This creates operational challenges, but also opportunities for upskilling.

Upskilling your employees, for example, could mean training front-of-house staff to do basic kitchen tasks or the other way around: kitchen staff can help out with front-of house tasks. The easiest way to do this would be to create mini online courses your staff could complete during breaks or while travelling on the tube using an online learning management system such as Flow Learning.

Also, if you have employees studying a design degree, why not ask them to help out with menu design or with marketing materials. This acts as a motivator in between more mundane and monotonous tasks.

“We have training programmes that are upskilling people to take them from one role to another. The aim is to include not just functional skills, but also leadership and life skills. These will not only be valuable in their job role, but also elsewhere. The challenge is to motivate people to take up these programmes. So, we are now focusing on making sure employees understand that they are not only necessary for their work, but also useful in their life outside of work.”

Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut



ACTIONS FOR IMPROVING YOUR EMPLOYER STATUS

Fierce competition for talent means that employers must now become more attractive in the eyes of potential new employees. In our Talent retention and hiring survey we asked hospitality companies which initiatives they have already undertaken, and planning to undertake, to improve their employer status. The top actions stated were “introduce other rewards” (63%), “Improved training and development programme” (52%), “coaching and mentoring” (48%), “focus on flexible hours” (41%) and “improved recognition programme” (41%) and “new learning management solution” (35%).



“We already had a good employee benefits and rewards programme before the pandemic. But we have now learned that we must be better at making sure all employees are aware of all the possibilities, we need to shout about it more. We have a great employee assistance programme should they encounter mental health or finance difficulties: we make sure there’s someone they can speak to. In addition, the benefits portal we have created has worked really well - employees can go there to pick and choose the benefits that will work best for them.” Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut



HELP PEOPLE BECOME THE PERSON THEY WANT TO BE

Younger individuals who are not yet career-minded are sure to leave or quit. This is quite possibly a job that they consider doing while in college. In addition, a job in a restaurant is easily transferable elsewhere. Many jobs are highly substitutable: If someone is unhappy with the job they have at an venue, they can choose to get a different job down the street at another place. This is particularly true at entry-level jobs that do not carry a lot of benefits with them. To tackle this, companies are thinking about how to support their employees to become the person they want to be in the future. This could mean simply offering flexible schedule to combine work with their studies or offering apprenticeships outside their business so they could get work experience in their field of study.



“We offer our restaurant teams apprenticeship in hospitality, from level 2 up to degrees qualifications. For our head office teams, we also offer role-based apprenticeships that include degrees and master certificates”.

Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut



“The challenge we have as hospitality leaders is that most of the people who come to work for us are just finding their feet in life, they are just getting going but don't yet know who they are in life. Maybe they want to become architects or yoga teachers but right now they are here, working for us. How can we create a space and environment where people who come work at Dishoom can understand all the nuances of our business, but from the people point of view? How can we empower them to be the best version of themselves so they can provide best customer experience, just as if they were serving their family. We believe the answer is to focus on helping them become the person they want to be, helping them unleash their potential. And then when they leave us it's with the best of will.”

Thomas Stroppel, Dishoom





“People are looking for transparency and authentic leadership from the management team. Throughout the pandemic we were constantly updating the teams about the situation with pay and hours. We held weekly webcasts with the management team to keep everyone informed – and we’re still doing them now, on a monthly basis.”

Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut

PEOPLE SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Before choosing a new employer, people ask about how the company treated their employees during the pandemic. How did the company's response to Covid? Did they try to minimise the amount of staff layoffs? Did they communicate during furlough and update employees was happening with the business?



INCREASING INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND GOVERNANCE TOPICS IS SHAPING PEOPLE'S EMPLOYMENT CHOICES

A recent employee engagement study in the United States shows that 58 percent of employees consider a company's social and environmental responsibility when choosing a place of work. Generation Z have a greater focus on sustainability issues and as they join the workforce, conversations among hospitality students are focusing on sustainability and employers "doing the right thing".

Pizza Hut is one of the founding members of Zero Carbon Forum - an industry collaboration to set a roadmap to Net Zero.

"Sustainability is very important to our company and our goal is to reach Net Zero by 2030. We share our sustainability plans as part of our induction process and we know we can do more around engagement and awareness in this area. It's a key focus for our existing teams and potential employees looking to join a business."

Tori Anderson, Pizza Hut



DO YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE?



www.mapal-os.com