



Described by the press as having 'revolutionized the concept of sandwich making and eating', Pret a Manger opened its first shop in London. Now it has over 440 shops: most in the UK, but also in the US, Hong Kong, France, China and Dubai. It says that its secret is to focus continually on the quality of its food and of its service, avoiding the chemicals and preservatives common in most 'fast' food. Pret says that it sells food that can't be beaten for freshness. At the end of the day, it gives almost everything it hasn't sold to charity. The Pret Foundation Trust works with homeless charities to ensure that its unsold sandwiches go to people who need them, rather than to waste, with 87 per cent of its unsold food being re-distributed. Pret a Manger shops have their own kitchens where fresh ingredients are delivered every morning, with food prepared throughout the day. The team members who are serving on the tills at lunchtime will have been making sandwiches in the kitchen that morning. This flexibility helps to level out workloads throughout the day. But it does require staff who can make the switch between preparation and service smoothly. 'We

are determined never to forget that our hardworking people make all the difference. They are our heart and soul', says Pret. 'When they care, our business is sound. If they cease to care, our business goes down the drain. In a retail sector where high staff turnover is normal, we're pleased to say our people are much more likely to stay around! We work hard at building great teams. We take our reward schemes and career opportunities very seriously. We don't work nights (generally), we wear jeans, we party!' Pret also invests heavily in training through its 'Pret Academies' and its online training resources.

Keeping staff committed is important to a company like Pret that takes pride in its customer service. 'We'd like to think we react to our customers' feelings (the good, the bad, the ugly) with haste and absolute sincerity', it says. 'Pret customers have the right to be heard. Do call or email. Our UK Managing Director is available if you would like to discuss Pret with him. Alternatively, our CEO hasn't got much to do; hassle him!' More formally, customer feedback is a key ingredient of weekly management meetings. Staff are rewarded for being nice to customers; they collect bonuses for delivering outstanding customer service. Each Pret outlet is regularly visited by a secret shopper who scores the shop on such performance measures as speed of service, product availability and cleanliness. In addition, the mystery shopper rates the 'engagement level' of the staff. At a more strategic level, environmental sustainability issues have always been important to Pret. Its sustainability strategy has five key elements: using fewer resources, sustainable farming, healthy food, a positive contribution to society and embedding an awareness of sustainability within its values.