

## **Case study – McDonald’s**

April 2015

***L&D:***  
Evolving roles,  
enhancing skills



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# McDonald's case study

## Organisation summary

McDonald's is a leading global food service retailer, with more than 36,000 local restaurants serving approximately 69 million people, in more than 100 countries each day. In the UK McDonald's has 1,250 restaurants, serving more than 3.5 million customers every day.

## People focus

McDonald's has experienced significant change in the UK over the last five years. The business has transitioned from a largely company restaurant ownership model, to one where 70% of restaurants are owned and operated by franchisees. The brand has also undergone a major refresh. Mark Reilly, Head of Corporate Training, describes the changes:

*'We've had to take on some really big challenges about our brand in terms of trust and how we're seen in terms of our food, our people and the communities in which we operate.'*

The UK has had nine years of good performance, and is now one of the leading markets in the world. But the drive to change hasn't stopped:

*'Our people, our employees, have been a really big focus and need to continue to be a focus for us. But as a brand we continue to change and evolve. We're coming out of recession, so we need to make sure we're retaining the customers and market share that we've gained from our competitors. We need to make sure we're focusing on customer experience, and that comes down to our people and their behaviours, which is where training becomes really important.'*

## The role of L&D

This emphasis on people relates to McDonald's focus on development:

*'The majority of our people are developed from within the system. We take people on as a crew member or as a trainee business manager. ... All of our operational hierarchy has started either as a trainee manager or as a crew member. We very much grow our own people.'* **Mark**

Because of this ethos there is real business buy-in of L&D and *'training has very much got a seat at the table'*, meaning that learning is aligned to business needs.

Alongside the brand refresh, McDonald's has also invested in qualifications pathways and accreditation of learning. Part of this commitment to development relates to the nature of the industry:

*'I think it's something that you find in hospitality and retail. It's often not the first choice for a career and it's a high turnover sector, so recruiting can be very competitive. You have to make sure you put the right people in the right jobs and then look after them to ensure you keep them and create opportunities for them to progress within the business.'* **Mark**

## L&D structure

The L&D team at McDonald's UK has three arms, which work together to ensure consistency and business alignment.

*'We need to make sure we're focusing on customer experience, and that comes down to our people and their behaviours, which is where training becomes really important.'*

The biggest is the operational training team, who deliver the core learning curriculum. The second team is the corporate function, which Mark leads, and is responsible for learning strategy and design, alongside delivering learning to restaurant managers, mid-managers and above. The team also have responsibility for the corporate department's development and talent interventions (including degree programme development). These two teams report into the head of UK training and development. The third part is the education team, which manages the Apprenticeship programme and qualification development. Along with customer services, all these teams report into the director of training, education and customer services.

The team all have a strong business connection:

*'All members of the training team in the UK have come from operations. Again, we've developed everyone internally within the system.'* **Mark**

There are also strong links with HR. In the UK, the team report into the people function, while globally L&D is part of the operations function. For Mark, having strong connections to both areas is critical:

*'Keeping close to operations ensures you understand its rhythm, culture and priorities and you can align development initiatives more effectively so they become embedded. It's about how you're able to keep the two in balance.'*

### **Measuring impact**

As Mark describes, the challenges of retailing mean that *'you have to get return on your investment, so you have to make sure that whatever you're doing is adding value.'* That means that understanding impact is critical.

As Deborah Rudge, Training Consultant, explains:

*'Our training is designed to support the learner within their role and to support the business to help with long-term business growth. It is important to us as a department we are seeing that return on investment from the training delivered. In our role as trainers, we work in partnership with operations and departments. Our focus is to help with building knowledge and leadership skills to create individual and business success.'*

L&D metrics are correlated to turnover and business results, and new programmes are always piloted to determine impact. This can be challenging, as programmes normally have a long-term scope and involve a blend of methods. Mark shares an example:

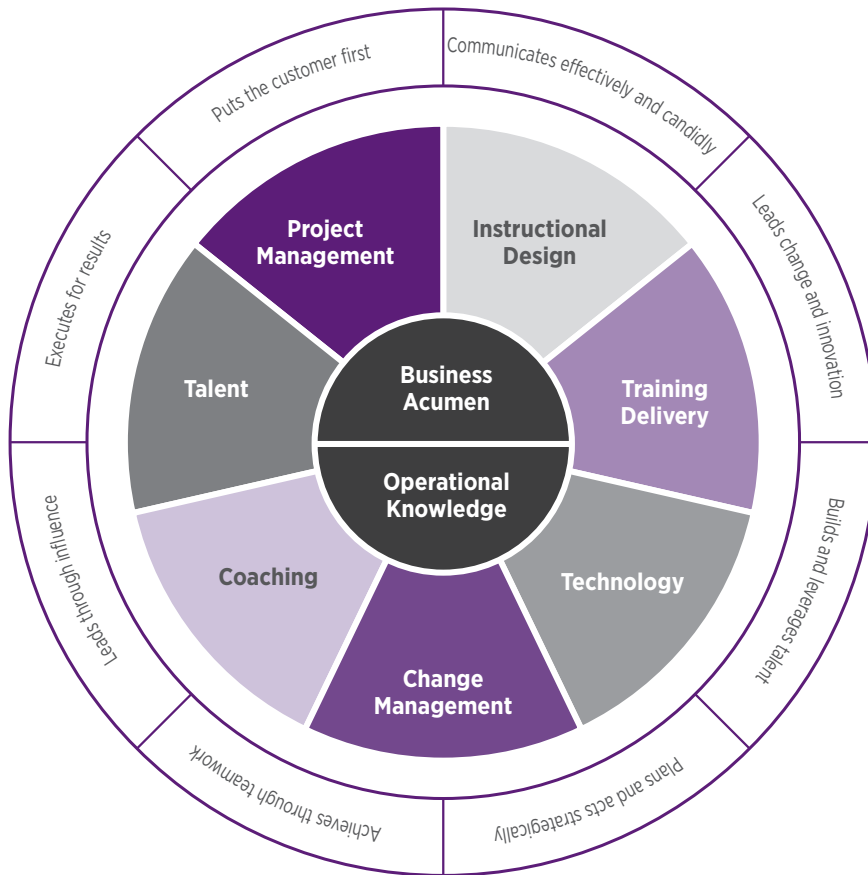
*'When business managers join the degree programme they suddenly have a whole load of work to do whilst running a busy successful business, so as they work through this they may not necessarily see business results improving. A key premise of the degree programme is to get people to start thinking about what is really the cause of a problem.'*

This means that managers start to focus less on *'sticking plasters'* and *'start fixing the great big problems. So it's only year two that some of their results start moving up'* (**Mark**). Understanding these dynamics requires a sophisticated methodology for evaluation.

### **Skills framework**

Mark has developed an L&D skills framework primarily designed to help support individuals seconded from operations into L&D, and other permanent staff develop their L&D capability. It is modelled on the CIPD Profession

**Figure 10: McDonald's skills framework**



Map and captures both functional skills and behavioural attributes (Figure 10):

*'I talk to my people about being a T-shaped leader. Yes, you are an L&D professional, but actually you've got to go across the business and understand how things come together. ... If you're thinking strategically, you can bring in lots of other things that can help support.'* **Mark**

The framework lays out expectations and supports recruitment decisions across each of the key roles in the function (training officer, training consultant and training manager). As many L&D professionals join from other disciplines within McDonald's, it also acts as a helpful starting point for understanding development needs and potential knowledge gaps.

The framework provides self-assessment tools which can be used to identify development needs. These can then be supported by an individual development plan, based on 70:20:10 blended learning principles.

**Performance consulting**

One of the most significant ongoing changes to the team involves moving away from training delivery to a consulting approach:

*'The change that we're going through is how do we move our people from being just deliverers of training to being performance consultants who are able to help their customers understand what is the performance gap, or what is the opportunity? Then focusing on the right interventions to drive improvement and results.'* **Mark**

James Thorne, HR Consultant, has also identified this change:

*'Increasingly we continue our journey from being training and HR professionals to performance professionals. We'll still retain our core ability to deliver great training in the classroom and coaching or advice in restaurants. But ultimately we'll have to become even better at the conversations around understanding what the performance gap is in the business to get to where we want to go.'*

Interestingly this change also aligns with wider developments in the organisation. Seventy per cent of the UK business is now franchised, meaning that the role of the 'franchisee consultant' has expanded. There are synergies with the changes in L&D:

*'The skills we're helping them to build are skills that we want to develop in all of our consultants across the organisation, including training. It is about becoming a performance expert and having the ability to, firstly, diagnose what the opportunities are and potential of this business is, then to help influence your customers to realise, actually, it might not be a training solution you need here. You might need to fix something else.'* **Mark**

Part of equipping the team with these skills involves helping them to build relationships and have the confidence to have candid conversations with the part of the business they partner.

### **Building new skills**

To enable this shift McDonald's has introduced a new programme, co-developed with Fiona Coleman from Create-i, designed to build this consulting capability and to improve the L&D skills framework. This is focused on building personal brand, relationships and influence, and using insights and data to inform decision-making:

*'For L&D to really understand and be aligned to the business, they need to be able to build relationships, help the business identify the key areas that they need to work on, and they need to influence the business to implement the right solutions and the necessary changes.'* **Mark**

Cohorts of 12 people complete the programme over six months. The cohorts are mixed, so L&D professionals attend alongside other consultants, which grounds the development in business realities, and leverages the clear synergies between the roles. Mark explains how the programme is structured:

*'It's a series of four workshops, with coaching in between. The coaching and knowledge that you need to report back at each class, on experience and improvement, ensure the learning gets applied in the workplace.'*

### **Impact of technology**

Alongside the move to performance consulting, the team are also looking at how they can best utilise technology:

*'Technology is changing things on so many different fronts. In terms of being able to deliver training, particularly when you have 1,250 restaurants and you're trying to keep it consistent. It makes our training more accessible. ... Technology has also impacted learners. Sixteen-year-olds coming out of school now learn in a very different way.'* **Mark**

The size and scale of McDonald's also means that technology can be very beneficial:

*'We're a business of around about 100,000 people. With that size and scale we have to always be considering what interventions work best for our overall business to ensure everybody gets the learning they need. Technology has undoubtedly enabled that to be slightly easier than it has ever been before.'* **James**

The changes have necessitated a closer link with the IT team:

*'When you're using technology, one, you have to have the support to build infrastructure. You then have to have the support available for when it's not working. Then you have to have the support for any sort of innovation and new things that you want to put into the system.'* **Mark**

Initially the use of technology was led by one enthusiastic member of the team. However, the team soon realised that they needed to up-skill everyone. Not necessarily to use technology to create content, but *'actually understand how it can be used within a programme'* (Mark). Subsequently the team has utilised technology to enhance the blended learning approach it already takes.

This has also meant a change in the role and purpose of L&D:

*'When people come into the classroom, we control that learning, but we are now expecting people to use e-learning or self-directed learning, so that's in their control. What they need are great coaches to help them do that.'* **Mark**

In this context the role of the line manager is more important than ever:

*'The more we move learning out into the business, the more you need to rely on the reporting managers to support that. One of our roles will be to move our skills onto the reporting manager. So your training department won't be just your team. It will be every reporting manager out in the system. They all know they're responsible for developing their people, but that's got to be far deeper.'* **Mark**

James agrees:

*'We understand that training doesn't just start and end at the training team; our mid-managers play an incredibly important role in ensuring our employees get the learning and development they need.'*

### **Looking ahead**

In the future, Mark believes that L&D will be a critical partner in driving change:

*'Change is going to be something that will become part of, not just our organisation, it's the world we live in. How do we help move the business through that?'*

To enable this, Mark believes that we first need to start by building L&D skills, by focusing on our own development:

*'It's the cobbler's shoes with L&D people. We look after everyone else, but how do we look after ourselves?'*

Mark is also passionate about driving capability and professionalism within L&D, so that it becomes a genuine vocation, attracting a wider pool of talent:

*'We don't want people just falling into it. We need to attract people from the first instance.'*





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