



Rewarding Learning
ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY (AS)
General Certificate of Education
2024

Professional Business Services

Assessment Unit AS 2
assessing
Human Resources Services

[SPB21]
VALID FROM SEPTEMBER 2023

**INTERNAL
ASSESSMENT**

As a Professional Business Services Consultant, you have been asked to produce a report for Your Cuisine Ltd. Read the Client Brief and use the information to produce your report following this structure:

Heading	Description and Requirements	Guide Word Count	Total Marks Available
Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured as required. Completed with appropriate recommendations including appendices, references and bibliography. 		6
Executive Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logical and concise summary of the whole report. Include an overview of your examination of the issues and concerns raised by the management of Your Cuisine Ltd in the Client Brief. 		12
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing a clear aim and relevant background information about the client organisation and context for the report. 	400	16
Research Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing the research objectives. Describing and justifying the research methods used (primary and secondary as appropriate). <i>Note: examples of acceptable primary research would include questionnaires and interviews which must be relevant to the context and issues raised in the case study.</i> 	400	12
Analysis and Discussion of Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a variety of formats, present research findings. Analysing and discussing the findings, drawing together primary and secondary evidence as appropriate. Evaluating research methods used. Including a clear discussion and analysis of your findings, supported by relevant knowledge, theory and concepts. 	2000	30
Conclusions and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing the original research objectives and drawing key findings together. Making recommendations for improvement supported by research evidence and relevant theory and concepts. <i>Summarise your analysis to reach a conclusion, and make recommendations to the management of Your Cuisine Ltd as to how they could achieve the goals stated in the Client Brief.</i> 	1200	24

Bibliography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledging and itemising references in the report using the Harvard referencing system. 	No limit	
Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including any evidence of primary research tools used, for example interview schedules, questionnaires and/or letters written or received. 	No limit	
The quality of written communication is assessed in this report.		Total Marks Available	100
<p>Students should write and present their reports as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the third person and passive voice; in 12 point font; using 1.5 line spacing; on one side of each A4 sheet; with numbered pages; and secured in a flat clear-fronted A4 report folder. <p>As a guide, the report should be 3500 to 4000 words, excluding the Executive Summary, Appendices and referencing of secondary sources.</p>			

In your report you should:

- Examine the issues and concerns raised by the management of Your Cuisine Ltd in the Client Brief.
- Demonstrate the use of a range of appropriate research methods to investigate solutions to the issues and concerns raised by Your Cuisine Ltd.
- Present a clear discussion and analysis of your findings, using relevant knowledge, theory and concepts to support your discussion.
- Draw conclusions from your findings and make recommendations to the management of Your Cuisine Ltd as to how they could address the issues raised in the Client Brief.

Client Brief

Date: 30 September 2019
Company: Your Cuisine Ltd
Project Name: Human Resource/Your Cuisine Ltd/19
Client Name: Your Cuisine Ltd

1.0 Background

Your Cuisine Ltd is a family-owned restaurant chain that has restaurants in Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Chester, Cork, Dublin, Edinburgh, Enniskillen, Glasgow, London (4), Leeds, Liverpool, Ballymena and Manchester. Between 2017 and 2019, ten franchises were awarded.

The founding owner and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was Pierre Blanc, who had 11 years' experience as a chef before opening his first restaurant in Enniskillen in 1981. Pierre began his career as a trainee chef in 1970 in Frederico's, a Michelin 3-star restaurant in Paris. He worked in Frederico's for nine years and during this time was promoted to Head Chef. Pierre left Frederico's in 1979 and was appointed Head Chef in two restaurants, in Rome and Milan. These appointments established his reputation as one of the best chefs in the industry.

1.1 Company Values

In 1981, Pierre used his restaurant knowledge to create a new dining experience in his restaurant, Your Cuisine Ltd, Enniskillen. He developed, promoted and lived the following company values:

- value everyone;
- embrace learning and raise your performance;
- give the customer added value;
- strive for perfection;
- use your imagination and creativity;
- recognise and reward employees' contributions;
- and
- care for employees.

1.2 Business Growth and Development (1981 – 2009)

Pierre was determined to make his Enniskillen business a success and worked up to 70 hours a week on many occasions. By the end of 1992, Pierre had opened restaurants in Belfast, Cork, Dublin, and Ballymena. The total number of full-time employees was 50. His business strategy was to lease premises, fit-out the properties, and employ staff to work in the restaurants. Pierre recruited the managers and head chefs for these restaurants. He applied his company values to help him identify which applicants would be most suitable. Pierre's recruitment and selection techniques resulted in the appointment of employees who delivered a high-quality service.

Pierre valued his employees and devoted a percentage of his annual budget to training and development. He was an advocate of 'employee investment', and experience had taught him that positive employee behaviours should be recognised and rewarded. Pierre introduced a reward system that was mapped against the company values, and employees were awarded bonuses based on the outcomes of performance reviews. Employees received annual pay increments linked to their length of service. He also

organised social events, which were subsidised by the company, for employees and their families and offered restaurant discounts to staff and their guests.

By 2009, Pierre had fourteen restaurants in operation. He was still involved in the recruitment and selection of the head chefs and restaurant managers, although he found that he spent less time on each appointment. In addition, he had appointed two Area Managers to help support the Restaurant Managers.

Pierre had also developed support links with further education colleges, which provide hospitality courses in each location where his restaurants are situated. The further education colleges provided Your Cuisine Ltd with access to: a hospitality talent pool; training which met regulatory requirements in food hygiene and health and safety; specifically designed courses for Your Cuisine Ltd employees; and updates on hospitality trends.

1.3 Restructuring and Performance (2009)

Pierre realised that his business needed to be restructured to avail itself of future market opportunities. In 2009 he appointed Karen Black as Human Resource Director, Jean Strauss as Operations Director and Bill Hand as Finance Director. These Directors were based at the Head Office in Enniskillen, and fully supported the company values. Staff were also recruited in Human Resources and Finance.

Figure 1 illustrates the structure of the business in 2009 and Your Cuisine Ltd Enniskillen depicts the typical structure of each restaurant. Pierre Blanc is the CEO. The Human Resource Director, Finance Director and Operations Director report to the CEO. The Area Managers report directly to Jean Strauss. Each restaurant has one Restaurant Manager, a Head Chef, two Assistant Chefs, two Kitchen Porters, two permanent Waiting Staff and between 2 and 6 temporary Waiting Staff. In 2009, the employee headcount was 125 permanent staff, excluding the CEO.

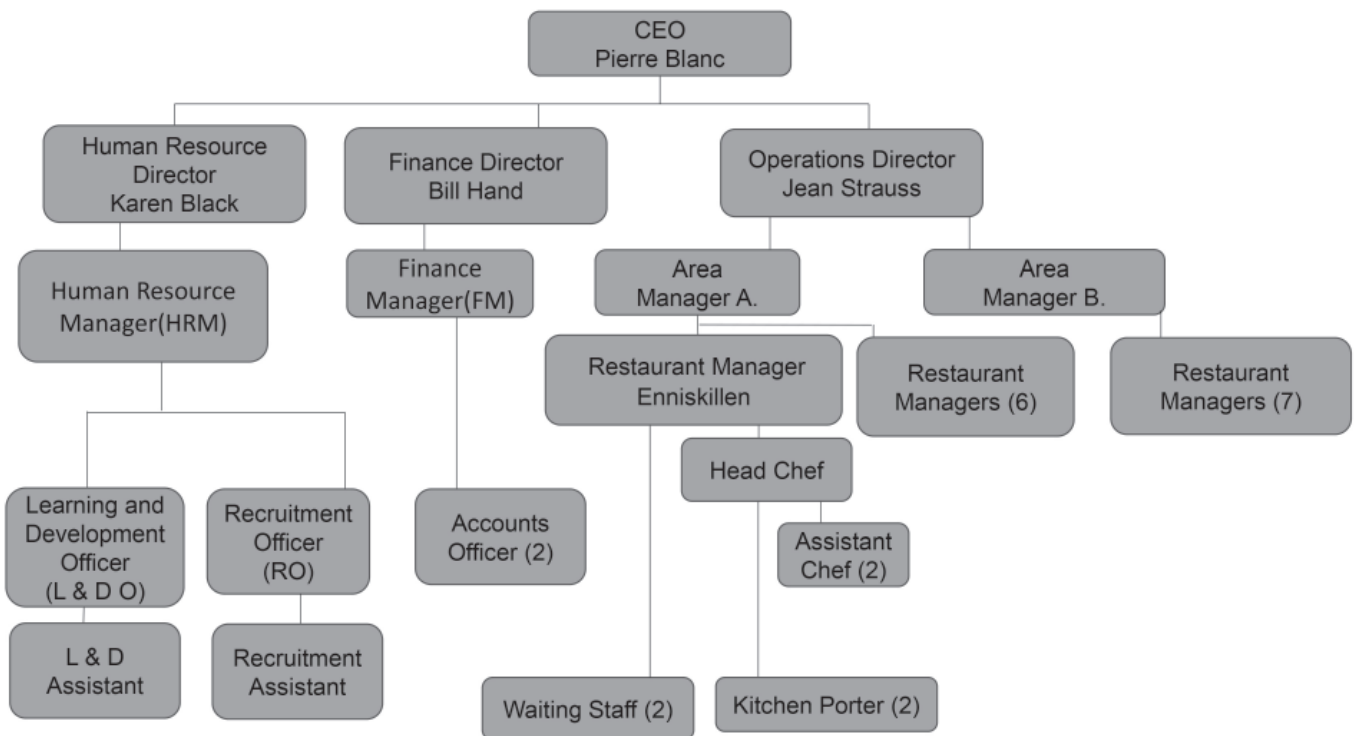


Figure 1. Your Cuisine Ltd Organisation Chart – 2009

Pierre's management style and values were deemed to have a significant impact on employee behaviour and performance. The consistently high performance of staff was regarded as being a major reason for high customer satisfaction levels, strong income growth and increased profits. Added to this were the annual staff surveys which consistently reported positive feedback from employees. Your Cuisine Ltd was noted for having employee absence and turnover rates well below the industry norms. Employees regularly recorded that '*I feel that I belong in this company.*' Despite the expansion of the restaurant business, career opportunities for promotion were limited, although the reward system was a plus for most staff.

The customer surveys which regularly scored ratings of 4.9/5.0 were based upon cleanliness, courtesy to diners, responsiveness to diners' requests, quality of food, and price.

1.4 Business Growth and Development (2009 – 2019)

The restaurant business continued to expand in England over the next 10 years as the company opened three new restaurants and won a number of contracts with tour operators in China, Ireland, the UK, and the United States. These tour operators included the restaurants in their visitor itinerary, and this increased footfall improved sales, particularly between Monday and Thursday. Pierre also believed that links with stakeholders such as the further education colleges helped to generate more business. The 20% discount offered to students and college staff between Monday and Thursday helped to generate sales during what was regarded as 'a slow part of the week'. He worked with the Operations Director and the Area Managers to strengthen the links with the further education colleges.

Pierre's success led to television appearances where he showcased his culinary skills. Customers regularly posted messages on TripAdvisor stating that 'the reason I visited the Your Cuisine Ltd restaurant was to savour the food created by Pierre Blanc'.

1.5 Changes in Senior Management

Rachael, Pierre's daughter, replaced Bill Hand as Finance Director in 2015. She graduated with a BSc in Finance in 2005 and became a qualified accountant. Rachael worked for three manufacturing plants as a Finance Manager until 2015. She is also an advocate of the Your Cuisine Ltd company values and the way employees are managed and treated.

On his 70th birthday, in 2017, Pierre announced that he was stepping down from running the business. He also confirmed that his son, Emilio, was to become CEO. Emilio had graduated with a BSc in Business and Finance in 1999 and had worked in the hotel sector for the last 18 years as a Manager, General Manager, and then Operations Director. There was a great deal of surprise at these two announcements as Pierre had given no indication that he was going to step down from running the business. Rachael was surprised and disappointed that her father had not discussed these decisions with her earlier.

Within two months of this change of leadership, Karen Black retired and was replaced by Jennifer, Pierre's youngest daughter. Jennifer had dropped out of university in 2007 and had toured the world for three years. She started to work for the Channing Hotel in 2010 as a trainee chef but left after 2 months. Following a variety of short-term jobs, she worked in marketing from 2012 to 2014. After some help from Emilio, she was employed as a Human Resource Assistant by Coyle's Engineering Ltd, a small business employing 25 people.

1.6 Annual Report of Your Cuisine Ltd

The Your Cuisine Ltd 2016 Annual Report was released in April 2017. The report highlighted the customer survey score of 4.7/5.0 and how 15% of current employees had been promoted within the business. Employees were also congratulated for their dedication, attention to detail, and hard work. The employees' loyalty was also acknowledged and, as usual, every employee benefited from the company's reward system.

1.7 New Strategy for Your Cuisine Ltd

Emilio announced that there were to be changes to Your Cuisine Ltd's strategy in May 2017. He decided that the business could expand rapidly through franchising, allowing each franchisee to run its own Your Cuisine restaurant. At the same time, his company could continue to directly manage their current portfolio of restaurants. He believed that new Management Information Systems (MIS) would make it easier to manage the franchises as well as the owned restaurants. Revenue streams, costs and human resource data could be monitored and analysed from Head Office in Enniskillen. This would enable the company to be responsive to threats and opportunities as they occurred.

He also envisaged that his restaurant business could attract franchisees through an advertising campaign and training provided through a bespoke onboarding (induction) programme. Emilio also stated the reward system and employee social events were to be stopped.

Jennifer supported his proposals and believed that she could help with recruitment, selection, onboarding and any other human resource support that was needed by the franchisees. She also thought that the use of local recruitment agencies and training providers could help both owned restaurants and franchisees acquire new staff and address employee learning and development needs faster than the further education colleges. This would also benefit the Operations Director and Area Managers as they would no longer have to spend part of their time liaising with further education colleges.

She also stated that an on-line learning and development programme would be available to assist restaurant managers in staff training in relation to all food and service matters by September 2017. This would be complemented by systems to record all training and highlight when mandatory training needed to be updated.

Rachael was surprised and worried about Emilio's new strategy and warned him that these changes could negatively impact on the business in terms of: the cost of the new MIS; the strain placed on the Operations Department; the pressure exerted on the Human Resource Department; the possible reputational damage inflicted on the company; a potential reduction in service delivery; reduced employee motivation; and a decline in employee performance.

The Operations Director and the Area Managers were sent a copy of the new strategy and attended a two-day workshop in June 2017 about how this strategy was to be implemented in July 2017. At this time, Emilio appointed Joe Black, who had worked in the car retail sector for thirteen years, as the Area Manager for Franchisees, reporting to Jean Strauss. This appointment was much to the surprise of Jennifer, Rachael and Jean.

Ten franchises were awarded between 2017 and 2019.

The total number of employees within Your Cuisine Ltd's owned restaurants by 2019 was 136.

2.0 Issues within Your Cuisine Ltd

2.1 Complaints

From November 2017 Jean Strauss became concerned about the increasing number of complaints on TripAdvisor and falling customer survey ratings. Area Managers also informed Jean about the negative impact of the new strategy. Most of the complaints were about the franchised restaurants, including:

- slow service;
- poor food;
- rude staff;
- unclean interiors.

Jean had asked Joe Black for a report in January 2018 about the franchised restaurants but he said he did not have time to do the report and that Emilio had told him to focus on opening more franchised restaurants. Jean met with Emilio and asked why she was not responsible for the granting of franchises. Emilio told Jean that Joe had specialised in this area regarding the franchising of car dealerships. Jean argued that she should be responsible for this work to ensure that resources were available from other departments to support each franchise. Emilio insisted that Joe was responsible for this work.

2.2 Human Resources

The Area Managers for the owned restaurants complained to Jean that Jennifer's department was offering little help in relation to the recruitment and selection of staff, onboarding and training. They said that employees could not access the on-line training until November and that it was frequently not working properly. The Area Managers said that the training records were incomplete as Restaurant Managers were relying on an inadequate system developed by Jennifer. They were advised by Jennifer, the HR Director, to use local recruitment agencies instead of further education colleges. The Area Managers reported that a number of staff recruited from local agencies did not know how to do their job. The generic job descriptions and person specifications used by the recruitment agencies were not appropriate. Restaurant Managers and Head Chefs complained that they were spending unnecessary time training agency staff and this was adversely affecting their own jobs. Jean had raised these complaints with Emilio several times but his response was "get Jennifer to help you".

Staff unrest continued to increase from 2018 to 2019. Staff were working longer shifts in order to cover for absences and high labour turnover. Jean complained to Emilio that she was "stressed having to deal with so many complaints from franchisees as Joe was telling them to contact her".

Jennifer was finding it increasingly difficult to deal with the level of requests for human resource support. Often Joe and the franchisees were bypassing Jean and approaching her directly for help. Jennifer was regularly working 50 to 60 hours per week, she was not sleeping well, had increased weight from 58 kgs to 68 kgs in the last year and had ceased going to the gym.

2.3 Business performance

Emilio was constantly complaining to Rachael about Jennifer and Jean. In July 2019, Rachael sent Emilio a report recommending that changes were needed. The report combined figures from the owned-restaurants and the franchised restaurants. The report included information shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Your Cuisine Ltd

Year	Employee turnover rates (%)	Employee absence rates (%)	Number of grievances	Food hygiene incidents	Customer satisfaction (scored out of 5)
2013	5.0	1.9	1	2	4.8
2014	5.2	2.1	2	3	4.7
2015	5.1	1.8	1	4	4.8
2016	5.1	2.2	1	5	4.7
2017	9.8	6.3	7	16	3.2
2018	18.1	16.1	14	23	2.7

The report also noted that recruitment and selection processes were taking too long to complete and 52% of new recruits left within one year. Overall, the quality of work and performance was poor. Feedback from the annual staff survey over the last year stated that:

- staff were not informed of the company values;
- career progression was limited;
- jobs were repetitive;
- the work environment was stressful;
- the learning and development programmes were inadequate;
- the on-line learning and development programmes did not work;
- communication within the business was poor;
- managers and employees no longer had the opportunity to share information;
- there was lack of support from Area Managers;
- turnover of chefs and kitchen staff was over 30% and this contributed to incidents of poor food hygiene;
- staff were having to work longer shifts to cover absences and high labour turnover;
- the company did not seem to care about staff;
- the management information systems in place were not fit for purpose;
- the company had lost a number of tour operator contracts and customer numbers had fallen, which had significantly reduced revenue streams.

3.0 Management Goals

Emilio decided that the company needed to address the issues that were adversely affecting the business. He listed, below, the following goals for the business:

1. An improved organisational structure and culture.
2. Improved recruitment and selection processes.
3. Enhanced onboarding and learning and development experiences for staff.
4. Improved employee well-being, motivation and performance.

4.0 Timescale

Emilio has requested that the report be completed and available in three months.

Permission to reproduce all copyright material has been applied for.
In some cases, efforts to contact copyright holders may have been unsuccessful and CCEA
will be happy to rectify any omissions of acknowledgement in future if notified.