

HUMAN RESOURCES CASE STUDIES

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APPLE: Work with us, “Join us. Be you.”

Maria del Carmen De la Calle Durán, *Universidad Rey Juan Carlos*

Thais González Torres, *Universidad Rey Juan Carlos*

Apple is a multinational corporation headquartered in California that was founded in 1976 by Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs. It recorded its first success with the launch of Apple II in 1977, although its major breakthrough arrived in 1984 with the Macintosh. Today, the main hardware products it manufactures and retails include the iPod, iPhone, iPad and Macintosh range. It has also marketed software products such as iTunes, iLife, iWork, Final Cut Studio, Logic Studio, iOS, and Mac OS X.

At the end of 2021, Apple continued to be the world’s largest listed company, holding this position for the second year in a row. Its brand value puts it in second place globally, behind only Amazon. Its asset margin in 2021 amounted to 218 billion dollars, with an annual turnover of more than 182 billion dollars. What’s more, in Europe alone it provides around 1.76 million jobs including employees, suppliers and app developers, with 1,415 staff in Spain, 76,000 jobs related to Apple stores, and 165 suppliers (Cinco Días, 2021).

Apple considers human capital to be a key component of its competitiveness, so its recruitment strategy has the overriding goal of attracting potential candidates that match its corporate culture and values. Accordingly, it focuses on hiring people that are diverse, independent, talented, passionate and committed, as these are the profiles that are deemed to best understand the company’s mission, and which will contribute the most to achieving its common goals. In other words, it looks for intelligent employees that will not need to be managed.

One of the channels Apple uses to attract employees is its own corporate website, “Jobs at Apple”, where they make a statement of intent by welcoming potential employees as follows: *“We’re perfectionists. Idealists. Inventors. Forever tinkering with products and processes, always on the lookout for a better way. A job at Apple is one that requires a lot of you, but it’s also one that rewards bright, original thinking and hard work. None of us here at Apple would have it any other way”*.

Positions at Apple cover a broad range of profiles involving the supply chain, operations, design, manufacturing, retail, customer service, marketing, and engineering. Dated 9 December

2021, the jobs section “Trabaja con nosotros” on the company’s Spanish website posted a vacancy for a technical specialist “Especialista Técnico”, offering a post at an Apple store for performing assistance and service tasks such as the following:

- Help and provide assistance for both new users and established customers.
- Resolve customers’ problems and provide advice. Liaise constantly with customers. The position caters for an uninterrupted working day, part-time, or temporary part-time.

The following are the job requirements:

- Time-management and decision-making.
- Keeping calm and customer-focused during the problem-solving process.
- Fostering customer trust.
- Fluency in the local language.
- Timetable flexibility essential. The working day will depend on business requirements.

The recruitment process is open throughout the year, and although it varies according to each country and candidate, there are several points in common: the process begins online, through the tab on the website called “Jobs at Apple”. A candidate has to fill in a form and write a motivational letter. Once invited to take part, the individual in question receives an automated email specifying the date and place of the first interview. The subsequent stages in the recruitment process may last anything from a day to several weeks, and the tests tend to be administered to a group of candidates at the same time. It is a rigorous process that is attended by store staff and managers. Once the process has ended, any candidate that has been rejected is not given the reasons for the negative outcome.

When a candidate successfully completes the selection process, and with a view to streamlining their induction, the company arranges a training course that lasts for around two weeks, enabling them to understand and acquire the necessary expertise on Apple’s different products and services.

Another type of training that is more continuous in nature involves the *Pathways* programme, which focuses on teaching the specifications and functions of each one of the products on sale at Apple’s physical outlets, as well as on providing a good service to improve customers’ retail experience. This programme’s development has involved the creation of an in-house position whose main role is the training of new recruits during their first year. The position requires the mentor to access the training app, where they will find advice and the skills to be conveyed to each new employee.

One of the company’s principal goals is to instil in employees and management the innovative culture Steve Jobs created. To do so, in 2008 they established a corporate training environment

(a kind of campus) for its staff called the Apple University. The main topics studied include such highlights as the history of Apple, mainly exploring its cases of success and failure, as well as those of other companies (Applesfera, 2015).

In step with this training, and right from the start, the company seeks to ensure new recruits understand the importance of individual responsibility and the fact they are involved in something bigger than themselves. The aim of this is to motivate employees, making them realise that everything they do is important and will have an impact on the company, with particular encouragement for self-learning and self-sufficiency. Apple therefore rotates its staff through different departments and projects in teams that meet twice a week to share ideas for developing a free-thinking and innovative culture.

With a view to motivating its staff, Apple created the *Fellows Program*, which assesses each individual's performance, and nominates as leader the person that has made a major contribution to the company. The idea is to acknowledge those employees whose contributions have had a major impact on the electronics industry.

The evaluation of Apple's performance, in turn, is holistic, and involves an assessment made by various referees, not only by management. In this 360° assessment, each employee is rated by all those people affected by their duties, such as supervisors, colleagues and reports (Labrado-García, 2019).

Apple's remuneration policy involves both monetary and non-monetary rewards, which are designed to meet its employees' needs, as well as increase their motivation. These include the following (Labrado-García, 2019):

- Salary. Pay tends to be high in order to attract the best employees, keep them motivated, and ensure they feel valued.
- Share options. Depending on their salary, employees may choose to receive part of it in shares, giving a high value to them, which means they constitute a major incentive.
- Discounts on products for both employees and their relatives or close associates.
- Health insurance and contributions to pension plans.
- Social and corporate prestige.
- Social events. The company holds gatherings that are attended by employees from different sectors to provide an opportunity to socialise outside work.
- Transport arrangements, which not only mean a cash saving, but also help to reduce the stress caused by commuting.
- Options for undertaking personal projects. For example, the programme '20% of the time' allows employees to devote 20% of their working day to the pursuit of personal

projects that may be of benefit both to themselves and to the company. The *Blue Sky* programme refers to the opportunity that Apple engineers have to enjoy two weeks “off” to focus on personal projects.

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Questions about the case:

1. Draw up a job description for the position of “Technical Specialist” at Apple. What requirements does someone need to meet for this job? Explain your answer.
2. Identify and list the HRM processes at Apple that appear in the job description. Which ones do not appear? Find some source that will help you to explain one of the processes that has not been identified in the text.
3. Analyse the different training schemes at Apple. What benefits does the Apple University provide for the company and its employees?
4. Analyse the remuneration policy in place at Apple. Do you think it fulfils the principles of internal, external and individual equity? Explain your answer.

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