mapal os

%

Report

97% of restaurant teams say they're trained.

Only half feel confident during service.



UK study across 400 frontline staff and HR leaders reveals why performance breaks under pressure

01.

Training isn’t the problem. *Execution is.*

On paper, most restaurant teams are well prepared.

Training programmes are in place. Content is delivered. Completion rates are high. From a Learning and Development (L&D) perspective, things look like they’re working.

But step into a live shift and the picture changes.

Service is fast, unpredictable and public. Teams are making decisions constantly, often under pressure, with limited time and incomplete information. **What matters in that moment isn’t what people have learned, but what they can actually execute.**

That’s where performance starts to break.

This report is based on a **UK study of 200 frontline employees and 200 HR and L&D leaders across quick-service restaurants (QSR) and full-service restaurants (FSR).** It highlights a consistent gap between preparation and delivery.

Teams feel trained, but they don’t always feel confident during service.

That gap has a direct impact on revenue.

When service slows down, fewer guests are served. When communication breaks down, upselling opportunities are missed. When mistakes happen, costs increase and guest experience suffers.

02

The uncomfortable *truth*

The industry is measuring training completion.

It should be measuring performance under pressure.

Most organisations can confidently report on completion rates, assessments and learning hours. These are visible, trackable and easy to benchmark.

What's much harder to see is how teams actually perform during a busy shift.

That's where performance is decided, and where it often starts to break.





03.

Teams say *they're trained.*

They're less sure they can deliver.

There's strong confidence in training itself.

- **95% of QSR** employees and **99% of FSR** employees say their training prepares them
- **All HR and L&D leaders** surveyed believe their training is effective

But confidence drops when the focus shifts to real service conditions.

- **Only 47% of QSR** employees feel fully confident during service
- While **53% of FSR** employees feel fully confident
- Among leaders, **only around half feel fully confident in outcomes**

This gap is the core issue.

Employees understand what's expected of them. They have the knowledge. But under pressure, that knowledge doesn't always translate into consistent delivery.

04.

QSR vs *FSR*

Where performance breaks

QSR

- Speed **pressure**
- Decisions **made in seconds**
- High volume, **limited recovery time**

FSR

- **Coordination** complexity
- **Multiple touchpoints** across the team
- **Greater reliance** on communication

The environments are different, but the result is the same.

Performance becomes harder to sustain during service.

05

Performance doesn’t fail once. *It stacks.*

A single issue rarely causes a shift to fail.

It’s the combination that creates problems.

These pressures tend to overlap. A busy shift, a slow system and unclear communication are often happening at the same time. As they build, performance becomes harder to sustain.



39 %

HUMAN

Personal responsibilities, fatigue and external pressures

31 %

OPERATIONAL

Workload, pace and staffing challenges

29 %

TECHNOLOGY

Systems that are difficult to use or unreliable

27 %

COMMUNICATION

Lack of clarity, missed or unclear messaging

06

Where things go wrong and *revenue drops*

When execution starts to slip, the impact is immediate.

- **Slower service reduces** the number of guests served
- **Missed communication** limits upselling opportunities
- **Errors increase** waste and reduce margins
- **Inconsistency affects** guest satisfaction and repeat visits

This isn’t just an operational issue; it directly affects revenue.





07

Learning *exists.*

It’s just not usable.

Learning in restaurants doesn’t happen in isolation. It happens during service, as teams respond to real situations.

But most systems aren't designed for that environment.

Frontline teams tend to favour learning that’s practical and immediate:

- **Coaching** that supports decisions in the moment
- **Shadowing and demonstrations** that translate directly into action



08

QSR vs *FSR*

Learning in practice

QSR

Speed matters more than structure

- **27% say competition-based learning** is most effective
- **26% say on the job learning** works best
- Only **10%** prefer **written guides**

***In QSR** environments, learning needs to keep pace with service. Teams respond best to formats that are quick, practical and immediately actionable.*

FSR

Clear guidance matters more than flexibility

- **23%** say **written step by step guides** are most effective
- **20%** favour **on the job learning**
- **23%** also value **competition-based formats**

***In FSR**, learning still needs to be practical, but there's a stronger need for structure to support consistency across more complex service.*

09

The reality *on shift*

There's a clear gap between how learning is designed and how it's experienced.

- **38% of QSR employees** say learning tools are hard to access when needed
- **26% of FSR employees** report the same issue
- Around a third in both environments report **usability challenges**
- **34%** say learning spills into personal time
- **Up to 31%** say content isn't relevant

Learning is available, but not always usable in the moment it's needed.

In hospitality, if learning isn't instant, it doesn't exist.

10.

The biggest *productivity killer?*

Switching between tools mid service.

Restaurants don’t have a tech problem.

They have a fragmentation problem.

Teams are working across multiple systems for learning, communication and operations. At the same time, communication often happens outside those systems.

- **34–35%** of operators **use social media groups**
- **39%** of QSR leaders **rely on personal phone numbers**
- **29%** of FSR leaders **do the same**
- **Around a third** rely on **managers to pass messages down to teams**

Teams don’t have one clear place to go for information.

What that creates

Information is spread across different channels. Messages are missed or duplicated. Ways of working vary between sites and even between shifts.

This lack of alignment directly affects execution.

Every additional tool adds friction. Even small delays matter when service is under pressure.

11.

QSR vs *FSR*

Friction on the floor

QSR

38% struggle to access tools

32% say communication tools are hard to access

Small delays directly impact throughput

FSR

36% report usability issues with learning tools

37% say communication tools are hard to access

32% report slow or unreliable communication tools

Different types of friction but the same outcome.

Execution slows. Errors increase. Revenue is affected.

12.

Managers are holding *performance together.*

Barely.

Managers play a central role in how teams perform

- **93.8%** of employees say they feel supported
- Only **38.4%** say they feel fully supported

Support is present, but not consistent.

In practice, managers are often stepping in to resolve issues that should not exist in the first place.

What that looks like

Managers are:

- Repeating or clarifying information
- Fixing system or process issues
- Supporting teams reactively during service

This leaves less time for:

- Coaching
- Developing
- Reinforcing standards

Instead of leading performance, they're maintaining it.

13.

QSR vs *FSR*

Manager reality

QSR

39% feel fully supported

The pace of service **limits time** for coaching

FSR

48% feel fully supported

Higher coordination demands increase pressure

In both environments, managers are stretched.

Without visibility, standardisation and clear frameworks, performance becomes dependent on individuals.

14.

91% see hospitality *as a career.*

Only a third are sure they'll stay.

Interest in hospitality is strong.

- **91%** of QSR employees and **94%** of FSR employees see it as long term

But confidence in that future is lower.

- Only **32–35%** say they're definitely likely to stay

This gap is shaped by day-to-day experience.

What drives that gap

Employees point to the same drivers of motivation:



These aren't long-term concepts. They're experienced during shifts. When service is inconsistent, so is motivation.

15.

The cost of getting shift *experience wrong*

Each departure doesn't just create a gap in the rota. It triggers recruitment, onboarding and lost productivity, all of which carry a cost.

- **43.2%** turnover in QSR and **39.1%** in FSR (HR DataHub, 2025)
- Replacing an employee can cost **50–75% of their annual salary** (Rise Accounting, 2026)

For multi-site operators, this leads to ongoing disruption, rising labour costs and uneven standards across locations.

Retention is often treated as a hiring problem, but **much of it is shaped by the day-to-day experience on shift**, where pressure, lack of clarity and limited support influence whether employees stay or leave.





16.

The best restaurants aren’t *doing more.*

They’re removing friction.

The most effective operators focus on simplifying how work happens. Five approaches stand out:

ONE SYSTEM
A single place for communication, learning and operations

LEARNING IN FLOW
Guidance that can be used during service

MANAGER ENABLEMENT
Visibility, standardisation and coaching frameworks

VISIBLE PROGRESSION
Linking performance to development

BUILT FOR REAL CONDITIONS
Tools designed for pace and clarity

17

What happens when everything *runs from one place*

When these elements are aligned:

- → **Errors** decrease
- → **Service** becomes faster
- → **Execution** is more consistent
- → **Revenue** becomes more predictable shift to shift





18

What QSR operators *should do next*

Focus on speed and decision making

- Reduce **system complexity**
- Make **information instantly accessible**
- **Support decisions** in real time
- **Reinforce behaviour** through fast feedback

19

What FSR operators *should do next*

Focus on coordination and clarity

- **Centralise** communication
- **Standardise** processes
- Provide **structured guidance**
- Enable managers to **coach effectively**

20

The bottom *line*

Restaurants are investing in training.

But performance doesn't hold up during service, and that has a direct impact on revenue.

This isn't a training issue. It's an execution issue, shaped by how systems, communication and support come together on shift.





21

See how leading operators *are fixing this*

Performance isn't breaking because teams lack training. It's breaking because the systems supporting them during service are fragmented and slow.

Leading restaurant operators are solving this by simplifying how work happens on shift.

Mapal helps do this by bringing learning, communication and data into one connected system, designed for the pace and pressure of service.





That *means*

One place for everything

Teams don't need to switch between platforms or rely on informal channels. Tasks, updates and learning all sit in one place, accessible on the go via mobile, so everyone has a clear and consistent source of information during service, wherever they are.

Clear, standardised ways of working

Processes are defined and easy to follow across sites, so teams aren't relying on memory or old habits. This reduces variation between shifts and improves execution.

Real-time visibility for managers

Managers can see what's happening across their teams and sites as it happens, making it easier to spot issues early, support the right people and keep service consistent and on track.

Learning that works in the moment

Guidance is accessible during service, not separate from it. Teams can quickly find what they need and apply it immediately, closing the gap between training and execution.

mapal OS

The result is stronger performance on shift.

FEWER ERRORS · FASTER SERVICE · CLEARER COMMUNICATION.

And ultimately, more predictable revenue across sites.

If you're looking to strengthen delivery, retention and team performance across your multi-site restaurant operation, we would love to show you how we can help.

Book a demo today