

UDC 005.95/.96:658.3:664

JEL M12, M14, M50, J24

DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/2786-765X/2026-13-10>**Olena Dragan**

Doctor of Economic Sciences, Professor,  
Professor of Department of Labor Economics and Management,  
National University of Food Technology  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7606-2385>

**Oksana Sheremetynska**

PhD in Economics, Associate Professor,  
Associate Professor of the Department of Labor Economics and Management,  
National University of Food Technology  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5409-8697>

**Anna Haidamaka**

Graduate Student,  
National University of Food Technology  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3780-2687>

## EFFECTIVE HR-PRACTICES IN HR-MANAGEMENT OF ENTERPRISE: EXPERIENCE OF FOOD INDUSTRY COMPANIES

The article explores effective approaches to HR management using leading international food industry companies Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's as examples. It provides a comprehensive analysis of their HR practices aimed at human capital development, the creation of an effective work environment, and the enhancement of employee engagement. Danone implements a system of corporate values known as "HOPE" (Humanism, Openness, Proximity, Enthusiasm). The company focuses on employee upskilling, the development of professional training programs, and open communication, which facilitates continuous feedback between staff and management. Unilever places particular emphasis on HR practices related to human capital development, especially reskilling and continuous employee training. One of its key initiatives is U-Renew, which enables employees to adapt to new professional requirements and enhance their qualifications. In addition, the company actively applies personalized and flexible employment models, develops hybrid work formats, and expands employee autonomy in choosing working conditions. These measures contribute to higher employee engagement, increased motivation, and improved organizational performance. McDonald's HR practices are characterized by a highly structured employee onboarding system. New hires undergo staged training that covers safety procedures, service standards, and corporate values. This approach ensures a high level of standardization across all locations, regardless of country or region. Clearly defined procedures enable employees to quickly master work processes, ensuring consistent service quality and operational efficiency. Mentorship also plays a crucial role, as new employees are gradually integrated into real work processes under the guidance of experienced colleagues. Furthermore, McDonald's onboarding system is designed not only to transfer technical knowledge but also to foster teamwork and corporate culture. From the first days of employment, new hires are integrated into the team, learning to interact effectively with colleagues and customers while understanding the importance of collaboration in achieving shared goals. This comprehensive approach significantly reduces onboarding time, minimizes stress among new employees, and enhances productivity at early stages of employment.

**Keywords:** HR-practices, human capital development, HR-management, employee engagement, food industry.

**Formulation of the problem.** Modern food industry enterprises operate in an environment of constant change and competition. Primarily, human resources are viewed as a key factor in company development, as the results of their activities depend directly on the level of employee engagement, motivation, and training. Therefore, the analysis of modern HR practices, using international food industry companies as examples, takes on particular importance.

The relevance of this topic is also driven by the need to adapt personnel management systems to crisis conditions, such as economic instability and martial law. Food industry enterprises are

forced to implement flexible approaches to professional development, employee support, and retention. In this context, it is essential to examine the experience of leading companies such as Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's. Consequently, the research problem lies in synthesizing the modern HR practices of international food industry companies and determining their role in enhancing enterprise competitiveness and HR management efficiency.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Modern scientific research in the field of HR management emphasizes that HR practices in the 21st century are becoming strategically important



for companies across various industries. In particular, the works of Dave Ulrich highlight that the HR function is transforming from an administrative role to a strategic one, focused on creating business value through human capital development and improving organizational effectiveness [14]. Researchers note that in conditions of an unstable environment, companies are forced to rethink their approaches to HR practices, emphasizing flexibility, adaptability, and rapid response to changes.

An important area of contemporary HR research is employee engagement management. Ryan Pendell's work demonstrates that the level of employee engagement directly affects productivity, employee turnover, and companies' financial performance [10]. In particular, it is emphasized that engagement is influenced by the quality of management, organizational communication, and psychological safety of employees, which is especially relevant for modern companies across various economic sectors.

Special attention is given by researchers to the development of future skills and workforce reskilling. In Josh Bersin's research, it is stressed that modern HR systems should be built on the concept of continuous learning, as professional skills quickly become obsolete and require regular updating [2]. Moreover, the importance of investing in employee training is highlighted as a tool for enhancing companies' competitiveness.

Another significant current trend is the introduction of flexible forms of work organization. An increasing number of scholars emphasize the transformation of employment models toward hybrid and remote work, which allows for greater employee autonomy and an improved work-life balance. The implementation of hybrid and remote work models is becoming a response to the need for increased flexibility and employee autonomy. Such changes contribute to improving work-life balance and reducing levels of professional burnout. In this context, the analytical centers Gremi Personal (Poland) and AntForce Analytics (Ukraine) conducted a joint study on the transformation of employment formats in Europe and Ukraine at the beginning of 2026, based on data from government institutions, recruitment platforms, and industry sources [12]. The results show a decrease in fully remote work in Europe (down to 10-15% of vacancies in the United Kingdom) and a shift toward the dominance of the hybrid model, while in Ukraine and Poland there is also a growing return to on-site work with a limited share of remote employment [12].

It is also relevant to emphasize the importance of continuous employee learning and the

development of new competencies. Due to the rapid obsolescence of professional skills, companies are forced to invest in reskilling and upskilling their workforce.

Most social platforms and networks focus on various HR practices, including ensuring employee safety; selective hiring; effective teams; fair and performance-based compensation systems; training in relevant skills; creating flat and egalitarian organizational structures; easy access to information; transparency; employee engagement; and performance management [7].

Thus, the key trends in the development of HR practices include increasing employee engagement, fostering continuous learning, and implementing flexible work models. In this regard, the analysis of effective existing HR practices in the food industry, taking into account current challenges, is of interest for further research.

**The purpose of the article.** To examine modern HR practices of international companies in the food industry using Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's as examples. In particular, to analyze key approaches to employee engagement, professional development, employee motivation, and effective performance under conditions of economic instability.

**The main material presentation.** On today's day, HR practices introduced to minimize costs while ensuring high performance indicators and improving the personnel management system have become particularly relevant. Within the food industry, leading international companies such as Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's were selected to study the development of HR practices.

**The Experience of Danone.** Danone is a leading international food company operating in 130 countries. The company owns more than 160 plants and employs approximately 80,000 people [3]. Danone's three business lines dairy and plant-based products, water, and specialized nutrition are united by a single operational principle: offering innovative, high-quality products that meet consumer expectations at every stage of their lives.

The enterprise builds its work environment around four "HOPE" values: Humanism, Openness, Proximity, and Enthusiasm, which define the method of employee support and the style of interaction within the company [4]. The organizational culture primarily emphasizes that employees should feel heard, motivated, and valued for making a significant contribution to the success and development of the enterprise.

One of Danone's leading HR practices is personnel development through advanced

training and education. Modern HRM research shows that employee development and training are essential for motivation, increased productivity, and organizational efficiency [4-5]. Scientific reviews of HR practices emphasize that training and development directly influence the formation of employee competencies and their ability to achieve the primary goals of the enterprise, which is crucial for global companies.

Additionally, employee engagement management is an important area of Danone's HR practices. Scientific literature notes that HRM practices play a key role in forming staff engagement through organizational commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction. Specifically, studies show that HR system elements such as performance appraisal, training, and reward systems create a positive organizational climate that increases the level of engagement among employees [13]. Danone implements this by shaping corporate culture, developing internal feedback between employees and management, and supporting open communication.

Furthermore, modern HRM research highlights the importance of employee involvement through management support and organizational climate. Scientific papers state that HR practices affect the level of support, trust, and psychological safety at the enterprise, which determines employees' readiness to put in extra effort for the company's benefit and their level of engagement [13]. At Danone, this manifests in an orientation toward cooperation, support for employee initiatives, and the development of an open management style.

The Experience of Unilever. Unilever was founded over 100 years ago and is one of the world's leading manufacturers and suppliers of food, personal care products, cosmetics, and household goods. Every day, 3.4 billion consumers use Unilever products in over 190 countries. The number of employees reaches 128,000, and sales in 2023 amounted to 59.6 billion euros. More than half of the company's divisions (58%) operate in developed and rapidly developing markets. Unilever owns more than 400 brands worldwide, including Dove, Domestos, Hellmann's, Wall's, PG Tips, Ben & Jerry's, Magnum, and Lynx [15].

AFINA Group began working with Unilever in 2018 and currently provides distribution services for the non-food brand group in the Odesa, Mykolaiv, Kyiv, Cherkasy, and Chernihiv regions [15].

According to Forbes Ukraine, in March 2026, Unilever reached an agreement with McCormick & Company regarding a multi-billion dollar deal to spin off the majority of its food business, valued at \$44.8 billion (€38.95 billion). For Unilever

CEO Fernando Fernandez, this may become the largest strategic move since his appointment in March 2025 [6]. After merging the food business with McCormick, the British group will be able to focus on more profitable areas cosmetics, personal care, and household chemicals [11].

An important component of Unilever's HR system is reskilling and systematic personnel training. The company actively invests in developing future skills, as Leena Nair (Unilever's Chief Human Resources Officer) emphasized in an interview that the "lifespan" of a professional skill has shortened to 2-3 years, requiring constant knowledge updates [6]. Also, within the HR strategy, internal development programs and educational leaves are implemented, such as the U-Renew initiative, which allows employees to undergo paid training to adapt to new professional requirements [8].

Another direction of the company's HR strategy can be identified: rethinking employee engagement management through autonomy and flexibility. Unilever is gradually moving away from rigid organizational structures and implementing an approach where employees can independently choose their employment format depending on life circumstances. This allows them to work fewer months per year or transition between projects, which increases staff motivation and strengthens the sense of autonomy [1].

Unilever is also actively developing a system of personalized working conditions and hybrid work. The company is moving away from a universal approach to work organization and creating individual employment models that depend on the country, role, and personal needs of the employee. In turn, this approach reduces staff burnout and increases the enterprise's flexibility [6].

The Experience of McDonald's. McDonald's is a global leader in the quick-service restaurant industry, with over 41,000 locations in more than 120 countries, serving approximately 70 million visitors daily. The company also employs over 11,000 people and offers flexible schedules, formal employment, training, and jobs starting from the age of 16 [9].

The enterprise pays significant attention to the adaptation process of new employees and serves as the "first workplace" for youth and people without prior experience. The company has created a clear adaptation structure where new employees undergo training in the basics of service, safety, brand culture, and corporate values. During the first two weeks, they get acquainted with work areas, receive support from colleagues, and perform various practical

tasks. This approach helps newcomers integrate faster into the work process and creates a sense of belonging to the team [9].

McDonald's actively encourages career growth and talent development for employees at all levels. The company provides various tools, such as the "Career Map" and the BEST program, which help individuals understand their development paths. Thanks to this, employees can not only move up the career ladder but also change the direction of their interests. Also, in 2024, the "JUMP" accelerated development program to the position of restaurant manager was launched, where in just 6 months, employees have the opportunity to master the various skills necessary for restaurant management [9].

The McDonald's HR system also includes an extensive system of insurance and motivational practices. In addition to competitive wages, employees receive: additional leave; insurance for relatives; medical insurance; mandatory medical examinations; free sessions with a psychologist; English language classes; free access to educational platforms; branded gifts from the company; corporate celebrations; various recognition programs; a 50% discount on lunch during a shift at a McDonald's restaurant; and free drinks [9].

Furthermore, during military operations, the enterprise pays employees their full salary, as time spent in a shelter is counted as time on shift rather than downtime. In cases of loss of housing, injury, or death of an employee,

including during service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the company provides financial assistance.

**Conclusions.** Effective HR management is one of the key factors of long-term development and successful functioning of modern international enterprises in the food industry. Examining the experience of leading companies such as Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's, it becomes evident that significant attention is devoted to the development of modern HR practices aimed at creating a supportive working environment, increasing employee engagement, and fostering employee development. Moreover, important elements of the personnel policies of these enterprises include career development programs, the formation of corporate culture, professional training and development systems, as well as the implementation of flexible work arrangements based on the principles of social responsibility, openness, and inclusion.

A promising direction for further research is the adaptation and generalization of effective HR practices of international companies such as Danone, Unilever, and McDonald's for application in food industry enterprises. Taking into account current trends in talent development, the formation of modern leadership, and the support of employee well-being can contribute to strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises, improving their operational efficiency, and ensuring sustainable development under conditions of instability.

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**Драган О.І.**

доктор економічних наук, професор,  
професор кафедри економіки праці та менеджменту,  
Національний університет харчових технологій  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7606-2385>

**Шереметинська О.В.**

кандидат економічних наук, доцент,  
доцент кафедри економіки праці та менеджменту,  
Національний університет харчових технологій  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5409-8697>

**Гайдамака А.В.**

здобувач вищої освіти,  
Національний університет харчових технологій  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3780-2687>

## **ЕФЕКТИВНІ HR-ПРАКТИКИ В HR-МЕНЕДЖМЕНТІ ПІДПРИЄМСТВА: ДОСВІД КОМПАНІЙ ХАРЧОВОЇ ІНДУСТРІЇ**

Стаття досліджує ефективні підходи до HR-менеджменту на прикладі провідних міжнародних компаній харчової індустрії Danone, Unilever та McDonald's. Проаналізовано існуючі HR-практики цих підприємств, спрямованих на розвиток людського капіталу, формування ефективного робочого середовища та підвищення залученості працівників. Danone впроваджує систему корпоративних цінностей під назвою «HOPE» (Humanism, Openness, Proximity, Enthusiasm). Компанія зосереджується на підвищенні кваліфікації працівників, розвитку професійних навчальних програм та відкритій комунікації, що сприяє безперервному зворотному зв'язку між працівниками та керівництвом. Unilever приділяє особливу увагу HR-практикам, пов'язаним із розвитком людського капіталу, зокрема рескілінгу та систематичному навчанні працівників. Однією з ключових ініціатив є програма U-Renew, яка дозволяє працівникам адаптуватися до нових професійних вимог і підвищувати кваліфікацію. Крім того, компанія активно впроваджує персоналізовані та гнучкі моделі зайнятості, розвиває гібридні формати роботи та розширює автономію працівників у виборі умов праці. Ці заходи сприяють підвищенню залученості персоналу, зростанню мотивації та покращенню загальної ефективності організації. HR-практики McDonald's характеризуються високоструктурованою системою адаптації працівників. Нові співробітники проходять поетапне навчання, що охоплює правила безпеки, стандарти обслуговування та корпоративні цінності. Такий підхід забезпечує високий рівень стандартизації робочих процесів у всіх закладах незалежно від країни чи регіону. Чітко визначені процедури дозволяють працівникам швидко опанувати необхідні алгоритми, забезпечуючи стабільну якість обслуговування та ефективність роботи команди. Вагому роль відіграє наставництво для нових працівників, які поступово залучаються до реальних робочих процесів під керівництвом досвідчених колег. Крім того, система адаптації McDonald's спрямована не лише на передачу технічних знань, а й на формування командної взаємодії та корпоративної культури. З перших днів роботи нові співробітники інтегруються в команду, вчаться взаємодіяти з колегами та клієнтами, а також усвідомлюють важливість співпраці для досягнення спільних цілей. Такий комплексний підхід скорочує період адаптації, знижує рівень стресу у нових працівників і підвищує продуктивність на початкових етапах роботи.

**Ключові слова:** HR-практики, розвиток людського капіталу, HR-менеджмент, залученість працівників, харчова індустрія.

*Дата надходження статті: 03.03.2026*

*Дата прийняття статті: 20.03.2026*

*Дата публікації статті: 11.05.2026*