If I Got the Job at PEZ

An Android installation problem becomes an unusual job application and an independent five-year PEZ strategy.

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Can You PEZ Me One? — An unsolicited strategy for a nearly hundred-year-old candy company.

My Son Found Me a Job

On 26 September 2026, I contacted PEZ about an Android application. This is probably not the conventional beginning of a five-year strategy for an international confectionery company, but it was the beginning of mine. My son had a PEZ product whose packaging pointed towards PEZ Play. We tried to install the application on my phone, only for Google Play to tell us it had been made for an older version of Android and could not be installed. The dispenser worked. The candy was there. The part that had failed to keep up with the times was the software attached to a product invented long before smartphones existed.

I found that amusing enough to write to PEZ and offer to help maintain its Android application. I work with software and practical technical problems, so the proposal was not entirely unreasonable, although it was a rather unusual way to apply for a job.

By then I had encountered a more troublesome problem. I had started reading about PEZ. A question about Android compatibility led into the history of its dispensers, its global distribution, the way characters are licensed, the collectors who distinguish tiny physical variations and the extraordinarily odd assortment of flavours the company has manufactured. A product that I had thought of mainly as an occasional little gift turned out to be a compact combination of confectionery, industrial design, merchandise, nostalgia and mechanical simplicity. The more I looked, the more ideas accumulated. Eventually I realised I was no longer investigating an Android application. I was mentally trying to run the company.

The company has not appointed me to anything. This is the point in the story where that distinction needs to be made perfectly clear. I do not have access to PEZ’s internal financial data, its manufacturing constraints or its confidential commercial plans. Some of the ideas that follow may already have been explored and discarded for good reasons. But imagine that the unusual job application had taken an even stranger turn, and I had been hired not to fix one piece of software but to decide what PEZ should do next. Imagine I had to explain the ideas to people who actually make the candy and then defend the economics in front of the board. What would I say?

How a Support Question Became a Strategy

I contacted PEZ about the Android problem and offered to help maintain the application. A company representative replied that the developers were already working on it. When I tried the app again later, it worked on the same phone. I cannot establish that my message caused the change; the work was already

underway.[1]

By then, the support question had led me into a different investigation: whether PEZ had research on adults eating its candy, and what that might mean for flavours, repeat purchases and retail. The private exchange is background to that investigation. This article summarises it without reproducing the emails or identifying my child or the representative.

None of that amounts to a job offer, an endorsement or a response to the strategy. My imaginary appointment, fortunately, did not require an appointment from Human Resources.

The Company I Would Not Reinvent

My first decision would be not to reinvent PEZ. That may seem disappointing from the person who has just promoted himself to imaginary executive, but a company that has survived since 1927 deserves a little humility from somebody who arrived through a bug report.[2] PEZ has an immediately recognisable physical format, manufacturing knowledge, international distribution, decades of commercial relationships and collectors who care about objects made long before many of them were born. The dispenser changes character and colour while remaining recognisably a PEZ dispenser. It is a rare kind of product identity: familiar without requiring everything to look the same.

This also means that PEZ does not operate in only one market. For a child, a dispenser may be a small toy that contains sweets. For a parent it may be a convenient gift. For a collector it can be a historical object whose precise version matters. For somebody following an artist or a popular creator, it might be merchandise that has little to do with confectionery. And for an adult who just wants mint candy, the most interesting thing may be what is inside rather than the face above it. The same format connects these transactions, but the reasons people buy are not identical.

Some people will want only candy. Some will want only a particular character. A collector may never open the packaging. None of them needs to become a full-time PEZ enthusiast for the company to serve them well.

The accompanying report explores a wider portfolio under the phrase *Can You PEZ Me One?* Here I would start with three questions: would somebody buy a flavour again, could a retailer justify keeping the product permanently available, and would a family choose to keep playing after the phone was put away? A new idea would have to survive the people responsible for making, stocking and using it. The report also sets out the principles I would bring to those decisions: commercial viability, fair participation, voluntary play and a visible account of human work. Saved Hours is part of that stated position; PEZ360 is one supporting test within the wider strategy.

The Candy Deserves Its Own Strategy

The next meeting would be with the people who develop the candy. It is easy to become fascinated by the plastic heads, the licences and the collectors while forgetting that the contents of the dispenser are something people can consume and purchase again. An attractive character may prompt an initial sale, but a desirable flavour can potentially create a different kind of relationship with a customer. That is not a new discovery for

PEZ; it already sells refills. The question is whether more deliberate product research could identify additional kinds of demand, especially among adults who have little reason to buy the current character-led products.

PEZ's origins are useful here. It began as an adult peppermint product, and its history includes coffee, liquorice and chlorophyll.[3] Chlorophyll is the green pigment involved in photosynthesis, and I would very much like somebody to find the original product file so I can learn what PEZ thought it was selling. But a fascinating historical product is not automatically one worth producing again. I would separate historical research from commercial development. Some findings belong in an archive. Others might justify a modern formulation. We should not pretend that a new recipe is identical to a historical one without documentary evidence.

I would begin by investigating a line tentatively called PEZ Originals. Peppermint would provide a historical anchor, coffee would be an obvious candidate for technical and consumer testing, and liquorice would be considered in markets where its flavour profile makes sense. I would not launch a dozen new varieties just to make the presentation look exciting. First I would ask whether a few formulations can be produced economically, whether they compare favourably with other small confectionery products and whether consumers would pay the intended price. Blind taste tests would come before nostalgia-heavy packaging, because I want to know whether people like what they taste rather than whether they like a story about what their grandparents could have bought.

And then I would ask whether they buy it twice. A customer who purchases coffee PEZ because the idea is funny may be worth a sale. A customer who returns for more because the candy tastes good may be the beginning of a business. If the product merely replaces the strawberry refill they would otherwise have purchased, the accounting may be less impressive than the marketing. The programme would therefore compare actual incremental contribution, repeat behaviour and manufacturing complexity. The goal is not a museum of forgotten flavours. It is to discover which flavours deserve a future.

Before commissioning entirely new products, I would investigate what PEZ already makes in different regions. A flavour that seems exotic in one country may be ordinary in another. An existing assortment may be worth a limited test with a particular retailer, although its absence from a market can have perfectly reasonable explanations: weak demand, logistics, labelling, shelf-space competition or local commercial decisions. The investigation should begin by asking people in the business what they know rather than congratulating ourselves on having noticed that every country does not sell exactly the same candy.[4]

The wider report also considers public product challenges, creator partnerships and a durable collector archive. PEZ Arts already launched an artist-designed dispenser by JF Krichbaum in 2026;[5] I would not arrive claiming to have invented the idea of artists working with PEZ. Those possibilities deserve their own rights agreements, owners and commercial tests. They do not all need to become the first launch. Millions of video views can be a very expensive way to learn that most viewers cannot or do not want to buy a dispenser.

From the Spot Bin to the Game Table

There is a much less glamorous part of the strategy I would not want marketing to overlook. In my own shopping, PEZ has often been something I encountered as an occasional special-purchase item in Netto rather than a product with a permanent display where I could browse different figures. That is an anecdote, not proof of how Danish retailers generally handle the brand. It is, however, a useful starting question: what is the value of creating demand if a customer cannot find the character or refill they want in an ordinary shop?

PEZ already has rotating retail stands.[6] The proposal I call PEZ 360 is therefore not an invention of a new piece of shop furniture. It is a test of a different way to use an existing format. Imagine a well-maintained rotating display with a visible selection of character dispensers and suitable refills, small enough to earn a permanent place but large enough to make browsing worthwhile. The commercial case would depend on the space the retailer gives up, the speed at which the stock actually sells, the time needed to refill the stand and whether the purchases are additional rather than merely transferred from a promotional box. I would compare it with ordinary shelving and occasional spot placement before announcing it as a universal solution.

Then I would ask what happens after the product leaves the store. A dispenser can remain in a child's room for years. Why shouldn't it become a piece in a game? PEZ has already explored that idea in a 2017 Smurfs game set,[7] but I would investigate a more general portable tabletop format that uses suitable dispensers customers already own. A small case could contain a fold-out board, rules, reusable counters and a simple way to stabilise the characters. Families should be able to play without purchasing another set of plastic figures. If the system works, PEZ could offer different boards and games without requiring every expansion to come with a new collection of dispensers.

The candy itself is an interesting physical component. Its small rectangular shape could represent resources, paths or completed objectives on a board. I can imagine a co-operative game in which children build a bridge using pieces placed by their dispensers, or a route-planning game in which supplies are moved between locations. But I would not design a game in which eating more sweets is necessary to win. Every mechanic must work with reusable markers, and any design allowing candy to contact a playing surface before being eaten needs appropriate hygiene and food-contact assessment. The hard part is not manufacturing an attractive box. It is making a game that children enjoy playing again.

Five Minutes of PEZ Play

I would keep PEZ Play. PEZ currently advertises 23 games in the application.[8] The Android problem was a reason to improve how digital experiences are maintained, not a reason to abandon them. But I would redesign the app's purpose. Most digital products are judged partly by how long they can persuade people to stay. I would like a child-oriented PEZ experience that succeeds by ending. Nintendo's *Hello, Mario!* offers an interesting precedent for a playful stop in which the character becomes tired;[9] it is not evidence that Nintendo imposes precisely five minutes, which would be my own proposed limit.

A PEZ Play activity could involve a short puzzle, a route, a small creative task or an introduction to a board-game challenge. It should be designed to offer a meaningful conclusion within roughly five minutes, rather than be an ordinary endless game interrupted by an unpleasant timer. Once finished, it might suggest

continuing with actual dispensers, a paper game or ordinary objects at home. The physical activity must remain available without the app, and the app must not make additional confectionery purchases a condition for playing.

I would test this with families before claiming that it reduces screen time. A child might put down PEZ Play and immediately open something else; in that case we have reduced attention paid to PEZ but not necessarily changed the family's digital habits. The research question is whether the short experience makes a voluntary transition into physical or shared play more attractive. The commercial proposition is also different from an ad-supported game. PEZ already sells physical products. It need not treat a child's attention as something to extract indefinitely in order to fund the digital experience.

The Spreadsheet That Can Say No

By now the imaginary finance director has every reason to interrupt me. A flavour, a retail experiment, a game and an app study: what does this cost, and how much money will it make? I cannot know from public information alone. PEZ publicly described approximately EUR 150 million in 2024 revenue,[10] but that is not a current product-level income statement. Parent-company accounts and consolidated group figures are different reporting boundaries; neither gives me permission to invent a margin on each dispenser.

The report proposes a **EUR 150,000 feasibility ceiling**, not a company-approved budget. It contains eight workstream allocations and a reserve. That is a menu for staged decisions, not an instruction to launch everything at once. I would begin only where an internal owner could provide the baseline, a useful test could fit within its allocation, and Finance could establish the actual costs. A successful experiment earns the right to ask for more; a failed one earns the right to stop.

Take the rotating stand. Under the report's illustrative assumptions, EUR 200 in modelled first-year costs (stand, installation, service and PEZ-side support), EUR 0.65 contribution per genuinely additional selling pack and a 75 per cent incrementality adjustment require about **7.89 observed extra selling packs per week** over 52 weeks to cover those modelled costs. The 75 per cent assumption is already included in calculating that store-level threshold; it corresponds to about 5.92 genuinely additional manufacturer packs per week. Here a selling pack means either one dispenser with three candy rolls or one refill pack with eight rolls; both are hypothetical pack definitions for the calculation. The service and support already included must not be charged twice; any other omitted incremental costs would raise the threshold. None of those inputs is a verified PEZ price or margin. The useful next step is to replace them with actual retailer and manufacturer figures, then ask whether the stand still works. The retailer also needs to earn its space. In the report's ten-extra-pack example, the retailer is positive below about EUR 31.50 per handling hour and negative above it, with the other assumptions fixed. At EUR 25/hour the annual result is about +EUR 45; at EUR 50/hour it is about -EUR 130. These are sensitivity results, not measured retail costs. Even at higher modelled sales, small changes in price or restocking time can remove the retailer's surplus. The game and app need their own tests; a child enjoying a prototype does not by itself pay for tooling or maintenance.

Where Did the Saved Hours Go?

There is another condition I would bring into the meeting, one drawn from my research outside PEZ. Whenever the company improves a process and reduces the human effort needed to produce the same result, I would want that change measured. Not only the narrow time taken by the task, but also the maintenance, corrections and work transferred elsewhere. Then I would ask a second question: what happened to the capacity that was released? Did it reduce overtime, improve quality, lower workload, enable product development or disappear into an increasing expectation that everybody must do more?

This is the Saved Hours Commitment. It does not turn every reduced labour hour into a fictional cash saving and it does not announce personnel guarantees that the company has not approved. It requires the gain to become visible so management and employees can discuss how it is used. The question also changes the way I would view new software. A better archive might genuinely save staff time previously spent reconstructing historical product information, but only if the same work is not simply hidden in another department. The ledger should record what was measured, how the output was kept equivalent and where the benefit appeared.

The principle behind the five-minute app is related but its measurement is different. Children’s play is not paid labour, and family time should not be converted into an hourly financial value. Yet the question of who receives the benefit of a technical improvement remains useful. If a digital experience can be enjoyable and then allow a child to return to play with people and objects around them, that is a design ambition worth examining. I would prefer that to measuring success solely by the minutes of attention the company managed to retain.

My First Hundred Days

My first hundred days would begin with the people who already know PEZ. I would speak to employees in manufacturing, design, licensing, retail, customer support and product development. I would want to know what a new flavour does to a production schedule, how expensive it is to create a new dispenser head and what happens when a product fails to sell. I would also ask which recurring task each department would improve if it had the chance, not because every complaint becomes a funded project but because people doing the work often know what consumes time without adding value.

I would then choose a small number of tests with those people. A blind flavour comparison could tell us whether a formulation deserves a paid repeat-purchase trial. A retailer willing to share a baseline could help test whether the stand adds sales after displaced purchases and refill work. A paper game and a short digital prototype could show whether families want to play again and whether leaving the app leads to shared play or simply to another screen. These are separate questions; none requires pretending that every proposal in the report is ready to begin.

The first hundred days would end with decisions about the evidence we actually had. They would not force food safety, licensing, repeat purchases or retailer recruitment onto the timetable of an imaginary new executive.

On day one hundred I would return with what we tested, what we spent, what worked, what did not and what remains unknown. I would include the experiments closed early. If the best improvement came from an employee's longstanding suggestion rather than one of my new concepts, that person should receive the credit. My objective would be to improve PEZ's capacity to choose and execute promising opportunities without undermining a successful existing business. The anniversary would be useful as a framework for documenting selected stories and experiments, but not a reason to manufacture products before they are ready.

The Board Meeting

One hundred days into the imaginary appointment, the board would probably be wondering how an Android support question had become an investment programme. I would explain that I still want PEZ to make its ordinary sweets and dispensers exceptionally well. Most of its products need no app, documentary film or celebrity partnership. A child buying a favourite character should be able to enjoy it without knowing anything about my strategy. The same is true of an adult buying candy or a collector looking for reliable history. The company should become better at recognising the occasions in which doing something additional is worth the work and the money.

I would not ask the board to approve a five-year transformation as a single cheque. I would ask it to authorise the first controlled investigations and let their results determine the following decisions. Some ideas may already have been explored. Some will fail for reasons that are obvious to PEZ employees and invisible to me. That is not a threat to the exercise; it is the whole point of building an honest decision process. A strategy that works only if every idea proves brilliant is not useful to the people who have to pay for it.

At the end of the meeting, I would return to the incident that began the investigation: my son and a PEZ product. He had no reason to know why his father was reading old flavour catalogues, calculating the economics of rotating displays or wondering how a tiny candy tablet could become a bridge in a game. He simply wanted the thing on the packaging to work. That is a reasonable expectation of a consumer-product company, and a useful reminder to a person attempting to run one. An elaborate commercial strategy should ultimately improve the experience of the person holding the product, not make that experience more complicated.

In reality, PEZ has not hired me. I have not attended these meetings, authorised any spending or reviewed its confidential financial accounts. This is a hypothetical appointment and an independent piece of research, with the assumptions and financial limits made explicit in the accompanying Camelot strategy. The aim is to answer seriously a question that began as a joke about a job application: what would I actually do if I had responsibility for developing the company?

There are probably easier ways to apply for a job. Most people send a CV and wait for a reply. I started by offering to fix an Android application and somehow ended up with a proposal for the second century of a confectionery brand. Perhaps somebody at PEZ will find one of the ideas useful. Perhaps they will explain why several have already been tried. Either outcome would be interesting. I would welcome a fresh conversation with PEZ about the ideas.

There is, however, one final practical detail that I should disclose before anybody considers offering me the imaginary position for real. **I would prefer to work part-time.** I have a son, my own research projects and a paper asking where the saved hours went. It would be an awkward way to defend that principle if I immediately signed up for a sixty-hour week explaining to other people how to get their time back. Naturally, I would be happy to discuss the CEO's salary. Ten hours a week ought to make for an interesting opening negotiation, although I suspect the actual management team might have some reasonable objections.

So, PEZ. Can you PEZ me one?

— Dennis Hedegreen

Accompanying Camelot strategy (independent working paper): Can You PEZ Me One? - Products, Human Time and Play (PDF) (https://hedegreenresearch.com/assets/camelot/reports/product-strategy/can-you-pez-me-one-pez-five-year-strategy/product-strategy__global__2026-10__i001__v0-18__draft.pdf). This V0.18 discussion draft connects the FY2027-FY2031 product proposals and 2027 centenary with human work, fair participation and voluntary play. It includes the full Saved Hours protocol as well as a supporting PEZ 360 case with hypothetical selling packs, separate manufacturer and retailer economics, and sensitivity and decision boundaries. The report explains the wider strategy and my criteria for judging it. It is an independent proposal for discussion, without PEZ authorisation or endorsement. Earlier editions remain preserved. Financial inputs remain illustrative.

Editorial notice: This essay describes a fictional appointment and an unsolicited plan. It is not commissioned, authorised or endorsed by PEZ. The facts concerning the original Android correspondence were checked against the author's emails, while the causal effect of the email on PEZ's subsequent app changes is not established. Financial scenarios in the companion report are illustrative assumptions, not forecasts or verified PEZ economics. Commercial reliance would require the relevant primary accounts and operating data.

Sources and method

These sources support historical and present-tense statements. Product proposals, campaigns, budgets, and the fictional leadership role are the author's hypotheses rather than PEZ commitments. Public sources were checked on 20 October 2026. PEZ Play, the Smurfs product listing, the leadership statement, PEZ Arts and Nintendo's description were rechecked on 23 October; the other sources retain their earlier check dates.

1. Background checked against the author's private PEZ correspondence in the 20 October 2026 review. The public account is summarised and anonymised; email text, headers, signatures and forwarded threads are not reproduced. The author reported that the app later worked on the same phone. No independent device retest, causal role in the app change, job offer or PEZ endorsement is established.↩

2. PEZ — history (https://www.pez-candy.com/en-int/pages/history) (company account of its 1927 origins).↩

3. PEZ USA — Fun Facts (https://us.pez.com/pages/fun-facts), confirming liquorice, coffee and chlorophyll as former flavours; it does not establish their present availability.↩

4. PEZ — FAQs (https://www.pez-candy.com/en-int/pages/faq-pez), on product ranges varying by country; it does not establish why a specific distributor selected its current assortment.↩

5. PEZ — PEZ Arts (https://www.pez-candy.com/en-fr/pages/pez-arts) and the 28 May 2026 launch announcement (https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/14955674/pez-becomes-art-toy-with-extremely-limited-artist-edition?lang=en&publisherId=13560654).↩

6. CTC Wholesalers — 24-hook rotating display (https://www.ctcwholesalers.co.uk/product/pez-counter-display-small-rotating-24-hooks/) and 64-hook rotating display (https://www.ctcwholesalers.co.uk/product/pez-floor-display-large-rotating-64-hooks/). Their listing does not show Danish retail penetration or PEZ's fixture costs.↩

7. PEZ Candy USA — Smurfs Click 'N Play, 2017 (https://us.pez.com/products/smurfs-gift-set-pez-dispensers). The game used special removable tops, not proof that every ordinary dispenser is compatible.↩

8. PEZ — PEZ Play (https://www.pez-candy.com/en-int/pages/pez-play), advertising 23 games when checked on 23 October 2026.↩

9. Nintendo — Hello, Mario! (https://www.nintendo.com/en-gb/Games/Smart-device-games/Hello-Mario--3029558.html). Its sleep/pause feature is documented; an exact five-minute cap is not.↩

10. PEZ — Leopold Hainy appointment, 1 July 2025 (https://www.pez-candy.com/en-ie/blogs/press/new-ceo-pez-ag-leopold-hainy). EUR 150m refers to the company's statement for FY2024, not verified FY2025 product-level results.↩

RELATION MEMORY

SOURCE LAYER The Saved Hours Doctrine · Method for measuring required human work and tracing released capacity; not automatic cash savings or a child-attention wage.

NEARBY An Article Is Not a Document · The narrative article and its separately versioned Camelot report serve different functions.

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