

SODEXO SUPPORTS THE FUTURE OF THE WORKPLACE

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[LONDON, DECEMBER 2023] As the global landscape undergoes unprecedented changes, Sodexo Corporate Services sheds light on key elements that are vital in securing a positive workplace future. From their Corporate Services Client Survey from 2023, clear insights show that a preference for remote working and cost consciousness above all else, is shaping a new way of using the workplace, and therefore presents a substantial opportunity for employers.

In a world marked by rapid technological advancements, shifting demographics, and unforeseen global events, businesses must stay ahead of the curve to ensure a resilient and adaptive work environment. Sodexo's survey provides insight on the key areas businesses should target. The people-first strategy that is dynamic and prepared for the future addresses challenges such as rising living costs, employee disconnection, and changing work patterns. By focusing on people, space and sustainability, these learnings presents an opportunity for employers to move with shifting priorities and the evolving workplace.

Julie Ennis, CEO of Sodexo Corporate Services UK & Ireland, notes: "Over the last years the global workforce has seen a magnitude of shifts. Building a future proof workplace is no longer a luxury, it is a must. In order to retain our people, who remain the centre of the workplace environment, it is imperative that solutions are created now."

Through Sodexo's research, there are several interesting facts effecting workplace culture. From information from 3000 workers across private and public sectors, the findings present a clear sense of what people desire from their workplace.

An overview of the insights:

- Employees prefer remote working
- Employees are cost conscious above all else
- Human connection is missing from the work ecosystem
- 43% of people are quietly dissatisfied with their jobs; 28% are disengaged and want to quit
- 1 in 5 are dealing with poor mental health; a similar proportion with poor physical health
- 90% of employees are waiting for their employers to improve on sustainability; 78% of the survey think environmental sustainability is very important

The Solutions

"Work place strategies can't be a 'one size fits all' solution. Our research has shown differing preferences for quiet spaces or lively, creative environments. Understanding that 'flexibility' carries different meanings for different people is key" says Ennis.

Data indicates that more than 2 days of remote work has an impact on engagement with colleagues and work experience. Sodexo notes that socialising, free or subsidised food, comfort in the working environment and subsidised commute are the 4 motivations to bring people back. Environments need to be created that foster social relationships - impromptu inspiration and informal socialising are key, as 71% of employees find greatest satisfaction in their workplace experience from team spirit and collaboration.

A case study can be seen in Sodexo's London Headquarters. Ennis notes: "Early surveys hinted at a new trend -the office as a social hub, a place for health and wellbeing, and an enabler to drive company culture [after the pandemic]. We wanted flexibility and adaptability to be its backbone. So we designed with these concepts in mind. Now, our sensor data speaks volumes about how people behave. Looking at our data [...] employees gravitate towards collaborative areas, while traditional workspaces often remain less populated. These spaces are a hive of activity, not just during work hours, but also after, as social hotspots."

Improving job perks could also help drive employees back to work; by improving employee loyalty and helping workers manage the cost of living crisis. Commuting benefits and good food options are at the heart of this, with 92% citing that desire for remote working is due to inflation.

"Food matters to employees, and it is underrated by employers as a means to improve satisfaction levels and performance."— Adrian Evans, Food Transformation Director, Sodexo. Nearly 20% of employees are

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dissatisfied with the meal solutions at the workplace which leads to making their own arrangements. 42% say they use onsite food services, such as a cafeteria, but 72% have access to them, demonstrating a disconnect between food benefits offered and take up, likely due to a gap in communication. This is a vital element for organisations to focus on, as a key driver for encouraging employees back to the office. In the era of hybrid working, food has transcended its traditional role, becoming a pivotal tool to enhance employee health and well-being. It is also a key enabler in attracting and retaining talent.

As a final element, the Sodexo report notes that 78% find sustainability important, and more than 50% of employees expect their employer to act responsibly. This increases to 85% amongst Gen Z, a demographic that comprises a large segment of the future workforce. In addition, 34% of UK workers would turn down a job offer if a company's sustainability values were not aligned to their own. It affords an additional touch point for engagement and loyalty between employees and employers.

In terms of priorities, the top three expectations of employees of sustainability criteria is energy usage, responsible waste management, and reduction of plastic usage. Sodexo believes it is vital to engage at all levels of the business, from suppliers to staff to customers and external parties too, to ensure sustainability as targeted at all levels. Claire Atkins Morris, Sustainability Director, Sodexo says "Start to understand available data sources. Review what you are doing, think about your goals, look at the gaps and start to make a plan for how to reach them." Strategies in turn must be communicated to employees to build on the relationships.

Sodexo's research has shown that organisations must adapt to ensure an engaged and positive future workplace. Transparency, communication, benefits and dynamic environments are key to achieving this.

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