

# Feed your workplace culture





## Let's get started!

The pandemic has sparked a lively conversation about the effects of working from home on workplace culture. There is one camp that believes going to the office is the only way workplaces will be able to retain and build their culture and there is the other camp that firmly believes working from home is the future of work and does not acknowledge that it is, in fact, not accessible to everyone. We believe the future of work is most certainly hybrid.

According to [IBEC's](#) Returning to the Workplace 2021 report, 81% of the Irish businesses surveyed are planning to adopt hybrid working. In addition to this, they are:

- preparing for more collaborative and face to face work activities taking place onsite, with more administrative, routine or individually focused tasks taking place in a remote setting
- considering investment in IT, software and physical spaces to promote collaboration among employees on and off site

Over the years we've learned a thing or two about workplace culture; we have seen how our clients have used food to help build inclusivity and create pivotal moments where workplace culture thrives in a real, meaningful way.

By putting the oldest human bonding ritual of breaking bread at the centre of your workplace culture strategy, you can bring teams together on the days they choose to be in the office, help them understand each other better, and ultimately get more good work done. Here's what you can do to get started.





## Bring back the lunch break

These days employers are focused on helping their employees boost their physical and mental wellbeing, recognising that healthy and happy employees are more engaged and productive. [Gallup](#) has found that businesses with engaged employees have reported 17% higher productivity and 21% higher profitability, so finding ways to boost these in the office as well as while working from home is in the company's interest.

What will make your staff happy, healthy and ready to thrive? Well, we think we have the answer. It's all about taking a proper lunch break and eating a nice meal – preferably with colleagues when in the office. From 1st April, the Irish government has also set a new [Code of Practice](#) for workers to get the right to disconnect from work and achieve a better work-life balance and companies need to set processes in place to adhere.

The most cited explanation for skipping lunch is an excessive workload. Yet, research has shown that skipping lunch is detrimental to productivity. It goes without saying that you need your brain to do good work; the brain consumes about 20% of the body's energy. By skipping lunch or not eating the right lunch, you starve your brain and muscles of the key nutrients needed to function at peak level – killing concentration and productivity.

### The Fooditude effect:

We know from observing our own clients that many take upwards of an hour for lunch. In one survey, all respondents reported eating lunch and 35% took more than half an hour for their break. Lead by example and show your staff that taking a lunch break is more than okay – in fact, make it mandatory.

### Tips for your workplace:

- Sound a lunch gong in the office or schedule lunch break alerts on calendars or Slack
- Let management lead by example and take disconnected breaks







## Discourage dining 'at desko'

Okay so you've got people taking a break to actually get some sustenance in them – that's great. But you also need them to get away from their desks and their screens - while working from home or from the office, so they feel well-rested.

Research has shown that when you take a break from the task at hand and do something totally unrelated, you are able to think more creatively when you return to the original task. Staying inside, in the same location, makes it hard for employees to develop new ideas. Taking a break gives us a fresh perspective on challenging projects.

Encourage your employees to change their scenery, go for a walk, hit the gym – or better still, share a meal with their colleagues.

### **The Fooditude effect:**

In a survey of our clients, 47% reported they never eat at their desk and 28% said they rarely do so. Even while working from home, they tend to share meals with a family member or housemate. One of the pleasures of working with our clients is seeing the cultures they've built around food and conviviality. The canteens we work in are buzzing with chatter and laughter – clear markers of happiness.

### **Tips for your workplace:**

- Set challenges / lunchtime activities like step challenges or a 'fridge foraging' lunch competition
- Create specific spaces for taking lunch breaks (more on this on the next page)





## Find some space, make it nice

If you want to get people away from their desks, it's helpful to offer them some space to do it. Understandably, this is easier said than done with the cost of office real estate in Dublin. But, if you can get people taking their lunch break in a comfortable and social space it will pay dividends.

This doesn't mean just throwing together some bean bags in the lunchroom. There is plenty of [evidence](#) that points to a link between office environments and productivity. In the new world of hybrid working where employees are questioning the need for 'presenteeism' - the focus has shifted from the office as a location for work and moved towards the use of the workplace as a hub for collaboration. Designing versatile spaces will allow employees to collaborate more effectively.

Lunch can be a great opportunity for people from different areas of the business to sit together and get to know each other, sparking serendipitous discussions. It will also help with building better relationships, which will positively impact the bottomline.

### **The Fooditude effect:**

We're experts at eking out cooking and dining space in existing offices. Our flexible delivery model uses minimal permanent equipment, allowing clients to repurpose the dining areas for the rest of the day. We can service clients that need anything from a one-off pop-up to 3 meals/day, 5 days/week without an onsite kitchen or extraction. At one client site we serve 800 meals/day with not much more than some counters and a dishwasher!

### **Tips for your workplace:**

- Swapping out static furniture in favour of movable or storable furniture makes the space adaptable
- Partition walls that are movable and can transform the size of the space or block off areas adding versatility





## Buy lunch

If you want to make sure your staff take a break – or take a break together – then don't just provide the space, provide the food too. After all, who doesn't like a free lunch (or breakfast or dinner!)? This is difficult to achieve while working from home – but not entirely impossible. Several restaurants including the popular [777](#) in Dublin have put together fantastic make at home 'meal kits' that can be mailed nationwide as a special experience. We've ourselves run virtual cook-alongs, cocktail masterclasses and even foraging sessions for our clients.

Kevin Kniffin, visiting assistant professor at Cornell authored a study titled "[Eating Together at the Firehouse: How Workplace Commensality Relates to the Performance of Firefighters](#)" and found that "Eating together is a more intimate act than looking over an Excel spreadsheet together. That intimacy spills back over into work," further adding "From an evolutionary

anthropology perspective, eating together has a long, primal tradition as a kind of social glue. That seems to continue in today's workplaces." Given the findings, organizations would do better to consider their expenditures on cafeterias as investments in employee performance, Kniffin says.

If you want to make your staff happy and more productive then providing free meals is a fool-proof and cost-effective way to help people feel more connected to their colleagues and motivated to do their best work.

### **The Fooditude effect:**

When we surveyed our own clients – all of whom offer food as a perk to their employees, we found that nearly 80% staff almost always ate with their colleagues with 48% saying they always eat with other people and 32% saying they usually do, illustrating that offering a free meal motivates people to eat together more often.

### **Tip:**

- Even if daily catering in the office is not an option, find a fixed day of the week or month – and build some excitement around it!







## Conclusion

A shake up of the way we have traditionally been working in a fixed office space has certainly impacted how workplace culture is perceived. However, shared values, beliefs and behaviours can be manifested in several different ways just by finding ways of bringing teams together - physically or virtually.

Everyone loves good food. We're urging companies to use the language of food to bring a diverse group of people together and make them happier, healthier and more productive.

### Fooditude can help businesses

- offer their teams safe, healthy and delicious lunches that nourish
- make lunchtime an inclusive occasion to bring people together and make company culture thrive
- become more flexible with versatile uses for the same space
- save costs, efforts and hassle

What's not to like there? If you would like to speak with us about how Fooditude can help feed your company culture, talk to us now.

Email [hello@fooditude.ie](mailto:hello@fooditude.ie)



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