



Introduction

The hybrid office is here. Schedules are more flexible, and daily attendance is not mandatory. How can companies make the office a place that employees want to return to?

We surveyed 600 employees and managers who are figuring out how to navigate the hybrid workplace in a post-Covid world. This report looks at which factors are most influential when it comes to motivating employees back into an in-person workspace.

Employees value lunch (and each other)

There are some things people undoubtedly love about working from home: the lack of a commute, more quality time with family and pets, and the (very) casual dress code.

But, despite these benefits, 93% of our survey respondents who had been primarily remote during COVID said they'd like to return to the office at least part time.

One of the draws to return to the office has to do with everyone's favorite part of the workday: lunch. Lunch was popular before COVID (**88% of employees say they looked forward to their lunch break prior to the pandemic**), but over the course of the past year it has become an even more compelling reason to return:

65% of respondents said they missed having lunch with their coworkers



45% say they have lunch with their coworkers more now than before the pandemic



Working parents appreciate sharing a meal with their coworkers most of all

Employees with children are over **6x more** likely than employees without children to say they're eating lunch with their coworkers more often now than pre-pandemic.

The real ROI of providing lunch

It turns out that providing lunch onsite employees is more than just a nice-to-have perk. It's actually a smart investment with very tangible benefits.

Back-to-office motivation

While some companies have returned to having their full staff in the office five days per week, many other companies have adopted a hybrid strategy, with different cohorts of employees in the office on different days. Whichever choice an organization makes, leaders agree that providing food is a great incentive for encouraging folks to come into the office.



93%

of leaders say that more employees show up to the office on days when free food is provided.

7 in 10

employees say that they would be more likely to return to on-location work if their employers offered free meals.

Employers recognize the important social and business benefits of office lunch:

65%

of those in manager level roles or above agree that socialization during lunch breaks is critical to team building

57%

of those back in the office are holding lunch meetings



“

As we welcome more employees back to the office, we're trying to create that 'team family' feeling, and have more employees in the break room eating lunch together.

Stephanie, Office Experience & Facilities Manager, WHOOP



Show support & appreciation

Meals can go a long way toward showing employees how much you care. Both managers and employees agree that providing food in the workplace is an important and effective way to make a team feel more appreciated and supported:

- **55% of managers** agreed that it is important to provide food in the workplace to support employees
- **48% of managers** agreed that it is important to provide food in the workplace to show appreciation
- **74% of employees** say that their employer providing lunch makes (or would make) the transition back to work easier on them



This is a big year for us. My love language is food and when people are working seven days a week and they're there for 12+ hours it's nice to do something to support them. It's the little things that make all the difference.

- Sarah, Company Culture and Operations Manager, Sendoso

What employees want from their onsite workplace

When we asked what hybrid and remote workers want most from their onsite workplace, food ranked high on the list.

Flexible in-office arrival and departure days/times:

65%

Transportation stipends:

59%

Free meals: ✓

58%

Onsite perks such as a coffee bar, game lounge, etc:

48%

A fully stocked snack pantry: ✓

46%

Discounted meals: ✓

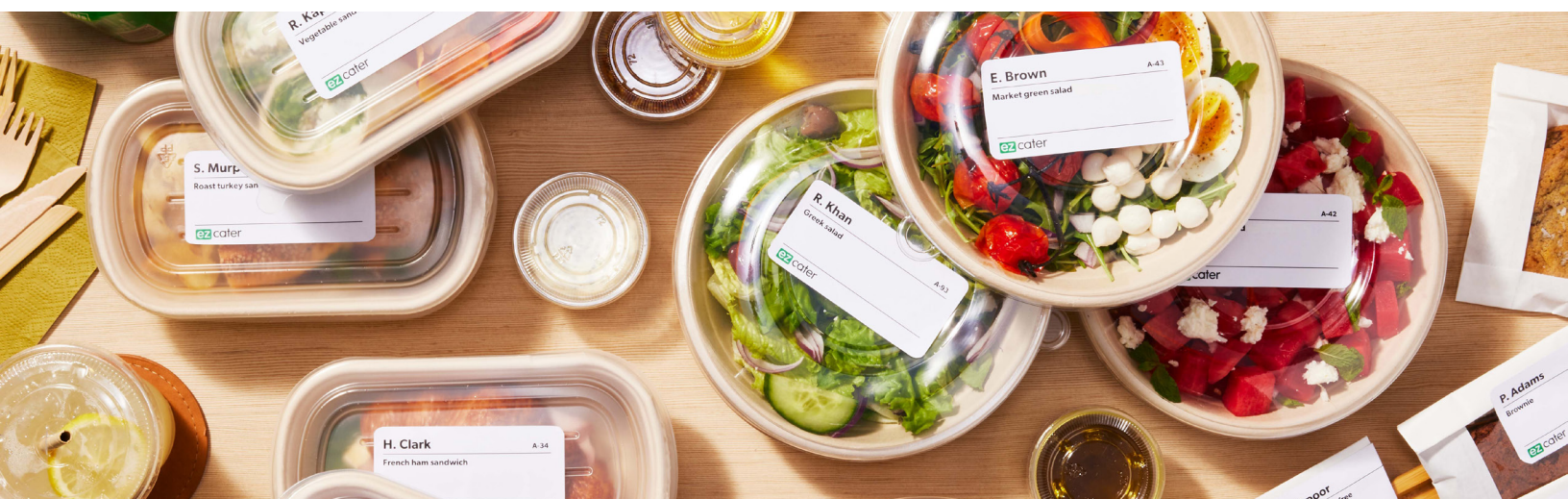
43%

Fun onsite activities and events:

42%

Childcare stipends or onsite childcare:

37%





Maximizing the impact of food in your return to office plan

As ezCater Co-Founder & CEO Stefania Mallett puts it, “Food brings people together like nothing else can. Post-COVID, workplaces must intentionally rebuild their social fabric.”

Now, more than ever, food is an effective way to show employees how essential they are, express appreciation, and bring a little extra camaraderie back to the office. As many organizations settle into a long-term hybrid model – with more complicated employee rotation schedules and varying numbers of people on site each day – it will be important to find opportunities to bring the team together. As leaders develop their plans for the culture of their hybrid office, providing team lunch is an efficient way to improve morale and drive in-office attendance.



Ready to feed your hybrid office?

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