THE LUNCH REPORT

WHY LUNCH AT WORK MATTERS
# Table of Contents

## Introduction

### Section One
- Why Aren’t America’s Workers Taking the Break They Deserve? 5

### Section Two
- The Generational Lunch-Break Divide 6-7

### Section Three
- Employees Are Battling Lunch-Flation 8-9

### Section Four
- Why Lunch is a Work Perk to Consider 10-11

### Section Five
- Food Breaks Fuel Performance and Promote Balance 12-14
Can one meal really change the way people feel about work? That’s a question we wanted to answer, so we asked 1,000 workers to tell us when and how they eat lunch – and what impact that midday meal makes on their mental health, productivity, and overall happiness at work.

What we found is that 1 in 10 people don’t ever take a lunch break, but 78% of the workers we surveyed agree that breaking for lunch improves their job performance.

We also learned that there’s a generational divide when it comes to who takes lunch, and that many workers are missing out on health and wellness benefits by skipping their noontime meal.

What’s preventing people from breaking for lunch? And how can companies encourage their teams to stop and re-fuel?

Dig into our findings to learn more about why lunch really matters to your employees.

Methodology

In April 2022, we surveyed 1,000 workers nationwide, from all types of workplaces, to better understand lunch patterns and trends, and how the “most important meal of the work day” affects the workforce.
FREE LUNCH IS A POWERFUL BENEFIT:
1 in 4 workers said they would return to the office in-person, full-time, if catered lunches were available.

LUNCH IS ACTUALLY THE MOST IMPORTANT MEAL OF THE DAY
78% of workers agree that taking a lunch break away from their desks improves their job performance.

MOST WORKERS EAT LUNCH AT THEIR DESK:
1 in 10 employees NEVER take a break away from their desks – and 70% eat while they work at least once a week.

YOUNGER WORKERS ARE MOST HESITANT TO TAKE BREAKS:
1 in 4 Gen Z workers are worried their employer won’t look favorably on them if they take lunch.

THE COST OF LUNCH IS TOP OF MIND FOR EMPLOYEES:
With 52% spending $11 or more per lunch, it’s no wonder respondents cite saving money as the best feature of getting free lunch at work.
Why aren’t America’s workers taking the break they deserve?

1 in 10 employees NEVER take a lunch break

43% Almost half eat lunch at their desks three or more times per week

70% eat lunch at their desk at least 1 day a week

And it could be because they’re getting mixed messages

Higher-ups could be setting a poor example:

56% of Director-level and 51% of VPs (and above) work at their desks while eating lunch at least 3 times per week

1 in 4 Gen Z workers are worried that their employer won’t look favorably on them taking a lunch break
THE GENERATIONAL LUNCH-BREAK DIVIDE

Defining the Generations in our Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GEN Z</th>
<th>GEN X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 25 and younger</td>
<td>26 to 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILLENNIALS</td>
<td>42-58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOMERS</td>
<td>59 and older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Younger employees are more likely to be “desktop diners” who work through lunch:

While half (48%) of Boomers say they never eat lunch at their desk, just 10% of Gen Z and 26% of Millennials said the same.

So what’s stopping younger workers from taking regular lunch breaks? Too much work!

- 21% said they don’t have enough time in their day to get their work done if they take a break
- 1 in 5 said they avoid breaks so they can finish their workday as soon as possible (27% of Gen Z)
- 19% said there are too many meetings or meetings during the lunch hour (26% of Millennials!)

TREND ONE
Rise of the “Office Lunch”

When workers forget to pack lunch, they resort to desperate means: 6 in 10 workers (61%) have made an “office lunch.”

Office Lunch (noun): lunch assembled from random office snacks. i.e., “I’m having an office lunch today because I forgot to pack mine.”

TREND TWO
Scrolling is the top lunchtime activity

- Scrolling social media (46%)
- Reading the news (27%)
- Watching TV or a movie (24%)
- Reading a book (16%)
Get ‘em while they’re hungry!

Gen Z will dominate the workforce by 2030, so it makes sense to up your food for work game now.

Catered meals bring co-workers together and show younger workers that taking a daily lunch break is not just OK. It’s encouraged.
Employees love lunch, but many of them aren’t taking a proper lunch break. And when workers do step away from their desk to dine and recharge, they feel it improves their job performance, enhances their relationships with co-workers, and contributes to their overall happiness level. So why don’t they take lunch more often?

That is one of the many valuable “food for thought” questions we investigate in this Power of Lunch Report, which is aimed at

Buying lunch is expensive (and prices keep increasing!), which means a free office lunch just became more valuable.

## Budget-Busting-Bites

- **80%** of people buy lunch at work at least once a week
- **52%** spend $11 or more when they buy lunch
- **43%** of people buy lunch three to five times per week

Almost half of employees (46%) agree that spending less money during their workday is the best part of free lunch.

### The anti-brown bag generation

- Only 9% of Gen Z bring lunch from home
- 73% of Gen Z and 68% of Millennials buy lunch at least 2 times a week, more so than their older co-workers (Boomers (44%), Gen X (58%))
Who’s dishing out the most lunch money?

The majority of Gen Z (68%) and Millennials (59%) spend at least $11 when dining or ordering out for lunch. Most Boomers, on the other hand, spend less than $10 (73%).

EMPLOYER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Considering food-away-from-home prices are predicted to keep increasing through 2022, companies that provide free lunch (even once a week) will go a long way with their employees.
Catered lunches are valued by employees and have the power to get them to the office. Especially as workforces adopt more hybrid schedules, in-office perks like free lunch can be just the motivation needed to get back into the office groove.

Free lunch is a big motivation to work on-site

- **23%**
  - Nearly 1 in 4 employees said they would return to the office full-time if free, catered lunches were available.

- **20%**
  - Said they would plan on traveling to the office 3-4 days a week to reap the benefits of free meals.

- **15%**
  - Were willing to commute in 1-2 days out of their week for free lunch.

- **65%**
  - The majority of respondents would plan to work on-site based on complimentary lunch being offered.
Younger generations - your future workforce - are motivated by a free lunch:

- 87% of Gen Z said they’d work on-site “frequently” if free lunch were provided, followed by 75% of Millennials and 58% of Gen X, with Boomers last at 57%.

- Younger generations care more about free lunches and are most likely to plan their work week around the benefit. This is especially interesting considering only 1 in 3 Gen Z (29%) and Millennials (35%) employees take a lunch break 5 days a week.

In a tight labor market, free lunch as a perk or benefit can help employers differentiate themselves from their competitors.
Proper lunch breaks improve job performance, according to employees who cite increased productivity and mental clarity as a result of taking a break for lunch. Perhaps more importantly, stopping to eat and taking mental breaks can prevent burnout - especially in the context of the extra stressful times workers have faced over the past few years. After all, there’s a reason why so many people took part in “The Great Resignation.”

**TAKING BREAKS MAKES US BETTER AT OUR JOBS:**
(THIS IS TRUE ACROSS A VARIETY OF WORKPLACE SETTINGS)

78% of employees agree that taking a lunch break away from their desks improves job performance.
Lunch breaks help employees chill out

40% of employees said taking a lunch break makes them feel less stressed.

39% attribute taking lunch to improved work/life balance.

39% feel more productive and able to accomplish more work.

37% feel less burnt out.

The ideal lunch break sweet spot

Respondents who said taking lunch has a big impact on their productivity break for this long:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Break Time</th>
<th>Increased Productivity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 15 minutes</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 30 minutes</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 45 minutes</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 minutes to an hour</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than an hour</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most likely to be “quick-bite” lunchers (15 - 30 minutes): Gen Z (46%)
Most likely to take longer lunches 45+ minutes: Gen X (32%)
EMPLOYEES ALSO SAID THAT TAKING LUNCH:

- provides them with better mental clarity (47%)
- makes them happier (46%)
- leads to more creativity in the second half of their workday (25%)

IT’S ABOUT CONNECTION

About 3 in 10 of employees said they looked forward to the social connection that comes from eating lunch with their coworkers.

I LOOK FORWARD TO LUNCH

35% of workers say lunch is their favorite part of the day.

EMPLOYER FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Maybe the way to your employees’ hearts (and brains) is through their stomachs. Catered lunches can help promote healthier work habits, increase productivity levels, and even potentially alleviate burnout.
THE POWER OF LUNCH

1. BRING TEAMS TOGETHER

Work is much more fun when free lunch (and connecting with co-workers) is part of the deal. Add recurring meal delivery to your hybrid or full-time on-site workplace.

2. SHOW THEM YOU CARE

It can be employee appreciation day any day with a catered lunch. Who doesn’t love tacos or cupcakes at work?

3. LUNCH AND LEARN

Food boosts brainpower, so add a catered lunch to your next training, onboarding, or lunch and learn.

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