

How food can support acquisition and team retention

For the last few months, businesses have been focusing on the logistics of transitioning to hybrid working, sorting out new technology and office locations, and as we now settle into our new normal, it is time for businesses to turn their attention to their next challenge - retaining and acquiring top talent.

After a tumultuous 18 months, many people are reassessing their priorities and a new career is high up on the list, with more than 40% of employees considering leaving their employer this year, according to a recent study from Microsoft.

With flexible working now the default, many businesses are having to reassess their benefits packages to address these new priorities, keep staff happy and get new talent through the door.

Our recent back to the office report showed a shift towards health and travel perks, as companies introduced travel loans (21%), cycle to work schemes (54%), gym memberships (35%) and healthcare support (45%), but the one consistent perk from pre-pandemic was food!

Just under half of employees (41%) said they would be more likely to join a business if it provided regular hot lunches for free, and since starting my career

in recruitment and talent acquisition, I've found that food perks really are integral to career satisfaction.

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When you think about it, free food brings people together, saves them money and time, is a way to celebrate successes and encourages breaks - just to name a few great things it does. All of these things feed into creating a collaborative and supportive workplace culture which is a huge recruitment draw.

Even with different company covid- policies, the action of getting food delivered to the office and eating at the same time contributes to that positive culture and sense of belonging. And the best thing is that everyone can enjoy it, rather than more specific benefits such as cycle to work or gym membership discounts.

This sense of community can also be extended outside of the office as well, with at-home food deliveries and virtual parties ensuring that those working remotely in our hybrid flexible world get the same sense of belonging. Where possible, we should always aim for parity in benefits to ensure no one misses out.

We all know that food isn't going to be the sole reason someone decides to take a job, with salary, career progression and flexibility also playing a huge role. But food and the enjoyment we get from coming together over lunch shouldn't be ignored - it feeds into the overall company culture which will always be a big attraction to talent.

As we enter the new post-covid workplace, where flexibility is a given rather than a taboo, culture has become the biggest recruitment tool, with many millennials prioritising work culture above anything else. They want to network, socialise with co-workers and celebrate as a team and there is no doubt that food at work can help contribute to all those desires.

Alex Jones, Head of Talent at Just Eat for Business

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