

The 2024 Workplace: Elevating Experiences with Local Food



2024 GUIDE

fooda

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Picture walking into an office where your arrival isn't marked by the usual, mundane 'hello,' but instead by the irresistible scent of freshly prepared empanadas wafting through the air. It's Thursday and employees who've been working remotely all week have come into the office, drawn not just by the prospect of catching up with colleagues, but by the promise of an experience. This is not just another day at the office; it's a day where work meets excitement, where food becomes more than just a meal - it's a communal experience, a catalyst for conversation and connection.

This scene captures the essence of what we're seeing in workplaces in 2024. It's a new era where companies are reimagining the traditional office environment, blending flexibility with engaging experiences to create spaces that employees are excited to be a part of. From the rising influence of Gen Z in the office, to the increasing demand for commute-worthy experiences, the workplace is evolving. At the heart of this transformation is the role of food - a powerful tool for building culture, fostering community, and enhancing the overall work experience.

Join us as we explore the top three trends for 2024 and paint a picture of what a modern food program should include in order to attract the up-and-coming generations and retain existing talent for years to come.

Trend #1 Generational Shift and the Rise of Gen Z



The corporate world is witnessing a significant shift with the rise of Generation Z in the workforce, those born between the late 1990s and early 2000s. Representing around 22% of the workforce, Gen Z is bringing a fresh perspective to the professional world. Because of the socio-economic and technological environment they grew up in, this generation seeks flexibility, stability, and better compensation from their careers, signaling a need for a paradigm shift in how organizations recruit and retain talent.

A key factor in attracting Gen Z employees is enhancing the workplace environment, and food at work plays a pivotal role. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of Gen Z workers state that an on-site cafeteria would be a significant incentive when considering a job offer, highlighting the importance of workplace amenities for young professionals, ([Food Service Director, 2023](#)). The increasing demand for amenities among Gen Z professionals is not just about convenience or luxury.

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It goes deeper, reflecting a generational shift towards a more conscious and value-driven approach to work and life. Data from Ketchum's Food Research suggests that 63% of Gen Zers believe their food choices need to signal their health, values and political beliefs, ([Ketchum, 2023](#)). By incorporating a food program that offers healthy, locally-sourced food options, employers are not just catering to a basic need but are also making a strong statement about their commitment to their employees' health and values. This alignment between an organization's actions and its employees' values is becoming increasingly crucial in attracting and retaining young talent in today's competitive job market.

The push for enhanced workplace environments is not limited to Gen Z. Millennial managers, who are increasingly entering leadership roles, are setting high expectations for their return to office. As reported, many in this group demand significant incentives for full-time office work, such as pay raises or improved office benefits, ([Fortune, 2024](#)). In fact, with the rising costs of living, 82% of Gen Z and millennial workers are advocating for employers to offer free or subsidized meals, ([Food Service Director, 2023](#)). A simple, yet effective way to cater to the younger generations that currently make up over half of the workforce. Learn more about offering free food at work in our [Guide to Employer Paid Programs](#).

Trend #2 Flexibility in the Workplace in 2024

Over the past four years, the concept of flexibility in the workplace has transitioned from a trend to the new normal. A recent report shows that 81% of HR offices, ranging from Fortune 500 giants to small start-ups, are set to maintain or even expand their remote work options for 2024 ([Forbes, 2023](#)). Hybrid work models, blending in-office and remote work, have now become a fundamental pillar of modern employment - and an important aspect of employee happiness. A recent Fooda survey showed flexible working hours and remote work options as the number one factor in improving the workplace experience (Fooda survey). This transition is not just a fleeting change but a critical evolution that companies must embrace to stay relevant and competitive. Whether we like it or not, hybrid work is here to stay.



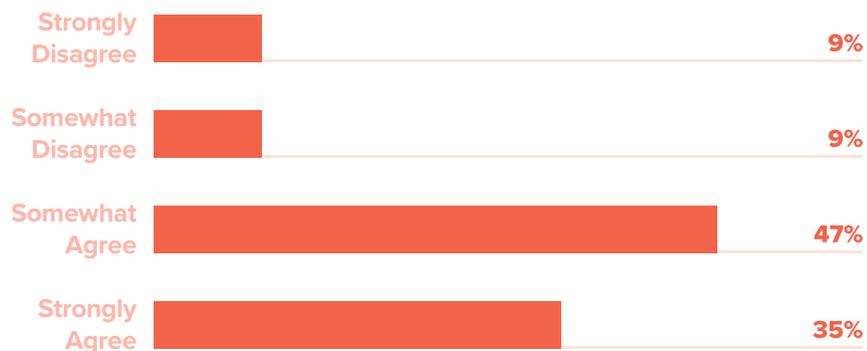
**Hybrid work
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Food's Impact on Return to Office (RTO)

One of the biggest challenges for employers in this new era is making the physical office space more enticing to encourage RTO. A key strategy in achieving this is through the promise of quality food options. Offering diverse and appealing food choices can significantly enhance the desire to be in the office, transforming it into an experience rather than a mere requirement. According to a Fooda survey, 81% of employees agree that the availability of food options in and around the workplace greatly influences their eagerness to be onsite. If increasing RTO is important for your organization, incorporating a food program is a great place to start.

Food Options In and Around the Workplace Impact My Enthusiasm About Being Onsite



The Need for Flexible and Scalable Food Programs

Given the lasting nature of hybrid work, the need for flexible and adaptive food services is more important than ever. A recent survey by Fooda revealed that 65% of employees expect to be onsite for at least three days a week by the end of 2024. Scalable programs, like Fooda, provide a valuable solution, enabling organizations to align their food offerings with the fluctuating in-office attendance. This level of adaptability is key in ensuring that companies can efficiently meet the diverse and changing needs of their employees without overextending their resources. This strategy plays a crucial role in making the workplace a destination that employees are eager to return to, particularly on the days they are scheduled to be onsite.

As we make our way into 2024, the focus on flexibility in the workplace is apparent. To adapt to this shift, companies must consider the pivotal role of food at work in enhancing the office experience, supporting employee engagement, and meeting the evolving needs of a hybrid workforce. The good news is that food services have evolved with these new needs and are now more flexible than ever.

Trend #3 Creating Commute-worthy Experiences



For many remote employees, making the trek into the office requires a specific reason. Usually an important meeting with leadership, a planning session with a whiteboard, or a company party. But what about the majority

of workdays that fall in between those mandatory events? For companies looking to increase the number of onsite days for employees, introducing commute-worthy experiences could be the silver bullet you're looking for.

Experiences like volunteer days, catered in-office lunches, small milestone celebrations, or lunch and learns featuring guest speakers can make a world of difference. These are not just events; they are crucial elements in building a vibrant company culture. These experiences bring people together, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Popup restaurants, for instance, bring the excitement and variety of local dining right into the workspace. These setups offer fresh, made-to-order meals that not only cater to diverse tastes but also add an element of novelty and surprise to the workday. Popup restaurants can transform the need to be onsite from a dreaded requirement to an experience your team doesn't want to miss out on.

The Power of Shared Meals

Recent data suggests that team bonding opportunities, including shared meals, rank as the second most important factor in enhancing the workplace experience (Fooda). It's simple. Food experiences bring people together. When employees come together to eat around a shared table, it breaks down barriers and encourages informal conversations that can lead to new ideas and an increased emotional connection to the company. By providing food around a shared community table, organizations can create an inviting environment where employees feel valued and connected.





8 out of 10
surveyed professionals
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when their employer
pays for lunch

Employer Paid Food Programs

Subsidized meals are another powerful draw. With 8 out of 10 professionals indicating they would be more enthusiastic about going to the workplace if their employer paid for lunch, it's clear that food is a powerful motivator (Fooda survey). By offering subsidized meals, companies can significantly boost the appeal of being in the office, making it a more enticing and rewarding experience.

Community Involvement Through Food

The role of food extends far beyond mere sustenance; it becomes a pivotal element in fostering a sense of community within the workplace. When introducing a variety of local restaurants into the office environment, employees are not only treated to great food but are also given the opportunity to immerse themselves in different cultures and cuisines. This diversity acts as a gateway to celebrate and appreciate the traditions and histories that make up our community. The shared experience of exploring new foods together can transform the typical lunch break into an enriching, communal activity that strengthens bonds among colleagues and deepens their connection to the local community.

As companies navigate the challenges of hybrid work environments and office returns in 2024, the focus should be on creating commute-worthy experiences.

Fooda's Product Offerings

In 2024, workplace food programs are evolving beyond just another amenity. They are becoming integral to enriching the employee experience, fostering community, and promoting a healthy, collaborative workplace environment.

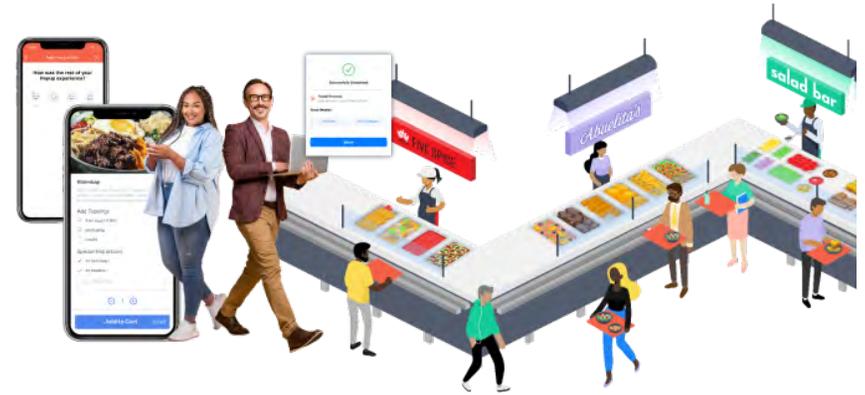
Fooda offers several ways for employers to provide their employees with exciting meals. In all of our models, employers can subsidize individual employee meals at any dollar amount - or not at all (in cases where population numbers allow for sustainable, unsubsidized programs).

Popup Restaurants

A daily rotating Popup restaurant program managed by Fooda is like having indoor food trucks scheduled far



in advance, with the option to subsidize meals for employees (fully, partially, or not at all).



Cafeteria Replacement

Legacy cafeterias are evolving into a next generation solution that saves money and never gets boring. Fooda replaces traditional food service providers with local, authentic restaurants that people love outside of work.

Individual Lunch Delivery

Employees place their own orders, picking from rotating restaurants. All orders are delivered at once by a dedicated staff member, trained to work inside your building. With multiple restaurants to pick from, employees are encouraged to mix and match on this “virtual food hall” platform. Have a Greek salad, a taco, and a tiramisu for dessert - from three different restaurants, without any additional fees.





Workplace Convenience Services

An enhanced self-service market, available 24/7 for ultimate convenience. This service provides a variety of fresh food and beverage options, including gourmet coffee, healthy fruits, salads, and wraps, all accessible through contactless self-payment kiosks. Combine this option with any of our other services to add hot food options and authentic restaurant experiences.

Scale Up or Down, Based on Your Budget & Population

For most organizations, no two days of the week look the same anymore. As your population fluctuates during the week, Fooda's service adjusts to accommodate the right blend of services.



As we close the pages of this guide, it's clear that the future of work is not just about where we work, but how we experience our workdays. The traditional office is being redefined, transformed into a space that's as much about community and culture as it is about work. Companies are now tasked with creating environments that not only meet the functional needs of their employees but also cater to their well-being and personal preferences.

The rise of Gen Z in the workforce, the shift towards hybrid models, and the emphasis on creating commutable experiences are not just trends, but signposts pointing towards a future where the workplace is an ecosystem of engagement, innovation, and connection. Food plays a central role in this evolution. It's not just a matter of providing meals; it's about creating shared experiences that bring people together.

This is the future of work – and the future of work includes food.



**Ready to transform
your workplace dining
experience?**

Talk to Fooda to learn more.

www.fooda.com/contact-us