



How Tech Startup BenchPrep Made Lunch a Powerful Part of its Culture

BenchPrep is a Chicago-based e-learning innovator that delivers a personalized learning experience to users with its omnichannel technology. Learners achieve higher rates of success and can study anywhere, anytime when using BenchPrep's platform. The company was cofounded by Ashish Rangnekar and Ujjwal Gupta in 2009, and has been a highly-desireable place to work ever since.

The startup has the standard tech company amenities you expect to see like MacBooks on every desk and a spectrum of LaCroix in the fridge.

But one thing that stands out in the BenchPrep office is how much space is devoted to the large wooden tables at the center of it. The company has enough seating at the tables for all 40 employees to sit together at the same time. This is because eating lunch together, as a team, is immensely important to the startup's leadership. So much so that the daily lunch is fully subsidised by BenchPrep.

How it works:

BenchPrep contributes a \$12.50 daily subsidy to cover lunch for its employees

Employees use the Fooda app or website to place their individual orders from 4-8 restaurants that change each day

Everyone's food arrives at the same time and the team all sits down together



"I can't find an alternative to eating food together everyday from an ROI perspective. You can do off-site meals, but you can't do them everyday. You can do team events, but that doesn't bring the whole company together," said Ujjwal Gupta, BenchPrep's cofounder and COO. "So to be honest, it's very difficult for me to even suggest that there's an alternative. It's such a unique thing; you need to eat lunch every day, and eating it together, with everyone, adds so much to our company."

The effects are recognized outside of the c-suite too. BenchPrep employees use the time to connect and build relationships with colleagues. Because of this, they consider their lunch one of the company's top perks.



“ Sitting down with coworkers over a great lunch plays a big role in how we connect with each other. We can find similarities, talk about stuff that's happening outside of work, and even become friends. That's tricky to do if everybody is going out to different places. ”

— ANNE GRZYP
OFFICE MANAGER, BENCHPREP

Aside from the benefits colleagues will see from enjoying a meal together, it's also hugely beneficial for employee retention. In fact, a recent study showed that 60% of employees said that having more food at the office would make them feel more valued and appreciated by their employer.

“ Most startups will offer benefits like free soda and snacks, but in a lot of cases, that's a cover-up for very poor benefits in other areas. Now if I were ever to move to a different company that didn't provide lunch, it would be a little bit of a shock. ”

— KATIE EVANS
CUSTOMER SUCCESS MANAGER, BENCHPREP



"I think it's the most underappreciated benefit you can give out as a company, and the most important benefit, from a founder's standpoint, that we give to our employees," said Gupta. "People don't realize how good of a benefit it is until they actually see it. Fooda has become part of our benefits package, but it's also become part of our culture. When we talk with former employees, it's one of the things they miss most."



**SAVES EMPLOYEES
AT LEAST
30 MINUTES/DAY**



**FOODA
CUSTOMER
SINCE 2012**

**7,500
PLUS**

**LUNCHES FOODA
HAS DELIVERED
TO BENCHPREP**

“ We believe it saves at least 30 minutes per day because employee don't have to manage logistics of going out to lunch, ordering, coming back, sitting, eating. It probably saves workers a lot at home too. They don't need to be cooking or thinking about it the night before and in the morning. ”

— UJJWAL GUPTA

COFOUNDER & COO, BENCHPREP



The perk isn't just powerful because it's a free daily lunch, it also saves employees hours per week at work and at home. And less time out to lunch means more time working, and less time thinking about lunch means more productivity.

BenchPrep is a fast-growing company. But even though the headcount is increasing rapidly, the company's leadership is confident the lunchtime perk isn't going anywhere.

“If one day we decide no more Fooda, I won't be surprised if half of our company protests,” Gupta said. “I don't know how we used to eat lunch before Fooda.”



Is your company interested in delighting its employees like BenchPrep?

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