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Streamlining Lunch at the Office



TOM CHAREK

Returning to the office has been a popular topic during the past year and for good reason. Companies are evaluating their policies and updating office leases as needed, landlords are reacting to the changing marketplace and what their tenant base looks like, and companies are considering perks and other opportunities they can offer employees to entice them to return.

One element that has been discussed more and more recently is the lunch experience and what that looks like for employees. Employees who are used to the healthy, home-cooked options available to them while working remotely are no longer satisfied with fast-food, quick lunch options available at or near the office. So employers need to reexamine how to improve what the lunch experience looks like for their employees. Will they go out to lunch or stay in more often? How far of a drive or walk is it to the closest lunch option? Will parking be an issue when the employees return?

During the pandemic, when restaurants were not able to open their doors to dine-in patrons, they turned to the home delivery services such as Grubhub, Uber

Eats and Doordash. Because of necessity, this once niche delivery offering became standard for restaurants and was expanded beyond traditional Chinese food and pizza. Most restaurant offerings could be delivered efficiently through online ordering systems, delivery apps and contactless payment. Though many restaurants reopened, people still liked the delivery option, especially lunch delivery to offices. Being able to stay in the office and have food delivered was a convenience employees enjoyed while working from home and were happy to continue utilizing.

However, with the good comes the bad. These delivery services may have created more options for the public, but also additional food waste and traffic around offices. How an office

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embraces this shift in habits and encourages recycling while limiting traffic will be important for years to come. Building owners and landlords need to consider these factors when determining what is best for attracting and retaining tenants in office buildings, just as employers need to have the right offerings for returning employees.

One way that waste and traffic can be limited is by landlords forming agreements with food delivery services and restaurants for a standard delivery time every day. Employers can then encourage their employees to be more efficient by eliminating multiple orders and deliveries to the building. In addition to improved efficiency, this is also a greener option as less deliveries mean less emissions generated from multiple trips to the same building or multiple drivers delivering to the same place. Wages of the food delivery team improve as they make less trips but

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deliver multiple orders. At the same time, lunch time traffic around a building is reduced.

The office market is changing, and adjustments are necessary. As landlords are encouraging tenants to renew leases, they need to recognize the changing landscape for employers. Collaboration between landlord and companies to create visitor parking spaces or even drive-through options for these delivery services can make this type of office food option even more efficient. This should be attractive to companies as they have something to offer their employees when they return to the office.

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Also, working together, landlords and office tenants can design outdoor spaces designated for individual or group meals during nice weather. These spaces need to be environmentally friendly and include ample recycling facilities to reduce the carbon footprint of the building. During colder months, offices promoting efficient lunch delivery will

also need space for employees to congregate; these spaces should receive ample natural light and promote environmentally friendly designs. Such improvements will continue to support the return to office and promote community among employees.

Creating a culture of healthy, green and happy employees starts with the understanding of both employers and landlords that returning to the office means providing convenience and efficiency. Streamlining food delivery has many benefits, not only to the employees and employers but also to the environment. **P**

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