

How To Bring Home Comforts Into The Office

Working from home is becoming increasingly more common, but some employers would prefer their staff to come into the office. Here are a few ideas of how employers can make their staff feel more at home.

Those 'office workers' who are still working from home are also currently facing several challenges. The feelings of isolation and stress many have passed for some over the past few months, but the issue of establishing healthy barriers between their professional and personal lives is still a tough balance for many.

Those working from home have been faced with the continual conundrum of whether to purchase the equipment they need to do their jobs effectively from their 'home office' and whether they really want their home cluttered with 'office furniture' that they can't then hide away at the end of the working week.

Despite months of this question being asked, many have still plumped for maintaining their homes as just that, homely. Decorated with soft furnishings, not footstools and printers, leaving them woefully under-equipped to perform their tasks effectively.

Currently, 55% of the entire UK workforce are working at home and not in their usual office spaces around the country. The overall consensus is that more than half of all UK office workers, are still struggling to emulate the ergonomic comfort of the office and are getting frustrated at the lack of equipment they previously had right at hand. It's 2022 and there are thousands of people scrounging for equipment or using household items as makeshift alternatives to basic office equipment.

So then why are many businesses still struggling with office occupancy, if the idea of having multiple screens, a printer and a proper office chair are appealing for home workers?

Primarily, it's because those working at home experience a whole host of other benefits that they would lose if they worked in the office. The solution then for those businesses wanting to increase office occupancy is simple; make sure you also offer those benefits, or other benefits that outweigh those of home working, to encourage people back to the office.

Firstly, make sure that every desk is well kitted out with office equipment – or that it can be booked easily. This means that you don't need to reinvest in more space and equipment for everybody and you can still operate on a reduced pool available to the workforce to use when they choose to work in the office as part of a hybrid working structure. You just need to make sure from a user perspective it's quick and easy to use the system to encourage use.

Secondly, ensure that you have a range of equipment available to employees including ergonomic support tools like footstools and dual screen monitor mounts. We're all

aware that DSE assessments have been practically impossible to roll out to home workers and the impact this is having on posture and muscle tension.

The modern worker is a multi-tasker and many need to work with complex computer programs simultaneously. For example, data crunchers need to use several excel sheets and graphic designers need to be able to see high detail on a large screen. Two screens had become the standard set up prior to the pandemic in most offices, for many different job roles. Cut to home working on a single laptop screen, or a single free-standing monitor plonked your kitchen table, and the inevitable frustration felt by many of us trying to perform the same tasks on a single screen. This is certainly one of the benefits of working in the office. Firms should make the investment in all workspaces and kit them out with 2 screens attached to adjustable monitor mounts which can be moved and customised to whoever is using them, so they offer personalised ergonomic comfort.

Working together is possible remotely through many of the online tools we all know and love to hate, however nothing is quite as effective when it comes to collaboration than being in the same room. We're all aware of how effective offices are for bringing people together for collaborative work. However, you should also consider that workers need spaces for concentrated work. One of the benefits about working from home is space for quiet concentrated tasks, the balance is to ensure that your office spaces feature both collaborative spaces as well as quieter spaces for focused individual work to avoid noise complaints and concentration issues.

In January of this year, a report by JLL identified that the top 3 things that workers now want from their office is relaxation spaces, healthy food services and outdoor spaces, however only 17%, 19% and 25% of workers have access to each these things respectively from their office space. In short, workers want the benefits of home in the office. One of the greatest benefits of the pandemic for the average worker was the realisation that removing fast food lunches and the confines of a lifeless office from their lives and swapping it for home cooked food and a lunchtime walk did wonders for their sense of wellbeing. If you can replicate this in some form or another, office spaces will become infinitely more appealing overnight.

One of the other benefits of working from home, is the ability to personalise your workspace. Giving employees the flexible tools to control the lighting and temperature around their desks will also strengthen the appeal of office working, as these are the things employees are able to do with ease when working from home.

Ultimately, you have the power to directly support the shift of workers back to the office. If the office offers an experience as comfortable as home with the added benefits of high-end ergonomic equipment, collaboration and concentration spaces, then employees will find the office much more appealing. They will have the flexibility when

they're in the office to work on different tasks and achieve them much more efficiently and with less induced stress than when working at home.

With the cost of living rising, and energy bills set to triple, now is the perfect time for you to ensure that your facilities add value and to strongly advocate office working to your staff.