



Amenities serve a purpose in today's workplaces: Organizations re-examining offerings to employees - by Megan Spinos

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Organizations are re-examining the amenities they offer employees to better align with the changing nature of work and high expectations for the workplace experience. We're shifting away from the obvious (food and beverage) and frivolous (ping-pong tables) to providing access to amenities that are more meaningful to the individual and support deeper objectives of the organization.

How did we get here and what's driving this movement? Firstly, Millennials now comprise the largest generation in the U.S. labor force, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data. The emergence of their successor, Generation Z, into the workplace has already begun. This new majority prefers to work for companies that bear a strong purpose, vision and culture, and value healthy work-life integration. Today's new amenities line up with these expectations.

Secondly, the appeal of a variety of work settings, such as co-working, flex and agile spaces, emphasize networking, collaboration and the social nature of work. Likewise, the healthy workplace has become essential to the employee experience, escalated with the WELL Building Standard. Today's workplace is encouraging new and different interactions, impacting the quality and composition of the amenities we provide.

The most common amenities provided to employees have been break rooms, multi-purpose spaces, on-site fitness, cafeteria/food service and lounges, according to the International Facilities Management Association (IFMA). But, we've grown accustomed to these types of spaces and now expect them to come standard in every work environment. Today, there is greater focus on mission-driven amenities that support a set of goals – both individual and organizational.

When planned earnestly, modern workplace amenities and the inspiring spaces that accommodate them can help a company foster a sense of community, reinforce employee health and well-being, stimulate a collaborative, dynamic culture and affirm the organization's commitment to that which it values most.

These types of motivations encouraged our strategy and design team at Vocon to reimagine an amenity-rich experience for the global headquarters of our Manhattan-based client. Looking to foster a strong sense of community on its main reception floor, employees and guests have a destination to connect with colleagues, work, learn, socialize, dine and shop at the company store. This creative, branded space reflects the soul of this Fortune 500 company and keeps employees engaged with its mission and vision. The organization is supporting health and wellbeing initiatives on the floor as well. Associates can drop in and visit the company's on-site health practitioners. Reservable hoteling desks are height adjustable to accommodate ergonomic sit or stand postures.

Our need for individual focus and privacy are an often-overlooked aspect of well-being that when optimized enhance employee work performance and satisfaction. To that end, we've designated quiet work zones strategically across the floor, and provided sound-minimizing phone booths and focus rooms that satisfy employees' requirement for heads-down, concentrative work.

Employees had strong preferences for food and beverage offerings on the floor, which we captured in focus groups and employee surveys. Associates asked for healthy and diverse food options - as well as great coffee - available all day in a work café that features a mix of traditional seating, family tables, booth seating, counters and soft-seating arrangements.

Corporate end-users aren't the only ones re-imagining their amenity offerings to enrich the workplace experience. Building landlords and developers know that new shared amenities and ancillary spaces are crucial to attracting tenants. Several organizations have developed programs and alliances to accommodate the trend.

Tishman Speyer launched a suite of lifestyle, wellness and corporate services called "Zo" to address the increased desire for tenants' work-life integration. Zo amenities include wellness, backup child care, on-site health screenings and medical services, travel planning, community volunteer engagement, grooming, rideshares, human resource services, and food catering.

CBRE has introduced "Above & Beyond For Business: A&B," an amenity platform that merges hospitality, events, collaboration spaces and concierge services to create a dynamic workplace experience.

While free snacks, ping-pong and beer carts will likely remain a fixture in many work environments, organizations realize amenities that support the needs of both the associate and the business serves to boost employee engagement and reflect its commitment to caring about the holistic well-being of its workforce.

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