

## How food can create positive employee experiences

3 years ago



[Sodexo](#)'s Corporate Services team welcomed around 70 guests from leading organisations to an insightful and lively event at its UK HQ in London, to talk about the future of workplace and the power of food for organisations seeking to improve the employee experience.

Kicking off the event on Wednesday 7 December was a panel discussion moderated by features editor of *The Caterer* magazine, Caroline Baldwin. Panellists included Linda Hausmanis, CEO IWFM; Ali Khan, chief operating officer at SHAPE, James Greetham, founder and CEO at Sprung Collective and Sodexo's CR Director for the UK & Ireland, Claire Atkins Morris.

The panellists enjoyed a lively and engaging debate, including topics such as the great resignation, the importance of workplace experience and the role of food in nurturing employee engagement. Scribe artist Oguzhan Secir was on hand throughout to capture the key themes, buzz words and topics on a unique live mural.

Discussions included the impact of the pandemic with one panellist stating that we won't know for ten years or so the true impact it has had on people, their psychology, behaviour etc whether young, old or in the middle. The importance of remembering that everyone is different and how the employee experience differs for each, and everyone, must be considered was widely discussed.

A word of warning for organisations looking to return to pre-Covid times or when adopting a hybrid model was conveyed. For every individual there may be a very personal reason why working from home or working from the office is better for them. Employers need to consider this in their workplace strategies, it shouldn't be about where they work, employers need to ensure their people are provided with a working

environment that suits their needs and enables them to be productive and thrive.

Food and drink were cited as one of the best catalysts for engaging people and when looking at cost we should look at the value of experience over financial cost. That experience needs to address sustainability, with more and more people experiencing climate anxiety. Free issue and subsidised food are not enough. Consumers are better educated and want to know more, where does the food come from, how much waste is there and how is it being managed.

It was agreed that happiness is one of the most important factors. Ali Khan from SPACE shared the insight from research which has shown that there are 150 factors used to measure if people are delivering to their peak, with one third coming from the individual and two thirds generated from their working conditions.

Guests were then invited to an interactive food experience designed and delivered by Sodexo's chefs from Fooditude and The Good Eating Company, showcasing their offerings for organisations looking for an agile business model for their workplace dining offer. Hot and cold dishes reflecting the latest trends in food were on offer for guests to experience along with vegan desserts and premium specialty coffee from Sodexo's partner, Origin.

Alex Kristall, managing director, Corporate Services, Sodexo UK & Ireland and host of the event said: "We believe food fuels our health, wellness and happiness at work, and we are seeing both caterers and high street chains enticing people back with exciting food and drink offers. We wanted to share our experience and engage industry experts in a discussion about the role food and drink can play, to help organisations retain and attract talent and what ingredients are needed to help them attract their people back into offices. Not only does great food help to entice people back into the workplace, but it also fuels productivity.

"We enjoyed a lively debate with our panellists, with the discussion brought to life through Ozzie's amazing mural. It was our pleasure to then serve our guests some delicious food from Fooditude and The Good Eating Company. We look forward to continuing this conversation with our existing and potential clients as we do all we can to support them with the workplace strategies and ambitions."

Sodexo's UK HQ, based at One Southampton Row, was transformed in 2021 to create a welcoming workspace embracing new ways of working and smart building technology. A truly connected workspace using the internet of things is felt throughout, with sensors tracking air pollution, desk usage and energy management to continuously improve the office environment.

Offering three distinct experiences – work, collaboration and showcase – the office provides an adaptable workspace that can accommodate a range of activities and events, just like this one. Sodexo's [Vital Spaces](#) approach was used to redesign the space to provide a workplace which not only prioritises employees experience but is a showcase of for its eco-system of workplace services.

Sodexo's Corporate Services business delivers workplace services, facilities management and food services to some of the world's most recognisable brands. Its teams have expertise operating across a range of different environments in the corporate sector, including headquarters, regional offices, data centres, manufacturing centres and research and development hubs, in sectors as diverse as professional services, financial services, pharmaceuticals, media and technology.

For more information on Sodexo's Vital Spaces visit: <https://sodexouki.info/3iRbt7j>