

Human connection revealed as missing link to future-proof workplace

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New research from [Sodexo](#) has revealed that UK employees still prefer remote working and are more cost-conscious than ever.

The company's new Work Experience Tracker research, conducted in collaboration with YouGov, revealed that out of the 3,000 respondents in the UK, one in five were dealing with poor mental and physical health, 20% are quiet quitters and 23% stated they wanted to quit.

These issues are likely to impact business performance and business leaders need to reflect on the causes and take action to improve employee experience.

A big question for many employers in 2023 still remains 'how do we bring people back to the office?' Sodexo's research reveals the top reasons which would help draw workers back in, with synergy between people, space and sustainability core to building a future-proof workplace, driving business performance and employee experience.

Two thirds of those surveyed said they were satisfied with their current working pattern. While 58% continue to work a hybrid pattern, 36% stated they would come into the office more to connect with other people.

This is corroborated in the 71% of those questioned stating the greatest satisfaction in their workplace experience was from team spirit and collaboration. Opportunities to socialise were attractive to 36%, while 35% noted that they would like to be offered free or subsidised commuting and 23% said the same about food.

CEO Corporate Services Julie Ennis said: "Interestingly the tracker research shows us that 43% of workers are only somewhat satisfied with their workplace experience. This is a risk for employers as these workers could move to become quiet quitters, but why is this group being overlooked? The question we need to ask ourselves is what piece of the puzzle are we missing?"

With the research revealing differing preferences for quiet spaces or lively, creative and collaborative environments it is essential that business leaders adopt a balanced approach factoring in wellbeing when looking at remote and in-person work and avoid adopting a one-size-fits-all approach when developing their workplace strategies.

The YouGov findings were also validated by Sodexo's own observations through sensor data at its London head office which shows the consistent motivation for workers going into the office is about seeing their work colleagues.

Ms Ennis said "Before the pandemic, we were already witnessing a shift in the nature of workplaces and the need to be future ready. To help businesses adapt, we developed Vital Spaces – a strategic approach to transforming workplaces and preparing for changing futures.

"Using [Vital Spaces](#) we redefined our London head office during the pandemic. Early surveys hinted at a new trend for the office to become a social hub, a place for health and wellbeing and a crucible for culture. Using data sensors from the office we are seeing this trend come to life with people gravitating towards the collaborative areas rather than the traditional workspaces."

The final cornerstone for building a future-proof workplace is sustainability. Sodexo's Work Experience Tracker examined the drivers around employment choices and found that 78% of those surveyed find sustainability personally important and half of respondents expecting their employer to act responsibly.

Specifically, responsible energy use, waste management and reduction of plastic usages at workplace are the top three expectations from employees.

At a recent summit held by Sodexo Corporate Services, Ms Ennis and special guest and renowned futurist Anne Lise Kjaer discussed the research and what factors business leaders need to consider to future-proof their workplaces at a recent virtual summit.