

New Research from ABM Reveals 9 in 10 Workers Would Sacrifice Pay for a Workplace Experience Worth the Commute

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A new study by facilities solutions provider [ABM](#) has found that nearly 9 in 10^[1] workers globally would give up a portion of their salary in exchange for a more personalised work experience; a statistic that reframes the entire return-to-office debate. For businesses grappling with under populated office space or gaps in productivity, the question is not whether people will come back. It is whether the office gives them a good enough reason to.

The research, published today in ABM's white paper *How Modern Workplaces Win*, surveyed more than 500 full-time office workers across the UK, US, and Ireland. It finds that employees are not opposed to office life; but they are clear about what it needs to offer. Eighty-five percent say they would willingly spend more time in the office, if the right facilities were in place. More than eight in 10 agree that a great office space directly improves culture.

That gap between the appetite to return and the experience worth returning for is becoming harder to ignore. In recent months alone, Microsoft has mandated three days in the office, [Instagram](#) has moved to five, and HSBC managing directors are now required to attend four days a week. Yet research from King's College London, tracking over one million UK workers, shows that compliance with full-time return-to-office requirements has fallen from [54% to just 42%](#) in two years. Mandates, it turns out, are not working in isolation and the ABM research highlights the impact which experience could have.

This week, Simon Barnes, VP Sales and Marketing, delivered a keynote at The Workplace Event 2026 at the NEC Birmingham, challenging leaders to ask not how to get people back, but what would make them want to come. He comments: “The data is clear: people are not opposed to the office. They are opposed to the obligation. When you look beneath the surface, there is enormous goodwill; the majority of people being willing to trade salary for a better experience is not a minor statistic. That is a workforce telling us exactly what they need. The question is whether organisations are listening.”

The research was commissioned to support the launch of ABM’s new workplace experience offer, delivered by its [ABM Experience Solutions](#) team. With 30 years of designing and delivering human experiences in environments where engagement cannot be mandated – only earned – ABM’s new workplace solution provides a unique perspective.

Across airports, transport hubs and leisure facilities, ABM has spent three decades understanding what makes people choose to return. Not out of obligation. Because the experience is genuinely worth it.

Simon continues: “The depth of expertise our team has now underpins ABM’s fully integrated workplace offer. The ABM Experience Solutions team places hospitality-trained professionals inside client workplaces, supported by bespoke diagnostics which gives clients a tailored service designed to engage. The result is a workplace that does not just look good on a floorplan but one that works measurably and consistently for the people inside it.”

Leanne Nutter, ABM Experience Solutions Director comments: “Through ABM Experience Solutions, we have spent 30 years creating meaningful experiences in places where you cannot rely on habit.. That is what makes our approach to the workplace genuinely different. We do not design for attendance. We design for choice.

“For our customers, the result is simple: spaces that drive revenue, loyalty and repeat visitors; underpinned by data-led insight that connects experience to performance and ensures every building functions at its full potential.”

How Modern Workplaces Win is available to download now [here](#):The paper examines the forces reshaping the modern workplace, the growing gap between mandates and experience, and what organisations can do to build offices that employees genuinely want to return to.