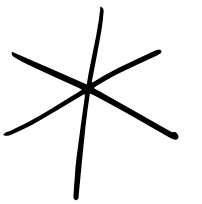


FEEDING CULTURE: A COMPLETE GUIDE TO OFFICE CATERING

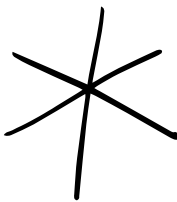


A workplace lunch program is no longer a “nice-to-have.” It’s a competitive differentiator that supports productivity, culture, health, and recruitment—all with measurable ROI. Backed by data and employee demand, it’s an investment more and more workplaces are making. This guide is written for Workplace Teams who intend to build a high-impact lunch program with ease and confidence.

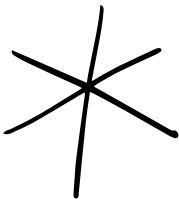




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HYBRID WORK HAS REDEFINED OFFICE INCENTIVES

Before 2020, showing up to the office was the default—and most companies didn't have to “incentivize” it. Desks, meetings, coffee machines, and occasional happy hours were enough.

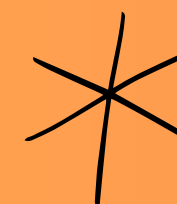
Today, in a world where remote flexibility is a baseline expectation, simply having an office is no longer sufficient to ensure attendance or engagement.

In the hybrid era, the office must compete with the convenience of home.

What employees value has shifted and surveys show workers now prioritize:

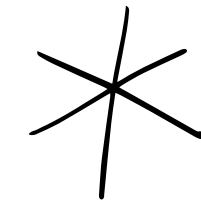
- Flexibility over face time
- Meaningful in-person experiences over mandates
- Convenience over logistics
- Health, wellness, and social connection over rigid structures

89% of hybrid employees say they want to control when and why they come into the office (Gensler U.S. Workplace Survey 2023).



WHY COME IN?

THE NEW INCENTIVE EQUATION



Employees will happily come to the office when the value exchange is clear. The “why” of office attendance has to be defined and clearly communicated. Employees no longer show up simply because it's expected. Instead, they come in when the value of being on-site clearly outweighs the convenience of staying home.

This shift has created a new kind of cost-benefit calculation employees make every day—and smart companies are adjusting their workplace offerings to meet it.

A request to work from the office must hit the key value needs of the employees. This means:

- Meaningful face time with leadership
- Intentional team collaboration
- Access to tools or resources not available at home
- Social and cultural experiences—including shared meals

Smart leaders understand time and convenience are currency and they are creating experiences that outweigh the cost of a trip to the office.

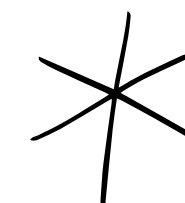
Employees need to feel that the ROI of an office day is worth it.





WHY FOOD AT WORK MATTERS

Page 05



The business case for workplace lunch programs are well resesrached and the data strongly suggest wide-spread impact on high-level company goals. Sharing meals is the one of the best things we can do for our wellbeing, reports the 2025 World Happiness Report, and in a hybrid or dispersed team, mealtimes create natural touchpoints for bonding and cross-functional collaboration.

Employee Engagement

When companies provide healthful and inclusive food programs, employee engagement increases. [Deloitte Insights](#) lists free food at work as a key engagement driver. Shared meals increase morale by up to 25% (Gallup).

Recruiting + Retention

Companies offering food perks see a 40% higher employee retention rate over 5 years (Glassdoor Economic Research).

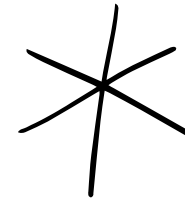
Productivity + Focus

Companies offering regular meals report 25% fewer distractions during the workday (SHRM, 2022). 88% of employees say having food at work helps them stay focused and productive (ezCater, 2023)..

Connection + Collaboration

Shared meals improve workplace morale by 20–25%, according to Gallup's Workplace Wellbeing Index. Employees who eat together are 2x more likely to collaborate outside their department, Harvard Business Review (2020)

THE BUSIENSS CASE FOR A FULLY MANAGED LUNCH PROGRAM

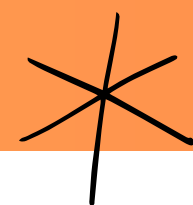


The systemic benefits of shared workplace meals comes when meals are frequent, recurring and predictable. It is key for leaders to design a program that is professionally managed end to end and doesn't become an administrative burden on the workplace team. **Using a single vendor expert in office catering reduces time spent on food coordination for office managers by 75% (Capterra, 2023).**

In the following pages, we'll explore how to build a successful recurring catering program that balances logistics, variety, nutrition, and cost. With consistent vendor coordination, employee feedback, and proactive planning, daily catering can become a high-value perk that strengthens team culture and employee loyalty.



5 STEPS TO DESIGN A HIGH IMPACT LUNCH PROGRAM



01

Clarify objectives of your lunch program

Improve retention and satisfaction, encourage employees to return to work, time-saving, and/or culture building

02

Define the scope of the program

- Meal type - Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, happy hour or all of the above?
- What days and frequency will you offer meals?
- Meal format - buffet-style, individually packed?
- Estimated headcount per day?
- Common dietary preferences (vegetarian, halal, keto, etc.)?
- Meal set-up (one or multiple locations in the office)
- Offerings - hot dishes, salad bar, panini station, soup, grab 'n go, desserts?

03

Research price + determine your budget

The key cost drivers are headcount, meal format, and frequency.

04

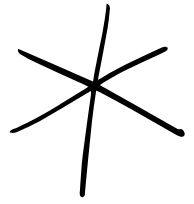
Evaluate catering models & shop vendors

There are 3 office catering models to investigate. If you intend to create a regular meal program, you need a vendor to manages the experience end to end.

05

Determine key metrics + calculate ROI

Identify KPIs to measure your program success. Use company-specific data to calculate ROI.



3 OFFICE CATERING MODELS EXPLAINED

Page 08



Food Broker / Marketplace Aggregator

These companies act as an intermediary between your office and a network of local restaurants, caterers, and food providers. They are tech companies that use their software and logistics to coordinate meals from multiple third-party sources. With this model, you don't work with one chef or kitchen but instead get meals from a rotating selection of vendors and restaurants.



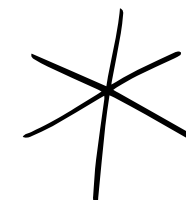
Carry-In Caterer / Direct Operator

Carry-in caterers prepare all meals in-house through its own kitchens, chefs, and staff. They operate like a full-service corporate catering company, not a marketplace, and maintain complete end-to-end control over sourcing, preparation, delivery, and service.



On-site cafeteria

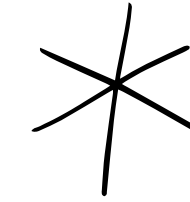
A company would invest in an onsite kitchen and cafeteria when they reach a certain size and their daily volume justifies the investment in staff, space and equipment. This approach is most common among large enterprises with big campuses like tech giants Google, Apple and Meta.



EVALUATING CATERING VENDORS

Page 09

The majority of workplace leaders are considering only two of the three models - broker or carry-in caterer. The primary difference between a food broker and a carry-in caterer lies in how the food is sourced, managed, and delivered, as well as in the level of control and customization provided by each model. Once you select the model for you, research vendors, read their content and look for testimonials.

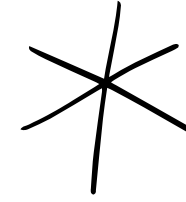


WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Specialize in corporate daily meal delivery
- High quality, fresh, nutrient-rich food with diverse menus for all tastes
- Expert account management supported by KPI reporting
- Dietary Inclusivity: Enthusiastically accommodate all dietary preferences and clear ingredient and allergen labeling
 - with clear process for collecting this information and happily provide high-quality alternatives.
- Manages all logistics, delivery, setup, and clean-up
- Automatic portion adjustments: Vendor automatically adjusts portions for headcount, type of menu, and your team's eating patterns and preferences
- Environmental accountability: Included in their service is daily donations of leftovers, waste tracking and carbon emissions tracking of menus. Some vendors report your specific environmental impact by location and where your leftovers have been donated.
- Scalable Across Locations: Easily extend the program to satellite offices or hybrid teams.



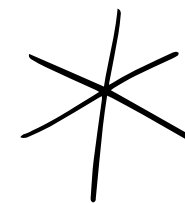
WHAT OFFICE CATERING COSTS



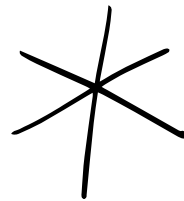
The key drivers for pricing are headcount, meal format, and frequency and prices range from \$15-\$25+.

Pricing can be structured a couple of different ways so when collecting bids be sure to ask how they structure pricing and what is included. Many vendors will give you an all inclusive per person per meal price which includes the food, delivery, on-site management, data tracking and reporting, and complete account management. Other vendors will charge delivery and tax on top of the quoted price.

Feeding Culture: A Complete Guide to Office Catering



THE BUYING PROCESS



01

Research

Conduct significant background research. Find 3 vendors that match your goals + reach out.

02

Strategic buying

Share your requirements with vendors and collect proposals + contract details. Create feature and cost comparisons.

03

Talk to references + share with stakeholders

Bring finance, operations + workplace stakeholders in early. What do they need for their decision making process?

04

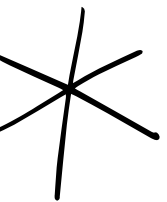
Negotiate + contracting

Lunch programs can be highly complex with lots of factors beyond service and price. Review contracts thoroughly and ask for what you need from vendors.

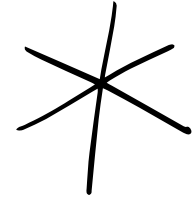
METRICS TO MEASURE PROGRAM SUCCESS Page 12

Once you implement a program, pay close attention to key metrics. These will help you determine whether the program is meeting the objectives you was designed for:

- Participation rate (Lunch attendance divided by Total office population per day)
- Employee satisfaction
- Cost per employee per day
- Time saved (by reducing admin time, offsite meal breaks)
- Waste volume (leftovers or unused meals)
- Environmental impact (leftover donations, CO2 emissions)



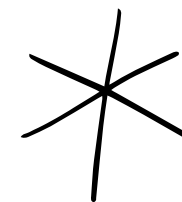
ABOUT SIFTED



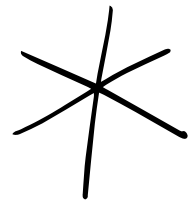
Sifted is a carry-in caterer specializing in experiential office lunch programs designed to enhance workplace culture and employee satisfaction. Sifted manages all aspects of meal service, including sourcing, preparation, delivery, setup/cleanup, feedback and KPI reporting, offering a seamless experience for clients. Our chef teams create diverse, globally inspired menus tailored to various dietary needs, ensuring inclusivity and variety in meal options.

- **Data-Driven Insights:** Utilizing proprietary technology, Sifted collects and analyzes data on meal consumption and preferences to optimize portioning and reduce waste.
- **Social responsibility:** Committed to social responsibility, Sifted donates 100% of its leftover meals to local nonprofits, contributing over \$3 million in meals to date
- **Inclusive leadership:** Founded in 2015 Sifted is a queer, women owned business, operating across major U.S. cities, including San Francisco, Seattle, Atlanta, Austin, Denver and New York City.

www.Sifted.co / hi@sifted.co



THANK YOU



We hope this guide was helpful. If you have any questions or would like more resources to help you evaluate and select the best catering partner for your office, visit **www.Sifted.co** or email at **hi@sifted.co**



www.Sifted.co / hi@sifted.co

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