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Workplace Survey Results 2019

DOES YOUR WORKPLACE DELIVER?

5 Keys to Meeting Employee Expectations

The Staples Workplace Survey is a comprehensive study of office workers and business decision-makers in the United States and Canada.

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Introduction

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Work-life balance continues to evolve. Employees, more than ever, crave work-life integration: an understanding that work and home life directly affect each other and, as such, should be viewed holistically. It's not an either/or choice.

Employers looking to attract and retain the best talent, inspire people to do their best work, and foster a culture of collaboration and productivity must work to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to understanding their workforce's shifting expectations and how to fulfill them.

Each year, Staples surveys employees and office decision-makers spanning various regions and industries to determine the trends defining workplace culture and how they're evolving alongside employee expectations. The 2019 Workplace Survey reinforces the belief that the workforce is any organization's most important asset — so in order to succeed and compete, employers must invest the time to understand and nurture their employees.
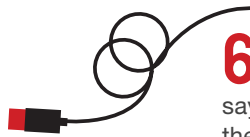
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Snapshot

THE MODERN WORKPLACE IS DEFINED BY ITS PEOPLE AND ITS CULTURE – NOT BY ITS PRODUCTS.

Employees desire flexibility

90%
say allowing for more flexible work arrangements and schedules will increase employee morale

67%
say they would consider leaving their job if their work arrangements became less flexible

Employers need to improve connectivity

36%
use cloud-based file management tools

34%
use instant messaging services

13%
use collaboration software

Environment drives success

80%
of employees say their offices are set up in a way that allows them to be efficient

73%
say their offices help them be better at what they do

Healthy workers are happy workers

41%
say they would take a 10% pay cut for an organization that cares more about their wellness

Culture is a priority for today's workers

68%
would consider leaving their job if they didn't feel supported by more senior employees

63%
say they wouldn't accept a job without first knowing that the organization is actively inclusive of women, minorities and people with disabilities

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Flexible work environments are good for business.

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When it comes to office design, one size does not fit all. For some, being in an open space inspires creativity; for others, privacy and quiet are necessary for them to focus.

In today's workplace, employees want to choose how, when and where they work. Their needs may vary day-to-day and task-to-task, and sometimes life circumstances — a sick child, an urgent home repair, a delayed flight home from vacation — necessitate working remotely or outside of standard 9-to-5 hours.

The results of this year's survey found that many employers aren't particularly flexible. However, those who respond to their workforce's desire for flexibility have a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Flexibility breeds happier, more loyal employees who are inspired to support their organization as much as their organization supports them.
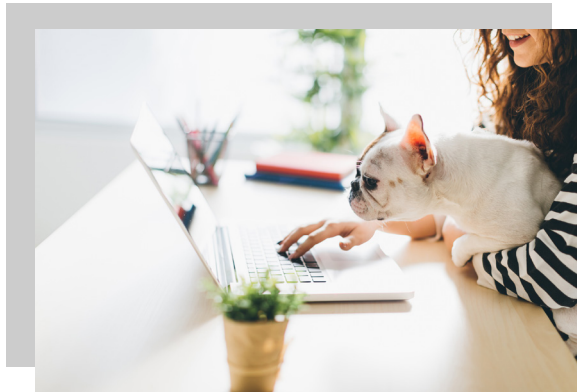
Employees see incredible upside to workplace flexibility

90% say allowing for more flexible work arrangements and schedules will increase employee morale

77% say allowing employees to work remotely may lead to lower operating costs

Flexibility is also a key consideration for them when it comes to loyalty

67% say they would consider leaving their job if their work arrangements became less flexible

A dedicated work-from-home policy is one of the most effective ways to introduce the flexibility employees crave

64% say they work remotely at least some of the time

But only **34%** say their employers have either a formal or informal work-from-home policy

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Flexibility

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Listen to your employees. You may not be able to fulfill every request, but you'll identify what your workers value and demonstrate a willingness to apply feedback and compromise along the way.

2. Consider agile seating arrangements, without individual assigned space, empowering employees to choose where they prefer to work when in the office.

3. If your business can support working remotely, formalize it. Providing an official policy in writing ensures employees feel comfortable and clear when requesting to work from home.

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Connectivity is the cornerstone of a collaborative, productive workplace.

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With more workers requesting to work remotely, organizations must be equipped with the technology to ensure reliable, secure access to the company resources they need to do their jobs.

The good news is, employers have more options than ever to support collaboration across geographies — from the employee who works from home a few miles away to the digital nomad working abroad.

New solutions are constantly hitting the market, and employers are well-positioned to test the waters of building a truly mobile, connected workforce. Unfortunately, many employers are not taking full advantage of the resources available to them.

52% of remote workers use a work-provided computer when out of the office

39% use a virtual private network

36% use cloud-based file management tools

34% use instant messaging services

13% use collaboration software

> " The days of cubicles and the 40-hour work week are over. The newest generation of office workers has never known the frustrations of dial-up internet or a broken fax machine; they're used to constant connectivity and access to multiple devices that enable them to work from anyplace at virtually anytime. Expectations have changed, and if companies want to remain employers of choice, they need to respond."
>
> **Chris DeMeo** | Vice President. Staples Brand Group

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Connectivity

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Work with a technology provider to identify how to best adopt and manage cloud services. In addition to helping employees access information from multiple devices and locations, cloud technology can also be more secure and cost-effective than on-site servers.

2. Identify your employees' mobile needs, and make sure their devices are set up to help them complete their work well beyond taking calls and checking emails. This might include providing mobile devices directly, automating security updates, or regularly confirming that workers have the apps and other tools they need to be productive.

3. Many collaboration platforms offer pared-down, "freemium" or trial versions of their software, while others are open-source and free for all to use. If you haven't dipped your toe into the collaboration software space, trialing a free version for a specific project or workflow is a great way to identify the benefits for your workplace.

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Workplace design impacts success as much as culture.

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Designing workspaces that inspire encourages employees to deliver their best work, in addition to fostering happiness — in turn, helping to attract and retain the best talent.

Trends in workplace design are always changing, and new research continues to emerge about the best ways to facilitate productivity and collaboration while reducing stress. Everything from the colors your office uses, to the use of greenery, to the openness of the space can have an impact on workers' satisfaction and ability to get work done.

While open offices may continue to dominate many workplace designs, this year's survey finds that this may not be meeting employees' needs. Instead, workplaces need to tap into the full design toolkit to build flexible, inspiring spaces that minimize distractions and enable employee choice when it comes to the environments that energize them.

> " Furniture and design have a huge impact on employee happiness and morale. You can buy the fanciest office chairs on the market, but if they're leaving workers with sore backs and aren't addressing more pressing needs like collaborative spaces, you'll end up with low ROI. Employers need to start their design process with employee needs, versus chasing the latest trends."
>
> **Susan Kill** | Vice President, Furniture

Open offices are a mixed bag for workers

78%
of employees in a "mostly open" office space say it feels welcoming

However,
52%
also say it creates distractions

40%
say their office space is too open

But for the most part, employees have positive things to say about their workplaces, suggesting employers are on the right track

80%
say their offices are set up in a way that allows them to be efficient

76%
say their office space enables the company as a whole to be productive

73%
say their offices help them be better at what they do

65%
say the environment at their office encourages peak employee performance

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Design

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. Office layouts don't need to be fully open or fully closed. Workers want a combination of open and private space — again highlighting the importance of choice. Consider design features like modular furniture, cubicles with lower walls, and dedicated collaboration spaces to provide a variety of options.

2. Research how office surroundings, such as color schemes and use of natural light, affect employee performance. There may be simple changes you can make that have a near-term impact on morale.

3. When possible, procure furniture with modern touches, like charging pads for devices or the built-in option to stand or sit, to help employees be more comfortable and more productive.

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Employers must commit to wellness.

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In their quest for work-life integration, employees are increasingly expecting their employers to factor wellness, both mental and physical, into their workplace strategy. There are strong correlations between employee performance and their overall well-being, so it benefits employers to identify ways they can facilitate workers' health.

According to this year's survey, employees feel a stronger affinity for their workplaces when their employers offer wellness programs. When asked to grade their offices overall, workers whose employers have wellness programs give their workplaces a B; those without wellness programs give their employers a C+.

In short, wellness programs make for happier, more productive employees — so everyone wins.

78%
of employees feel their employers have a responsibility to keep them mentally and physically well

But only
42%
of employers offer a wellness program

41%
of employees say they would take a 10% pay cut for an organization that cares more about their wellness

TOP WELLNESS PROGRAM FEATURES

Wellness programs can consist of any number of incentives and benefits. Here are the most common wellness program features survey respondents reported having:

1. Rewards or cash incentives for healthy behaviors
2. Access to 24/7 health resources
3. Gym reimbursement
4. Group fitness classes in-office
5. Fitness counselors/nutritionists to help employees build individualized programs

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Wellness

TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

1. If you don't already have a wellness program in place, you can start small. Simple changes like offering healthy snacks or compiling a list of health resources to share with employees are low-cost ways to show them that their wellness is important to you.

2. Build a culture that empowers employees to take care of their health. Encourage employees to stay home when they're sick. Have open conversations about the importance of mental health. Remind employees to take vacation days and log off, even for mental health reasons.

3. If your office space supports it, consider establishing a dedicated wellness room where employees can recharge, take medication, breastfeed, etc.

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The bottom line: Culture matters.

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Employees want work in a place they like — after all, they're spending roughly a quarter of their time there. But liking the workplace is about far more than liking the job, liking the pay, liking the office layout and liking coworkers. Building a supportive workplace culture is the connective tissue that holds the company together and sparks loyalty.

All of the findings in this year's survey point to the importance of culture. Employees desire flexibility, connectivity and recognition of their individuality; most importantly, they want to feel heard. The best employers — with the happiest employees and the brightest future — are the ones who make it a point to listen and act.

73%
of employees give their employers an A or B when asked to grade them on having an equal and inclusive culture

68%
would consider leaving their job if they didn't feel supported by more senior employees

63%
say they wouldn't accept a job without first knowing that the organization is actively inclusive of women, minorities and people with disabilities

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Methodology

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The 2019 Staples Workplace Survey was conducted by KRC Research on behalf of Staples in October 2018. Respondents consisted of 1,001 office workers in the U.S. and Canada.

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