PA ENTERPRISE

DeskDemon's Magazine for Executive PAs, Office Managers and Secretaries

February/March 2019

Does your company have a Corporate Travel Policy?

Dealing with a problem at work

How healthy is your workplace?

7 ways to create a better work-life balance

Getting back to work with or after a mental illness

Age Discrimination blamed as biggest obstacle for getting back into employment

Brits diet of fake food news prevents optimum nutrition

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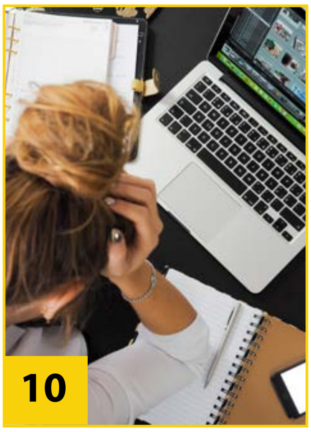
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Age Discrimination blamed as biggest obstacle for getting back into employment

Research reveals strong call to action for recruitment industry, HRs and business owners to give better guidance to those out of work; offer careers counselling, advice on CVs, interview technique and feedback after interviews. Age discrimination is cited the top obstacle to getting back into employment, according to the latest research by job search engine uk.jobrapido.com

The job search engine surveyed 2,027 people in the UK who are currently not in education, employment or training for work and had previously worked in management, executive, administrative or manual labour positions.

Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) believe the biggest obstacle/reason to getting a new job is their age and that the role they apply for is given to a younger candidate.

Whilst 9% of the respondents stated that poor health had prevented them from getting a job, a further 11% admitted they can't seem to find the right job to apply for, 11% revealed they keep going for interviews and not getting the job, 6% admitted they have lost their confidence and 6% are still confused about the job they want. The remainder are using the time out to change careers and are thinking about taking a vocational course, consider their next role as well as travel or look at setting up their own business.

Nearly a third (30%) have not been in employment between 3-12 months, 9% have been out of work 1-2 years, 6% 3-5 years with a further 21% out of work for more than 5 years. One of the main factors for this sustained length (5 years) is to poor health.

Call to action for recruitment industry, business owners and HR executives:

When asked what could help to change their circumstances, more than a fifth (21%) of respondents believe that they need more guidance about what job would be relevant for them.

- 18% would like advice about how to improve their interview technique or embark on careers counselling so they feel more confident about getting their next job.
- 17% would like advice on how to improve their CV

- 14% would like better feedback after their interview so they can learn from their mistakes
- Among other answers received, some respondents have told they would like advice on courses or training so they can build up their skill-base.

Research also reveals sizeable minority (4 in 10) are not preparing enough/at all ahead of interviews

- 55% said they read articles, research the company and look up details about the person interviewing them and a further 4% tried to connect with someone ahead of the organisation - however nearly a quarter (23%) said they just had a quick look at the website, 11% admitted they did not know how or what to prepare and 7% did nothing to prepare ahead of the interview

Loss of confidence, stress and depression taking its toll because of not working:

- Nearly a third (30%) said that they have lost their confidence and do not feel like they can get a job anymore. Others said that they were far more stressed and some admitted to having depression. A further 30% say have had to cut back on their spending and change their lifestyle. 8% felt that change in circumstances was actually positive and they were no longer stressed.

Answering difficult questions:

When asked what was the most difficult question they had been asked in an interview, the most popular responses were:

- "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"
- "How old are you?"
- "Where will you be in 5/10 year's time?"
- "Why would you be an asset to our company?"
- "Why do you want to work for us?"
- "Why have you been out of work so long"

Biggest challenges to getting a job in their industry:

- Nearly a third (32%) believe the skills needed are very different from when they first started out
- 29% believe the market is too competitive and the jobs tend to go to people in-house before they are published externally
- 14% believe that the development of technology has meant some jobs are now redundant
- Others believe there is not enough information available on training for new skills or there are less jobs around than there were five years ago

Rob Brouwer, ceo of Jobrapido comments: "In spite of the progress of UK employment law and measures to mitigate against the risk of discrimination, it is clear that some companies are not giving candidates a fair 'playing field'.

"It is disappointing that so many of those trying to get a job believe that age counts against them when their experience should be seen as an asset. HR departments should be scrutinising their equality policies and ensuring that all applicants, regardless of age, are given a detailed breakdown of why they were unsuccessful. Transparency is crucial.

"A considerable number of those not currently employed admit their confidence has taken a tumble and do not believe they can or will get a job in the future. However, on the one hand, it is important to be prepared for an interview when they meet a prospective employer.

"But on the other hand, clearly, there is a strong call to action for those working in the recruitment industry and to employers and HR professionals to look at ways they could support and help those trying to get employment. This could include running CV workshops, career counselling session, a masterclass on interview techniques, how to answer challenging questions or guidance as what jobs might be suitable for their existing skills."

7 ways to create a better work-life balance

Many of us have fallen victim to the always-on work culture. Research from CV-Library finds that nearly one-third of us don't have a good work-life balance.

This is quite concerning, especially as a lack of balance and being overworked can have a damaging effect on our overall wellbeing.

So what can be done to tackle this? Well, there's a few steps you can take. Below, we'll talk you through these and explain why everyone should strive to create a strong work-life balance.

What is work-life balance?

Work-life balance is the term used to describe striking a balance between your work and personal life. Sadly, this is increasingly harder to achieve nowadays, with advanced technology and this 'always-on culture' making it easier for people to work from almost anywhere, at any time!

Technology and shared work spaces have blurred the boundaries between work and home, meaning many now struggle to switch off from the daily grind and achieve a good work-life balance.

In fact, 72.4% of Brits confess to replying to work-related emails, or making work-related calls, in their free time. Furthermore, one third (34.9%) have access to shared drives and workspaces, with 62.1% saying that they access these outside of working hours.

Why is this balance so important?

Poor work-life balance can have a number of physical and mental effects on overworked professionals. Mental health issues such as stress, anxiety and depression can arise, as well as physical issues such as fatigue.

These issues may eventually lead to burnout and needing to take time off work. Interestingly, almost half (44.4%) of UK workers revealed that they have left a job in the past due to having a poor work-life balance.

So how can you make sure you're getting the balance right, enjoying your personal time and not falling out of love with your job? Below, we share our top tips for creating a better work-life balance.

1. Leave work at work

As mentioned above, technology has blurred the lines between work and home. With many of us continuing to take calls, send emails and access shared workspaces away from the office, work is no longer refined to the four walls of the workplace.

As such, you need to make a conscious effort to switch off and leave work behind at the end of the day. Where you can, avoid having your emails

set up on your mobile and don't access shared drives after hours.

Creating a clear divide between your place of work and your home can help you to relax and unwind at the end of the day.

2. Don't do too much overtime

Sometimes overtime is necessary, perhaps if you're working on a big project or you need to earn some extra cash. But with two thirds (64%) of Brits admitting that they often work more than their contracted hours, this is cause for concern.

In fact, our shocking statistics reveal that as many as one in four (24.8%) could be working up to 34 extra days each year!

So make sure you're not overdoing it. If you find yourself coming in early and staying late every day, or putting in extra shifts every weekend, something needs to change.

3. Make time for yourself

When you're not at work, you need to make sure you find time for yourself. What do you enjoy doing? It might be a physical activity like going to the gym or playing tennis. It could be a creative activity like writing or painting. Or perhaps you just like to read or watch TV.

Whatever you choose, take back your free time to enjoy yourself. This will ensure you have a dedicated time to relax and unwind, as well as keeping you happy and creative. Something that will also benefit you when you're in the workplace.

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4. Don't be afraid to say no

Sometimes you have to say no. You're only human and there's only so many hours in the day. Whether that means saying no when your boss asks you to do overtime, or saying no to a colleague who asks you to pick up some of their workload.

It's important to be realistic and put yourself first. If you know that taking on the extra work is going to mean putting in excessive overtime, more stress or unachievable deadlines, then you shouldn't feel guilty about saying no.

If you find that your boss penalises you for this, it might be time to look elsewhere for a company that encourages work-life balance.

5. Use your annual leave

Earlier this year it was revealed that 22 million Brits don't make use of their annual leave. But, taking time away from work to recharge is vital.

Plus, taking holiday allowance doesn't have to mean actually going on holiday if you don't want to – although that is a great way to unwind! Instead, you might want to take the odd day to relax at home or catch up on life admin.

And remember, don't ever feel guilty about taking your holiday. It's there for a reason. If worrying about your workload piling up while you're away is stopping you from taking time out, check out our next point about being more productive and effectively managing your workload.

6. Work smarter, not harder

Instead of putting in all the hours under the sun, consider ways you can prioritise your workload and complete tasks in the most efficient manner. Working smarter, not harder will help you to achieve a better work-life balance.

Make lists, set calendar reminders and work closely with your colleagues to ensure you give yourself plenty of time to meet deadlines. This will reduce stress and the need to stay late or work from home.

This also means you can take annual leave or relax at the weekends, safe in the knowledge that your work is under control.

7. Speak to your manager

If you're finding it impossible to get the balance right – perhaps the company is under-staffed, you're having to pick up the slack for others or you're being given unrealistic deadlines – it's time to talk to your manager.

Any good manager will want to show they care about you and make sure you're happy in your role. Otherwise, you might choose to go elsewhere for a better opportunity.

Tell them what's going on and work with them to put measures in place, to ensure that you're able to find a stronger work-life balance.

Are you ready to get create your balance?

Follow these simple steps to help you create a better work-life balance. Be sure to leave work at work and make the most of your weekends and annual leave.

If this seems an impossible task in your current role, it could be time to look elsewhere for an employer that understands the importance of staff wellbeing.

Article by Natashia Larkin
CV-library

Move over manic Monday, terrible Tuesdays the most common day for car accidents

Tuesdays are the most dangerous day to drive cars, according to new data analysis by LeasePlan UK. In fact, statistical analysis by the vehicle management group has found that 18% of accidents involving company cars, occur on the second day of the working week. The result? Damages from fault and non-fault incidents cost companies upwards of £2.8 million over the last year, just for this day alone.

An estimated one in three company vehicles will be involved in an accident each year. The evening rush hour 3-6pm, is the most common time for accidents and January with its combination of poor light and low sun along with icy and wet roads presents some of the most challenging driving conditions for motorists.

According to the new data collected over the last 12 months, Fords are most likely to be involved in accidents, followed by BMWs and Volkswagens. These incidents are also, on average, costing businesses £16.1 million annually, with vehicles spending 10 days off the road for repairs.

Chris Black, Commercial Director at LeasePlan UK, said:

It's hugely important to stay as safe as possible on the roads this winter. By taking the necessary precautions before you set out on your journey from checking your route to giving your car a quick once over; topping up fluids and air in tyres – you can greatly reduce your risk of an accident.

In 2016, road accidents cost the UK economy £4.6bn due to lost economic output. Whilst all of

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us hope to never be involved in a traffic incident, it's important for drivers to be aware of what to do and how to act.

With nearly 25,000 drivers seriously injured in 2017 in road traffic accidents, it's likely drivers will either experience or be involved in an incident at some point in their lives. If this happens, LeasePlan UK has created a set of tips to help drivers know what to do in the event of an accident:

Make sure you stop

If you have accidently caused damage or personal injury to another vehicle, an animal or a property – even if it wasn't your fault – you must stop in a safe place.

Check for injuries and danger

If anyone involved is injured or in immediate danger, call the emergency services as soon as possible. Be sure not to put yourself at any undue risk in order to help.

Stay clear

If an accident has occurred, it is best to get yourself out of the way as quickly and safely as possible. Blocking traffic or standing in the middle of the road is dangerous and can cause another accident.

Share your details

If anyone else has been involved with this incident, it is within your right to ask for the owner of the vehicle's name and contact details – along with the name of their insurer. If they refuse to share these details, then the incident must be reported to the police.

Remain calm

No matter how upset you are, remain civil. If no one is hurt, that really trumps everything else; property damage or financial loss can be repaired or made up later. Don't say or do something you may later regret.

Take pictures

One last piece of advice; take a couple of photos of the scene (once safe to do so), as when you're talking it through with your insurer it'll help piece the events together, or as evidence if needed.

'Do You Have a Corporate Travel Policy?'

Why this needs to be the question you ask at your next job interview

The days of the 'road warrior' might just be numbered. That once, near universal willingness to accept wasted time while on the road, to put up with inconsistent travel management, ineffective mobile travel management tools, bad interfaces and design, and a lack of adequate customer support – gone. Business travellers are asking for a more robust business travel experience and companies are listening. 2018 has seen the conscious business traveller step forward to voice their wants and needs, and it's a trend set to continue into 2019 and beyond.

Those of you who travel frequently for work – who are often, week after week, giving up your own time up for the success of your company – will be pleased to know that companies are increasingly looking for the best solutions to reduce on the road pain points for their employees. They're realising that putting the needs of the frequent business traveller first to ensure their happiness requires a travel policy that isn't solely focused on travel expenses and vendors, but takes into consideration employee wellness. From traveller to CFO, it just makes everyone's working lives that much easier.

So, if you're currently in the middle of bad business travel habits at your company, or looking to make your next career move, here are 3 reasons why it's important to ask about company travel policy. And, what's more, we thought we'd back it up by putting our own travel policy where our mouth is! We spoke

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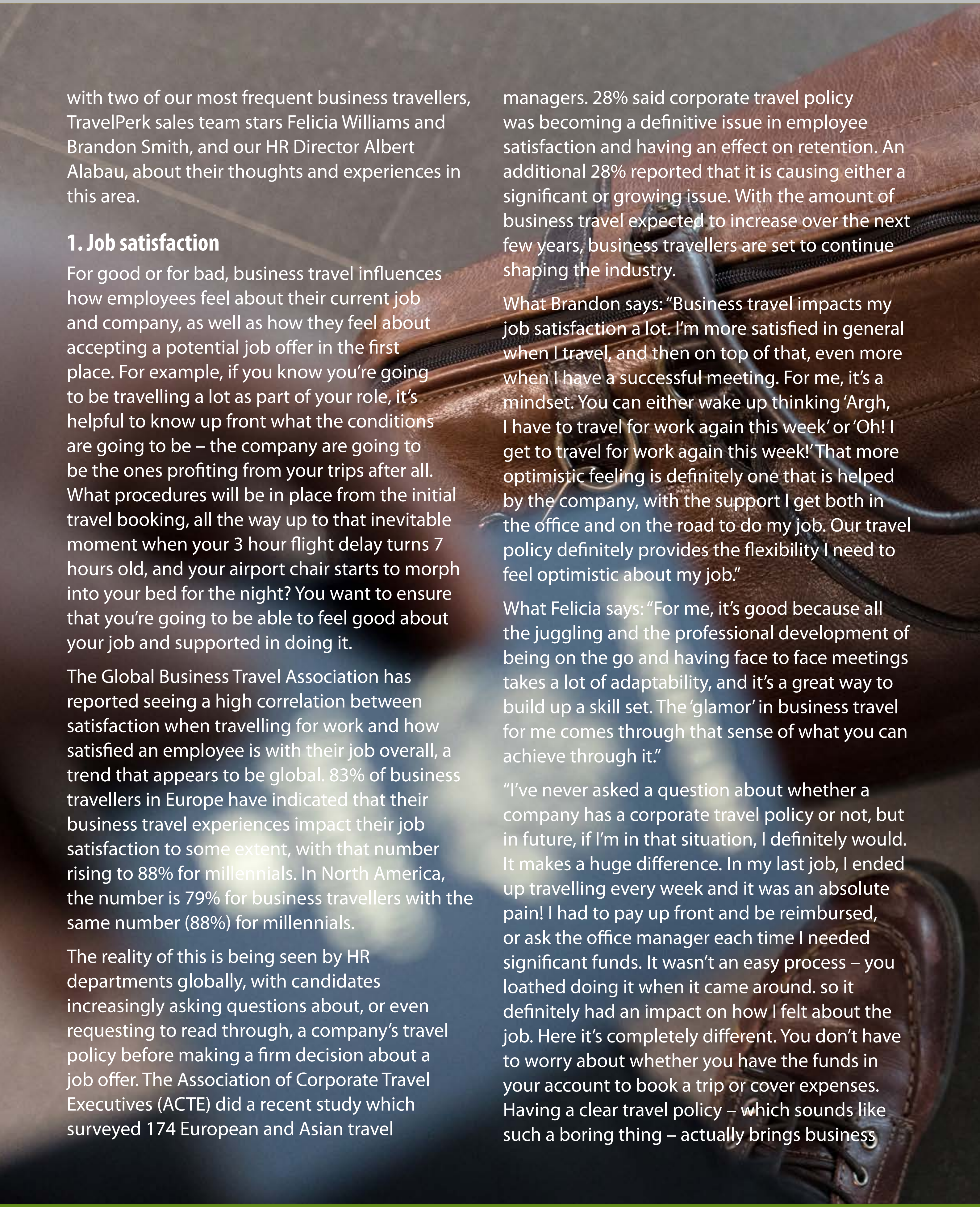

with two of our most frequent business travellers, TravelPerk sales team stars Felicia Williams and Brandon Smith, and our HR Director Albert Alabau, about their thoughts and experiences in this area.

1. Job satisfaction

For good or for bad, business travel influences how employees feel about their current job and company, as well as how they feel about accepting a potential job offer in the first place. For example, if you know you're going to be travelling a lot as part of your role, it's helpful to know up front what the conditions are going to be – the company are going to be the ones profiting from your trips after all. What procedures will be in place from the initial travel booking, all the way up to that inevitable moment when your 3 hour flight delay turns 7 hours old, and your airport chair starts to morph into your bed for the night? You want to ensure that you're going to be able to feel good about your job and supported in doing it.

The Global Business Travel Association has reported seeing a high correlation between satisfaction when travelling for work and how satisfied an employee is with their job overall, a trend that appears to be global. 83% of business travellers in Europe have indicated that their business travel experiences impact their job satisfaction to some extent, with that number rising to 88% for millennials. In North America, the number is 79% for business travellers with the same number (88%) for millennials.

The reality of this is being seen by HR departments globally, with candidates increasingly asking questions about, or even requesting to read through, a company's travel policy before making a firm decision about a job offer. The Association of Corporate Travel Executives (ACTE) did a recent study which surveyed 174 European and Asian travel managers. 28% said corporate travel policy was becoming a definitive issue in employee satisfaction and having an effect on retention. An additional 28% reported that it is causing either a significant or growing issue. With the amount of business travel expected to increase over the next few years, business travellers are set to continue shaping the industry.

What Brandon says: "Business travel impacts my job satisfaction a lot. I'm more satisfied in general when I travel, and then on top of that, even more when I have a successful meeting. For me, it's a mindset. You can either wake up thinking 'Argh, I have to travel for work again this week' or 'Oh! I get to travel for work again this week!' That more optimistic feeling is definitely one that is helped by the company, with the support I get both in the office and on the road to do my job. Our travel policy definitely provides the flexibility I need to feel optimistic about my job."

What Felicia says: "For me, it's good because all the juggling and the professional development of being on the go and having face to face meetings takes a lot of adaptability, and it's a great way to build up a skill set. The 'glamor' in business travel for me comes through that sense of what you can achieve through it."

"I've never asked a question about whether a company has a corporate travel policy or not, but in future, if I'm in that situation, I definitely would. It makes a huge difference. In my last job, I ended up travelling every week and it was an absolute pain! I had to pay up front and be reimbursed, or ask the office manager each time I needed significant funds. It wasn't an easy process – you loathed doing it when it came around. so it definitely had an impact on how I felt about the job. Here it's completely different. You don't have to worry about whether you have the funds in your account to book a trip or cover expenses. Having a clear travel policy – which sounds like such a boring thing – actually brings business

travel closer to that glamorous lifestyle people see it as!"

What Albert says: "For younger people especially, travelling can have a very positive impact on their job because they enjoy it and feel like the company is investing in them. They see that by travelling they can make a bigger impact, make a difference, get results and experience other realities. They often come back with fresh ideas and stories and it provides an enriching environment for everyone. You need to nurture these positive effects with a travel policy that makes employees feel that you've put their needs first."

2. Work/life balance

Remember the days when commitment to your company meant late, thankless nights spent hunched over unfinished reports in the office while eating dinner at your desk (the last third of a far from fresh sandwich or partly wilted salad you saved from lunch)? Let's hope the answer is no! While remaining silent about your workplace dissatisfaction for fear of losing your job used to be a real worry for many employees, businesses are now the ones living in fear of losing you!

To do a good job, employees need the right conditions and the right balance. This doesn't stop at having an overall corporate wellness policy – more and more, travel policies also need to reflect the flexibility employees want and often need regarding their schedules while on the road, especially when they have families. This can be anything from wanting to get a business trip done and dusted and get back home, or, alternatively, being able to have some leisure time to relax and explore a new location.

The same ACTE survey saw 31% of travel managers respond that they'd received requests for exemptions from existing travel policies from employees. This also included threats and implications that employees would leave to find employment in another company if elements of the existing travel policy were not made more flexible, or were not able to be opted out of entirely. Flexible, intuitive elements in a travel policy are what allow for employees to coordinate their business trips in a way that fits their own schedules, and maintains the work/life balance considered so essential nowadays.

What Brandon says: "My work/life balance is phenomenal. The company is very flexible and trusting when it comes to travel. If I have a meeting both on Friday and Monday they'll encourage me to stay the weekend. The words are always 'Ok then, stay and relax.'

It's great that we can use the airport lounges too so that you can get work done on the go and have access to food – it's easier, it helps. Generally, I get what I need on the road to do my job well. I can finish up early, maybe decide I want to go home and the company often arranges that. I play American Football, travel for work and work in the office and can do all of this because TravelPerk gives me the flexibility to manage my life how I want."

What Felicia says: "Being on the post-sales side, I have the flexibility to combine meetings and make it work for both myself and the client – it helps to keep a balance. It's also helpful that I have freedom when I get to the locations, and it gives me a chance to see friends if I visit London or explore the city I'm in. Bleisure is definitely encouraged! Plus there's the freedom to do flexible hours when in the office – for example coming in later and staying later. I'm never worried about my work/life balance."

What Albert says: "I see that more and more of our employees are looking for flexibility if they have to travel a lot. They're looking for bleisure travel, the chance to take a day off if they want to explore or relax. Some companies have very rigid policies in place where you don't have the opportunity to do this but we do the opposite.

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We hire grown ups and we treat them as such. That means we give 100% trust to employees from day one and build from there. When you do this, trust your employees to work and manage their own schedules you get an amazing return – engagement, commitment and loyalty."

3. Wellness

Business travellers have been referred to as the mobile elite. Messaging friends and family from various locations every month or posting pictures of yet another trip can make travelling for business seem glamorous. And, at times, we're sure you've probably had a few 'this is the life' moments, but as always, there are two sides to every story. Business travel can have a lasting impact on health, leading to physiological and psychological repercussions that can be long and short term, show up later down the line, and/or have an immediate effect. Employees should be safeguarded against these as much as possible by their employer – travel policy to the rescue once again.

Previously mentioned bleisure and flexibility on trips tie into encouraging and improving employee wellness, but there's more that can be done. Policies can stipulate for certain accommodations (hotels closer to offices, with gyms or close to good, healthy dining options) and also for alternative accommodation, such as an Airbnb, which may be more in line with what a business traveller is looking for. Companies should opt for travel booking solutions that have 24/7 customer support so that employees don't have to endure too much stress when issues occur on the go. Considerations can also be made for employees once they return, such as being able to work from home or resting the next day before coming in to work again. A smart company will be creative with their travel policy in making sure they're looking out for your needs!

What Brandon says: "People ask about my sleep and say it must be crazy, but I sleep on the plane. I'm out before we even take off! I get my downtime on the plane and fortunately I'm not a big sleeper so I don't feel any effects from my travel. With the flexibility I get from the company I have time to do sport, and on the road I eat well because the accommodation is usually in a good location and there are various food options around. And if I ask for some flexible time on the other side of a trip it's never a problem"

What Felicia says: "Having taken trips with Brandon, I can confirm that he has an insane ability to fall asleep immediately! My problem usually comes down to stress from delays when I'm travelling. But thank God for the TravelPerk Customer Support team. And I'm really not saying that just because you're recording!"

"I was meant to fly to Paris on a trip and said bye to Brandon who went to another terminal. Later he sent me a picture of him eating some sort of delicious food before his flight. My terminal didn't have any delicious food. What it did have was a 7 hour delay. I would've been stuck so I messaged the Team to ask if they could help figure out my plans. They got back to me immediately with options. Just knowing there's help for you,

someone checking all options when you have limited wifi and signal so that you can get out of a far from ideal situation is amazing. So much stress is avoided in knowing you have people to help you get to where you need to go when you're in dire straits!"

What Albert says: "As much as business travel can be exciting and provide job satisfaction, it's tiring. Luckily I haven't experienced it here, but at other companies I've seen people have a burnout. Finding a way to make things work so that people are happy and performing in a sustainable way is key. We make travel less stressful on the road by giving our employees all the tools they need – including a corporate account – so they don't have the stress of having to be reimbursed. Of course they have access to the same 24/7 customer support we provide our customers and we allow for flexible accommodation possibilities, among other things. Whatever they need to help them we figure out a way to make it happen. You can't limit your processes and policies in fear that someone will abuse the system and you can ensure compliance with the right policy and travel management platform. You need your employees to be fresh and comfortable wherever they go!"

The benefits that come from having a company travel policy are undeniable, and as someone who has to travel as part of their job, this area is bound to have the most impact on your experience of it. A company lacking a good travel policy is unlikely to have the right measures in place to ensure an employee can not only do their job well, but have a great time doing it. Essentially, it's a no brainer – what's good for the employee is good for the company! The trend is evident and travel policy is starting to be seen as part of an overall benefits package. In asking to see what your job entails and the benefits you'll get as part of it, make sure to include your travelling conditions in the negotiations. Both you and the company will be better off for it. And, if you're currently in a company without a travel policy, there's plenty of evidence and guidance you can present as to the advantages of implementing one for everyone involved in the travel process.

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Dealing with a problem at work

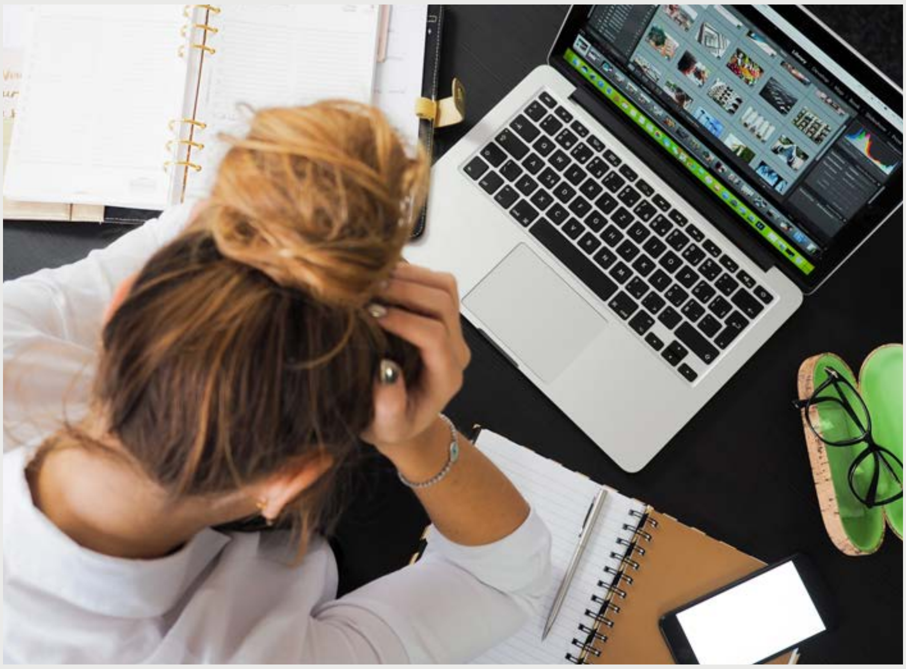
If you have a problem at work, there are ways you can try to solve it. What's best for your situation will depend on things like what the problem is, how serious it is, how your employer has dealt with similar complaints before, and how successful you think a particular step might be. Follow this advice from Citizens Advice.

The options outlined here go from the informal to the formal. You don't have to go through them in order and can start at any of them.

You'll need to follow a different process if you've been disciplined, dismissed or made redundant.

You can get free advice from your nearest Citizens Advice. It will help if you can bring:

- your note of what happened and what you want
- your contract of employment or a copy of your employer's policy on dealing with problems at work
- copies of any emails you've had about your complaint or a note of any conversations you've had about it



Preparing what you want to say

Before you talk to your employer, you should think carefully about what you want to say.

Write down what your employer has done that you're unhappy about - that will help you to remember everything you want to say.

Gather together anything relating to your complaint - like the date and time of the incident, any conversations you've had about it since then and any emails or letters you can find that relate to your problem.

This can help you clarify exactly what your complaint is, and make it easier to discuss when you need to.

You should also think about what you want your employer to do about it.

You might find it helpful to talk to friends, colleagues or your union rep (if you're a member of a trade union). They might be able to tell you how a similar problem was dealt with.

Talking to your employer

Talk to your line manager, or someone else if you'd prefer - for example, someone from the HR department or another manager. Arrange a meeting with them so you won't be disturbed.

You can ask if someone can go to the meeting with you if you don't feel able to go on your own. This could be a friend, colleague or your union rep. Your employer doesn't have to agree to this, though.

At the meeting, tell your employer what you're unhappy about and ask them about the reasons for their actions.

Tell them what you think should happen and show them any evidence you have to support your position. For example, if you didn't get holiday pay, show them what your contract says about this and your payslips.

Keep a note of what was said at the meeting, particularly of any action your employer agrees to take. If you have someone with you at the meeting, they could take the notes for you. If your employer agrees to do something, make sure they set a date for doing it so that you can chase them if necessary.

Your notes will help if you have to take the matter further. For example, you'll be able to use them as evidence if you raise a grievance or go to a tribunal.

Contact your nearest Citizens Advice if you're not sure what to say to your employer.

Writing to your employer

If talking doesn't solve the problem, you can send an informal letter or email to your line manager, a more senior manager or your HR department.

If you don't think this will work, you can go straight to a formal grievance.

Mention what's happened, including what you've already done to try to resolve the problem and how your employer can solve the problem.

Include copies of any evidence, such as emails or letters from your manager.

Raising a grievance

If your letter doesn't get the response you're hoping for, or you want the problem dealt with more formally or it's more serious, you could raise a grievance.

Check if your employer has a grievance procedure. It might be on their website or in a staff handbook, or ask for a copy. You might prefer to follow their steps if they have a clear complaints procedure.

You don't have to raise a grievance, but if you win a tribunal case your compensation could be reduced if you didn't without good reason.

Your grievance letter should mention what's happened, including what you've already tried to do to solve the problem - for example if you've spoken to HR or sent a letter to your employer.

The manager who deals with your grievance should be impartial - this means they won't have been involved with what's happened so far. They could be more senior - like your manager's manager - or from a different department, like HR.

Going to a tribunal or making a settlement

If you can't resolve your problem by speaking to your employer or raising a grievance, you can:

- go to an employment tribunal - you'll need to do early conciliation first
- make a settlement agreement

You must start early conciliation within 3 months less 1 day of what you're complaining about, so don't let a grievance drag on. If you're getting close to the deadline, start early conciliation even if your grievance hasn't been resolved yet.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Getting back to work with a mental illness

Going back to work after a long absence, be it a couple of months or a couple of years, is often difficult. If you've been off because of a mental illness, it can feel even more daunting. Whether you're returning to a job you already have or are looking for a new one, you'll be faced with what might feel like a unique set of issues. However, you're not alone; research shows about one in four of us experience mental health difficulties every year.

By Andrew Arkley cv-library.co.uk

When you're returning to work, either with or after a mental illness, remember that the most important thing is to make sure you take care of yourself. If at any stage you feel you're being pushed too far, make sure you take some time to unwind or seek help if necessary.

Returning to a job

Preparations

Before you even think of stepping back into a work environment, you need to make the necessary preparations.

Talk to your doctor to discuss going back to work. They'll be able to give you some advice to make the transition a little easier.

This is also a great time to discuss any medication you're on – whether you're ready to lower your dose/come off it entirely. Either way, it's useful to take stock of how treatment is going.

Also, if any side-effects, such as drowsiness or fatigue, could present a problem, you can discuss whether switching medications is a good idea. This is all advice you should only ever seek from your doctor.

Talking to someone at work

Discussing your return to work is another good idea. Depending on where you work, this could be an immediate superior, someone from HR, or perhaps even your boss.

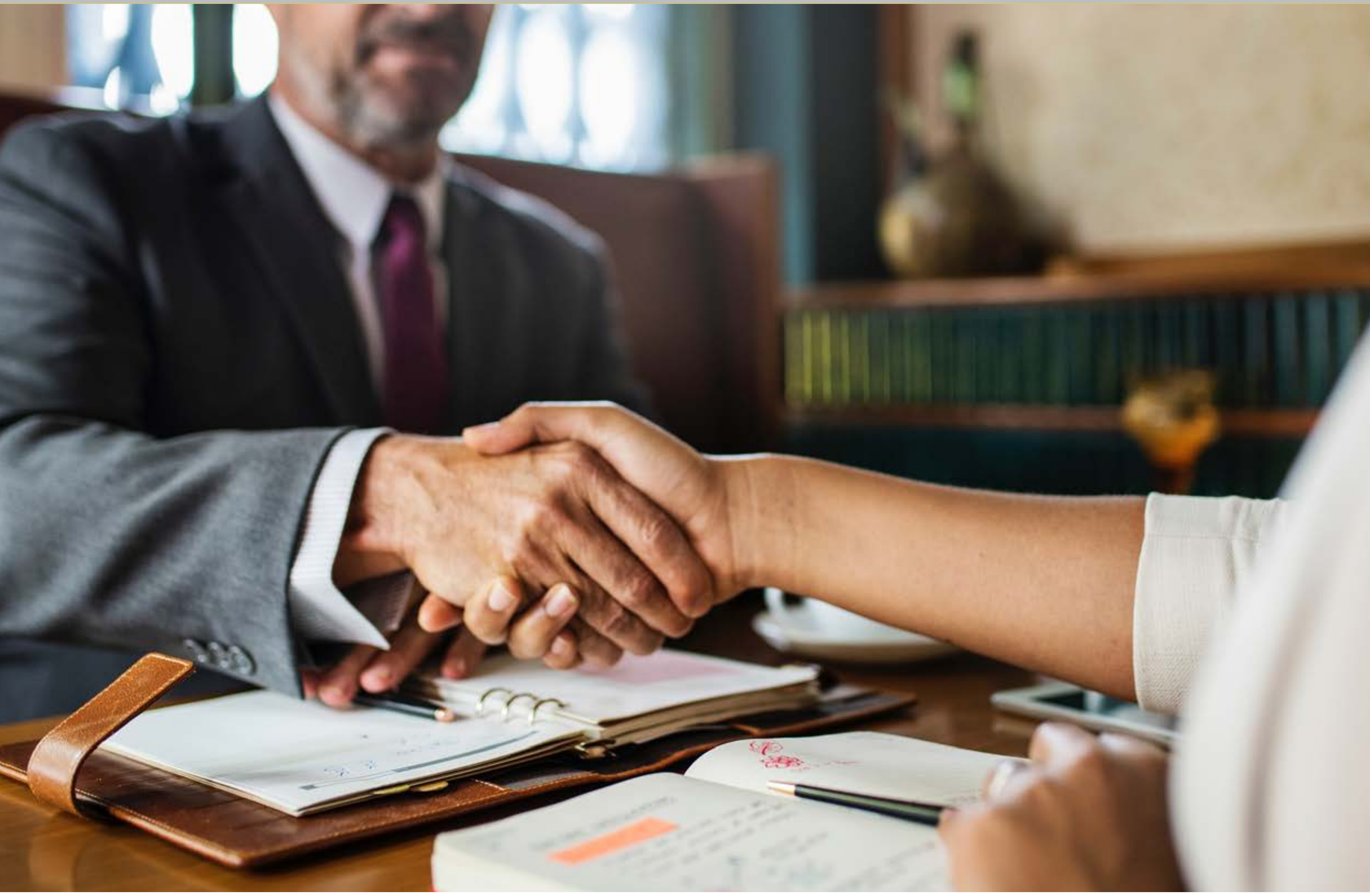
If they haven't already, set up a meeting to talk through any concerns you may have and discuss anything that might need to be put in place to help you out.

If you're worried about asking for something from your employer to help you get back into work, don't be.

A good employer will care about your health, but all employers will want your best work and if that means making some changes, they will be more than happy to.

Most importantly, in many cases they're legally required to make reasonable adjustments, so don't let this worry you.

Of course, you might be asking yourself what constitutes a 'reasonable adjustment'. This could be anything from working more flexible hours, to having your own dedicated workspace rather than hot-desking.



This is also the time to talk about having a phased return to work. Taking a few shorter shifts or working a shorter week or two before you restart working regularly will help take some of the stress off.

Talking with colleagues

Without beating around the bush, discussing a mental illness can be tricky. It's something that can be difficult to explain and you might worry that your colleagues will treat you differently if you try.

Remember, it's completely up to you whether or not you want to tell your colleagues about your mental illness.

If they're concerned, just let them know you're okay. Perhaps you could even have a chat about what they could do to help. But, you aren't obliged to disclose anything you don't want to.

As long as they comply with any of the reasonable adjustments made for you, maintaining good working relationships is still possible without delving into your mental illness.

However, you might find it useful to confide in your colleagues. Talking about your mental illness can make you feel at ease. Plus, having someone to go to if you're struggling can make you feel less isolated.

Getting a new job

If you're looking for a new job, having a mental illness can add extra worry on top of the already stressful experience of job searching.

The nature of your mental illness may make parts of the application process difficult for you. Luckily, reasonable adjustments aren't just for current employees of a given workplace, so don't let that hold you back.

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Company's Growth
GLOBAL BUSINESS REVIEW

Should you disclose?

Let's get this out of the way first: employers aren't allowed to ask you any health questions before they make you a job offer, unless in the case of specific roles where it is absolutely necessary. In most cases, the decision to disclose is entirely up to you.

It's also illegal for you to be denied a job on the basis of your illness. Choosing to discuss your illness is therefore much more of a personal decision.

On the one hand, explaining your situation upfront will save you from having to disclose it later. This is especially true if you're successful in your application, meaning preparations could be made for you from day one.

On the other hand, if the thought of disclosing makes you uncomfortable, or indeed, if you simply don't feel your mental illness is a significant problem anymore, then that's okay too.

Gaps in your CV

This is perhaps one of the biggest fears for those out of work for a significant amount of time. CV gaps often emerge as a potential deal breaker for applicants.

There are a few ways you can get around a career break in your CV. A bit of clever formatting, simply putting years rather than years and months for dates, could cover up a gap of a few months.

Focussing on your skills will also help gloss over gaps. You can show that even if you have taken time off, you're more than capable to work.

If you were able to do other things during your illness, such as volunteering or personal work/education, definitely mention it. If you have very little experience, it would be worth doing this while you apply for jobs. Plus it'll have the added benefit of building up your confidence.

The most important thing is to be truthful. Lying isn't going to help anyone and an interviewer will be able to tell.

Don't let mental illness hold you back

If you're ready to go back to work, either with or after a mental illness, it should be a moment of joy. There are difficulties, but it's almost always a positive step to feeling as well as possible.

To repeat, the best advice we can give is to make sure you take care of yourself. There is no shame in struggling with your return to work and whilst we hope this article has helped ease any stress, if anything gets too much discuss it with someone you trust or go see your doctor.

How healthy is your workplace?

A survey has revealed that almost one in two office workers don't believe that their company management care about the working environment they provide. This finding is despite 90% of employee respondents regarding a healthy workplace as important. The study, carried out by HomeLeisureDirect.com, questioned 2,000 UK-based office workers, as part of research into office working environments.

With respondents split equally between the sexes, and across a mix of ages, the survey initially looked at how much time within the working day was spent sitting down. The responses revealed that a third (32%) spent over 80% of their time at work sitting down, while a further 28% spent more than 60%.

Only 3% spent less than 20% of their time off their feet, with a further 12.5% estimating to spending between 20% and 40% of their time at work sitting.

The next question looked at the prevalence of office breakout areas. Over half (57.5%) of those who took part said that their workplace didn't have one, while 42.5% did – which was actually a higher percentage than anticipated.

Of those workplaces that did have a breakout area, the most common forms of equipment in place were pool tables (42.8%), table tennis (32.8%) and foosball tables (24.5%), with respondents allowed

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to select more than one answer to this question.

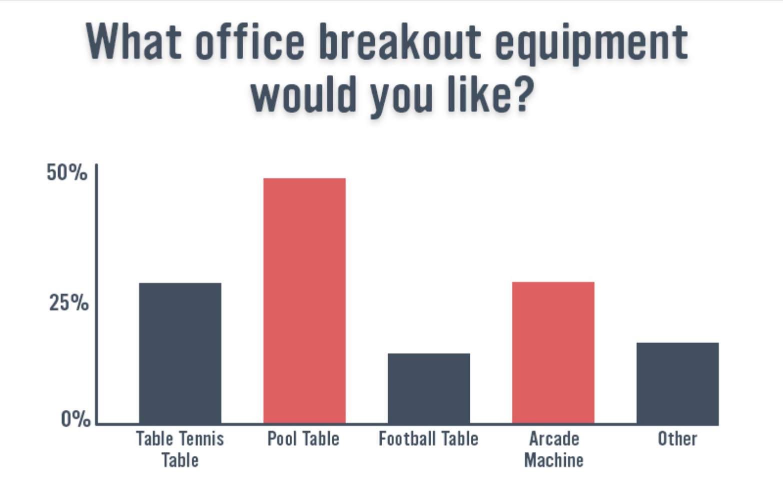
Those workers who didn't have access to a breakout area were asked if they would like one, to which a huge 70% said that 'yes' they would. When questioned as to the kind of equipment they would like to see in their offices, the top two choices reflected the most popular options for existing breakout areas; pool tables (42.7%) and table tennis tables (27.5%).

Given that both table tennis and pool offer a much-needed break from screen time, it's not surprising that these are amongst the most popular options. A further question in our study asked about concern around the effect of prolonged screen time on respondents' eyesight. This revealed that 70.8% were worried their eyesight would worsen through too much screen-time – making table tennis or pool the perfect opportunity for a purposeful break.

Amidst the questioning around existing office breakout areas, we also posed the question "Do you think company management care about the environment you work in?" to which an astonishing 51% said "No." Given that businesses are increasingly obligated to offer support around their employees' wellbeing, the fact one in two employees don't think management care really is an eye-opening statistic for us.

This perceived lack of care for the working environment from employers wasn't reflected by employees, however, with a whopping 65% admitting that they would consider switching employers to join another that had a better office environment – a statistic that serves to underline the importance of workplace conditions on staff morale and employee health and wellbeing.

Despite a slight majority of employees thinking management don't care about their working environment, office breakouts are becoming an increasingly popular investment for businesses, thanks to their positive effect on staff's physical and mental health, as well as general happiness.


What office breakout equipment would you like?

Those whose office already has a breakout area told us that the benefits of having something as simple as a pool or table tennis table increased team building (44.4%) and motivation (37.1%), while also reducing stress (42.2%) as well as increasing their productivity levels when they get back to work (35.9%).

Improved productivity is something that Andy Beresford, Managing Director here at Home Leisure Direct, can testify to: "Our guys here in our main office have access to all of our games products on a daily basis. Whether it's a quick game of table tennis, or a spin on one of our arcades, it's always noticeable how rejuvenated they are after taking a break."

Other questions within the study established that 69% of respondents ate lunch at their desks, while most employees (67.5%) spend up to 40 hours a week at work, and cite that lack of time in their lives is the biggest reason for not being able to exercise as much as they would like to. With a table tennis table available to them, employees would be able to have a form of exercise that they could access within their workplace, utilising lunch breaks to get at least the recommended 30 minutes exercise per day – with regular exercise noted for increasing overall happiness, while also improving productivity at work. One report suggests that a mere 5 minutes per hour could have a significant impact on an individual's health, and urges employees to take frequent and regular breaks away from their desks.

Brits diet of fake food news prevents optimum nutrition

Nutritional Therapist and Health Lecturer at The Institute for Optimum Nutrition Mike Murphy, provides top tips on how to obtain the best nutritional advice and myth-busts the fake food news lingering on the internet.

22% of the UK are thought to have consciously pledged to have an improved, more balanced and nutritionally healthy diet in 2019 but as we begin March many are slinging the avocados in the bin, packing away their trainers and replenishing the biscuit tin, their vow for 2019 to be the healthiest year yet broken. For those that are culprits of this and are feeling exceptionally guilty, new research conducted by The Institute for Optimum Nutrition (ION) provides soothing reassurance that maybe failing to embrace a healthier diet simply isn't our fault. It has been identified that only 1 in 3 Brits (30%) have a good understanding of what actually makes a good diet. With the internet and the media providing such large amounts of conflicting and deceptive nutrition advice, it is unsurprising that so many fail at maintaining a healthier lifestyle.

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- 49% of Brits want a better understanding of nutrition
- In 2019, 22% of the UK pledged to eat a healthier and more nutritious diet

A survey of 2001 UK adults has explored the UK's knowledge on nutrition and discovered it is very limited. 78% see the importance and value of nutrition on every day wellbeing, with 45% understanding that nutrition impacts their health and 33% identifying that nutrition effects mental health but almost half (49%) of those surveyed said they would love to have a better understanding of nutrition with 26% even admitting that they find nutritional advice confusing and conflicting.

When seeking nutritional advice 21% of the UK turn to social media as a source of information despite many social media sites containing fake news and unproven advice. Retaining information from dubious sources could explain why 6% of the public believe that carbohydrates are an unhealthy component to a diet and 7% think fat should be avoided.

With false nutritional advice invading our social media news-feed, it can be challenging to obtain accurate and reliable information. So to add some clarity, Mike Murphy, Nutritional Therapist at Saffron Wellness Ltd and a Health Lecturer at ION myth-busts the most common fake food news and provides his top tips on how to seek out the most reliable nutritional advice.

Myth 1
Eating fat makes you fat…

In fact, the opposite can be true. Low-fat diets are ineffective at long-term weight loss. Our brain is more than 60% fat and the fat in our diet helps to promote satiety and a more stable metabolism. The trick is to focus on healthy fats such as those found in nuts and seeds, oily fish like salmon or mackerel as well as extra virgin olive oil; and to not eat these fats in the presence of too many starchy carbs.

Myth 2
We need to drink milk for strong bones…

Whilst it's true that dairy products are high in calcium, so too are many other foods; Dark leafy green vegetables such as Kale have comparable calcium levels while sesame seeds contain more than eight times the calcium of cow's milk, and both these sources are also richer in Magnesium and Vitamin K which are also needed for strong bones.

Myth 3
Eggs are bad for my cholesterol…

Although egg yolks are high in dietary cholesterol, they are chock full of important nutrients and the advice to restrict their consumption has now been eliminated because they don't actually raise your blood cholesterol much. Cholesterol is one of the most important biochemicals in the body and only a small amount comes from our diet - most of the cholesterol we need is made by our liver and consuming eggs has actually been shown to improve HDL (good) cholesterol.

Myth 4
Red meat is bad for you…

Meat has been getting a lot of bad press lately. Putting the environmental argument aside, the World Health Organisation have labelled red meat as a "probable" carcinogen to humans. They use the word "probable" because the studies don't separate all the other factors that can be involved in cancer development, like a lack of fruit, vegetables and fibre intake as well as exercise and smoking and alcohol consumption. The main issue is with cured, smoked and processed meats which can contain chemical compounds (nitrosamines and polyaromatic hydrocarbons) that have been found to damage DNA that could potentially initiate the cancer process. So if eating less red meat is on your agenda, for whatever reason, start by cutting back on the cured, smoked and processed forms and when you do eat meat, stack your plate high with vegetables and don't worry too much.

Myth 5
Salt is bad for you…

Sodium is an essential mineral that we cannot survive without. The problem is when we eat too much of it, as studies do link high salt intake to high blood pressure. The real issue though is the source of salt in our diets. Many processed foods are very high in salt and so people who consume too much salt are typically guilty of consuming too many processed foods which are generally unhealthy and lack nutrients. If we base our diet mostly around unprocessed foods we don't have to worry about salt.

Tips on how to seek out reliable nutrition information

Tip 1:

Current government guidelines around diet, health and wellbeing haven't been updated much over the last 20 years and they are now past their use-by date in many respects. The British Association for Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine (BANT) have published a set of wellbeing guidelines based on the most well-researched and up- to-date information available. These guidelines provide easy-to-understand and meaningful information to the public and can be accessed here: bant.org.uk/about-nutritional-therapy/bant-wellbeing

Tip 2:

For those that want to go deeper, one of my favourite websites for reliable and up-to-date nutrition information is the Linus Pauling Institute lpi.oregonstate.edu/mic. Here you'll find everything from facts on specific nutrients to disease prevention as well as links to all the government agencies around nutrition.

Tip 3:

Optimum Nutrition Magazine is a free online e-magazine for those interested in the latest news and research around nutrition and its impact on health and wellbeing. It also has some great recipes and is absolutely worth subscribing to: www.ion.ac.uk/Pages/News/Category/optimum-nutrition

Tip 4:

Lastly, it's important to realise that when it comes to nutrition, there is no one-size fits all. Although general guidelines can be very helpful, not everyone is starting from the same position and we're all somewhat unique in our nutritional requirements depending on our genes, our environment and our current state of health.