

Why Your Office Kitchen Layout Matters for Employee Engagement

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Your office kitchen and pantry have the potential to become a hub of innovation and employee engagement. In a well-lit space, stocked with all the most popular snacks and beverages, your team can come together to recharge and collaborate. The office kitchen is where impromptu meetings take place, creative ideas form, and company culture is built while the coffee brews.

Here's why your office layout matters and how the right office kitchen design is essential in creating a dynamic and engaged workforce:

Employee Retention

When you take time to create a welcoming and well-stocked kitchen and pantry, you're communicating to your employees that they matter. According to a study done by Peapod, 67% of full-time employees with access to free food at work are "extremely" or "very" happy at their current job.

Elevate the workplace kitchen to become more than simply a space to prepare food and drinks. Instead, reimagine it as a venue where colleagues can huddle, collaborate and forge strong company bonds. A great office kitchen can be a substantial office perk for new

employees or for those you would like to encourage back to the brick-and-mortar office after time spent working remotely at home.

If the office kitchen is welcoming and provides a respite free from stress, your team members will collect together there. It will become so much more than just a place to stash their lunch or grab a quick drink. You can create a concourse that connects with clever design solutions and a little forethought. Sometimes it will be a calming spot to decompress and recenter, helping your team move past barriers, problem-solve and come up with fresh ideas.

For creative industries, in particular, a change of scenery can work wonders when workers are faced with a problem or block to overcome. The pantry, outfitted with comfy chairs and workbenches, can be an alternative place to focus rather than becoming stagnated at their own desk.

Pro tip: Make sure you strategically place charging stations in the kitchen to support work wherever it happens.

The space will function as a lively social hub where colleagues gather to collaborate, learn, and celebrate company wins. Your newly designed office kitchen can help form part of a wellness package for staff so you can promote good nutrition by providing fruit, smoothies, and healthy snacks. You can also offer [corporate catering](#) events by hosting team lunches with guest chefs or baristas.

Instead of employees grabbing a quick sandwich at their desk in between calls, your company can prioritize taking time to gather and enjoy meals together as a collective. A recent study done by [Nespresso](#) found that 92% of employees want to have a coffee and lunch spaces in the office to socialize.

6 Layout Tips For The Office Kitchen

Beyond showing that you value and care for your team, well-designed office kitchens are practical. A sensible and logical layout with a good flow allows multiple people to prepare food or drinks simultaneously without getting in each other's way. Clever accessible floor plans with clean lines between prep areas, the sink, the dishwasher, and the garbage can also help keep the kitchen clean and tidy.

At Crafty we provide companies with five-star food service and the premium products that make teams flourish and strengthen company culture, and it all starts in the kitchen. Check out these 6 tips to create the perfect office kitchen layout:

- [The Kitchen Triangle](#)
- [Office Space](#)
- [Flow](#)
- [Collisions](#)

- [Lighting](#)
- [Materials](#)

1. The Kitchen Triangle

Conceptualized in the early twentieth century, the theory of the working triangle is still hailed as [the best way to design a kitchen](#). The triangle describes three points of heavy use in the average kitchen; the sink, fridge, and oven. In an office kitchen, you often won't have a stove but can replace this with a microwave or a popular appliance like a toaster oven or more commonly, the vaulted and much-loved coffee machine.

Creating an invisible triangle between these three elements that keeps them close but not too close at a distance of four to nine feet between each point of focus helps create a seamless flow of traffic. These distances prevent bottlenecks, especially when multiple people are trying to use the space at the same time, like right before a meeting or when caffeine withdrawals hit at 3pm. It's also important that there are no obstacles between these three points of the triangle to slow down your process.

As kitchens have changed over time and become more communal, a new version of the work triangle champions workstations or zones. This can be achieved very well in a corporate kitchen with a self-contained coffee bar in one corner of the kitchen or a self-serve brain food snack display set apart from other high-traffic areas. One of the best ways to design a functioning work triangle is to survey your workforce and ask them for insight into how they use the kitchen and suggestions on which innovations and features would make them more likely to spend time in the office kitchen.

2. Office Space

[Office kitchens and pantries](#) must be designed for a crowd. After all, in the course of the day, depending on the size of your company and any guests attending meetings, the kitchen could be utilized by many different people, all with varying needs. It's paramount, therefore, to plan enough space for appliances and create accessible routes for everyone to be able to maneuver around the kitchen.

Your office coffee station, in particular, needs enough space so that people can add milk, cream, or sweeteners without being in the way of others grabbing their cups of java. You also need to provide areas next to the sink or microwave, where people can prep meals or clean up. We recommend leaving at least 24 inches of space between appliances.

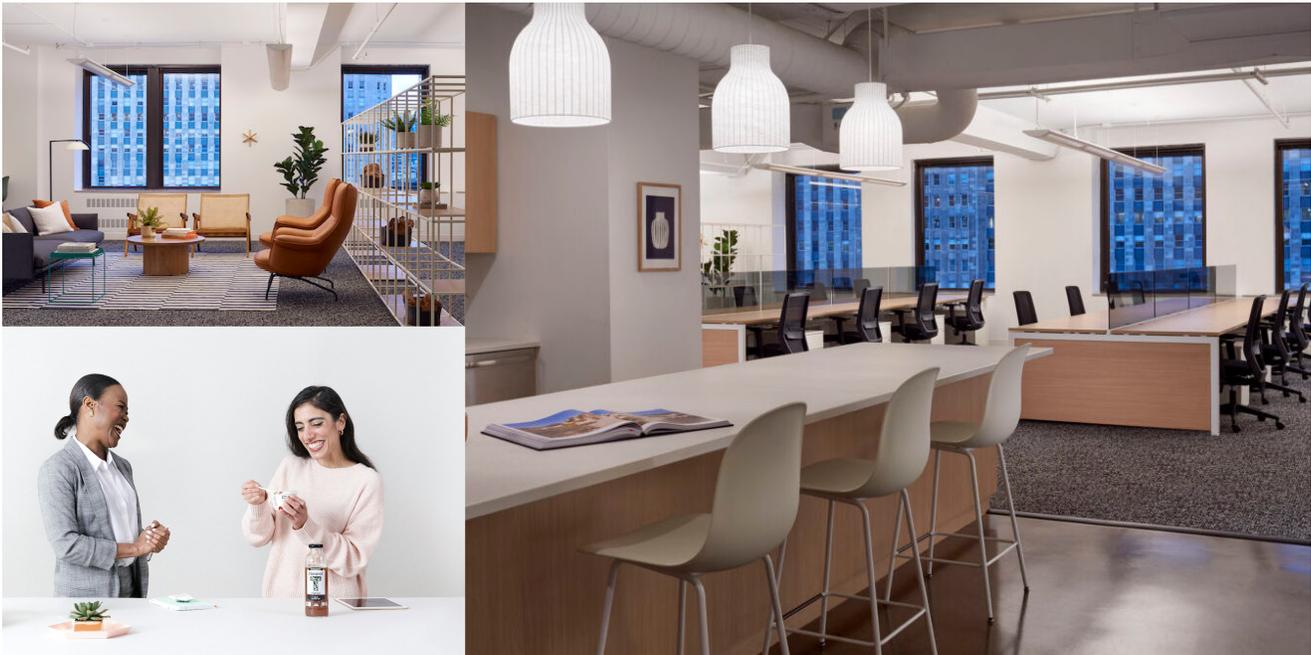
If you are able to provide space for people to eat, socialize and relax in the kitchen, try to set it apart from the main cooking area so that people aren't distracted from their informal meetings by whatever Tom from Accounts is cooking up.

3. Flow

Kitchens are traditionally a place of efficiency where tasks such as prepping, cooking, and cleaning up need to be taken care of quickly. As office kitchens provide the same features, but in the middle of a busy workday, an efficient, timesaving design is even more important.

There are areas of your new office kitchen where you want to encourage people to stop and relax, eat a meal, chat with colleagues, or decompress. However, other areas of the kitchen, especially close to appliances, need to maintain smooth lines of flowing traffic to avoid frustrations, especially if teammates need a quick drink before heading to a meeting or leading a presentation.

It makes sense to place the dishwasher near the sink, silverware drawer, and dishes so that people can easily load and unload the dishwasher. Consider keeping your supplies in storage zones so that coffee pods or filters are close to the coffee machine and plates and dishes are near prepping areas. Stock “to go” containers and food wrap near your snack zones so that employees can take their meals on the road or out to appointments.



4. Collisions

Diversity fosters creativity and problem-solving in the workplace and your office kitchen design can actually encourage more collaboration across teams. If people regularly use the pantry and kitchen in the workplace, they are more likely to run into colleagues in different parts of the organization that they may not otherwise meet in the course of their day. These chance interactions, or casual collisions, can improve employee satisfaction and company culture. According to his biographer Walter Isaacson, Steve Jobs was a big proponent of office design that created these opportunities to collide and collaborate.

Redesigned office kitchens are an opportunity to create a focal point, like the traditional water cooler, where people can come to take a break, engage in conversation, and share ideas and updates on everything from the latest product launch to the most binge-worthy streaming show. Add seating and outlets to make touchdown spaces where colleagues can plug in their devices and turn their chat into a quick ideation session.

If you also hold staff events and workshops in huddle spaces within your office kitchen, complete with tasty office catering, you can further encourage collaboration company-wide. Enhance company culture by designating a space in the shared kitchen for board games, sports notices, trivia, and information on company retreats or social events.

5. Lighting

The importance of good lighting cannot be overstated. In fact, harsh strip lighting found in many offices can actually negatively affect employee happiness and mood. The quality of light and a person's access to natural light during the day can alleviate headaches and unlock many wellness benefits, including fewer sick days taken throughout the year.

Natural lighting has been found to reduce stress, make us feel happier, and encourage better sleep, which in turn leads to greater productivity at work. According to a survey published in the Harvard Business Review access to natural light in the workplace is the most popular request among workers.

Research also shows that people who have control over their lightning report better focus. So, consider installing dimmers and task lights so your team can customize their work environment, including in the office pantry and kitchen areas.

If you intend for your new office kitchen to be more than just a place to make food and drinks, invest in a variety of different lighting options. From lots of natural “feel good” light sources like windows, skylights, and open plan designs to accent lighting and cozy corner lamps to create spaces where people can chat, read or simply relax.

Upgrading your lighting can make your entire office feel more spacious, modern, and inviting to employees, clients, and customers. It can even make the space more valuable to potential tenants or buyers.

6. Materials

Whether you are relocating to a new office or renovating your current office kitchen, you'll want to consider the materials used in your new refit, especially against the following points:

- **Durability** — Durable materials built to last are an excellent investment, but they also signal to your staff that you care about their environment and are making a commitment to their comfort and happiness.

- **Aesthetics** — Be sure to choose a design and color palette that will last through trends but that also complements your company's brand and culture. Be mindful that very bright colors and designs can be overwhelming for many people.
- **Practicality** — Office kitchens are used by lots of people, so higher grade, better quality materials will stand up to repeated use day in and day out.

A new office kitchen is an exciting project that will unite your team and encourage them to mingle and collaborate more often. With a thoughtfully designed, accessible workplace kitchen created with purpose and style in mind, you'll encourage people to get together and enjoy the workday.

A versatile kitchen design will help the space adapt to various different needs, including providing a quiet place to gather your thoughts before the workday starts, a lively, convivial atmosphere for team gatherings, special events, catered lunches, and instructor-led workshops, or a cozy stop to share a hot drink and chat with a colleague before heading home.

Conclusion

Your workplace kitchen can become so much more than another corporate space. It can actively foster a sense of community, bringing people together and elevating employee well-being and productivity.

To find out more about how to create the perfect office kitchen and why it matters to employee happiness and satisfaction. Download the [ultimate office kitchen guide](#).

Written by Fiona Tapp

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