

Rethink the Café to Keep Employees On-Site

Dining Insights Fall 2008

With customer counts at in-house dining centers steadily declining, to an average of 40% of population, down from 50%+ in the early 1990s, how does a company keep its employees on site and its dining operation viable?

“Rethink, redesign, redecorate and offer a more attractive space, more attuned to employees’ needs for speed and a more balanced, healthy menu at reasonable prices,” says Angela Phelan, Clarion vice president responsible for dining facilities design projects.

Why They Go Out

“The strength of off-site offerings has less influence on people’s decision of where to eat than did the qualities of their own on-site offerings,” a research report commissioned by the Society for Food-service Management in 2004 found. Both operators and corporate administrators said the primary reasons employees go elsewhere are:

- Bored with eating in the same place.
- No consistent marketing to employees.
- Service lines are too long.
- Diet needs and preferences are not met.
- Unattractive or uncomfortable facilities.

The Welcoming Café

A more amenable staff café can eliminate these obstacles and attract more customers, Phelan says. “Offer wi-fi capability and large, convivial round tables to encourage conversation. Provide a coffee bar with a premium brand coffee and variety of snacks and pastries. And give them television screens to catch the news and stock reports.”

Colors play a role in enhancing the café’s atmosphere. Light-colored or white walls help brighten the servery. Carefully-placed lighting in the servery will enhance the appearance and attractiveness of food displays.

Dining areas may be more muted, with softer colors. Comfortable, upholstered chairs and carpeted floors (to reduce the noise factor) help make the café a more welcoming place. Banquettes, where a group of people can cluster in relative privacy, are popular. Starbucks-style soft seating – lounge chairs and couches with side tables – provide a place where people can relax for a few minutes and converse with friends over a coffee before returning to work.

“But most of all,” Phelan says, “the most enlightened dining centers offer the most current trends: free trade coffee, the newest panini combinations, healthy, including organic meals, and dozens of varieties of bottled beverages and excellent desserts, and serve them up with style.”

Clarion can reinvigorate your employee and executive dining services with innovative design and decor, imaginative menus and improved services. Contact Angela Phelan at 973/544-6223 or ALP@clariongp.com or Tom Mac Dermott, FCSI, at 603/642-8011 • TWM@clariongp.com or visit our website, www.clariongp.com

