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Fresh Fruit for the Office: a Powerful Tool to Promote a Healthier Workplace

People spend, on average, over half of their waking hours at their place of work. It is no surprise, therefore, that the workplace has a significant impact on people's health and well-being.

Every organisation needs healthy and motivated workers in order to thrive. Management have a number of tools at their disposal to promote a healthier working environment, ranging from health insurance and flexible working hours to water coolers, exercise plans and health awareness schemes. However, a new, simple and cost-effective initiative is becoming increasingly popular in workplaces across the UK: offering fresh fruit to staff on a regular basis.



Offering fresh fruit in the workplace is not an entirely new concept – in certain areas across the globe, such as Australia, California and Scandinavia, fresh fruit is a common sight on workplace floors, having become an integral part of daily working life. In Australia, the practice has increased markedly in the past five years.

Buoyed by the Department of Health's 5 A DAY programme, fresh fruit for the workplace is rapidly catching on in the UK as well. Vasco de Castro, a Director at Fruitful Office - the UK's original workplace fruit supplier - explains why: "We have been experiencing a rapid growth in orders over the last 12 months from companies across a variety of industries. Employees are requesting healthier alternatives to traditional snacks such as crisps, biscuits and chocolates. Staff demands, coupled with the powerful benefits of a healthier workforce, is a win-win situation that management can no longer ignore."

The business case for providing fruit at the workplace is strong:

1. Increased job satisfaction

According to a recent survey by Fruitful Office, the first of its kind in the UK, 80.4% of their clients admitted that "Quality of life in the office" had improved since the introduction of free fruit. 72.5% answered that "office morale" had also improved. Few people would deny that high employee job satisfaction is a critical success factor for any business.

2. Reduced absenteeism

According to the CBI, absenteeism costs the UK a whopping £11.6 billion a year. By helping staff to achieve their recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, fresh fruit can result in a healthier workforce. The health benefits of eating fresh fruit are well documented, including helping to reduce the annual flu, the risk of heart disease, some forms of cancer, and strokes. Reductions in absenteeism can translate into significant savings for an employer. As an example, consider a company with 100 employees at an average wage of £100 per day and an average absenteeism rate of seven days per employee per year (the UK average in 2006, according to the CBI). Reducing absenteeism by just 10 per cent would represent a total saving of £7,000, or a payback of £70 per employee per year.

3. Improved corporate image and reputation

In recent years, the labour market has become increasingly competitive, as the unemployment rate in the UK has fallen. This has forced businesses to introduce a wide range of rewards in order to attract the best workers, including non-monetary perks. Fruitful Office's survey revealed that offices benefit from an improved corporate image, with both clients and visitors, after the introduction of free fresh fruit. This type of benefit is becoming an important differentiator as organisations strive to retain employees and lure talented individuals away from the competition.

Leading businesses, including PricewaterhouseCoopers, Michael Page and Christie's, already offer their staff free fruit. But, says Vasco de Castro, you don't have to be a well-known name to realise that fresh fruit is a powerful tool to promote a healthier workplace. In his opinion, much like the water cooler that was virtually non-existent in offices only a few decades ago, fresh fruit will soon be a permanent feature in workplaces across the UK.

For more information please visit www.fruitfuloffice.com



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