



The lunch hour is dead

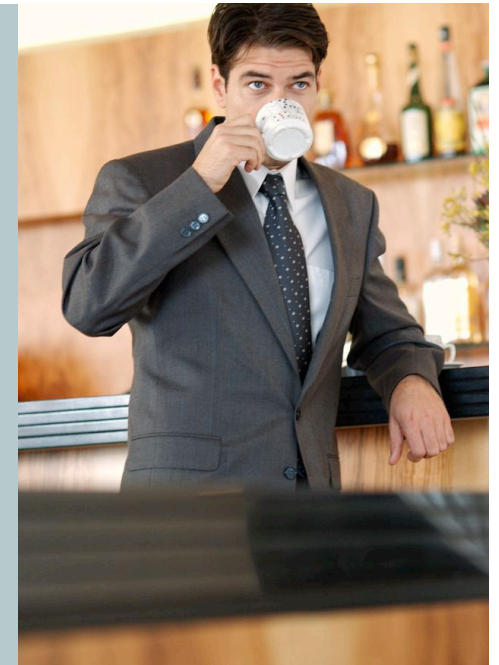
Is the loss of the lunch hour putting your staff at risk?

A recent survey of 764 office based employees from a variety of industries across the UK (carried out by Peninsula BusinessWise) reveals that 73 percent of office workers skip lunch on a regular basis, and 71 percent say they are simply too busy to ever take a break.

Apart from it being unhealthy for anyone not having lunch, it is likely to cause tiredness, feelings of being drained and lethargic, limited cognitive ability, have damaging effects on motor skills, not to mention a potential increased safety risk.

Such a high percentage of lunch workers clearly indicate a problem in UK office based culture. So what's driving it? Probably a number of things, at the top it's bound to be influenced by shareholder short-term profit focus, but surely the way we all propagate organisational norms must come into play? At grass roots level the spotlight has to be turned onto the influence of office managers, heads of department. So many managers have no idea that they exert an extremely powerful influence over the way their people behave. Time and again you will witness mimicked behaviour from subordinates who follow the behavioural patterns of their boss. If the boss skips lunch the staff skip lunch, if the boss works late the staff work late – this lemming like quality has been well documented by the academics over a long long period of time.

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Surely HR has a role to play in redressing the balance. Legislation around regular breaks haven't come about by chance, the benefits are well recognised. Change could be influenced via the setting of their own exemplary behaviour standards, but there's so much more that can be done to develop the effectiveness of managers in heightening awareness that this is a problem. We would suggest running a lunchtime session on the subject! Book them for 90 minutes over lunch, give them a fun and informative 45 minutes of input and breakout, then encourage everyone to take a break for the remaining 45 minutes which they had expected to be in the session. If you got your heads together you could probably come up with some other approaches to add to this.



Employers have a duty of care towards the health of their employees, and as such must ensure that they look after all members of staff. What percentages of your employees have killed off the lunch hour? Maybe it's time to bring about an alternative lunchtime culture?