

Caffeine trumps safety at work - poll

A recent nationwide survey of 12,000 office workers has revealed the most important things we demand from our workplaces; the things we like best and hate most about the place where we spend a third of our lives.



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Richard Andrews, managing director of Inspiration Office, an Africa-wide office space and furniture consultancy with offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town, said that the poll threw up some surprising findings.

“We asked people what was the most important thing for them in the workplace and 95% said access to good tea and coffee.

“This topped the list ahead of security (91%) and a healthy environment (87%) of what South African's see as most important in the workplace.”

Rounding out the most important things was natural light (85%), greenery (71%), canteens (65%) and comfortable chairs (52%).

“Essentially it's all the smaller things that people really need to be happy in the workplace,” said Andrews.

Pet peeves

The poll also quizzed people on their biggest annoyances at the workplace.

Topping the list of biggest peeves with 88% was loud colleagues (people talking loudly on the phone, endlessly talking to colleagues and making a general ruckus), followed by colleagues who “smelled up the place” by eating lunch at their desks (76%).

“It seems as many offices move to open plan design, the trend of squeezing more people into less space has brought workers in closer proximity to each other. There is nowhere to hide from other peoples’ habits.

Andrews added that ‘unbearable bosses’ (66%) was in third place, particularly those that were hyper-critical and micro managers. Lack of privacy also featured with just over 50% citing that as an office downside.

Other strong office dislikes were dreary office spaces, long meetings, dress codes and working hours.

What we love

When asked about the best things about the workplace, the social aspect of meeting new people and becoming friends with certain colleagues was the best thing about the workplaces according to 80% of respondents.

Also favourable was the ‘learning and personal development’ that the workplaces offered (61%) and this was followed by ‘a place to make money’ at 49%.

Filling out the remaining office positives was ‘stimulation’, ‘sense of worth’ and ‘contribution to society’.

Andrews said that more businesses in South Africa were moving to address concerns such as those highlighted by the survey.

“Quiet spaces, places to make private calls and a trend towards more comfortable and relaxed spaces will improve the day-to-day office experience.”

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