BUMP THE JUNK
From lighting, temperature and sound, to price, placement and portion size, there are a complex mix of factors influencing what, when, how and why we choose the food and drink that we do.

Food is increasingly becoming an important workplace tool, which helps to encourage socialisation, aid collaboration, as well as increasing worker health, happiness and morale. This in turn can have a positive effect on worker retention.¹

Making small changes or ‘nudges’ to the workplace food environment represents an opportunity to positively influence workers’ health. Nudges are small, cheap and easy to implement. Over time, small effects can accumulate to become significant, while still ensuring individuals maintain their control over choice.²
It’s no surprise that increasing the portion size of food and drink increases overall consumption. We rely on packages and plate size to tell us what is ‘normal’ or ‘appropriate’ to consume as we do not usually actively decide how much we eat.

It is also normal to consume the food that we are presented with in its entirety.

Our Tip

Use the influence of portion size to increase the consumption of healthier foods, such as fruit and vegetables, while decreasing the portion size of less healthy items.
In a worksite vending machine intervention in the US, prices on lower fat snacks were reduced by 10%, 25% and 50% compared to the higher fat snacks. Low fat snack consumption increased by 9%, 39% and 93% respectively.\(^6\)

In a cafeteria setting, price reductions on fresh fruit and vegetables have also shown to increase consumption four fold but sales returned to pre-intervention levels with the reinstatement of regular prices.\(^7\)

Increasing the price of less healthy foods by 10% and decreasing the price of healthier items by 25% has demonstrated expected revenues to be within 5%.\(^7\)

Our Tip

Small price increases on less healthy products together with price decreases for healthier products has shown to be a financially feasible long term strategy to promote healthier food choices.
Accessibility to food and drinks shape how much individuals consume. Modest changes to the positioning of foods can influence intake, without having to modify the actual choice on offer. We are more likely to consume less if there is substantial effort required to obtain the food or drink.

Our Tip

If you want to increase or decrease the popularity of a food item, make it easier or harder to access, respectively.

Accessibility

Small changes can make a big difference
Promotion has shown to have a small but significant effect on food and drink sales

- Rearranging healthier items to be at eye level has shown to contribute to increased sales - ‘eye level is buy level’. Utilising ‘colour-coded’ labels in addition to rearrangement has demonstrated an increase in sales too
- A menu item’s position within a list can affect selection and sales as people tend not to read menus and rather scan them, as they are often hungry and in a hurry
- People tend to remember the top two items on a list and the bottom item
- Effective descriptions of menu items can help to improve perceptions of quality and value. Descriptions can be linked to the geographical (e.g. Thai) or sensory (e.g. fresh, crisp) properties of the food. Remember that you set a strong expectation when including descriptions so make sure the actual product meets those expectations.

Our Tip

Put the food items you want to encourage at the top or bottom of the menu.
Modifying what is available has been shown to change consumers’ choice in a healthier direction.

Variety can be strategically used to improve food product selection or meal composition.

Allocating more shelf space to healthier items helps to increase sales as visibility is increased.

A larger range of products increases the chance the consumer will find something that meets their needs.

In addition, setting up a separate display of products has been shown to capture and draw attention to ‘new’ or ‘special’ products.

**Our Tip**

Increase the number of varieties and allocate more shelf space to healthier food and drink options.
It’s thought that background music affects our perception of taste, flavour and pleasantness of food and drink.\(^\text{16}\)

The louder the music, the more food and drink we are likely to consume, as the number of bites per minute has been shown to increase.\(^\text{16}\)

The slower the music, the longer we take to eat our food and the more money we are likely to spend.\(^\text{16}\)

Harsh or bright light tends to reduce the amount of time people stay in a restaurant.\(^\text{3}\)

Soft or warm lighting encourages people to linger.\(^\text{3}\)

The slower the music, the longer we take to eat our food and the more money we are likely to spend.\(^\text{16}\)

Sensory experience

Our experiences with food involve nearly all our senses – sight, smell, taste and even sound.

Believe it or not, background music influences the type of food we select and the rate at which we eat.

Lighting has also been shown to influence the duration of time spent in a restaurant.

Our Tip

When encouraging particular items, keep in mind the sensory experiences that can influence food and drink consumption.
While simple nudges can be effective to get the ball rolling, some workplaces might want to go out with more of a bang:

Taste-testing activities can be done with workers to determine acceptability of potential new products in the vending machine or at the café/canteen/kiosk

Suggestion boxes could also be utilised to enable ongoing feedback/suggestions

Remember, small changes can make a big difference
References


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