



BEAN TO CUP

COFFEE SERVICE

CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO?

ABSTRACT

There are three main benefits of using a Bean to Cup Coffee in the workplace. Complimentary coffee makes employees feel valued. Bean to Cup Coffee Service is more environmentally sustainable than single-serve brewing machines. A Bean to Cup Coffee Service saves employers time and money. It has been estimated that offsite coffee trips could cost employers \$1,563 of work time per year for every employee who makes a daily coffee trip.

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Summary

The benefits of using a Bean to Cup Coffee service to provide workers with hot beverages are three-fold:

- Providing a small perk like complimentary coffee in the workplace makes employees feel valued, and along with the many positive physical and mood effects of coffee consumption, this contributes to employees' happiness, commitment, and productivity in the workplace.
- Bean to Cup Coffee Service is an environmentally sustainable option compared to "other" single-serve brewing machines which are not only costly to use but create an unsustainable amount of waste with their individual packaging.
- A Bean to Cup Coffee Service saves employee time by keeping employees in the office for coffee breaks and eliminating time wasted when skilled employees are responsible for using office time to set up and clean up coffee. (It has been estimated that offsite coffee trips could cost employers \$1,563 of work time per year for every employee who makes a daily coffee trip.¹)

The Value of Coffee in the Workplace

Coffee is important to business owners and managers because it's important to workers. According to a US national survey, three out of five workers surveyed felt motivated to do their best work when provided with small perks like free beverages, and small perks made almost half of workers feel more valued.²

Workers rely on coffee to get through the workday because of its many benefits for mood and performance. It stimulates the release of dopamine which causes euphoria and pleasant feelings³. According to Dr. Gary L. Wenk, professor of Psychology, Neuroscience, Molecular Virology,

¹ Packaged Facts, 2015, *High-Quality Employer Supplied Coffee Makes For Happier Employees*, <http://www.packagedfacts.com/about/release.asp?id=3756>.

² "Looking for a Simple and Inexpensive Way to Increase Employee Productivity and Morale?" Keurig Office Morale Research, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://image.exct.net/lib/fe9615707067037c7d/m/1/Keurig-Office-Morale-Research.pdf>.

³ Wenk, Gary L. "Why Does Coffee Make Us Feel So Good." *Psychology Today*. October 28, 2011. Accessed May 8, 2016. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/your-brain-food/201110/why-does-coffee-make-us-feel-so-good>

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Immunology, and Medical Genetics at the Ohio State University and Medical Center, coffee “is able to tap into virtually every reward system our brain has evolved.”⁴

A systematic review of thirteen trials found that coffee significantly reduced the number of errors workers made. It improved reasoning, memory, attention, and perception. One of the trials included in the review compared the effects of caffeine with the effects of a nap and found that the group of workers who consumed caffeine made significantly less errors than the group who napped it really perks employees up..⁵

Other studies have shown that caffeine consumption improves speed and accuracy in the performance of logical reasoning tasks and improves sustained attention and psychomotor speed. Studies also show that post-lunch fatigue can be eliminated by drinking caffeinated coffee, and white collar workers who consumed more than 150 mg/caffeine a day were less likely to make errors of memory, attention, and action at work. One study even demonstrated that, in very adverse situations, Navy Sea-Air-Land trainees showed improved vigilance, learning, memory, and mood state after moderate doses of caffeine.⁶

Other research focuses on coffee’s ability to minimize common discomforts. A study of 100 volunteers found that coffee consumption cancels out the reduced alertness and slowed performance of workers who affected by the common cold. A group of sick volunteers who consumed a normal amount of coffee showed the same alertness and performance as healthy volunteers.⁷ Coffee consumption at work has also been shown to help with the normal neck, forearm, shoulder, and wrist pain associated with desk work.⁸

In addition to making workers happier and more focused, coffee in the workplace can impact the strength of social groups at work. This is significant because the strength of an individual’s

⁴ Wenk, Gary L. “Why Does Coffee Make Us Feel So Good.” *Psychology Today*. October 28, 2011. Accessed May 8, 2016. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/your-brain-food/201110/why-does-coffee-make-us-feel-so-good>

⁵ Ker, Katherine et al., “Caffeine for the prevention of injuries and errors in shift workers,” *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* Issue 5, Art. No. CD008508 (2010), accessed May 8, 2016, doi: [10.1002/14651858.CD008508](https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD008508).

⁶ Smith, Andrew, “Coffee, attention, memory and mood: from the brain to the workplace,” *Café, Ciencia Y Salud*, <http://lacienciadelcafe.com.ar/estudios-cientificos/concentracion/coffee-attention-memory-and-mood-from-the-brain-to-the-workplace/>.

⁷ Andrew Smith et al., “Caffeine and the common cold,” *Journal of Psychopharmacology* Vol. 11 No. 4 (July, 1997): 319-324, accessed May 8, 2016, doi: [10.1177/026988119701100406](https://doi.org/10.1177/026988119701100406).

⁸ Strøm, Vegard et al., “Coffee intake and development of pain during computer work,” *BioMed Central*, September 3, 2012, accessed May 9, 2016, doi: [10.1186/1756-0500-5-480](https://doi.org/10.1186/1756-0500-5-480).

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social group in the workplace has been shown to improve productivity, and drinking coffee together at the workplace (instead of taking individual off-site breaks) strengthens groups.⁹

Some research even suggests that, contrary to popular belief, out-of-office coffee breaks actually increase fatigue by breaking up the flow of the workday. In one survey, breaks taken away from the office did not increase workers' energy levels. In fact, some employees returned to the office more fatigued. However, workers who stayed at the workplace during their break and had a positive interaction with a coworker returned to their work feeling more energized.¹⁰

The practice of drinking coffee together during a scheduled break is common in Sweden, which has one of the world's most productive workforces. Conversation during in-office coffee breaks tends to naturally include work-related topics, giving employees an opportunity to unwind without breaking up the flow of the workday, potentially even providing a relaxed environment for problem-solving and the resolution of differences among employees. Christer Thelin, the head of Sweden's handball federation, who meets up with his employees in the kitchen twice a day for coffee, says, "It gives us a chance to talk about what we're doing. Ideas take shape and that way we can avoid a lot of meetings."¹¹

It's easy to see how research done in the UK on how tea breaks contribute to workplace morale and productivity applies equally well to coffee breaks. In one study, three quarters of participants chatted while getting themselves tea in the office, and 69% of those conversations were work-related. Leeds University Business School organizational psychologists Helen Hughes and Mark Robinson comment on the benefits of this opportunity for conversation:

⁹ Waber, Benjamin N. et al., "Productivity Through Coffee Breaks: Changing Social Networks by Changing Break Structure," *Social Science Research Network*, January 11, 2010, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1586375> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1586375>.

¹⁰ Charlotte Fritz, "Coffee Breaks Don't Boost Productivity After All," *Harvard Business Review* (May 2012), accessed May 8, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2012/05/coffee-breaks-dont-boost-productivity-after-all>.

¹¹ "Is Sweden's 'fika' break concept going global?" *The Local* (SE), June 9, 2015, accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.thelocal.se/20150609/could-swedens-fika-become-a-global-institution>.

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Tea breaks provide some respite from mentally and physically demanding work, reducing stress levels and increasing concentration and motivation when people resume work. People tend to solve problems at work by talking to the people that are in their network, and very often these are the people in their work team or who they sit near. A tea break may be one of the few opportunities that people have to network, by chatting to, or bumping into, colleagues who are not in these circles. Chats of this kind can also be a great opportunity to share knowledge and news about work-related issues, thereby improving performance and efficiency.¹²

The Environmental Cost of Single-Serve Coffee Brewers

The environmental cost of single-serve coffee brewers has become a matter of public concern in recent years. The popularity of the viral ad campaign [Kill the K-Cup](#) is just one example of the negative press brands like Keurig have been on the receiving end of in recent years. In a short, horror-film-style clip, the campaign depicts a world taken over by discarded K-Cups, claiming that in 2014 enough K-Cups were discarded to circle the earth 10.5 times.¹³

In fact, Boston-based inventor John Sylvan, who pioneered the K-Cup, has expressed that he regrets his invention. He envisioned K-Cups replacing trips to the coffee shop and disposable coffee cups, balancing out the environmental cost of convenient coffee. He never imagined that single-serve brewers would replace traditional coffee makers, adding significantly to the problem of disposable coffee packaging. Sylvan himself brews traditional coffee because of both the environmental and monetary cost involved with Pod type single-serve machines.¹⁴

Keurig says that it will start selling recyclable K-Cups later this year, but the new recyclable cups will only make up a fraction of its supply. The long-awaited recyclable K-Cup is composed of polypropylene, and while it is recyclable, it's hardly environmentally friendly. Because the cups will not be compostable or recyclable, Keurig is still planning to sell billions of pieces of disposable plastic each year. Even if consumers make the effort of peeling off the aluminum tops

¹² Julia Rampen, "Tea breaks cost employers £300 per employee per year," *Workplace Savings and Benefits*. July 17, 2012, accessed May 8, 2016, <http://www.wsandb.co.uk/wsb/news/2192130/tea-breaks-cost-employers-gbp300-per-employee-per-year>.

¹³ Kill the K-Cup, "Kill the K-Cup," YouTube video, January 7, 2015, accessed May 10, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRGiGbX9Ilo>.

¹⁴ As It Happens (Carol Off and Jeff Douglas), "K-Cup inventor regrets creating non-recyclable Keurig coffee pod," Interview, *CBC Radio*, March 5, 2015, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.2981396/k-cup-inventor-regrets-creating-non-recyclable-keurig-coffee-pod-1.2983243>.

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of each K-Cup used (a messy process), it's unclear whether or not recycling centers, which process huge amounts of plastic, metal, paper, and trash, will be able to capture and sell for a profit so many tiny, individual K-Cups. Darby Hoover, senior resource specialist at the Natural Resources Defense Council notes that recycling does not offset the environmental cost of making coffee pods in the first place, which requires energy, materials, chemicals, water, and transportation. She calls consumers to "re-evaluate the role of packaging in our lives" and remarks that "we can make simple choices that reduce our environmental impact."¹⁵

Potential Savings for Employers

When employers provide coffee at work, workers don't have to waste valuable work time leaving the office to get their coffee fix. Three out of four employed adults surveyed spent time purchasing coffee or tea outside of the office. The average time spent was 10 minutes per day, amounting to over 40 hours per year per employee. While 10 minutes was the average time spent on coffee breaks, almost two out of three employed adults surveyed spent up to 15 minutes per day purchasing coffee outside the workplace. This amounts to 20 hours of lost productivity for an office of 25 employees, and 18 to 34 year olds, a group which makes up the majority of workers at many offices, spent more time purchasing coffee and tea than other age groups.¹⁶

Marketing research firm Packaged Facts rates coffee's impact on workday productivity 3.9 on a 5-point scale of importance and claims that coffee's impact on productivity should spur all employers to provide their workers with free coffee. Packaged Facts estimates that offsite coffee trips could cost employers \$1,563 of work time per year for every employee who makes a daily coffee trip.¹⁷

The environmental cost of single-serve brewers have been addressed above, but there's also a monetary cost for the convenience of individual coffee pods and cups. A New York Times article

¹⁵ Gelles, David, "Keurig's New K-Cup Coffee Is Recyclable, but Hardly Green," *The New York Times*, April 15, 2016, accessed May 10, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/17/business/energy-environment/keurigs-new-k-cup-coffee-is-recyclable-but-hardly-green.html?_r=0.

¹⁶ "Looking for a Simple and Inexpensive Way to Increase Employee Productivity and Morale?" Keurig Office Morale Research, accessed May 9, 2016, <http://image.exct.net/lib/fe9615707067037c7d/m/1/Keurig-Office-Morale-Research.pdf>.

¹⁷ Packaged Facts, 2015, *High-Quality Employer Supplied Coffee Makes For Happier Employees*, <http://www.packagedfacts.com/about/release.asp?id=3756>.

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estimates the price of the coffee purchased in gourmet, single-serve coffee cups and pods at \$50 per pound, and this cost doesn't include other associated costs such as the brewer, brewer maintenance/replacements, and cleanup.¹⁸

A Bean to Cup Coffee Service also saves companies employee time that would otherwise be spent setting up and cleaning up coffee equipment. With a conservative estimate of 15 minutes of employee time spent each day on these tasks, coffee setup and cleanup alone cost an office of salaried employees about \$1500 per year.¹⁹ This does not include the cost of coffee equipment, coffee equipment repair and maintenance, filters, coffee beans, cups, lids, stirrers, sugar, milk/creamer, and employee time spent purchasing supplies. In addition to these financial benefits, using a coffee service guarantees that coffee equipment is cleaned regularly and stored safely, eliminating the possibility that uncleaned coffee equipment or improperly stored dairy create a workplace health hazard.

¹⁸ Strand, Oliver, "With Coffee, the Price of Individualism Can Be High," *The New York Times*, February 7, 2012, accessed May 11, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/08/dining/single-serve-coffee-brewers-make-convenience-costly.html?_r=1&ref=business.

¹⁹ Estimate calculated assuming an average salary of \$50,000 and a 40-hour work week.

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