

Starting up

- What kind of coffee is available where you work or study?
- When you buy a cup of coffee, what are your expectations and demands?

Reading

Companies are starting to improve the kind of coffee they provide for employees.

To find out more, read the article and then answer the questions below.

Reading comprehension

Read the article and find answers to the following questions.

- 1 Which building dates from the 17th century?
- 2 What architectural style is it?
- 3 Why are the employees of Zava a captive audience for the coffee made by Matlind Ruka?
- 4 What are the three goals that some companies use coffee to achieve?
- 5 What does Goldman Sachs have on the sixth floor of its City of London headquarters?
- 6 What extra benefit does Google offer its employees?
- 7 What is the opinion about instant coffee?
- 8 What do fifty-two per cent of consumers want from the coffee they drink at work?
- 9 How is a high street coffee shop brand such as Costa Coffee regarded by many office workers?
- 10 What did Compass do last year?

Fancy coffee becomes a must-have office perk

¹A few months ago, Matlind Ruka was serving cappuccinos and flat whites in the café at Kenwood House, the 17th century former residence to the Earls of Mansfield. However, today he is an in-house barista making free coffee for fellow employees at Zava, an online medical platform.

²Although the office lacks the splendour of the north London neoclassical villa, there are some aspects of this job he particularly likes, such as getting to know his colleagues' coffee tastes and the opportunity to educate a captive audience on roasts and blends. "Coffee is an art. We talk about the bean to the coffee cup," he says.

³Dedicated coffee-makers such as Mr Ruka are one example of the caffeinated offerings that some companies have introduced to keep their employees productive, happy — and in the building. Goldman Sachs's new City of London headquarters boasts a coffee bar on every floor, including one that serves single origin specialty coffee from the small chain Notes, and on level six, an "offering of the very best specialty coffee, from delicious espresso blends to regularly rotating single origin coffees".

⁴Google offers its employees barista courses to learn more about coffee and coffee-making. Jo Cresswell, community expert at Glassdoor, the job and recruitment website, says: "Employees expect not just coffee, but high-quality ground beans on tap. They will make their voices heard if they're not happy with this coffee." It is a service, she says, that would be likely to survive a downturn. The job site includes many coffee-related comments on reviews, such as one who writes "the worst thing is leaving the lovely café behind which was a real treat, lovely barista and setting of coffee shop also".

⁵Office offerings reflect increasingly sophisticated tastes. Large employers know that a jar of instant coffee in the kitchen no longer cuts it. "The high street has significantly influenced what businesses do with coffee at work," says Jeffrey Young, chief executive of the Allegra World Coffee Portal, a market research company. "Employers have to up their game." Fifty-two per cent of consumers, according to his company, like to drink the same coffee and other drinks at work as those they get in coffee shops.

⁶Steve Lovegrove, UK and Ireland head of business excellence at Compass Group, the global contract catering company, says: "Our customers are demanding the same quality of coffee in the workplace as they are seeing on the high street both from independent and branded coffee shop chains." Whereas many Compass clients opt for a high-street brand, such as Costa, in the past five years there has been a swing towards "something a bit more niche and independent in look and feel", says Mr Lovegrove. Compass opened a Barista Academy last year to keep up with demand, training 250 employees in the UK.



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Vocabulary 1

There are a number of idiomatic and colloquial words and phrases in the article.

Find them by matching these definitions with the phrases in the article.

- 1 a group that must listen to something because they cannot leave
- 2 freely available
- 3 complain (as a group)
- 4 something very nice
- 5 is not good enough/ not the right standard anymore
- 6 improve what they do
- 7 a movement in favour of something
- 8 stylish, different

Vocabulary 2

Complete these sentences, using words and phrases from Vocabulary 1.

- 1 Coffee is so much part of our culture now that most employees expect it to be available _____ whenever they want it.
- 2 If companies want to keep their employees happy, particularly if they work in the creative industries, they will have to _____ and make sure that good quality coffee is available. Instant coffee from a jar _____ and might even cause some people to change companies.
- 3 People's tastes have become very refined, and there has been a big _____ speciality and _____ blends of coffee.
- 4 If employees don't get the quality of coffee they expect, they will soon _____.
- 5 Matlind Ruka, in his new job as an in-house barista, is lucky because he has a _____ of employees to try out different roasts and blends on. The employees are lucky too, because if he is good, they will be in for _____.

Grammar – linking

- 1 There are four occasions in the article where linking words are used to express the idea of contrast. Can you find them?
- 2 Complete these sentences using the linking words from the previous exercise.
 - a Twenty years ago, good employers chose the best brand of instant coffee they could find.
_____ now, only the most refined and niche roasts and blends are acceptable.
 - b Till recently, many employees bought their coffee from coffee shops and brought it to work.
_____ now, they expect the same or even better standards of coffee to be available in their workplaces.
 - c _____ employees of some companies are spoiled, with in house baristas to make their coffee, the question can still be asked whether this makes them more productive or creative.
 - d Nowadays, people are very choosy about the type of coffee beans their coffee is made from,
_____ in the past, they had to make do with instant coffee.

Discussion

- 1 Some people may wonder if the focus on which bean or blend the coffee is made from, and having an in-house barista to supply coffee on tap has gone a bit far. Does it improve productivity or creativity? Is it worth the investment? Or is it just a fashion that will soon pass?
What do you think?
- 2 What about tea drinkers? There are just as many if not more blends and varieties of tea.
Why are tea drinkers not given the same offering by companies? Or are they?

ANSWER KEY**Reading comprehension**

- 1 Kenwood House
- 2 Neoclassical
- 3 Because he is the in-house barista.
- 4 To keep their employees productive, happy and in the building.
- 5 An “offering of the very best specialty coffee, from delicious espresso blends to regularly rotating single origin coffees”.
- 6 It offers its employees barista courses to learn more about coffee and coffee-making.
- 7 It no longer meets the expectations of many employees.
- 8 They like to drink the same selection of coffees as they get in coffee shops.
- 9 They want “something a bit more niche and independent in look and feel”.
- 10 The company opened a Barista Academy, training 250 employees in the UK.

Vocabulary 1

- 1 captive audience (para 2)
- 2 on tap (para 4)
- 3 make their voices heard (para 4)
- 4 a real treat (para 4)
- 5 no longer cuts it (para 5)
- 6 up their game (para 5)
- 7 a swing towards (para 6)
- 8 niche (para 6)

Vocabulary 2

- 1 on tap
- 2 up their game ... no longer cuts it
- 3 swing towards ... niche
- 4 make their voices heard
- 5 captive audience ... a real treat

Grammar

- 1 However (para 1), Although (para 2), but (para 4), Whereas (para 6)
- 2 a However / But / Whereas
b But / Whereas / However
c Although
d whereas

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