


Workforce Reckoning

OfficeMax State of the Workplace Report 2022



A must-read for any business wanting to retain valuable employees.

FOREWORD

Back to business, but what has changed?

If there's one thing that the Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced for me, it's the importance of our people.

We have collectively worked through this incredibly challenging event and have all become more acutely aware of the things that matter most to our business and our stakeholders. As a leader within your organisation, I'm sure you feel the same. But what matters to us as individuals, on a more personal level?

In commissioning our *State of the Workplace, 2022** research – the first time we've done so – this was front of mind. How has New Zealand's workforce changed in the last few years?



53%

say that what's
important to them
in an employer has
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past couple of years.

Against a backdrop of labour shortages and 'The Great Resignation' it felt important for OfficeMax – on behalf of the 30,000+ New Zealand organisations we work with – to understand what workers are looking for and value, and how this translates into the physical spaces we work in.

I'm pleased we did. We now know that more than half of workers surveyed (53%) say that what's important to them in an employer has changed over the past couple of years.

As offices reopen their doors, many for the first time since mid-2021, this research captures an important moment in time. Our personal values, which have previously felt disconnected from our workplace of choice, are now mission critical and we must listen and adapt.

As the quest for talent continues to challenge leaders, this research aims to help us understand the expectations of workers in a post-Covid economy, and the relationship between their personal values and the significant changes we're seeing in the workplace of the future.

At OfficeMax, our vision is to empower sustainable and successful workplaces. We trust this report goes some way in helping empower your organisation to adapt to and accommodate the changing needs of your people.

I hope you find this report insightful and the findings of the research thought-provoking. If you have any questions please contact your OfficeMax Account Manager.

Kevin Obern
Managing Director
OfficeMax New Zealand



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Purpose and values prove vital

Not surprisingly with the cost-of-living and rising inflation, salary remains the most important feature that people look for in a new role for 66 per cent of New Zealand workers. However, money isn't everything, and companies can't rest on remuneration alone to drive loyalty or attract talent.

67%

say they will only work for a company that has a positive impact on society.

Around two thirds of Kiwi workers (67%), say they will only work for a company that has a positive impact on society making this a key area for companies to get right.

This over indexes among the younger generation, at 77 per cent for those aged 34 and under, suggesting that those who are

in the early stages of their career are consciously selecting purpose-led businesses – not only to purchase from, but work for. Against a backdrop of

labour shortages and “The Great Resignation” this makes a striking figure.

Furthermore, the majority (80%) of employees think that a company's stated purpose or mission is important when looking for a new job.

Indeed, 35 per cent of those surveyed seek out companies that provide goods or services that benefit society, and that do work which serves a local or global need (22%). Ethical supply chain was also important for a large number of respondents.

But words aren't enough. Employees are also evaluating how companies follow through with their publicly stated values, with more than a third (35%) of under 34-year-olds claiming they would leave their job if their employer contradicted its values or mission.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, flexible working policies and honesty / integrity are the key features that Kiwis look for when assessing a new role, beyond salary. Honesty / integrity is particularly important for those aged 55+, being ranked the highest among this age group (63%) after salary and flexible working.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Share your organisation's strategy and purpose. Make it accessible, clear, inspiring and part of everything you do and communicate relentlessly throughout the year.
- Storytelling is vital, prioritise stories about social impact and ensure your website reflects your journey and purpose - it will resonate with job seekers as well as customers.
- Values are not just posters on a wall - state how you will live these values, draft a plan on how you will deliver on them and assign key measures to track progress.
- Initiate regular 'pulse checks' internally to capture employee 'voice' and engagement - acknowledge and act on their feedback where possible.
- Leaders within your organisation need to be visible to employees and stay in touch with what is happening in their world, so they can facilitate a better working environment.
- Walk the talk - look at what products and consumables you use in your organisation and make sure they align with your stated values, for example purchasing goods with environmental credentials or from social enterprises.
- Consider how ethical your supply chain is and how sustainable your product purchases are – including end-of-life product disposal. Share good news stories of your purchasing decisions with employees.
- Prioritise employee wellness – things like fresh fruit deliveries, milk alternatives (oat/soy) or free period products demonstrate to your people that they are valued.
- Have some fun with employee events - make your people feel valued and give them a reason to come in to the office.

Wellbeing in a post-pandemic world

Without a daily commute, working from home through the pandemic has changed the make-up of our workdays. How we prioritise spending time with family, friends or alone have become more important.

Workers say that what's important to them in an employer has changed over the past couple of years.

Among employees who said that they are unlikely to stay with their current employer, culture and wellbeing plays a key role. 32 per cent say they don't feel their company invests enough in its people and 27 per cent say it's because they don't enjoy the culture.

In parallel, almost, two thirds of Kiwis (62%) who work at least some of the time in an office type environment feel that their job has a positive impact on their wellbeing. This is critically important to understand: the physical workplace has a positive impact on wellbeing.

This supports further findings, when thinking about employee benefits, those surveyed said that mental health days off (70%) and flexible working hours (85%) are the top of the list when looking for a new job - providing a glimpse into the future of work.

The key aspects about office life that employees are currently missing when working from home include the clear separation between work and home life (47%), as well as being around people to spark ideas and be more creative (45%).

While flexibility and the ability to work from home are desirable, it's clear that employees are missing the physical workplace.

62%

who work at least some of the time in an office type environment feel that their job has a positive impact on their wellbeing.



The comforts of home, at work

The expectations of the physical workplace is one area where expectations have changed.

When asked about the one thing their employer could do to improve the physical workplace, the findings reflect the months that workers have just spent at home.

Top 4 things employees now look for in a workplace.

1. TOP-NOTCH TECHNOLOGY SET UPS
2. ERGONOMIC WORKSTATIONS
3. IMPROVED CLEANLINESS
4. QUIET SPACES FOR FOCUS

Top-notch technology set ups, ergonomic workstations and improved cleanliness are deemed a priority by employees, alongside quiet spaces for focus, which all made the top four responses.

Employees aged 55 and over place higher importance on having clean spaces (58%) and lunchrooms (51%), while the younger age group (under 34) places importance on a modern office (22%) and break-out areas for collaboration away from desks (14%).

When looking at workplace benefits that different companies offer, a staggering 54% of respondents said an unlimited supply of hot beverages was essential to the physical workplace – ranking above gym memberships (44%) and drinks after work (37%).

After working from home for so long, office workers have become accustomed to taking a break for lunch in the kitchen and making a nice cup of coffee in the morning.

The cleanliness of the workplace, compared to the safety of home, appears to be an area of anxiety for workers. The ability to focus within noisy open-plan offices with multiple conversations, music and meetings taking place is also a consideration – again reflective of months spent working in solitude.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Create different spaces within your office

- Divide open plan environments into purposeful quiet and collaborative zones through the use of furniture like storage tambour units, living walls and acoustic screens
- Quiet spaces for informal catch ups and collaboration can be created without constructing new rooms – consider soundproof or privacy booths and single pods which can be added to open plan areas. Locate your coffee machines nearby to attract people to them
- Use of acoustic walls or panels will help reduce noise, they can also be decorative, creating a modern, attractive environment for employees and customers
- Establishing environments where employees can choose the space that works for them, at any given time, will go a long way to enhancing productivity.



Provide Ergonomic Workstations

- Assess workstation set ups to check your employees are set up for safe and ergonomic working - a checklist like [OfficeMax's warrant of fitness](#) helps you find out what you need to provide them
- For desk-sharing environments invest in flexible furniture that adjusts to suit more than one person - such as height adjustable or sit-stand desks and easy-to-adjust monitor arms. Choose desks with built-in cable management and access to power on top of the desk rather than beneath
- Comfortable, ergonomic chairs and large or dual-screen monitors are a reason to come in to the office
- Monitors with built in charging docs and webcams reduces the number of devices you need to get your team set up for seamless video calling, as well as providing easy laptop network connection when in the office
- Keyboards and mice need to suit the person, not the budget in order to help avoid repetitive strain injuries
- Provide headsets to employees to cut out noise and distractions during virtual meetings and calls, wireless options enable your people freedom from being tethered to their desk.



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Enable productive meetings

- Provide video conferencing and specialised microphones for seamless meetings when you have a mix of employees in the office and at home
- Meeting rooms benefit from the use of acoustic solutions to enhance video conferencing sound, enable privacy and to avoid noise travelling elsewhere
- Interactive touchscreens such as a CommBox allow easy collaboration during meetings, as well as fast, secure sharing options at the end of the meeting – no more taking a photo of your scribbles with a phone.



Assure your people that cleanliness is a priority

- Work with suppliers to assess the quality of your cleaning products – are they fit for purpose? Is a more industrial option required?
- Communicate your regular cleaning and hygiene practices to your employees
- In communal areas provide cleaning and hygiene stations stocked with hand sanitiser, masks, and surface spray and wipes for employees to use.



Reinvigorate your kitchenette or lunch room

- Create inviting spaces for people to gather informally and chat away from their desks by providing a mix of options such as high tables and bar stools for people to stand around, and low tables with comfortable chairs or couches
- Investing in top notch coffee machines not only attracts employees back to the office, it also improves productivity as they are more likely to stay onsite than pop in to their local café
- Demonstrate your social responsibility commitment by removing single-use plastics (e.g. cups, plates, and cutlery) and by providing beverages from brands such as Common Good Coffee, Charity Tea or Karma Cola.

CONCLUSION

It's time to step it up

While the challenges we've seen since the start of the pandemic will not dissipate any time soon, our research shows that businesses are taking intelligent steps towards retaining top talent through changes to physical office environments – from soundproofing spaces and meeting rooms or introducing quiet booths, to significant investments in technology and cafeteria offerings.

Businesses seem to understand that after spending the better part of a year working from home, employees now expect some of those comforts – such as high-quality coffee, the ability to concentrate outside of an open-plan environment and ultra-clean workspaces – in the office. These are clear links to our time spent in lockdown.

That's encouraging, but what we're seeing from this research is that expectations go much deeper than that now.

It's clear that what's important to workers in an employer has changed over the past couple of years: business values, integrity and doing good matter as much as a competitive remuneration and workplace perks.

This is something all business leaders need to hear and a message OfficeMax will be sharing with our customers and taking on board ourselves.



KEVIN OBERN Managing Director, in one of OfficeMax's revolutionary new Customer Experience Showrooms

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

* OfficeMax *State of the Workplace, 2022* was conducted by Perceptive Research on behalf of OfficeMax in an online survey targeted at New Zealanders over the age of 18. Respondents had to either be employed part time or full time in an office environment. 1,002 responses were collected between the 23 February and 9 March 2022.

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