

Three years since the first lockdown and many firms have yet to create office appeal

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With today (Thursday 23rd March) marking three years since the UK's first mandated lockdown, workplace creation expert, Unispace, has warned that too many firms have yet to achieve the desired workspace set up to give staff a reason to return to the office.

This follows recent reports from LinkedIn which revealed that more than a third of employees would quit if forced to return to the office full-time, while firms including Facebook, KPMG and Amazon continue to call for more time in the workplace.

As Lawrence Mohiuddine, CEO, EMEA at Unispace explains, for many, the appeal of the office has not yet been revived, which will only exacerbate talent attraction and retention challenges:

“It is hard to think that just three years ago, the country's workforce was thrown into remote working overnight. While many adjusted to this change relatively quickly, the same arguably cannot be said for the current working environment. Businesses and employees remain in a state of limbo, with many firms indicating a desire for people to return to the office more frequently, while staff remain somewhat reluctant. The key driver for this reticence is an element that is too often being overlooked, namely that there is no real incentive for staff to head back into the office.

“If we take a holistic look at the world of work today, things have changed drastically between pre- and post-pandemic times. How staff work is different, how they engage with peers and customers has evolved and the ability to operate in a more flexible manner has been broadly embraced. Technology and digital infrastructure across firms have been updated as a result to support remote and hybrid working. But the office itself has not – in most cases – changed, and that is further creating a wedge between employers and employees.

“People need a reason to take themselves out of the comfort of their own homes and head into the office, and business leaders need to discover what that incentive is, bespoke to their workforce. While it will vary, we can see some general trends that are intrinsically linked to new working styles. In fact, our own study of 3,000 office workers across Europe revealed that 74% of staff would be happier to return to the office if it had separate spaces for collaborative activities and individual focus work. Clearly offices need a redesign to suit the new needs of post-Covid working. Simply mandating returns without rethinking the workspace will be detrimental to staff retention, motivation and engagement.”

ENDS

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