

Business and Industry Catering - UK - October 2010

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What is this report about?

The general mood in contract catering is 'stable', 'survived', 'in good shape', reflecting the fact that food and service management (FSM) companies feel they have endured the worst the recession has to throw at them – even though the next 12 months will be challenging. However, the largest sector, business and industry (B&I), has been hit hardest.

With a decline in meals served of almost a fifth, the driving force behind B&I future plans has to be driving footfall, and making workplace canteens step up and offer a more competitive service, not solely based on price but embracing innovation, sustainability and health.

What have we found out?

- Some seven million employees bring their own lunch, and eat at the canteen. This group represent a valuable pool of opportunity for cross- and up-selling for the canteens, including through smaller items like hot drinks and snacks.
- Facilitating the use of the canteen for eating lunch brought from home can expand such footfall. The higher awareness of the canteen's offering and prices thus achieved can play an important role in encouraging usage.
- Healthy options, promoted as such, should be a staple on the canteen menu for them to engage the 6.6 million employees that use canteens and say they are always looking for a healthy option.
- Effectively communicating their value for money credentials, perhaps including through tastings or promotions, is key for canteens to spark interest among the 14 million employees who have cut back on spending on lunch.
- Women are noticeably less likely than men to use work canteens. Many women work part-time, suggesting that catering better for flexible working hours including through breakfast, snacking and specialist hot drinks could help canteens engage this market they have somewhat neglected.
- More exotic dishes or ones that require slow cooking, large batches or many components stand to chime with the more than two in five 16-34-year-olds who tend to choose a lunch they wouldn't make at home.

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