

# Coffee in Offices

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Whether management likes it or not, morning coffee is in the office to stay, and it appears that the custom is on the increase. Reasons are hard to pin down, but they seem to have something to do with the growing informality of office manners and the decline of breakfast as a meal.

Statistics are necessarily hazy, but it's probably conservative to say that a majority of business establishments permit their employees to have coffee during working hours. The National Office Management Association puts the figure at three out of four offices, while over half the 70 major corporations informally queried by the Field Research Division of the Paper Cup and Container Institute admitted the coffee habit. Despite the serious attention being paid to industrial feeding, the Institute found that 12 of the companies which reported coffee in their offices made no provision for coffee breaks on their production lines.

## **A Break in the Morning for Coffee Is Desirable**

Companies agree that the coffee break is desirable, whether they provide for the refreshments or simply allow employees to find their own ways of getting it. Most of them, however, think the assets are intangible. Thirty-six of those questioned by the Institute cite the promotion of a friendly feeling as the main advantage, while 24 think that the office breaks may have some effect in reducing fatigue. Nine guessed that coffee breaks increased production, but even these were not very sure. Fifty-five reported no effect on production. "At times it may hold up production—I couldn't say it ever increased it," one typical answer reads. Two flatly stated that the time lost cut the volume of work turned out in the day. One realistic

respondent said that coffee on the job reduced tardiness on the part of employees who simply could not train themselves to get up in time for breakfast.

Whether welcomed as a morale builder, or suffered as a necessary evil, coffee periods present a number of mechanical problems management would like to solve. Shall employees be allowed to bring containers of coffee to their desks? The answer depends on the type of work, the amount of contact workers have with the public, the facilities for distribution from a central cafeteria or outside restaurant, and the amount of staff time required in ordering, making change, and cleaning up.

Should coffee be available only at scheduled rest periods? If not, how much actual working time is lost by individuals visiting a coffee vending machine, a lounge where coffee can be brewed by the employees, or even the restaurant across the street?

It is ever advisable for the company to pay for the coffee, and if not, should some arrangements be made for collecting on a weekly basis? Should employees be allowed to make their own coffee on the premises?

Personnel managers can almost always reduce the waste, irritation, and lost time for coffee with some company-provided service. If they don't, employees will make shift themselves at greater expense of time and sometimes at considerable sacrifice of sanitary standards. Coffee made on an electric plate on the radiator, and served in cracked china cups is messy and can be a source of contagion during the winter cold season. If cold drink paper cups from the water cooler are used to eliminate the danger of infection, spilled coffee is likely to result. For satisfactory coffee service, it is necessary to use a waxless hot drink paper cup.