

Episode #158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You



Full Episode Transcript

**With Your Host
Dr. Janel Anderson**

Episode 158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You

Hello and welcome to another episode of the working conversations podcast where we talk all things leadership, business, communication and trends in organizational life. I'm your host, Dr. Janel Anderson.

In the ever evolving landscape of modern work culture companies are constantly seeking new ways to attract and retain top talent. From competitive salaries to flexible schedules, employers have long understood the importance of offering enticing perks and benefits to stay ahead of the curve.

However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more extravagant approach. Office peacocking which you can think of as the workplace amenities arms race, with an increasing emphasis on returning to the office, which we talk about regularly here on this podcast. Some companies are pulling out all the stops to make their physical office spaces more attractive and enticing.

So what exactly is Office peacocking? It's the phenomenon where companies compete to outdo each other in providing lavish perks and amenities to their employees. Picture this gourmet coffee bars fully stocked snack stations on site gyms and nap pods. Some companies have even gone as far as installing rooftop gardens, indoor slides, pet friendly policies, and all the like to create a more appealing work environment. Now these are just a few examples of the extravagant amenities that some companies are incorporating into their office space to create a more enticing workspace.

Now think about it. Why would employees bother coming back to the office if they can achieve the same level of productivity from their comfort of their own home? To entice them back? Employers are investing in these flashy perks that rival those of high end resorts and tech campuses. But why the sudden emphasis on these over the top perks?

Well, the push pull to get people back into the office after working from home for several years is the primary reason fueling this trend with more employees working from home and demanding greater flexibility. Employers are under pressure to make the physical office a destination worth returning to. It's also a move to increase employee satisfaction and retention.

The job market as you know if you've been listening to the podcast for any length of time is still tight and it is not going to loosen up anytime soon. So of course attracting new employees and keeping the ones that you have is super important right now. On the surface, it might seem like a win win situation. Employees get to enjoy all the perks

Episode 158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You

of the luxury resort while employers benefit from increased productivity and morale and potentially getting employees back into the office more often. And then of course retention.

However, the reality is far more nuanced, and office peacocking comes with its own set of challenges and considerations. One of the primary concerns is the question of equity. Not all companies can afford to invest in extravagant office amenities and not all employees have access equal access to these perks. And this can create disparities within the workplace and it can exacerbate existing inequalities.

While some employees enjoy the benefits of onsite gym or gourmet catering, others may feel left behind or undervalued especially the ones who continue to work from home sometimes because they have to. Whether that's because the office building is closed or because they've moved to different geographic location.

So take companies who have a blended workforce where some of the people are on site and some are fully remote and those companies need to take careful consideration when implementing these kinds of amenities. It can breed resentment for those who are fully remote especially when geography is involved.

If people who come into the office are given substantial perks that decrease their cost of living, say food and beverage, laundry service childcare and so on. And that those who are hired under a work from anywhere plans are not given the same perks, it may backfire.

Additionally, if it's not implemented thoughtfully, some workers may feel that these perks are mere distractions or attempts to mask deeper issues such as overwork.

So let's dig into this a little bit deeper into the danger of prioritizing these superficial perks over more meaningful aspects of employee well being. While fancy office amenities might initially attract employees, they can also distract from deeper issues such as overwork, burnout, and the lack of work life balance.

Now this is definitely what was happening in the tech space as much as two decades ago when these amenities begin appearing from startups in Silicon Valley to large corporate campuses of well established tech companies, gourmet lunches and coffee bars and fully snack refrigerators. And free flowing microbrews that were all on tap, as well as air hockey and pool tables and football and putting greens, largely so that employees felt no need to leave the campus. All of your basic needs were more than provided for and the amenities and activities kept lots and lots of people on site.

[Episode 158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You](#)

So your after work social circle was built right in. It was an outright lured to give up any sort of work life balance or blend when there was no reason to head home, especially for younger employees who hadn't started families yet.

I will admit to having gone down the slide a couple of times at one of my clients sites about eight or 10 years ago. True story. They had a big slide that went from the third floor down to the first but now these days it's not just about the superficial perks. It's also about fostering a certain sense of community and belonging. So for those who are coming back into the office, and the companies who want them to, they need to be providing something worthwhile and not just fancy coffee by providing spaces for collaboration, networking events, and team building activities.

Employers can help to create a more vibrant and dynamic workplace culture that employees won't want to miss out on. And that again, doesn't involve fancy coffee. Well, it can involve fancy coffee, and if I was going there, I would love a fancy coffee while I was there, but it's not the fancy coffee that's going to lower me back. It's the team building activity. It's the networking event. It's the professional development that I might find for myself on site when I go into the office for that event. It's not the comfy furniture or the snazzy lamps.

Now of course for a number of companies the COVID 19 pandemic forced a reevaluation of the role of the physical office and the value of in person collaboration. Because as we all know, office space has historically been expensive. It's now on the decline because so many people are leaving the office but with many employees now accustomed to remote work and flexible schedules, the allure of flashy office perks may not be as compelling as it once was.

So this is part of the reason that some companies are trying so hard at this as companies embrace hybrid work models and they adapt to the changing needs of their workforce. The focus is shifting towards creating flexible and adaptable spaces that support both in person and remote collaboration.

Now, in some cases, office perks are relevant and helpful and useful in getting people back into the office. When thoughtfully implemented, perks and amenities can play a valuable role in fostering a positive and productive work environment. They can enhance employee satisfaction, they can boost morale, they can promote a sense of belonging and camaraderie.

However, it is essential for companies to strike a balance between offering attractive

Episode 158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You

perks and addressing the underlying factors that contribute to employee well being and engagement. So what does the future hold for Office peacocking and the amenities arm Race?

Well, as we navigate this post pandemic landscape, it's clear that the definition of a desirable workplace continually evolves. In fact, what was desirable six months ago is probably not what you're currently desiring. It is a moving target. And while flashy perks and amenities might still have some place in the overall equation. The most successful companies will be those that prioritize flexibility inclusivity and purpose driven work.

Now can they do that while also offering a delicious cup of coffee? And a comfortable, cool place to sit and hang out and collaborate with your coworkers? Absolutely. It's about finding the balance.

Ultimately, office peacocking is not just about creating a more appealing work environment. It's about fostering a culture of respect, support and empowerment. By investing in the well being and the development of their employees. Companies can create workplaces that are not only attractive, but are also meaningful and fulfilling. And that might mean having nap pods and prayer rooms and meditation spaces and yoga studios. Absolutely.

It really must take into consideration the employee base and what the organization is up to writ large. The companies who get it right by offering amenities tailored to their employees needs and desires as well as to the work they are doing. Well, they will have a distinct advantage over the ones who are merely throwing money at lavish perks that don't connect with their employee base or the mission of their organization.

So if your company is considering adding some of those lavish perks in an effort to lure people back to the office, I will warn you, it may be attempting strategy for a track. It may be attempting strategy for attracting top talent, but it's really important to consider the broader implications and focus on creating workplaces that prioritize equity, flexibility and purpose.

By striking the right balance between perks and purpose, companies can create environments where employees thrive and succeed. Consider investing in cool technology that helps people collaborate better, that could be software or hardware instead of fancy things in the office. Now of course, we can still have a really good cup of coffee. Nobody is going to fault you for having a really good cup of coffee in the workplace.

Episode 158: Office Peacocking and What it Means for You

So remember, my friends. The future of work is not only about technology, and cool spaces. It's about the values we uphold the communities we build and the sustainable growth we all strive for.

We need to keep exploring, keep innovating, and keep envisioning the remarkable possibilities that lie ahead. As always, stay curious, stay informed and stay ahead of the curve.

Tune in next week for another insightful exploration of the trends shaping our professional world. If you enjoyed this content and you're watching on YouTube, make sure you hit that subscribe button and knock that little bell so that you get notified every time there's a new episode out.

If you happen to be listening on a podcast player, make your way over to YouTube soon. You can find me at youtube.com/janelandersonPhD. I'm making some other videos there too, not just the podcast. So even if you are listening on a podcast player, you're gonna want to subscribe as well.

Wherever you're listening or watching please leave me a review and helps other listeners find me and that spreads the word of working conversations better, faster and more meaningfully. Until next time, my friends be well.