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## **STORM IN A TEA CUP? STAFF REACH BOILING POINT AS FIRMS SLASH FREE TEA AND COFFEE**

Getting your boss a cuppa may be the best way for promotion, but almost half (45%) of British workers don't actually get to enjoy a free cup of tea or coffee at work<sup>[1]</sup>, according to new research from [uSwitchforbusiness.com](http://uSwitchforbusiness.com). In fact, a third of workers (33%) have seen their companies cut back on free refreshments over the last year<sup>[2]</sup>, costing staff over £110 a year on average<sup>[3]</sup>.

- **One in ten workers (11%) say that cutbacks on refreshments have changed the atmosphere for the worse at work while a fifth (20%) say it has left workers feeling worried about what else could be cut<sup>[4]</sup>**
- **Over a third of workers (36%) expect at least free tea and coffee at work – only 16% don't see why companies should be expected to pay for them<sup>[5]</sup>**
- **Just a third of British employees (34%) think that the company they work for is generous to staff<sup>[6]</sup> with four in ten (42%) describing staff perks as poor<sup>[7]</sup>**
- **Three in ten (30%) say that small perks like free tea and coffee boost morale – just 6% of workers don't value such perks<sup>[8]</sup>.**

While cutting costs has been a necessity for British companies recently, those choosing to ditch small perks such as free tea and coffee could see a storm brewing, according to new research from [uSwitchforbusiness.com](http://uSwitchforbusiness.com), the independent business energy broker. Scrimping on refreshments may seem a small step, but it's a step too far for hard-working staff.

Despite tea being the nation's favourite drink and a work day essential for many, just 55% of Brits get to enjoy a free cuppa at work<sup>[1]</sup>. Nearly four in ten workers (38%) don't get any free refreshments at all from their employer<sup>[1]</sup> and it looks like more companies intend to follow suit. Of those who enjoy perks in the office, a third (33%) say that their employer has taken steps

over the last year to cut the cost of refreshments<sup>[2]</sup>, with many workers now expected to provide their own, pay for what they use or at least contribute towards the cost. These cutbacks have left workers out of pocket by over £110 a year on average<sup>[3]</sup>.

As businesses cut hours, scrap bonuses and cancel pay rises, scrimping on refreshments may seem the lesser of two evils, but the potential backlash from employees could prove to be more than a storm in a tea cup. One in ten workers (11%) report that cutbacks to refreshments have changed the atmosphere at work for the worse, while a fifth (20%) say that they have made staff worry about the future and what else could be cut<sup>[4]</sup>. Even such small cuts could be damaging to a company, especially as only a third (35%) think that the company they work for is generous to staff<sup>[6]</sup> with four in ten (42%) condemning the perks they receive as poor<sup>[7]</sup>.

Over a third of workers (36%) expect their employer to provide free tea and coffee at the very least – just 16% don't see why companies should be expected to foot the bill<sup>[5]</sup>. A further fifth (20%) don't care about free drinks just so long as they are paid well<sup>[5]</sup>. But this may be difficult with many companies imposing a wage freeze.

The perk may be small, but it can lift spirits - a third of workers (34%) say that little extras such as free tea and coffee boost morale, while 14% recognise it as a generous gesture from company bosses<sup>[8]</sup>. In these cash strapped times over a quarter (28%) appreciate the money it saves them<sup>[8]</sup>. Just 6% of workers say that they don't value company perks<sup>[8]</sup>. And if that's not enough to convince company bosses not to raid the tea fund, they may want to consider this. A third of Brits (30%) say the quality of perks influence their choice of employers<sup>[9]</sup> and 16% use it as a gauge for what the company is like – if the company is mean about tea and coffee, what else are they mean about<sup>[5]</sup>?

**James Constant, Director of [uSwitchforbusiness.com](http://uSwitchforbusiness.com), says:** “Given the economic climate it makes sense to cut costs. However, it's also vital that companies send out the right message to loyal staff. Perks like free tea and coffee do add up, but the cost is minimal when compared with the value that staff place on them. Cutting out the free cuppas may add to the bottom line, but there may be a far greater price to be paid in staff morale.

“When it comes to cutting costs businesses need to pick their battles wisely. There are many quick and easy wins that won't impact on staff morale, including moving to a cheaper energy supplier and reducing the amount of energy you use. Business energy contracts come up for regular renewal, but if businesses don't check the market before signing their next contract or

even worse simply allow their existing contract to rollover, they can end up paying over the odds for their energy. But by shopping around for a better deal businesses can save up to 70% on their energy bills<sup>[10]</sup> meaning they can afford to leave the tea fund alone.”

**For more information visit [www.uswitchforbusiness.com](http://www.uswitchforbusiness.com) or call 0800 051 5343**

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**Notes to editors:**

Research carried out with the uSwitch.com Consumer opinion Panel online in June 2011, among 1,109 British adults.

1. In response to: 'Which of the following refreshments does your employer provide free of charge for staff?' 55.2% said 'hot drinks such as tea/coffee'; 38.2% said 'we don't get anything for free'
2. In response to: 'Has your employer taken any steps in the last year to cut the cost of refreshments?' Of those who got freebies in the past, 32.9% said 'yes'
3. In response to: 'Now your employer has cut your perks, how much has this cost you each month?' the average amount was £9.40 a month, equaling £112.80 a year.
4. Asked of those who had seen cutbacks on refreshments over the last year: 'What impact has this had overall on staff?' 11% said 'It has changed the atmosphere for the worst'; 19.9% said 'It makes people worry what else will be cut'.
5. In response to: 'Thinking about refreshments at work, which of the following do you agree with most?' 35.9% said 'I expect my employer to provide free tea and coffee at the very least'; 19.8% said 'I don't care what I get as long as I'm paid well'; 15.5% said 'If a company is mean to staff about tea and coffee, what else are they mean about?'; 15.7% said 'I don't see why companies are expected to pay for these things – we're all adults and can fend for ourselves'.
6. In response to: 'Thinking about the company you work for, how would you describe them as an employer?' 5.4% said 'very generous'; 28.9% said 'fairly generous'.
7. In response to: 'Overall, how would you describe the perks (free or subsidized) that your company offers (including refreshments, gym membership, car parking, staff discounts etc)?' 24.1% said 'poor'; 17.9% said 'very poor'.
8. In response to: 'What is it that you value most about company perks, if you receive them?' 29.6% said 'It boosts morale in the office'; 27.6% said 'the money it saves me'; 13.6% said 'It's a generous gesture'; 5.9% said 'I don't value them'.
9. In response to: 'Does the quality of perks on offer influence your choice of employer?' 30.3% said 'yes'.

**About us**

uSwitchforBusiness.com is a free, independent energy brokerage service focused on helping business customers get the best gas and electricity contracts. It also provides a range of additional products and services, including insurance and communications, which are tailored specifically for customers who own, run or hold responsibility for procurement in a business.

uSwitchforBusiness.com is the sister site of uSwitch.com, the free, impartial, online and telephone-based comparison and switching service which has been helping consumers to save money for over 10 years. uSwitchforBusiness.com was launched in November 2008 in response to requests from business customers wishing to benefit from the same impartial and independent support when buying energy.

uSwitchforBusiness.com offers a dedicated contact-centre manned by a team of business energy specialists, as well as a freepost 'Send us your bill' service, whereby businesses can post their latest energy bills with their telephone number to FREEPOST USWITCHFORBUSINESS, to get a free call back from a dedicated business specialist. Customers can also call 0800 051 5343 or email [brokerteam@uswitchforbusiness.com](mailto:brokerteam@uswitchforbusiness.com).

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