

# Food That Works Harder

## Dining-Led Wellness as a Business Performance Strategy

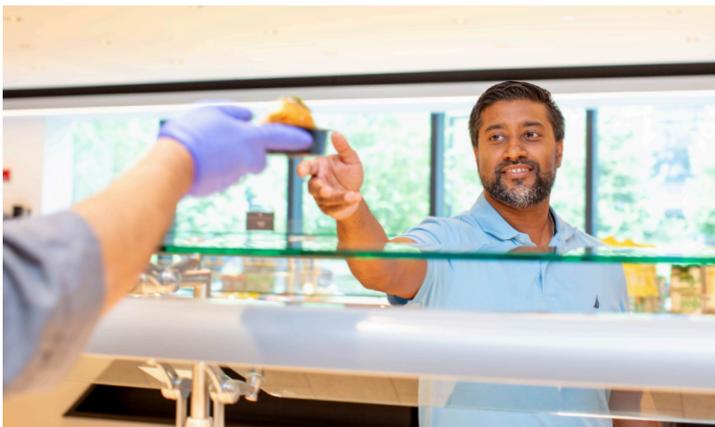


### Executive Summary

At NEXDINE, we believe dining should do more than feed people. It should fuel performance, strengthen culture, and create measurable business value.

Corporate leaders are facing rising healthcare costs, productivity loss, and increased pressure to attract and retain talent, while many traditional wellness programs fail to deliver sustained results. In this case study we share how organizations that integrate nutrition and wellness directly into their dining services achieve tangible improvements in Colleague health, engagement, and long-term financial performance.

Backed by peer-reviewed research, government data, and large-scale U.S. workplace studies, the evidence is clear. Food decisions made at work shape daily behavior at scale. When dining service providers embed nutrition expertise, wellness strategy, and behavior-based design into workplace dining, companies see real returns.



### Wellness Outcomes Achieved Through Dining-Led Programs

U.S. workplace studies consistently show that dining-based wellness programs produce measurable and lasting outcomes.

Colleagues exposed to nutrition labeling and healthy choice architecture in workplace cafeterias reduced calories purchased per transaction by 6.2 percent over two years, including a 23 percent reduction in calories from the least healthy food items. These improvements were sustained over time, demonstrating that the dining environment, not one-time education, drives behavior change.

Additional research modeling the adoption of national nutrition standards in workplace dining projects meaningful long-term reductions in heart disease, stroke, and diabetes across large Colleague populations. Unlike traditional wellness initiatives, these results are based on actual purchasing behavior rather than self-reported participation.

### Colleague Health, Energy, and Productivity Benefits

The quality of food Colleagues consume during the workday directly affects how they feel and perform. Access to fresh, well-balanced meals reduces reliance on ultra-processed and high-sugar foods, supporting steadier energy levels and fewer afternoon productivity drops. Meals designed with appropriate protein, fiber, and nutrient balance contribute to sustained focus and mental clarity throughout the day.

Over time, improved diet quality lowers the risk of cardiometabolic conditions that drive the majority of employer healthcare costs. Organizations that prioritize better food at work experience fewer productivity disruptions related to fatigue, disengagement, and preventable health issues.

# Food That Works Harder

## Dining-Led Wellness as a Business Performance Strategy

### Why Companies Are Expanding Wellness Through Dining

Employers are increasingly turning to dining-led wellness as a response to several converging challenges.

Healthcare costs continue to rise, largely driven by preventable chronic conditions. Absenteeism and presenteeism tied to poor health erode productivity and operating margins. At the same time, Colleagues evaluate employers based on visible, everyday benefits that support their wellbeing.

Traditional wellness programs often struggle with low participation because they require extra time and effort outside of the workday. Workplace dining reaches Colleagues every day, making it one of the most effective and inclusive wellness platforms available.



### The Advantage of a Dining Provider with Nutrition and Wellness Expertise

Partnering with a dining services provider that integrates nutrition and wellness expertise delivers advantages that go far beyond food service.

Wellness-focused dining programs influence choices at the exact moment decisions are made. Nutrition standards are built directly into menus, sourcing, preparation

methods, and culinary training. This approach ensures consistency, scalability, and accountability.

Dining data allows organizations to track participation and behavior trends over time, providing a clearer picture of impact than most standalone wellness programs. When wellness is embedded into daily dining, it becomes part of company culture rather than a separate initiative.

### Return on Investment for Employers

Well-designed workplace wellness programs have demonstrated meaningful financial returns.

Major analyses of U.S. wellness initiatives show average returns of more than three dollars in medical cost savings and nearly three dollars in absenteeism reduction for every dollar invested. Research modeling nutrition standards in workplace dining estimates hundreds of millions of dollars in long-term healthcare savings when applied across large Colleague populations.

Dining-led wellness improves the reliability of ROI because participation is built into everyday routines. Colleagues do not need to opt in, download an app, or attend a session for the program to work.

### Adoption and Impact Across the United States

Workplace wellness programs are now widely adopted across the country, particularly among organizations with large Colleague populations and on-site dining operations.

States with high concentrations of corporate campuses, manufacturing facilities, healthcare systems, and logistics hubs see the greatest benefit from dining-led wellness. These include California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Massachusetts, where scale, healthcare cost exposure, and competition for talent are highest.

In these markets, dining plays a critical role in supporting workforce health and operational efficiency.

# Food That Works Harder

## Dining-Led Wellness as a Business Performance Strategy

### Recruitment and Retention Impact

Access to fresh, high-quality food at work is a daily, highly visible benefit that Colleagues experience firsthand.

Research links healthier workplace food environments to increased job satisfaction, stronger perceptions of employer support, and lower turnover intention. In competitive labor markets, dining programs that prioritize freshness, quality, and choice strengthen employer brand and enhance the overall Colleague experience.

For organizations requiring on-site, hybrid, or shift-based work, dining quality is often a deciding factor in both recruitment and retention.



### What Does It All Mean?

Dining is no longer just an amenity. It is a performance and culture driver.

Organizations that partner with dining service providers like NEXDINE, who integrate culinary excellence with nutrition and wellness strategy, are better positioned to improve Colleague health behaviors at scale, protect productivity, manage long-term healthcare risk, and differentiate themselves as employers of choice.

The question for corporate leaders is not whether food impacts performance. It is whether their dining program is working as hard as their people do.



Written by:  
Crystal Wright  
VP, Brand Marketing,  
NEXDINE Hospitality