



Sourcing the right
drinks machines for
your needs



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Introduction

Are you a busy office or facilities manager? Then this guide is for you.

Whether you're hugely experienced or new to the task of sourcing drinks equipment and supplies for the office, staffroom or other workplace, you will find lots of useful information here to make your job easier.

Choosing a coffee machine supplier is not something you do every day – not even if you specialise in office moves and relocation. Tastes change, suppliers change and the products available change too. So, just where do you start?

We have organised our guide to give you a useful checklist of the things to think about, as you find the solution that is right for your workplace and staff.





Start with the essentials

Every company is different and every location has different needs. But whatever your business, one thing's for sure, you want to make sure your staff, customers and visitors all have great tasting drinks to enjoy. This is not such a daunting task if you start by asking yourself some key questions:

1. How many people have you got on site?
2. How much do they drink? (suppliers usually measure this in cups per day.)
3. What sort of quality are you aiming for?
4. Does your drinks equipment have to look good too?
5. Do you have a fixed budget?
6. Do you need different solutions for different areas – your reception area, staff room, board and meeting rooms, breakout areas for example?

So let's look at some of these in a little more detail.

How much is too much?

Your approach to the provision of food and drink for customers and staff will undoubtedly be influenced by the type of company you are working for.

The infrastructure of an office is often counted as a cost. Some companies are fairly cost sensitive about their benefits and employee package. Others less so. In either case, the more a business gives to its staff, the higher its costs will be. The larger the business, the more significant this investment becomes, although there are economies of scale of course, so the cost per employee reduces as staff numbers grow.

Budgeting is a commercial reality. You can't always afford to give everyone exactly what they want, or indeed what you would like to. But if you shop wisely, you can make sure you get the most bang for your buck. You can also think creatively. You could combine a basic free drink alongside a bean-to-cup machine that has a card payment function. It gives staff a choice – if they fancy splashing out on a treat, they can do so without facing the elements – and for an awful lot less than they'll pay at the local coffee shop.

Costing for taste

Better tasting coffee costs more, right? Actually it's not quite that simple.

You might be surprised to learn that, cost-wise, there's not much difference between a bean-to-cup coffee and a filter coffee. What makes the difference is whether it's instant coffee or fresh.

Instant coffee is about half the cost of a fresh cup. A cup of instant might cost the company approximately 7p a cup. Fresh coffee – whether filtered or bean-to-cup – will cost you around 11p-13p a cup.

At Roast & Ground, we can help you choose the right drinks for your company. We offer a coffee range that has been refined over 18 years and offers solutions for a wide range of tastes. Our larger Rex-Royal machines come with two grinders so you can offer a choice of beans to keep everyone happy.



Who breaks for coffee, when?

How does your business organise coffee breaks? This can make a big difference to the equipment you need.

If staff are required to take short, planned breaks all at the same time, an instant coffee machine, which takes 10-15 seconds to make a drink, may be the best solution. Think about the number of people who will need to be catered for. If everyone has the same 15-minute break, will there be queues?

By contrast, where staff take more varied breaks, or there are fewer of them, a bean-to-cup coffee machine which grinds the beans for every cup will take around 30-45 seconds to produce each great quality drink. So the type of drinks machine you choose for your environment does matter.



What do you need, where?

What do you need for your meeting rooms or breakout areas? A simple solution that provides black coffee? Or something more sophisticated?

If the drinks machine is noisy, you may not want it in the meeting room itself. The quietest way to provide coffee is to pour from a jug – this allows everyone to help themselves to a drink when they wish, without disturbing the flow of the meeting.

Do you want to rival the coffee shops, or are your staff happy with a smaller range of options?

Or are you looking for an attractive machine for communal spaces?

You also need to consider if you have someone who is willing to learn how to clean your new drinks machines. If not, you will either need your cleaners to take on the job or your machine supplier might offer a cleaning service.

Which drink choices?

We have talked a bit about coffee quality. But you may want to choose a machine that delivers drinks other than coffee – leaf tea and hot chocolate, soup or cold drinks, for example.

If you have an office full of committed tea drinkers, you need machines that reach the maximum water temperature. It should be said, tea is often a compromise if hot water is taken from an automatic bean-to-cup coffee machine, as the drink temperature requirements are different. Nowadays many of our customers install boiling water taps to keep the tea drinkers happy.

Getting your colleagues together to try out some coffee blends could help you meet the taste preferences of your staff. You might ask them to make note of what they like and why. Not only will staff feel appreciated by the gesture, it's a short-cut for you.

Alternatively it can work well to choose your coffee machine and have it installed, using different coffee beans over a number of weeks. A one-off caffeine hit is great, but a coffee that you'll enjoy throughout the day often requires a milder coffee flavour. You'll only really work out which is your best all-round solution over a period of time.

Current trends

Coffee drinking has become something of an institution in the last decade or so. London streets are choc full of coffee shops and other operations are getting in on the act.

This inevitably has had an impact on the workplace. Far fewer offices resort to a tin and spoon, as their workers have become more discerning. In recent years, many companies have been willing to find ways to offer fresh milk too.

Major cities tend to be at the forefront of these trends – and when it comes to drinks equipment this is definitely true. Businesses are increasingly willing to choose from the wide range of options offered by today's drinks market, as part of their overall staff package.

Many of Roast & Ground's customers tell us their staff arrive 10 minutes early to meetings to make sure they can settle down with a nice cup of coffee in hand. With fresh grinding of beans for every cup a particular favourite, staff are enjoying little perks of the job, while the company, school or other venue finds that the right coffee machine can be critical to its day-to-day operations. You can't underestimate the feel-good factor. Decent staff drinks can contribute to a feeling of being valued and, in return, the commitment staff are prepared to offer.

At the same time, work environments have also changed. Many offices now have open-plan spaces for desks, supported by large-break-out areas for sharing ideas and informal meetings. Private meetings are held in separate rooms. Drinks machines need to complement these different arrangements.

Of course CSR credentials are also an important factor. Over the years it has become more common for our customers to look to us to help them meet their company CSR commitments. We provide a range of Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade accredited coffees and also encourage our customers to use bio-bean's coffee grouts recycling service. We work to make the right choices when it comes to reuse and recycle, how we pay and treat our staff and more.





Another trend to consider is the growing interest in what we are consuming. Some staff may want the option of a healthier choice in drinks – for example, choosing a milk alternative for their latté. Whilst some are keen on fresh milk, others are satisfied with a granular option – which can certainly make life easier operationally.

Technological advances make granular milk a surprisingly tasty and healthy option, it's simply semi-skimmed milk that's been granulated, with nothing added. And of course, there are low-sugar options, chocolates with different levels of cocoa, syrups and Decaf beans using the Swiss Water process, which avoids the use of chemicals in the decaffeination process.

Whatever the trend, there will be an equivalent available for the workplace environment. That's good news on the one hand, but of course it also makes choosing the right solution for your staff and organisation – on budget – somewhat trickier.

Espresso Martini anyone? No problem with our syrup add-on for the Rex-Royal S2 machine.

Narrowing your options

Having thought through the essentials, you can now start to pin down the practical details. For example:

1. Where are you planning to locate the equipment?
2. How many machines are you looking for?
3. Will there be access to mains water or will machines need to be filled manually?
4. Do you want to provide specific drinks and snacks?
5. Fresh or instant coffee? Hot chocolate?
6. How many people will be using the machine and how many drinks a day?
7. Will drinks be free or paid for?
8. If paid for, what payment system would you prefer?
9. Do you have specific requirements to meet your company's corporate social responsibility commitments?
10. Do you require finance, or will you be buying your equipment outright?

Once you have an idea of your requirements, you're then in a great position to start looking for a supplier that's up to the job!



Comparing suppliers

It's worth choosing your supplier carefully, as you are often committed for the medium term. Many agreements are for three to five years, so you need to be sure that your machines and the service on offer will be just as good in year five as they are on day one. So, what should you be looking out for?

You are likely to buy your drinks supplies from the supplier of your machines. You need to think about ordering and delivery. Do they have an online shop? Do they offer next-day delivery?

What about quality? It's all very well having a top-of-the-range, brand new piece of kit, but the fresh beans and other consumables are also key to drinks quality. Can your chosen supplier offer a good range of high quality products? Above all, will the coffee be freshly roasted? And what about cleaning? Do you require a daily or weekly hygiene service? How will your machines be maintained?

You are likely to be signed up to a drinks machine supplier for some years, so it's vital you think beyond the immediate installation. It's always worth adding a breakdown or maintenance contract. You won't want a machine out of action for days on end.

Many suppliers offer the works – they will manage your machine, consumables stock, and scheduled maintenance for you. Are you looking for this level of service?

Is your potential supplier any good?

As experienced suppliers of great quality office drinks equipment, consumables and related services, we think the following points are the most important.

It's the supplier's job to get to know your company's culture, infrastructure and expectations, so that they can advise on the solutions that will meet your needs well. We often find it's best to talk things through over a quick Zoom or Teams call at the start of the process, or a face-to-face meeting for more complex requests.

Suppliers can generally offer a range of equipment, but it is worth establishing that they really are experts in the equipment that interests you.

Does your chosen supplier offer the services you require? Good quality suppliers generally insist on some form of equipment maintenance agreement to ensure your drinks machines are kept in good working order.

As you have seen when comparing costs, there are big differences between different options – such as instant compared with freshly ground coffee.

So make sure you know what you're looking for before you compare costs. Otherwise, you could find yourself comparing chalk and cheese.

Check your supplier's claims before you sign on the dotted line.

1. Go online to view customer feedback.
2. Ask to see testimonials and enquire how long the supplier tends to keep their customers for.
3. Ask about the company's background and check how long they have been trading.
4. Research the machine manufacturer.
5. Check whether the equipment you are considering to install can be repaired by the supplier's own engineers and that they are specifically trained to look after it.



Always check the small print of any contract – transparency from the very start builds trust.

Of course you want to make sure you are getting great value. But if the price is too cheap you may not be paying sufficient to get the service your business requires.

If you've taken on board the checklists, gone through the detail and you still have a choice to make, then trust your judgment on who to work with.



Conclusion

A company's facilities tend to reflect the culture of the organisation, so choosing the right products and the right supplier is really important. It says a lot about the company and how it treats its staff.

It is challenging to find the right drinks machines for your office spaces, but there are suppliers out there who are more than willing to help you find the right solutions.

Whether yours is a smaller office, or a company with thousands of employees scattered across the UK, Roast & Ground can offer you the expertise, passion and track record for delivering top class coffee machines, great tasting coffee and services that are just what you need.





Can we help you
source the right drinks
machine for your
needs?

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