



ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

BUSINESS



JEFF GRITCHEN, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

At Evolution Hospitality, a 60-person hotel management company in San Clemente, employees sit at a communal table during lunch. The kitchen opens onto a living room with a pingpong table and three TVs.

ON THE JOB

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

In-office food spaces are the new workplace hub. Here's a peek at four that are special in their own ways.

That old saying that the heart of a home is the kitchen now applies to the office, too.

Companies are making kitchens and in-office dining areas the hub of their workplaces to help employees meet and mingle, boost morale – and, oh yeah, feed people.

The trend is evident from photos and descriptions I received after putting out a call for Orange County companies to share what was unique or special about their kitchens and break rooms.

Some local businesses have created lavish dining-cum-lounge areas that wouldn't look out of place in a design



COURTESY OF ZUMASYS

Zumasys Chief Executive Paul Giobbi says he spent "a ton of money" to make sure the business software company's headquarters represents its modern and fun style.

magazine. The physical spaces at others are more modest, but they're used to feed staff on a regular basis, including catered daily breakfasts and lunches or weekly gourmet

meals where the boss dons an apron and does all the cooking.

Kitchens have become so important that some companies are making them the first

spaces visitors see. For the headquarters of one Los Angeles area entertainment company, office designers Stanley Felderman and Nancy Keatinge put a commercial-grade kitchen and employee cafeteria next to the lobby. For employees, "it's one of their favorite places to meet," Felderman says. "It's been so successful, they have had to triple capacity" and are expanding seating to another floor.

Small businesses and companies with minimal budgets can create food spaces that encourage collaboration and make employees feel good about being at work. At minimum, carve out space for a microwave, toaster oven and refrigerator, Felderman and Keatinge say.

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