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Cafes become offices as companies slash costs

SİBEL CİNGİ / MİNE TUDUK
İSTANBUL - Referans

As the global turmoil forces companies to reduce costs at every level, many prefer to move to smaller offices, while some large offices are divided into smaller sections to be rented.

There is, however, also a group of people aiming to cut office costs through using cafes as the new business environment.

The new trend is sitting at a café and paying only for drinks and beverages while taking care of business instead of paying 4,500 Turkish Liras a month for a type-A office. Hundreds of people are working from Turkey's modern designed cafes with their laptops, and even business meetings are held at cafes. The cafes that have gained a new customer base amid the crisis are also adapting to this new situation. Some are establishing fast Internet connections while some are enriching their menus.

The tendency has been visible particularly over the last year, said Haluk Okutur, owner of Simit Sarayı, a fast food restaurant known for its growth during crises. "For a year now, people who lost their jobs and those who have closed down their offices and downsized have started to use the centrally located fast food restaurants as offices. This has almost become a trend."

Demand has increased 15 percent and business meetings are held at his establishment frequently, Okutur said, adding that they had upgraded their Internet connection infrastructures for better service.

Mehmet Yilmazoğlu, general coordinator of Mado, a café specializing in ice cream, said even people who used to work at home offices have started to prefer cafes now. The occupation period of a table by a single customer has increased to four or five hours, he said. "By using

A new trend leaves behind the concept of regular offices and even home offices as the global crisis leads people to develop new ideas for cutting costs in every part of life. Many now prefer to do business at comfortable cafes where they can use wireless Internet connection and pay just for the food and drink



COMFORT: People organize meetings at cafes not only to reduce office costs but also for the motivation being outside the office creates, according to Esra Arsan Bayrak, corporate communication and marketing manager at Gloria Jeans.

cafes as an office, one can get rid of many costs, such as rent, electricity, water and fuel. As these people bring their customers to our places, our business potential rises 15 percent. Upon demand, we have upgraded the Internet network at our branches and installed wireless Internet networks at all branches. We have even started offering lunch upon demand from these people because before they were obliged to leave our place at lunch time."

People organize meetings at cafes not only to reduce office costs but also for the motivation being outside the office creates, according to Esra Arsan Bayrak, corporate communication and marketing manager at Gloria Jeans. "Having realized this trend, we have put

some large tables at certain floors of some of our larger cafes."

Another method to cut office costs is virtual offices that are used as communication centers and offer the chance to hold meetings once or twice a week.

Removing cost burden

Realty Atlas Gayrimenkul, which has offices in the business centers in Istanbul's most central spots, said there has been a boom in virtual office rentals. Virtual office renting starts at \$150 for a month, said Tanju Bilgen from the firm. "Amid the turmoil, the cost of fixed offices is a burden for everyone. The monthly cost of an type-A office is around 4,000-5,000 liras. Virtual offices, which are used as communication

centers with phones, fax, e-mail and secretary services, have become a savior amid the crisis. The rent reaches \$300 if the customers demand the chance to hold a meeting once a week at the offices.

"In previous years, the firm offered services for just 10 customers at most a month, but the crisis has boosted this figure to 30, said Bilgen, adding that their customers are from several fields, including commodity exchanges and innovative product sale.

"Virtual offices are facing the busiest period of the last three years," said Haluk İskora, owner of Office Istanbul, which has been offering services for the last three years. "We are working at 100 percent occupancy."



BOOM: Student accommodation is booming in the UK property market.

UK's Unite becomes partner to Oasis bank

LONDON
Bloomberg


Unite Group, the U.K.'s largest provider of student accommodation, formed a venture with Oasis Capital Bank of Bahrain to develop three properties to house more than 1,100 students in London.

The buildings will have an estimated value of 194 million pounds (\$319 million) on completion next year, Unite said in a statement Thursday. Oasis Capital Bank will invest 39 million pounds for a 75 percent stake in the venture.

Unite, which is based in Bristol in western England, is selling the properties to the venture for 88.2 million pounds. The company's net debt will fall by 75.2 million pounds.

Student accommodation is the one part of the U.K. property market that is booming, with enrollment in the academic year starting next month forecast to rise 8 percent. London has more than 250,000 full-time students with only 46,000 purpose-built bed spaces, according to Unite.

Unite shares have more than doubled in six months to give the company a market value of 221 million pounds.



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Poultry company increases capacity

BOLU
Anatolia News Agency

Beypiliç, a Turkish poultry firm, aims to increase its weekly egg capacity from 1.5 million units to 2.9 million with a new hatchery that will start operating at the beginning of the year.

Speaking at a seminar held at the cultural center of Abant İzzet Baysal University in Bolu, Beypiliç Managing Director Sait Koca said the ongoing projects are about to be complete. "With the completion of our slaughterhouse, our hourly chicken slaughtering capacity will rise from 14,000 to 28,000. This will enable higher production as well as an increase in staff and breeders."

Noting that the firm could not launch table egg production investments mainly because of the harsh conditions, he said, "As we all know, 2008 was a nightmare. Compared to it, the hormone crisis and avian flu crisis of the recent years were simple problems."

The chicken meat sector is growing gradually, Koca said, adding, "Chicken production, which stood at 313,000 tons in 1995, rose to 1.175 million tons in 2008. The sector grew by 275 percent compared to 1995." Beypiliç's growth outperformed the sector, he said. Beypiliç's growth rate over 1995 is 729 percent. Beypiliç's share in Turkey production rose from 4.9



GROWTH: The chicken meat sector is growing gradually, says Sait Koca.

percent to 10.9 percent between 1995 and 2008, he added.

Beypiliç is among the firms whose processed products the European Union allows as an import item, Koca said. "Our initiatives concerning exports to the EU are ongoing. We expect to realize it in a month. Our exports have not ceased this year due to the absence of avian influenza. Significant figures have been attained in exports particularly with the constant growth of the Iraqi market. We expect the sector to grow rapidly."



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Cut your teeth on Twitter

Consider Twitter an ideal laboratory where you can learn and test your own techniques. When it comes time to pay the bills with your new entrepreneurial venture, you'll be glad you cut your marketing and communications teeth on a tool like Twitter

No matter what kind of business you are starting, your success will depend largely on how well you market and sell yourself and your ideas. If you are looking for an accessible way to hone your marketing and customer relations skills in preparation for your entrepreneurial leap, consider Twitter.

Twitter started out a few years ago with people answering the question, "What are you doing now?" Many of you will recognize this as the status update you see on Facebook, too. Nowadays, though, the Twitter community has matured to the point where people are doing much more with it than simply telling the world they are "eating an apple".

For the new entrepreneur, one of the beauties of Twitter is that it teaches you how to be a better marketer. You need to limit your Twitter updates to 140 characters, which means you have to think carefully about what you are saying. You have to distill your message into just a few words that will capture the attention of your followers. Believe me, it's not easy to do.

How can you use Twitter to promote your own business? I find that on Twitter, "shop talk" is usually acceptable, so feel free to talk about your business. But try to not talk only about what you do. In other words, stay away from the corporate version of "cat videos", the links, articles, or videos you find personally interesting, but that your customers don't really care about.

Remember that your company probably plays a small part in your customers' overall lives, and they are more interested in their lives than yours. So use Twitter to share information and resources that are relevant to them, not just the things that are relevant to you. For example, if you run a printing company, your customers probably don't care that this morning you chose a different supplier for your ink. However, they probably do care about the books you are printing. So in your tweets, announce the new books available this week, and share parts of them with your followers. And like learning any new skill, be patient until you "get it." Learning how to connect with your customers on Twitter will take some trial and error.

In my experience, there are three styles of Twitter usage that seem to work better than others. The first I will call, "Sharing niche professional knowledge." For example, this kind of user is interested in stocks and bonds, and uses Twitter to share favorite blogs, links, and hot financial tips. This kind of usage requires a great deal of consistency, because people will come to you for great stock tips. But if you start posting unrelated things like movie star gossip, you'll lose your audience.

The second style is where someone writes a separate blog, and then uses Twitter to post messages related to the blog. One of my favorites is Penelope Trunk, whose blog Brazen Careerist blends a discussion of career issues with a personal journal, and her hilarious tweets make readers want to go check out her blog and read more about what she has to say.

The third style is used best by famous people and celebrities. Their tweets don't adhere to a consistent theme or concept, but people follow them simply because they come from a famous person, and people want to know what famous people are thinking or doing. One example of this is Guy Kawasaki, a successful, well-known entrepreneur and venture capitalist. He tweets on a wide variety of subjects, and people follow him because they want to hear what he has to say, regardless of the subject.

Consider Twitter an ideal laboratory where you can learn from others and test your own techniques for reaching out to your future customers. When it comes time to pay the bills with your new entrepreneurial venture, you'll be glad you cut your marketing and communications teeth on a tool like Twitter.

And don't forget, Twitter is a community of real people. When someone speaks to you in real life, it's polite to look them in the eye and respond, right? On Twitter, when someone starts following you, return the favor and start following them, too. It's an important part of showing respect for others. Oh, and if you want to find me on Twitter, I am there as fatierdogan. See you in the Tweet Space!