

Why your office coffee sucks



Does your breakroom coffee taste like it came out of a lumberjack's Thermos?

In case you haven't tried it lately, ask yourself this: How many employees come to work with their hand wrapped around a \$6 Caramel Macchiato—venti? Probably a lot more than the few employees who, with the taste buds of a house fly, emerge from your Café de Kitchenette wiggling a wooden stirrer in a 6-ounce white styro cup.

The truth is, your coffee is bad for a lot of little reasons, all of which can be fixed.

The first and most important rule: Unless Daryl from accounting is a closet barista, don't allow him to brew it. He needs a good eye-opener, so into the basket go three extra heaps of grounds, although some lands on the floor. Stop him right now, designate one or two people as the qualified brewers and follow these basic guidelines:

1. **Get a better machine.** That plastic piece that set you back \$19.99? Dump it and get a higher-end coffee maker. Think of it as a micro-investment of a hundred dollars to keep your employees fueled for productivity—for years.
2. **Buy good coffee.** No need to friend Juan Valdez to hit him up for tips. Eight O'Clock Coffee 100% Colombian ranked No. 1 in *Consumer Reports'* taste tests of 19 ground coffees, including Dunkin' Donuts and Starbucks.
3. **Clean the pot and the machine regularly.** Coffee beans are naturally oily. And oil leaves residue all over the place: the carafe, the machine and even your "My Blood Type is Coffee" mug. The old residue will corrupt the taste, so somebody's got to clean it. If left gunked-up, that \$100 coffee machine might as well be the \$19.99 one.
4. **Hands off that tap!** Skip the tap water and keep a gallon of spring water in the fridge. Here's the test: If your water is great to drink, then that's what you should use to make coffee.
5. **Coffee-to-water ratio.** Some like it strong, some like it weak, but to hit the sweet spot use two tablespoons of coffee grounds for every six ounces of water.
6. **Follow the one-hour rule.** Don't leave the pot on the heating element for more than one hour. In fact,

after 40 minutes, the “burnt” taste becomes noticeable. Anything over an hour and you’ve got something similar to what you get from the tax-preparer’s office late in the afternoon.

7. **If all else fails**, send Daryl to Starbucks.