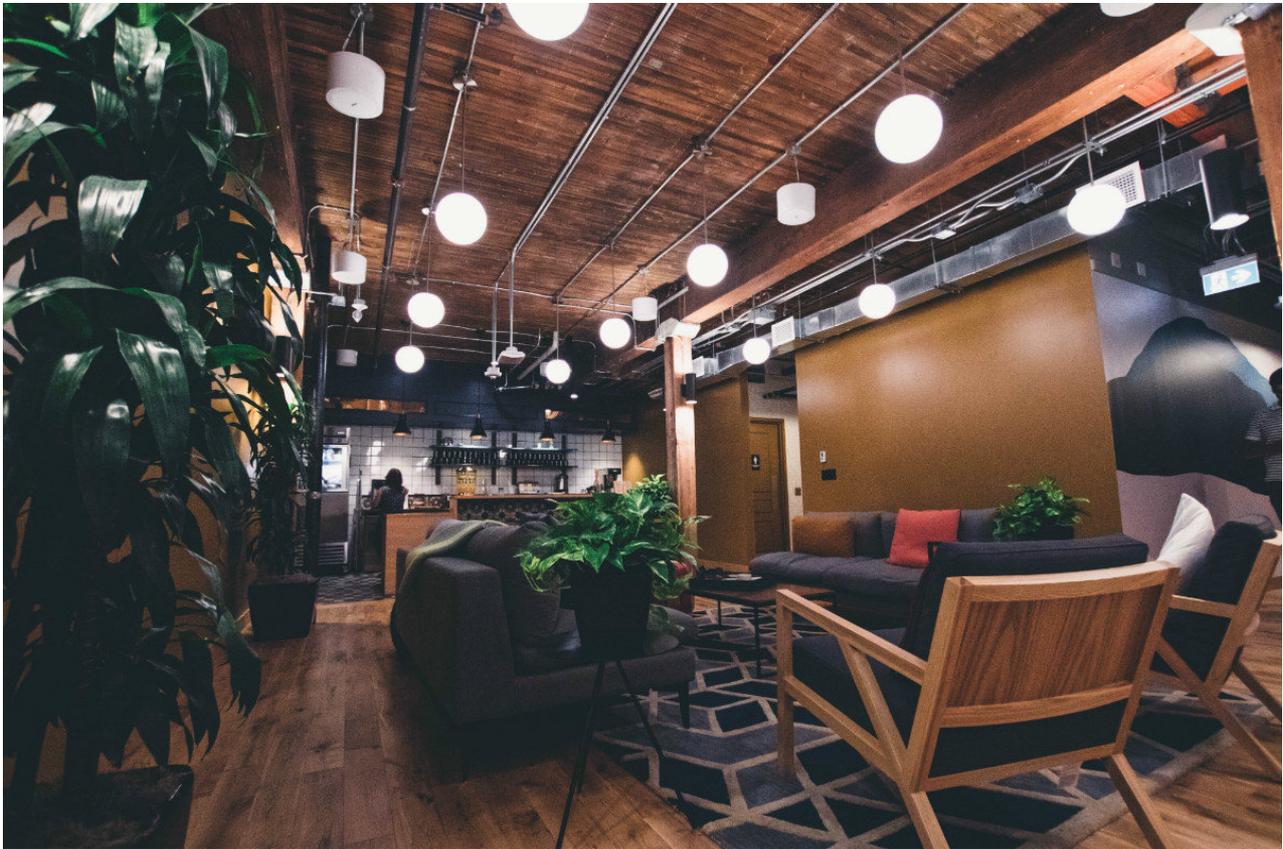


Human-Centric: What Professionals Look for in a Coworking Space

emaginspace.com/office-solutions/coworking-space/

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Coworking is big business, and it's just getting started.

Just take a look at the numbers: At the end of 2017, the number of people using coworking spaces around the world was roughly 1.5 million. By 2022, that number will have more than tripled.

That means commercial developers and workspace designers will increasingly need to account for the entrepreneurs, freelancers and nomads who frequent coworking spaces.

And while coworkers have many of the same needs as traditional employees, there are some key differences that workspace designers must know. These distinctions make all the difference between a ho-hum coworking space, and an environment that attracts top-dollar tenants.

Coworkers Seek Connections With Like-Minded People

Coworking is fundamentally a social practice. Sure, the people in the office are probably going to be quite focused and productive (more on that in a minute, by the way), but we are social creatures, and we appreciate meeting people on journeys similar to ours.

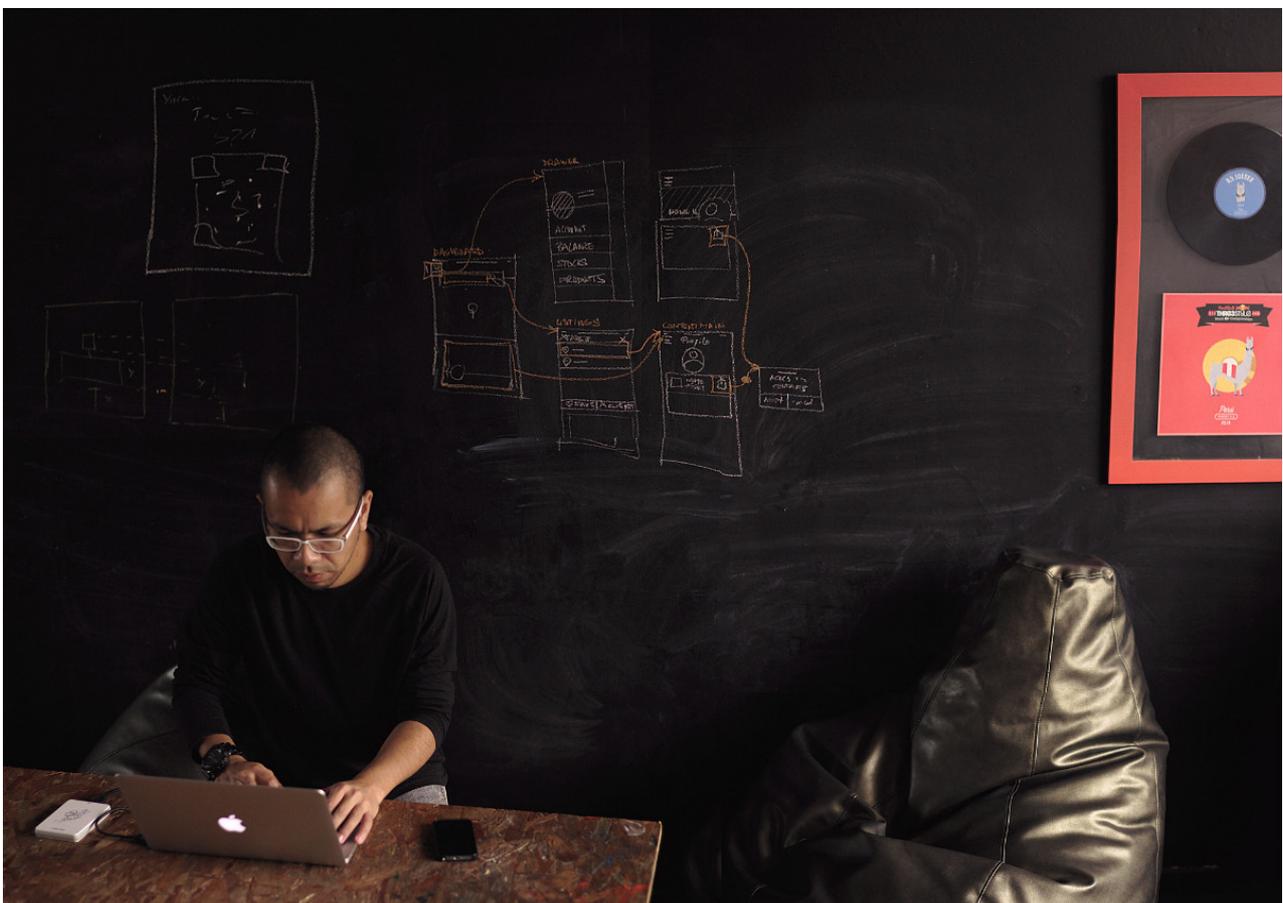
This camaraderie perhaps more than anything else distinguishes a coworking space from a simple office. “Working alongside people who have similar interests and goals encourages a happy, harmonious work environment,” Catherine Eckerd at [Impact Hub Boulder](#) writes. “... Whether you are sitting in your own office space or enjoying a communal work table, coworking brings a sense of community one cannot find in a cubicle.”

Eckerd notes that a collective sense of hard work has self-reinforcing benefits: It forces everyone else to push themselves a little more, engendering shared senses of accomplishment.

In such an environment, people appreciate having the ability to celebrate the success of others, and the ability to connect with one another over shared professional interests and goals, [Grant Barnhill](#) writes at Colorado Biz.

Granted, “like-minded” can sound exclusive, especially for people who don’t fit the typical coworking demographic of professional twentysomethings and thirtysomethings. But exclusion runs counter to the entire ethos of coworking, says Zak Cumber at [Coworker.com](#)

“Coworking spaces are all about collaboration and community — which require acceptance of others in order to thrive. So even if you don’t fit into what you think the normal coworking ‘mold’ is, rest assured that others will welcome you.”



...and Coworking Spaces Are Nicheing Down in Response

Actually, let's walk back that last point just a little bit. Despite the ostensible push for inclusion and collaboration, members in a coworking space can coalesce into cliques that then create in-groups and out-groups.

When that happens, anyone in the out-group will feel cut off from the collaborative spirit that attracted them to the coworking community in the first place.

Many coworking space owners have seen this happen first-hand, and they have begun to work with specific communities to provide the right working environments. Probably the most prominent example of this in recent years has been the rise of coworking spaces for women. By building inclusive communities that focus on welcoming female entrepreneurs, freelancers and other professionals, coworking spaces are finding new opportunities to create amazing working environments.

For example:

- [coworkHERS](#) in Portland, Maine, was designed to be a place where female freelancers, entrepreneurs and employees alike could find a place to “balance career, lifestyle, relationships, and self.”
- [The Riveter](#) in Seattle provides members with yoga classes, barre classes and meditation sessions to end their work days.
- [Rise](#) in St. Louis connects teenage girls interested in business with members who are willing to mentor them.
- [Hera Hub](#), with locations across the country and in Stockholm, helps female entrepreneurs secure angel investments.

Elsewhere, some coworking spaces have flourished because they are designed with certain groups of professionals in mind. Here are four such examples:

Type Set, Seattle

[Type Set](#) in Seattle is designed specifically for writers. It enforces a no-talking policy and sets its prices to levels that are friendlier to Seattle-area writers than other spaces tend to be.

“Most of the previously existing coworking spaces are too expensive for most writers, at upwards of \$300 per month or more for full-time membership,” co-founder Elisabeth Eaves tells [Smartsheet](#). “Seattle is also rapidly growing and becoming denser, which I think bodes well for the future of coworking. The smaller the spaces people live in, the more likely they are to need an outside workspace.”

The Rattle, Boston

[The Rattle](#) in Boston is designed for musicians primarily, as well as other creatives. A group of truly remarkable mentors is available to offer professional guidance to members. One of those mentors is Grammy-winner Imogen Heap, who has her own startup, [Mycelia](#), that works to empower musicians so their art can flourish in a digital marketplace.

THECUBE, London

THECUBE is situated in London's tech hub, Shoreditch, and brings together professionals who are interested in science, technology and design. "The biggest asset that we offer is our community," the team writes. "We are boutique space, so people here really get to work together and foster long lasting collaborations."

Podcast Village, Washington, D.C.

Having just opened a second location in Georgetown, Podcast Village in D.C. brings together podcasters and broadcast professionals to create a unique working community. The new location features a couple of broadcast studios, a control room, a voiceover booth and an editing bay with Mac computers, D.C.-based tech writer George Mocharko reports.

Coworkers Need a Place to be Productive

The camaraderie that makes a good coworking space special only develops when everyone is productive and able to get work done.

Fortunately, study after study has found that the majority of people are more productive in coworking spaces than at company offices — or even at home. Oles Kosiuk at the blog Dumb Little Man writes that nearly 2 in 3 people report that working from coworking spaces helps them meet their deadlines better.

"One of the reasons shared working spaces are successful is the fact that they provide a structured space to work that is not home," Kosiuk says. "Use this to your advantage and keep work and home time separate."

How does the coworking environment help people feel more productive? By creating work environments that facilitate the process of thinking, Professor Ulrich Weinberg from The School of Design Thinking says.

A thoughtfully designed coworking space has places for collaborative work, for focused work and for relaxation. By switching in and out of those modes at your own pace, you coax creativity and clarity from your own mind — rare finds in most corporate offices.

"Self-organising teams don't need a big hierarchical structure above them because they can do lots of things on their own," professor Weinberg says. "... [Most businesses] are using the kind of structures which actually keep us away from really good solutions to complex problems. We just try to solve complex problems right now, but we don't use the full mental capacities of our people."

The same goes for the home office. Even though an office (or your kitchen table) provides a place for your mind to quietly wander, spending all of your work hours at home ultimately blurs the lines between living space and working space.

What's more, you lose the social aspect of work at home, Masthead Media founder [Amanda Pressner Kreuser](#) says. "The benefit of a quiet space to think gives way to a longing for collaboration. The non-commute eventually equals a never-ending workday with no built-in boundaries. No coworkers to hold you accountable may actually lead to a productivity slump."

No one to bounce ideas off of, either. And that brings us to our last point.



Coworkers Seek Inspiration and Advice From Each Other

The camaraderie aspect of coworking is great, but we cannot overlook the practical benefits of a social workspace.

Imagine you're working on a graphic design project in a room full of other graphic designers, all brilliant in their own right. When you hit a wall creatively, there is no better source of inspiration or advice than the designers around you.

In a piece for Entrepreneur.com, business consultants [Doug and Polly White](#) tell the story of one such graphic designer — a younger professional named TJ working from the [Gather](#) coworking space in Richmond, Virginia — who was able to learn new skills quickly thanks to the guidance of the veteran designers around him.

Even in less tangible ways, the benefits of social work environments tend to become clear to many coworkers. Often, drive and a healthy work ethic rubs off on others, Hollie Arnett at [CoLo](#) writes. "Since coworking surrounds you with motivated and driven individuals, the residual effects leave you feeling inspired and motivated, too," she says. "Seeing what others around you are doing can motivate you to up your game and achieve your goals."

Big employers are very aware of this, too. Some companies have begun to send members of their full-time teams to nearby coworking spaces just so their staff can mingle with other talented professionals.

Verizon has actually taken this a step further by partnering with the coworking company Alley. Verizon is helping Alley open new locations, and in exchange the telecom giant hopes this will facilitate knowledge exchange with entrepreneurs and bright minds from outside the company, digital media consultant and entrepreneur Andrew Broadbent writes.

In the next few years, the number of coworking spaces will grow and global membership numbers will triple. Expect to see more deals like the Verizon-Alley partnership. After all, many forward-thinking companies are understanding that smarter offices are a competitive advantage, even if they don't actually own or manage those offices themselves.

What matters is putting talented people in environments where their talents can thrive. So far, coworking has proven uniquely able to deliver on that.

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