

# Coworking

Only \$4.99!  
Available  
on Amazon,  
iTunes, and  
Barnes &  
Noble for  
your Kindle,  
Nook, and  
iPad.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION INNOVATION



## WORKING in the "UnOffice"

A Guide to Coworking for  
Indie Workers, Small Businesses,  
and Nonprofits

 NightOwlsPress.com

### BUILD ENTREPRENEURIAL MUSCLE.

Over 300 pages of straight talk, tips, and strategies for improving your business or organization in collaborative workspaces.

### FIND PROOF OF IMPACT AND GET INSPIRED.

More than 100 pages of interviews with 33 coworking members.

### GET INSIDER ADVICE.

19 founders of spaces like The Hub, Indy Hall, NextSpace, and Affinity Lab give their candid views on working independently with others.

### About Working in the UnOffice: A Guide to Coworking

**An all-around guidebook to coworking.** This packed edition chronicles the rise of coworking and the social and economic trends making it possible. Readers learn how to find and select the perfect space and master the art of adjusting to collaborative environments. Discover the secrets to "accelerated serendipity" as members and founders recount their experiences of how coworking became a driving force behind critical business decisions and breakthroughs.



*"Part anecdotal narrative, part practical, how-to guidebook, this book has amassed tips and the shared wisdom of coworkers all over the country on making the most of a collaborative environment to spark ideas and enhance productivity. With this illuminating and no-nonsense take on coworking, you'll get inspired to change how you work."*

– Campbell McKellar, CEO, [Loosecubes](http://Loosecubes.com)

For more info: [www.CoworkingGuide.com](http://www.CoworkingGuide.com)

# Inside 'Working in the UnOffice': HIGHLIGHTS

Foreword by Campbell McKellar, CEO, Loosecubes

## PREFACE: *Coworking - Triumph of the Commons*

### 1: Sharing How We Work & Thinking Outside the Space

**The Making of the Coworking 'Perfect Storm'** - Discussion of trends contributing to the rising popularity of coworking (e.g. shift to a 'sharing economy' and collaborative consumption; rise of telecommuting, home-based businesses; cloud computing; and the science of group innovation).

### 2: Coworking Deconstructed

**Free, Un-tethered— but Alone** - Discussion of the big drawbacks of independent working: Isolation, lack of productivity, and distractions— and how it stifles creativity and productivity.

**Ditch the Dash, Rev Up a Revolution— Coworking Begins** - Discussion of the movement's origins, how it evolved and is defined today, and why it's regarded as the future of work.

**Coworking's Core Values** - Collaboration, Community, Sustainability, Openness, Accessibility (with real-life examples from coworking space founders and members illustrating each in action).

**State of the [Coworking] Nation** - Summary of coworking stats from the latest surveys and studies.

### 3: Making the Leap

**What's So Great About Where You Work?** - The good, the bad, and the ugly of your workspace options, mainly: home offices, coffee shops, serviced offices, and coworking spaces (with insights from coworking space founders and members discussing each environment).

**Finding a Coworking Space** - Discussion of directories and portals, such as [Loosecubes.com](http://Loosecubes.com).

**Selecting and Test-Driving the Right Coworking Space** - Critical factors for every prospective coworker to consider, such as: #1 Type of Community (e.g. incubators, D-I-Y/hacker spaces, industry-specific, etc.); #2 Industry Requirements (fields that thrive in spaces); #3 Membership Costs and Plans; #4 Membership Turnover; #5 Stability of the Coworking Space; #6 Access to Multiple Locations; #7 Diversity of the Community; and #8 Amenities and Programming.

### 4: Recalibrating Your Business for Coworking

*Coworkers share tips and strategies on what to do during your first 1-3 months:*

**The New Kid on the Block** - Break the ice; Let socialization happen naturally; Master the art of the polite deflection; Mingle; Expect a drop in productivity levels during the first month; Get the lay of the land to master the open floor plan; Get with the program; Conserve energy and supplies.

**Playing Well With Others** - Don't be a space hog; Follow common courtesies; Lend a hand; Get involved; Watch out for coworking space politics; Promote others.

**Getting in the Groove** - Work on the cloud; Organize events; Check out the Coworking Visa; Collaborate; Get a work buddy; Invest in a good pair of headphones; Observe when there are downtimes and busy periods; Be more aware of who's around you when working on sensitive info; Update your address; Rethink your company dynamics.

**Tools of the Coworker Trade** - Recommended apps and tools for coworkers.

For more info: [www.CoworkingGuide.com](http://www.CoworkingGuide.com)

## PROOF of IMPACT

Joey Coleman, founder of Design Symphony, member of Affinity Lab  
"Within three months of getting a desk at Affinity Lab, I had been referred business by my coworkers that covered my rent for the first year. Dozens of Affinity Lab member companies have become clients of mine, creating direct revenue opportunities. I've received approximately \$50,000 in direct revenues from Affinity Lab members and another \$100,000+ in referrals."

Lisa Van Damme, Performance Impact, member of Boulder Digital Arts  
"With a home office, I felt compelled to work at all hours of the day and night. As soon as I moved to my coworking office, I gained much better control over my hours and better work/life balance. I certainly feel happier in my job now that I have my coworking space."

Phil Hughes, co-founder of Clustered Systems, former member of TechShop  
"We started with an idea that neither of us had much experience with nor the experience to implement. That's really where TechShop helped because they had all the tools. We could build quick prototypes and try something out with immediate feedback. If we had done that at a regular machine shop, it would have cost us over \$100,000."

Jason Barnett, director of The UpTake, member of CoCo  
"Organized coworking environments are ideal workplaces for modern organizations that are interested in partnerships, collaborations, and a healthy work environment."

Lisa S. Malul, director of Action Alliance for Children, member of The Hub Bay Area  
"I think that [coworking offers] a tremendous savings in overhead for almost any organization. There are reasons for large organizations to stay in their own independent spaces, but I think for smaller organizations that need to be very nimble and meet many changing financial demands, I think that coworking is a great solution."

# Inside 'Working in the UnOffice': HIGHLIGHTS

## 5: Getting the Most Out of Coworking

*Coworkers offer advice for optimizing the coworking experience through interaction and participation:*

**Interact** - Be interested in others and get to know people; Turn to your community; When you have a bad day, talk it out with a member; Use your coworking space as a testing ground for ideas; Feed off the energy of people around you; Establish personal and business relationships; Participate in community group projects and outside user groups.

**Share** - Share ideas; Share contacts; Share expertise; Share problems.

**Play** - Take a break and laugh; Eat, drink, and be merry; Share interests and hobbies.

**Participate** - Brown bag lunches; Networking nights (or days); Seminars and workshops; Bar camps, hacker nights, and forums; Community events; Social events.

**Maximize Your Space** - You don't have to work at your coworking space every day; Make the most of the space even if you aren't working there; Accept that there are good and bad days; Get to know your coworking space founders; Take an active role in designing the coworking space experience; If someone or something bothers you, speak up.

**Enhance Productivity, Creativity, and Serendipity** - Discipline yourself against distraction; Court creative sparks by engaging in conversations; Practice filtered hearing; Don't ditch the office structure completely.

**Use Collaborative-Friendly Resources** - List of organizations that focus on helping startups and entrepreneurs, either with financing or business development.

**Create Meetup Groups** - Coworking creates community. Leverage that sense of community into a Meetup group to enhance your credibility.

**Plan Your Exit Strategies** - It's sometimes inevitable. Members have had to leave their coworking space because they couldn't drum up enough clients to justify the membership costs, or because they were so successful they outgrew the space and needed to relocate to accommodate their growth (includes advice from people who have 'graduated' from their respective spaces and how they maintain ties as virtual members).

---

## Epilogue: Coworking as the Future of Work?

---

## Proof of Impact: 33 coworking members interviewed

---

## Movers & Shakers: 19 space founders interviewed

**Target Audience:** A book for freelancers, startups, small businesses and organizations, and telecommuters

"A raucous chorus of insights and experiences about getting out of the work rut. Hear people's raves, confessions, and straight talk on working better."

Alex Hillman, co-founder of Indy Hall  
"[Coworking] has allowed us to form relationships before a transaction takes place. I get to know my coworkers based on what they are interested in, what they do/don't do well. Then, when we're working together it's more enjoyable because we have common interests beyond the money at the end of the rainbow."

Jeff Shiau, director, The Hub Bay Area  
"You're not just saving on rent, but you're also able to make connections, to build a community around your ideas at a creative level that's beyond what you would be able to do working by yourself."

Chase Granberry, founder of Authority Labs, member of Gangplank  
"With issues, it all flushes out quicker through discussion and collaboration rather than trying to figure it out on your own."

Angel Kwiatkowski, founder of Cohere  
"Members' work has improved by coworking because they can now outsource tasks to one another. There's probably a member who loves to do what you hate! I've seen a web architect subcontract out proposal writing to a writer, and a writer subcontract out graphics to a designer."

Anna Thomas, Loosescubes, former member of New Work City  
"Working among a diverse group of independent professionals was invaluable. There were numerous times when we were able to connect with a neighbor who provided insight on our product that we wouldn't have received otherwise."

Suzanne Akin, founder of Akinz, former member of Cohere  
"One of the hardest things to get used to is to have to constantly schedule work to avoid ups and downs in my workflow. I would have a big down cycle and would simply put the word out to my community that I needed work and it never failed that something would end up on my to-do list."

Mike Muldoon, founder of Infrno.net, member of NextSpace  
"Need a cable for a ten-minute project? Somebody's got it, and you don't have to burn half a day spending \$40 at OfficeMax for a part you'll never use again. Whatever your problem is, there is probably somebody with help to give."

For more info: [www.CoworkingGuide.com](http://www.CoworkingGuide.com)

# PRESS

Available on Amazon, iTunes, and Barnes & Noble for your Kindle, Nook, and iPad.

For more info:  
[CoworkingGuide.com](http://CoworkingGuide.com)

## Change

*The Next Web*  
[“Working in the UnOffice: The Lonely Planet of Coworking Guidebooks”](#)  
26 September 2011



*Shareable magazine*  
[“A Feng Shui Checklist for Coworking and Collaborative Workspaces”](#)  
3 October 2011



*Work Awesome*  
[“Coworking: Sharing How We Work”](#)  
19 October 2011



## How You

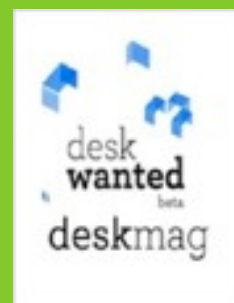
*Fast Company*  
[“How to Get a Job in America”](#)  
27 September 2011



*GigaOM*  
[“What’s next for coworking? Space founders and users weigh in”](#)  
10 October 2011



*DeskMag*  
[“Home Office, Coffee Shop or Coworking Space? A Comparison”](#)  
21 October 2011



## Work

*DeskMag*  
[“Five Must-Read Books About Coworking”](#)  
2 October 2011



*CNN Money*  
[“What’s next for coworking? Space founders and users weigh in”](#)  
10 October 2011



*Freelance Switch*  
[“How Freelancers Can Network Better at Coworking Spaces”](#)  
1 November 2011





COMMUNITY

COLLABORATION

INNOVATION



# WORKING

in the "UnOffice"

A Guide to Coworking for  
Indie Workers, Small Businesses,  
and Nonprofits



NightOwlsPress.com

# Working in the “UnOffice”

## A Guide to Coworking for Indie Workers, Small Businesses, and Nonprofits

GENEVIEVE V. DEGUZMAN AND ANDREW I. TANG

A [Night Owls Press](#) Book



**Copyright © 2011 by Genevieve V. DeGuzman and Andrew I. Tang**

All rights reserved worldwide.

Night Owls Press

[www.nightowlspress.com](http://www.nightowlspress.com)

San Francisco, CA 94122, U.S.A.

Cover design by Michael Kostuchenko

*First Edition August 2011*

Practice good karma! No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without the written permission of the publisher, except by reviewers who may quote brief excerpts in connection with a review. You can reach Night Owls Press at [admin@nightowlspress.com](mailto:admin@nightowlspress.com).

Much of this publication is based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence shared by the participants interviewed. Where statistical data or facts are cited, the authors have made every reasonable attempt to achieve complete accuracy of the content and to reference sources in the endnotes. Readers should use the recommendations and advice cited in the book as they see fit and at their own risk. Readers' particular situations may not be exactly suited to the examples illustrated here; they should adjust their use of the information and recommendations, accordingly.

Any trademarks, service marks, product names, or named features are assumed to be the property of their respective owners, and are used only for reference and editorial purposes. There is no implied endorsement if we use one of these terms.

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:*

DeGuzman, Genevieve V. and Tang, Andrew I.

Working in the UnOffice – A guide to coworking for indie workers, small businesses, and nonprofits/ Genevieve V. DeGuzman, Andrew I. Tang

p. cm.

E-book ISBN-13: 9781937645007

2011937204

## About Night Owls Press

Night Owls Press is an editorial services and publishing company based in San Francisco, CA. We work with small businesses, startups, and nonprofits around the world to produce e-books, reports, feature articles, web content, and other creative and analytical materials.

Get in touch: [editor@nightowlspress.com](mailto:editor@nightowlspress.com) Get more info:

[www.nightowlspress.com](http://www.nightowlspress.com) Read our blog: <http://www.nightowlspress.com/blog/>

Follow us: [www.twitter.com/nightowlspress](http://www.twitter.com/nightowlspress) Become a fan: [www.facebook.com/nightowlspresscom](http://www.facebook.com/nightowlspresscom)

## About the Authors

After getting a case of cabin fever working on their own, Genevieve and Andrew became dazzled with the concept of coworking. *Share resources! End the isolation! Spark collaboration!* They set out to unravel the hype, collecting stories from across the coworking universe. *Working in the UnOffice* is the result of that investigation.

**Genevieve V. DeGuzman** is the lead writer/editor for Night Owls Press. She enjoys working with small businesses and nonprofits to communicate their visions and ideas to the world. In a former life, she worked as an economic development researcher for international organizations and lived and traveled in Asia for several years, writing on issues related to improving the business environment, sparking economic growth, and helping micro-entrepreneurs. She dreams of starting a shared space in a developing country hot spot to bring together NGO and international development workers with local entrepreneurs.

**Andrew I. Tang** is the production editor and business maven behind Night Owls Press. A long-time resident of San Francisco, he has worked on a number of media start-ups and digital ventures. Before that, Andrew was a senior portfolio manager for Mellon Capital Management and Barclays Global Investors. He's an avid hiker and runner (more than 100 marathons completed), veteran traveler (more than 50 countries visited), and has lived in Malaysia, the U.K. and briefly in Argentina and Mexico. Andrew is currently putting together a book on his experiences over his 900 km trek on the Camino de Santiago from France to Spain.



**To the freelancers, small businesses, and organizations around the world that continue to inspire us with their entrepreneurial zeal and creative visions.**

# Contents

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>COWORKING: THE TRIUMPH OF THE COMMONS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>YOU'RE WONDERING ABOUT COWORKING</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>WHY WE NEED A GUIDEBOOK</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>WHAT YOU'LL GET</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>WHY THIS BOOK IS DIFFERENT</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>ONE: SHARING HOW WE WORK AND THINKING OUTSIDE THE SPACE</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>THE MAKING OF THE COWORKING 'PERFECT STORM'</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>#1 SHIFT TOWARD A 'SHARING ECONOMY'</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>#2 HOME IS WHERE THE WORK IS: RISE OF THE TELECOMMUTER AND HOME-BASED BUSINESSES</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>#3 DIGITAL WORKERS ON THE CLOUD</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>#4 WHERE GOOD IDEAS COME FROM: WORKING WITH OTHERS</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>TWO: COWORKING DECONSTRUCTED</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>FREE, UN-TETHERED— BUT ALONE (AND OTHER TRAVAILS OF THE INDIE WORKER)</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>DITCH THE DASH, REV UP A REVOLUTION— COWORKING BEGINS</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>HOW COWORKING GETS ITS START</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>COWORKING DEFINED</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>THE APPEAL OF COWORKING</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>COWORKING'S CORE VALUES</b> .....	<b>22</b>

#1 COLLABORATION .....	22
#2 COMMUNITY .....	24
#3 SUSTAINABILITY.....	25
#4 OPENNESS .....	26
#5 ACCESSIBILITY .....	27
<b>STATE OF THE [COWORKING] NATION .....</b>	<b>28</b>
A VERY HAPPY BUNCH.....	28
COWORKER ENVY.....	29
MOSTLY MEN, MOSTLY FREELANCERS, AND INDEPENDENT WORKERS (FOR NOW... ).....	29
WHAT COWORKERS WANT AND LIKE .....	29
COMES IN ALL DIFFERENT SIZES.....	30
<b><u>THREE: MAKING THE LEAP.....</u></b>	<b><u>31</u></b>
<b>WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT WHERE YOU WORK?.....</b>	<b>31</b>
HOME OFFICE .....	32
COFFEE SHOPS .....	35
SERVICED OFFICES .....	37
COWORKING SPACES.....	39
<b>FINDING A COWORKING SPACE .....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>SELECTING AND TEST-DRIVING THE RIGHT COWORKING SPACE.....</b>	<b>60</b>
#1 TYPE OF COMMUNITY .....	61
#2 INDUSTRY REQUIREMENTS .....	71
#3 MEMBERSHIP COSTS AND PLANS.....	74
#4 MEMBERSHIP TURNOVER.....	76
#5 STABILITY AND LONGEVITY OF THE COWORKING SPACE.....	77

#6 ACCESS TO MULTIPLE LOCATIONS.....	79
#7 DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITY.....	81
#8 ACCESSIBILITY, AMENITIES, AND PROGRAMMING.....	84
<b><u>FOUR: RECALIBRATING YOUR BUSINESS FOR COWORKING.....</u></b>	<b>93</b>
<b>THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>GETTING IN THE GROOVE .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOOLS OF THE COWORKER TRADE .....</b>	<b>107</b>
COLLABORATION .....	108
NETWORKING.....	109
CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT .....	110
MARKETING AND SALES .....	111
OFFICE TOOLS.....	111
GRAPHICS AND DESIGN .....	112
FINANCIAL/MONEY .....	113
CREATIVITY .....	113
PROJECT MANAGEMENT.....	114
PUBLISHING.....	114
<b>SHOW ME THE MONEY .....</b>	<b>115</b>
CROWDFUNDING.....	115
FELLOWSHIPS.....	116
GRANTS .....	117
ANGELS/VENTURE CAPITALISTS.....	118
<b><u>FIVE: GETTING THE MOST OUT OF COWORKING .....</u></b>	<b>119</b>

<b>INTERACT .....</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>SHARE .....</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>PLAY .....</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>PARTICIPATE .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>MAXIMIZE YOUR SPACE .....</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY, CREATIVITY, AND SERENDIPITY.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>USE COLLABORATIVE-FRIENDLY RESOURCES.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>CREATE MEETUP GROUPS .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>SET UP CLIENT MEETINGS.....</b>	<b>147</b>
ACTUAL PHYSICAL MEETINGS.....	147
VIRTUAL MEETINGS.....	148
SETTING UP AND CONDUCTING MEETINGS.....	148
<b>PLAN YOUR EXIT STRATEGIES .....</b>	<b>149</b>
SUCCESSION.....	151
FRIENDLY SALE .....	151
ACQUISITION OR MERGER.....	151
CLOSING DOWN .....	152
<b><u>EPILOGUE.....</u></b>	<b><u>153</u></b>
<b>COWORKING AS THE ‘FUTURE OF WORK’ .....</b>	<b>153</b>
THE WAY AHEAD FOR COWORKING.....	154
<b><u>PROOF OF IMPACT: INTERVIEWS .....</u></b>	<b><u>155</u></b>
<b><u>REESA ABRAMS, TECHCYCLE3 .....</u></b>	<b><u>155</u></b>
<b><u>SUZANNE AKIN, AKINZ .....</u></b>	<b><u>159</u></b>
<b><u>JAMES ARCHER, FORTY AGENCY .....</u></b>	<b><u>163</u></b>

<b><u>JASON BARNETT, THE UPTAKE .....</u></b>	<b><u>166</u></b>
<b><u>JASON BEATTY, 9BITLABS .....</u></b>	<b><u>169</u></b>
<b><u>JOHNNY BILOTTA, GUIWERKS LLC.....</u></b>	<b><u>172</u></b>
<b><u>ION BUDA, ONE DESIGN COMPANY.....</u></b>	<b><u>177</u></b>
<b><u>BETSY BURROUGHS, FOCUS CATALYST .....</u></b>	<b><u>180</u></b>
<b><u>PJ CHRISTIE, GROW YOUR BASE.....</u></b>	<b><u>183</u></b>
<b><u>JOEY COLEMAN, DESIGN SYMPHONY .....</u></b>	<b><u>186</u></b>
<b><u>GRANT CUPPS, DGC INTERACTIVE .....</u></b>	<b><u>191</u></b>
<b><u>KYLE DE HAAS, FRANNET .....</u></b>	<b><u>194</u></b>
<b><u>CHASE GRANBERRY, AUTHORITY LABS .....</u></b>	<b><u>196</u></b>
<b><u>LISA GRAY, LDG ASSOCIATES .....</u></b>	<b><u>201</u></b>
<b><u>ANTHONY GRIEDER, ALLOY DESIGN, INC.....</u></b>	<b><u>203</u></b>
<b><u>PHIL HUGHES, CLUSTERED SYSTEMS.....</u></b>	<b><u>206</u></b>
<b><u>ANNIE LIN, BRAVE NOISE LEGAL.....</u></b>	<b><u>209</u></b>
<b><u>ADAM LINDSAY, NEXT FEATURE.....</u></b>	<b><u>211</u></b>
<b><u>LISA SHULMAN MALUL, ACTION ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN.....</u></b>	<b><u>214</u></b>
<b><u>MIKE MULDOON, INFRNO.NET.....</u></b>	<b><u>218</u></b>
<b><u>DOUG NAEGELE, INFIELD HEALTH.....</u></b>	<b><u>221</u></b>
<b><u>KELANI NICHOLE, CONTENT DISTILLERY.....</u></b>	<b><u>224</u></b>
<b><u>JUDI OYAMA, MAXIMUM IMPACT DESIGN.....</u></b>	<b><u>228</u></b>
<b><u>ALAN PINSTEIN, NEYBOR .....</u></b>	<b><u>231</u></b>
<b><u>KEVIN PURDY, FREELANCE WRITER .....</u></b>	<b><u>235</u></b>
<b><u>JASON RICHELSON, SHOPKEEP.....</u></b>	<b><u>237</u></b>
<b><u>GREG ROTH, THE PERCY GROUP.....</u></b>	<b><u>239</u></b>



<b><u>KEVIN SCOTT, SCOTT LABS LLC.....</u></b>	<b><u>242</u></b>
<b><u>ANNA THOMAS, LOOSECUBES.....</u></b>	<b><u>246</u></b>
<b><u>GREG TINDALE, TINDALE TEAM.....</u></b>	<b><u>250</u></b>
<b><u>LISA VAN DAMME, PERFORMANCE IMPACT .....</u></b>	<b><u>252</u></b>
<b><u>PARKER WHITNEY, FLYCLOPS.....</u></b>	<b><u>256</u></b>
<b><u>GREG WILDER, ORPHEUS MEDIA RESEARCH.....</u></b>	<b><u>260</u></b>
<b><u>MOVERS AND SHAKERS: INTERVIEWS.....</u></b>	<b><u>265</u></b>
<b><u>PETER CHEE, FOUNDER AND KRISTIN EIDE, COMMUNITY MANAGER - THINKSPACE.....</u></b>	<b><u>265</u></b>
<b><u>KYLE COOLBROTH, CO-FOUNDER - COCO .....</u></b>	<b><u>268</u></b>
<b><u>BRIAN DIFEO, COMMUNITY MANAGER - HIVE AT 55.....</u></b>	<b><u>273</u></b>
<b><u>KIRTUS DIXON, CO-FOUNDER AND SARAH COX, OPERATIONS MANAGER - COSPACE.....</u></b>	<b><u>276</u></b>
<b><u>TIM DORR, CO-FOUNDER - IGNITION ALLEY.....</u></b>	<b><u>280</u></b>
<b><u>PAUL EVERS, PRESIDENT AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR - TBD LOFT .....</u></b>	<b><u>285</u></b>
<b><u>JIM GRAHAM, CO-FOUNDER - SATELLITE TELEWORK CENTERS.....</u></b>	<b><u>290</u></b>
<b><u>FELENA HANSON, FOUNDER - HERA HUB .....</u></b>	<b><u>295</u></b>
<b><u>MARK HATCH, CEO - TECHSHOP .....</u></b>	<b><u>298</u></b>
<b><u>ALEX HILLMAN, CO-FOUNDER - INDEPENDENTS HALL (INDY HALL)...</u></b>	<b><u>302</u></b>
<b><u>ANGEL KWIATKOWSKI, FOUNDER - COHERE .....</u></b>	<b><u>308</u></b>
<b><u>SHELLY LEONARD, COMMUNITY MANAGER - CONJUNCTURED.....</u></b>	<b><u>310</u></b>
<b><u>LYNNE MCNAMEE, MARKETING MANAGER - MILFORD BUSINESS SERVICES.....</u></b>	<b><u>312</u></b>
<b><u>JADE MESKILL AND DEREK NEIGHBORS, FOUNDERS - GANGPLANK....</u></b>	<b><u>315</u></b>
<b><u>DAVID MOFFITT, FOUNDER - COWORKING ROCHESTER.....</u></b>	<b><u>322</u></b>

<b><u>JULIAN NACHTIGAL, PUBLIC RELATIONS REP - PARISOMA INNOVATION LOFT .....</u></b>	<b><u>325</u></b>
<b><u>BERIT OSKEY, CO-FOUNDER - AFFINITY LAB.....</u></b>	<b><u>330</u></b>
<b><u>SAM ROSEN, FOUNDER - COOP.....</u></b>	<b><u>334</u></b>
<b><u>JEFF SHIAU, DIRECTOR - THE HUB BAY AREA.....</u></b>	<b><u>337</u></b>
<b><u>FAQ.....</u></b>	<b><u>341</u></b>

# Foreword

Today, independents and entrepreneurs are becoming more connected than ever before. Digital technology enables us to work with team members located around the world. We interact with our colleagues over e-mail, Skype, and social networking. We often have the option of flexible and remote work arrangements that allow us to choose our hours and work where we want. We rarely work for a single company for our entire lives anymore, and often reinvent ourselves with multiple careers, making networking more crucial than ever. But despite this increasing connectedness, independents, startups, and small businesses, in large part, still work in isolation.

Work has changed. It's time for the office to catch up.

Back in 2009, I arranged to work remotely for several months in Northern Maine. I'd been able to escape New York City for a bit while maintaining my job and salary. Although I was equipped with the technology to do my job effectively hundreds of miles away from the office, I struggled to be productive. I started dreaming of being in a Wi-Fi-equipped art studio where I could plug in occasionally and get my work done, while still relishing the perks of my remote set-up.

I wanted to be free to travel, to work on my own terms, and to meet interesting people along the way. So, I set out to create [Loosecubes](#), a platform that would enable me to do all of these things.

When I returned to New York, I joined [New Work City](#), New York's first community coworking space. Aside from the obvious benefits of increased productivity, shared amenities, and economies of scale, what was most compelling about coworking to me was the community around it. In a city like New York where the pace of life can make it difficult to form lasting personal connections, I was amazed to see that the group of independents and entrepreneurs at New Work City were creating thriving friendships, partnerships, and businesses.

What's more, I learned that New Work City wasn't the only place this was happening. All over the world, coworking spaces of all shapes and sizes were also embracing communities born out of working together, in a way that hadn't been organized in the past.

Just over one year later our community of shared workspaces on [Loosecubes](#) has grown to over 2,000 worldwide. And while the physical spaces look different, the common thread that binds them is the spirit of collaboration, camaraderie, and

community. Coworkers across the globe are meeting every day and sharing ideas, insights, and support with each other as we work to build our own businesses.

[Loosecubes](#) had the honor of hosting the first [Coworking Unconference](#) in March of this year. And more than ever before, it was evident that the community behind the coworking movement is strong and growing fast. As the coworking movement gains momentum, expands, and redefines the traditional office environment, I hope our community continues to embrace its potential to lead something that changes the world for the better. As the group becomes more and more organized, it's crucial that we stay true to the ideals of what coworking really means to us. It's a serious responsibility, and my team and I couldn't be more thrilled to be taking on the challenge.

For those who are still strangers to shared workspaces, exploring the world of coworking in all its different forms can sometimes feel like spelunking in the dark. As a professional who's gone through the gamut of options in the past and outgrown working at home, staring at cubical walls, and fighting for power outlets at cafés— I know how hard it can be to find the right place out there and make that transition.

*Working in the UnOffice: A Guide to Coworking* works like a nifty passport. Read it and travel to coworking spaces across the country and meet over 30 independents, small businesses, and nonprofits like you who are thriving because of coworking. Part anecdotal narrative, part practical, how-to guidebook, this book has amassed tips and the shared wisdom of coworkers all over the country on selecting a space, getting settled, and making the most of a collaborative environment to spark ideas and enhance productivity. With this illuminating and no-nonsense take on coworking, you'll get inspired to change how you work.

## **Campbell McKellar**

Founder & CEO of [Loosecubes](#)

August 2011

# Preface

## ***Coworking: The Triumph of the Commons***

**BACK** in 2009, when the Nobel Prize in Economics was awarded to Elinor Ostrom, it gave credence to a simple idea we've all known as kids but often forget as we get older and enter the real world: *Sharing is good*.

In her decades of research, Ostrom wrote about things that we share, such as collective resources like our oceans and forests, infrastructure like our roads and public transportation, and services like our public libraries and community centers— suggesting that a “commons”-based society was more efficient.

She's right. There is no tragedy of the commons. The debate about who was best qualified to manage the resources of society— the state or the market— always seemed too simplistic. Drawing on Ostrom's ideas, some say that perhaps the best steward is, in fact, us. Yes, folks. *We the people*. Many of the solutions to issues we face today— such as reducing our environmental impact on the planet or figuring out the complexities of ownership in the digital age— can be traced to the fundamentals of collaboration and sharing.

In many ways, Ostrom's ideas are no longer revolutionary notions. That's because we've been moving in this direction for years with the emergence of companies and organizations that allow us to share, barter, or exchange goods and services. Today, the self-interested capitalist sentiment of “*every man for himself*” seems to ring false and hollow. What makes more sense for creative thinkers, inventors, writers, artists, and entrepreneurs is this: innovation and growth are more likely to come from collaboration and the free flow and sharing of ideas, not from lone efforts. As more people start businesses and personal projects, or telecommute and opt for flexible arrangements with their employers, this collaborative movement is encompassing *how we work*.

## ***You're Wondering About Coworking***

On first glance, coworking seems like the perfect set-up for startups and freelancers, small organizations, and the remote worker: join a

collaborative or shared workspace to save money, beat the doldrums of isolation, and collaborate with other organizations and startups.

But it's the promise of innovation and community that makes coworking most appealing. Behavioral studies have long shown that sharing and collaboration can lead to instances of creativity and innovation in the workplace. It only makes sense that organizations and small businesses find that they gain more from working together, rather than alone. This type of collaborative working doesn't mean you surrender your independence and lose your individuality, but instead share resources and space— and in the process find common ground with each other, lend expertise, and share ideas.

Still, many organizations are puzzled at how surrendering their autonomy (if they owned or rented their own offices) or paying for a space (if they worked from home) would lead to any benefits. *“How would coworking expand my bottom line or inspire me to innovate?”*

For the uninitiated, coworking isn't an easy sell. We understand. As a small business ourselves, we started test-driving a few coworking spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area— but couldn't make up our minds. We thought about the money we could save by continuing to work at home— and all the other typical excuses. And yet we were torn because we also felt drawn to the dynamic layouts of the spaces we saw: people working at shared and cloistered tables, the bright colors, and the cool décor. Most of all, we loved the energy and the hum: people milling about, talking excitedly with each other while swiveling in their chairs from one desk to another. Oh, and the free coffee on tap, of course.

And then we realized: maybe there were other businesses and freelancers out there with the same dilemma, curious but still hesitant about making the leap— possibly missing out on an amazing opportunity. And so a book project was born.

## ***Why We Need a Guidebook***

Coworking spaces are popping up everywhere left and right it seems. The latest estimates from [Deskmag](#), for example, put the count at 820 spaces worldwide, with 380 in the U.S. and Canada.<sup>1</sup> [Loosecubes](#) counts 2,000 shared spaces and offices in its directory of offerings around the world. It shows the enormous enthusiasm and faith in the idea. In this rich environment of options, you are faced with limitless possibilities to flourish— but it can be difficult to make the right choices.



There are questions to consider, such as:

*How can I tell whether a space is right for me?*

*How do I make the transition from my home or a conventional office space to a shared or collaborative workspace?*

*Once I'm in, how can I leverage the space— the community— in making my business or organization better?*

Get the answers to these questions (and more!) inside this book.

## ***What You'll Get***

We did our research. We talked to coworking members across the country, as well as to space founders and reps, and their collective stories and insights have been distilled into this handy volume. This book is built from the experiences of small businesses and organizations tackling the same questions above. *People like you.*

We've written a book that is both a dissection and analysis of coworking trends and its rising popularity (Chapters 1-2), as well as a guidebook and narrative chronicle from people in the coworking trenches (Chapters 3-5). We've set out to help you find and select the right space, listing all the critical factors to consider when deciding which space best suits your needs (Chapter 3).

Then, once you've found your space, learn the ropes to adjusting to the coworking environment and master the art of networking among the mix of personalities (Chapter 4). You'll find tips and tricks for navigating shared spaces (Chapter 5)— measured steps to take advantage of the shared facilities, strategies to access your community of entrepreneurs, and optimum ways to collaborate within and across fields— all to make your small business or organization thrive. We've also put together an annotated list of collaborative tools and resources to enhance your productivity and workflow as an independent worker (Chapters 4 and 5).

What we're most proud of is the collection of profiles (see the "PROOF of IMPACT: Interviews" and "MOVERS and SHAKERS: Interviews" sections at the end of the book) that cover the candid conversations we had with members and former members, as well as with the founders of coworking spaces across the country.

The community of entrepreneurs that makes up a coworking space largely determines the essence of that space— and so it is also with this book. The 33 businesses and organizations we talked to range from the usual digital technology and graphic design freelancers that flock to coworking in droves, to the more unusual inventors, innovation consultants, and even telecommuters working remotely for corporations. Some of them have been in business for years, with polished operations and venture capital to boot. Others are plucky, bootstrapped shops, or people throwing their hats into the ring as “accidental entrepreneurs” because of the recession— tough folks who are freelancing and consulting on their own.

The debate on how to define a coworking space is an intense one. We know there are “variations on a theme” when it comes to the concept of coworking, so we decided to take a flexible approach and cast the widest net possible when choosing and interviewing the different shared and collaborative spaces available. The 19 coworking spaces we talked to range from more community-oriented spaces like [Gangplank](#) that balk at charging members (membership plans don’t exist there) and opt for “social capital” as its currency, to spaces with more structured environments for established organizations like [Affinity Lab](#) and [ThinkSpace](#). Some spaces featured here offer welding tables and laser cutters instead of your usual desks and copiers ([TechShop](#)), and some have multiple locations ([The Hub](#), [NextSpace](#), and [pariSoma](#)). You’ll also hear from the most visible coworking advocates out there today, including [Indy Hall](#)’s Alex Hillman, [Gangplank](#)’s Derek Neighbors and Jade Meskill, [Cohere](#)’s Angel Kwiatkowski, and others.

## ***Why This Book is Different***

To our knowledge, this book is one of the first of its kind written from the perspective of the very people who stand to benefit from coworking— small businesses and organizations looking for better ways to work. Like many of you, we’re researching our options of where to work, love our independence, but also tire of working in a vacuum— and, of course, can’t afford to break the bank. These considerations have shaped our focus in writing this book. Second, from what we’ve seen, the available publications out there are somewhat limited, generally written by individual spaces that focus exclusively on their own membership pool (for a list of additional publications on coworking, see “Where can I find out more about coworking?” in the FAQ section).

In contrast, the stories and insights here are sourced from across the coworking spectrum of members working in some of the more famous

spaces in the coworking circuit and those working in quirky, less well-known spaces. We offer a lively cross-section of members and former members, founders and space reps pulled from the variety of coworking spaces and shared offices across the country.

Couched in this wonderful diversity, you'll see how much coworking is a part of their inspiring stories, regardless of their location, background, or size. Coworking is so much more than a backdrop, and for many people, it's the driving force behind critical business decisions and breakthroughs.

Writing this book has been a fulfilling project and one we hope will add to the dialogue on the shifting state of work today, of which coworking is very much a game-changing catalyst. Our hope is that after reading this book, you'll be better able to consider your options, and find out if coworking is really right for you.

## ***Acknowledgments***

When we launched this project in early 2011, we didn't realize how daunting a task it would be to collect and shape the stories from coworkers and coworking advocates around the country.

First, our heartfelt thanks go to the people who are making coworking happen every single day. Your stories of collaboration and "accelerated serendipity" are truly an inspiration. Getting to know you—coworking members and advocates alike—we felt a strong kinship. We all share the same aspirations for our work. We all share the same powerful goals to make our passions a reality. Your insights and straight talk on entrepreneurship and living one's passions are lessons we'll take to heart.

In the spirit of coworking, the editorial production of this book was the result of the collaborative efforts of our in-house editorial staff and two wonderful people in particular. We tip our hats to them. *Roll credits!*

**Rheea Hermoso-Prudente** provided extensive research, writing, and editing assistance throughout this book. From our experience working with freelance editors, Rheea is in a class of her own, with a great eye for detail and tone. She is an established freelance writer and editor, contributing articles for *Entrepreneur* and *Smart Parenting* magazines and working in their Special Publishing department. Rheea also manages the editorial content for *Lucerne Luxe*, a luxury watch magazine. She also writes for her popular parenting blog, [Rainy Days and Mom Days](#).

**Charlene Davis** assisted us in our field research— contacting and talking to dozens of coworking space members across the country, managing time zones and juggling schedules. Charlene is also an experienced freelance writer ([The Write Essentials](#)), writing on topics related to startup ventures, e-commerce, retail, and food. Her feature articles have been published in *Entrepreneur* and *Her Magazine* (New Zealand), as well as in [WashingtonPost.com](http://WashingtonPost.com), and [MSNBC.com](http://MSNBC.com). She has published several books with [Entrepreneur Press](#).

Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their unflappable support and confidence in our venture and in this book project.

# ONE: Sharing How We Work and Thinking Outside the Space

*GOODBYE, office. Goodbye, kitchen table. Goodbye, Starbucks coffee counter.* For small businesses and organizations, as well as indie workers and freelancers, coworking is developing into a real viable option for getting things done. In the past, when identifying places to work, independent workers, small businesses, and organizations often had to choose between several scenarios, all with their attendant advantages and disadvantages: working from home; working from a coffee shop, library, or other public venue; or leasing an executive suite or other commercial space.

Well, enter coworking. At its most basic level, coworking is the phenomenon of workers coming together in a shared or collaborative workspace for one or more of these reasons: to reduce costs by having shared facilities and equipment, to access a community of fellow entrepreneurs, and to seek out collaboration within and across fields. In fact, coworking makes the traditional office set-up seem downright antiquated and quaint, something that belongs more in a museum exhibit and is sorely out of touch with today's creative and dynamic workforce.

Coworking spaces offer an exciting alternative for people longing to escape the confines of their cubicle walls, the isolation and distractions of working solo at home, or the inconveniences of public venues. The benefits and cost-savings in productivity and overall happiness and well-being that can be reaped from coworking are also potentially huge. Enthusiasm and creativity become contagious and multiply when you diversify your work environment with people from different fields or backgrounds. At coworking spaces, the chances of “accelerated serendipity”<sup>2</sup> occurring— those “Eureka!” moments that take place during the most unexpected turns— are greater than in any other environment. Members pass each other during the day, conversations get going, and miraculously idea-fusion happens with everyone benefitting from the shared thinking and brainstorming.

So what gives coworking its traction and charm for thousands of workers around the world?

## ***The Making of the Coworking ‘Perfect Storm’***

There are several social and economic trends that are making coworking an ideal option for independent workers, small businesses, and organizations. All these

factors and opportunities have come together in what experts like to call a “perfect storm” for the growing fascination with coworking:

#1 Shift Toward a ‘Sharing Economy’

#2 Home is Where the Work is: Rise of the Telecommuter and Home-based Businesses

#3 Digital Workers on the Cloud

#4 Where Good Ideas Come From: Working with Others

## **#1 Shift Toward a ‘Sharing Economy’**

Coworking is at the heart of the new trend toward sharing and “collaborative consumption”. Those who grew up with the children’s show *Sesame Street* may remember the episode with the Geefle and the Gonk who wanted to eat nectarines growing on a tree. The Gonk was too short to reach the fruit; the Geefle could reach them, but couldn’t bend his arms to feed himself. So they decided that the Geefle would pick the fruit and the Gonk would feed him half. Happy with the way things worked out, they decided to keep the system. “Let’s call it cooperation,” says the Gonk. “No,” pipes up the Geefle. “Let’s call it Shirley!”<sup>3</sup>

Sharing— be it goods, time, expertise, or even responsibilities to acquire nectarines— isn’t anything new. These days, it just goes by names more highbrow than “Shirley”. And it’s changing the way we spend, interact, work, and live. Welcome to the new sharing economy.

### ***Your Car, My Couch— A New Way We Share***

Admittedly, sharing may not be a virtue one readily owns up to. But chances are, you have a Facebook account, and you’ve uploaded pictures of your newest baby — human or otherwise— told your friends what you had for breakfast and posted a link for one of your current causes on your wall. What is that, if not sharing? And it’s that online sharing that’s making it easier for people to share offline, experts at [Latitude Research](#) have found.<sup>4</sup>

Just what do people share offline? Almost anything. If you have a spare room, for example, you can allow a weary traveler to crash in it for a few nights, either for free (CouchSurfing) or for a fee (AirBnb, Crashpadder). Cars can also be borrowed or shared (ZipCar, RelayRides). Rooms and zooms are not the only



things up for sharing these days; skills, time, garden space, power tools, clothes, and other “stuff” are also swapped, bartered, shared, or given away. It’s all part of a rising culture and economy around a trend called “collaborative consumption”.

According to researchers, the mindset of collaborative consumption veers away from owning something to having easy access to it.<sup>5</sup> It’s akin to say, being able to drive a car when you need to, without the actual burden of ownership, such as paying for maintenance and insurance. The growing trend of prioritizing experiences over material possessions and achieving a work-life balance has also shifted our focus away from ownership. In fact, Lisa Gansky, author of *[The Mesh: Why the Future of Business is Sharing](#)*, predicts that saving money will be regarded as the norm, and that the simplification of our lives and getting off the consumer treadmill will make people happier.

Collaborative consumption marketplaces are popping up everywhere: media, car rental, lodging, staffing, textbooks, apparel, custom graphic design, and even finance. And they are big.

Take Groupon’s success. Harnessed on the power of collaborative consumption, Groupon grew into a collective buying phenomenon based around “tipping points” or participant thresholds (the deal is only “on” if enough people buy)—uniting buyers and sellers in a collaborative fashion, saving customers money, and generating revenue for many participating businesses. For local businesses, Groupon turned traditional advertising methods upside down by letting merchants pay only for real results— when a customer comes in and actually buys a product or pays for a service. Like many businesses, Groupon is riding the collaborative consumption wave. In November 2010, Groupon defiantly ducked a \$6 billion buyout offer from Google, opting to stay independent and continue to raise its own valuation through venture investments.<sup>6</sup> Many insiders have said that Groupon’s quirky, social media-fueled style built on the creative backs of its sales and editorial forces— a decidedly people-oriented, collaborative work environment— would have clashed with the corporate culture at Google.

ThredUp is another innovative business that has banked on trends in collaborative consumption. The company created a peer-to-peer platform reminiscent of eBay by which parents could exchange boxes of kids clothing with other parents. Its tagline, “Clothes Don’t Grow, Kids Do”, automated online what parents had done for ages within their circle of family and friends— swap or donate clothes outgrown by their kids. ThredUp established a one-to-one swap system that manages the process between strangers. Parents have two options when they go online: shop for a box of “preloved kids clothes and toys” or list a box of donated clothes and toys. ThredUp provides free boxes over the mail for parents who become members, and donors get a postage paid label when they send their goods and free pick-up by the U.S. Postal Service. Families shop online

to see the offerings like any online store, select a box, and pay for the shipping and handling plus a \$5 fee; the contents themselves are actually free. Recycled clothes and sharing have saved families over \$200,000. By hooking into collaborative consumption trends and connecting people, ThredUp made inroads into a secondhand market that is notoriously fragmented and inaccessible.

## ***Why We Share More Today***

Trust is a key element in this kind of sharing economy. After all, how can you let a stranger drive off in your car, sleep in your house, or ask for your old clothes if you didn't somehow trust that you'd get your car back in one piece, won't get clobbered in your own bed, and won't get a boxful of rags in return? Trust levels are also a good indicator of quality of life. Studies show that high social trust usually correlates with low crime rates and good economic performance.<sup>7</sup>

In the past decades, from 1976 to 2008, the General Social Survey showed that the level of trust had eroded: Americans largely didn't trust each other. However, since the advent of social media networks like Facebook and Twitter, and the proliferation of mobile technology, people have had more opportunities to interact and create reciprocal relationships that are re-building trust, albeit online.

eBay is a model of online trust. You send money to people you don't know, expect them to ship you goods, which you haven't actually seen, in the condition that they promised. eBay founder Pierre Omidyar believes that most people are honest, and that by creating a transparent market that encourages honest dealings and is protected by safeguards through a rating system and verifications, doing business with strangers online becomes easier.<sup>8</sup>

The feedback system used on eBay— buyers and sellers give each other points and reviews after each transaction— has fostered good behavior all around. People know that the rating they have will determine whether people will transact with them in the future— buyers want to buy from sellers with positive ratings, and sellers may not even entertain bids from buyers with low ratings. In the new sharing economy, money isn't the only thing that talks. Your “reputation capital”— the summary of what other people think about your actions in a given community— also says a lot about you, experts agree.<sup>9</sup>

This newfound trust in people— or at least in the people we do business with— would not have been possible without progress in technology. Rachel Botsman, author of [\*What's Mine is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption\*](#), has written about how technologies, particularly social networking sites and mobile phone advancements, have transformed the usual business and social practices of bartering, sharing, renting, and trading.<sup>10</sup>

This increase in connectivity and focus on trust could also reflect a return to the belief that community is important. Lisa Gansky, author of *The Mesh*, has also discussed how dislocated individuals are seeking community and personal interaction in droves. The communities formed today may not be of the traditional neighbors-playing-bingo-at-the-church-social or families-gathering-for-the-weekly-weekend-barbecue type. But with each Tweet, each Facebook status update, with each reply to questions posed on the Starbucks or Apple forums, with each contact we add to LinkedIn, we feed our “social self— the part of us that seeks connection and belonging,” says social psychologist Marilynn Brewer of Ohio State University.<sup>11</sup>

The shift in community patterns, from autonomy to connectedness, also reflects changes in values. The so-called Millennial Generation (ages 18-29) is more environmentally aware and more socially conscious. According to a Pew Research Center study, Millennials prefer a simpler lifestyle, veering away from the rampant materialism that they perceive bilked earlier generations. Instead of buying individual cars, for example, more choose to share bikes or cars, or use mass transit.<sup>12</sup>

People are also increasingly choosing a sustainable lifestyle, as opposed to a convenient or extravagant one. Three in five people share or would share products or services simply because it’s better for the environment, according to a Latitude Research report.<sup>13</sup> Increased coverage and visibility of environmental issues have also made people more conscious of buying and disposing of goods.

This shift to a sharing mentality isn’t all altruism though. The global recession has left a deep impact on people’s consumer habits. In the same Latitude report, researchers found that “saving money” and being “good for society” tie in at 67 percent as reasons why people share or would consider sharing.<sup>14</sup> The global recession forced people to rethink what is valuable to them, and many are choosing practicality over consumerism.

So given that people *are* willing to share and that it makes economic sense— just what *would* they share?

Naturally, media and information top the list. Transportation also offers sharing opportunities (in the form of car, bike, and boat sharing, for example). Infrequently used, high-priced items such as power tools also present themselves as ideal products to be shared. And finally, physical spaces: a place to stay at when traveling and a place to store stuff is a valuable commodity— as is a place to work and be creative.

## **#2 Home is Where the Work is: Rise of the Telecommuter and Home-based Businesses**

If you're home on a Monday morning dressed in your sweats or in your PJs, sending e-mail to a client, and there's no one to see you— are you working? The philosophical implication aside, the answer for the 20 to 30 million U.S.-based telecommuters is a resounding “Yes”.<sup>15</sup>

Companies are realizing that employees don't have to be physically in their workplace to do their jobs; they don't even have to be in the same time zone. Even traditional, large businesses are recognizing that centralized, management structures need to become more flexible to meet the needs of its employees, say experts.<sup>16</sup> Dwayne Spradlin of InnoCentive, Inc. has described how organizations have to move away from rote and static procedures to more flexible ones to better organize and optimize infrastructure and human resources. Younger workers, especially the Millennial generation, have a fundamentally different view about work and career fulfillment.<sup>17</sup> Many of them are interested in moving laterally, not vertically in companies, and to take on different roles. They are project-focused and thrive in environments of constant churn and change.

More baby boomers, women, parents, and Generation Y-ers are also shifting to home-based work arrangements or are opting for telecommuting options, because it makes it easier to achieve the work-life balance objectives they have set for themselves. They are, for example, able to participate in family activities while still keeping on top of their work. All this is made possible by the capabilities, accessibility, and affordability of available tools and technology.<sup>18</sup>

Even the government is recognizing the shift from physical to online spaces for workers. In December 2010, the U.S. government passed the Telework Enhancement Act, which requires federal agencies to establish teleworking policies and support systems that allow qualified employees to work from home. The amount that companies can save by allowing offsite work is astounding— up to \$10,000 per employee annually, in terms of reduced utilities and costs in real estate, office supplies, security, maintenance, equipment and the like, and in terms of increased worker productivity— making telecommuting even more attractive. The Telework Research Network calculates that telecommuting could save as much as \$650 billion dollars a year overall.<sup>19</sup> The environmental impact is also considerable. Telecommuting reduces the dependence on fossil fuels and lessens the production of greenhouse gases— issues that are growing in importance.

The flexibility of telecommuting also holds great appeal: of the 72 percent of employees that would favor a job with flexible work arrangements over another

without, 37 percent specified telecommuting as a factor.<sup>20</sup> “What employees of all age groups want is the flexibility to determine for themselves where, when, and how they work,” says Kate Lister, the principal researcher at Telework Research Network.<sup>21</sup> This also rings true for independent and self-employed workers. Despite generally working longer, earning less, and stressing out more, independents score higher on the job satisfaction scale because they value the autonomy and flexibility that working out of a formal office setting gives them.<sup>22</sup> In an interview with *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Om Malik, founder of [GigaOm](http://GigaOm.com), has said, “There is nothing more [liberating] than being a web worker... There is no boss. You work for yourself... It’s the future.”<sup>23</sup>

Kristen Eide, community manager of [ThinkSpace](http://ThinkSpace.com) in Redmond, WA, tells us that the trend of telecommuting is becoming more appealing and has impacted their space membership. “I know some companies are going virtual with their employees, and coworking can be a great solution for virtual workers who cannot or would rather not work out of the home. I think that trend will continue for a while.” Their space hosts 240 member companies, many of which are telecommuters from larger companies such as CPA and law firms.

Both companies and workers reap the benefits. Jim Graham, co-founder of [Satellite Telework Centers](http://SatelliteTeleworkCenters.com), a coworking space that specifically targets this market for remote workers and telecommuters, tells us, “We’ve been able to demonstrate that we can house an employee for about half what it costs to support them at a corporate headquarters. Employees are happier because they’re working closer to home and they find they’re more productive because they’re away from the interruptions that come from working at the main office, and they don’t have the distractions or sense of isolation that often comes from working from home.”

### **#3 Digital Workers on the Cloud**

In the aftermath of the first Industrial Revolution, we saw the rise of the efficient factory systems and then later the cubicle farms. We know the scenario all too well. White collar workers congregated in confined spaces, working side-by-side at identical desks. Management hovered from corner offices, supervising and orchestrating the steady hum of production. Many used to believe that a command-and-control structure was needed to get work done.

Today, living in an information and computing age, where much of our work resides on the cloud and businesses outsource work— is this closed system relevant anymore? The old system worked largely because personal computing was expensive or inadequate, Internet connections and web access weren’t so pervasive, and moving and dispersing information was difficult (hence, the need for physical meetings for collaboration and team briefings).

Technology is redefining the borders of the spaces where we work. We have laptops, iPads, and smartphones. The information and tools we need to work exist in digital form— as apps that function on mobile devices anywhere. Meetings and briefings are less centralized and can be more efficient over chat or Skype with little need for face-to-face time. We don't necessarily need the traditional office structure to connect with our colleagues and be productive.

Daniel Pink, author of [\*Free Agent Nation\*](#), has written about how infrastructure that has evolved— from laptops and smartphones to Starbucks and other coffee shops that offer Wi-Fi— has increased the number of independent workers. Information age jobs lend themselves naturally to web working and telecommuting. Technical professionals such as software developers and architects, web and mobile app developers, and technical consultants top the list. People from creative fields such as writing, graphic and web design, and photography also telecommute. Lawyers, salespeople, accountants, and other professionals are starting to break out of the confines of the office, too.

And of course, independent homepreneurs, solopreneurs, and startups— there are about 10-15 million of them, though not all work at or from home— comprise the rest of the telecommuters.<sup>24</sup> The decline in lifetime job security has shifted the balance towards self-employment. After all, if you can't depend on a big corporation like General Motors for your future, why not depend on yourself instead? Besides, bagging a full-time, full-benefit job will be difficult in the coming decade, many experts say.<sup>25</sup> Companies are not only letting people go, hiring has also slowed down, as they depend on technology, outsourcing, and a leaner workforce to get the same jobs done.

Independents who freelance with several clients are no longer bound by location restrictions. They work for anyone (global outlook), anywhere (local source) through virtual channels, such as e-mail, Skype, and virtual networking. With easy connectivity and tools on hand, independents and employees can now work anytime, anywhere, and in any way that they choose.

David Bollier, author of [\*The Future of Work: What it Means for Businesses, Markets and Governments\*](#), has said, "Digitization has changed the economics of creating and distributing products, services and content across a growing number of categories."<sup>26</sup> Technology has essentially amplified worker performance— and changed the game for both employees and independents. With the rise of the cloud, more people will have access to computing power and will leap over the obstacles of infrastructure and connectivity to start focusing on what really matters in business: innovation and creativity— the things that improve and enhance services.



It might have been a tough pill to swallow initially, but many companies are catching on to these flexible work arrangements with the assurance that their employees are working out of professional venues and have access to facilities with the right technology to make virtual working possible. [Satellite Telework Centers](#) co-founder Jim Graham tells us how two of their members working as remote employees of larger companies use the coworking space effectively. “We have one member whose company is based in San Diego. He brought in a Flip camera and filmed the facility and his cubicle to prove to his bosses that he’s actually working in a professional office environment. We have another member who works for a huge telecommunications company and spends her day giving Webex-based trainings to sales teams all over the world.”

## **#4 Where Good Ideas Come From: Working with Others**

At the same time, there is also a realization that people are more productive on a results-output basis, rather than on a time-clock basis, which has led to new work arrangements like flextime and has even encouraged workers to pursue private projects. Giving smart and creative people the space and time to pursue a wacky idea overturns the industrial workplace model.

At Google, employees are given a creative license to devote up to 20 percent of their working hours to personal projects. Many of Google’s flagship products—Gmail and Google News— were dreamt up and developed during these downtimes and before employees punched out. Google has since deployed “grouplets” for initiatives that cover broader changes through the organization. One remarkable story of a successful Google grouplet involved getting engineers to write their own testing code to reduce the incidence of bugs in software code. The problem was how to push the idea across a large organization like Google and get buy-in at a level enough to make a difference. The intrepid grouplet came up with a campaign based on posting episodes discussing new and interesting testing techniques on the bathroom stalls. “Testing on the Toilet” spread fast and garnered both rants and raves. Soon, people were hungry for more, and the campaign ultimately developed enough inertia to become a *de facto* part of the coding culture. They moved out of the restrooms and into the mainstream.

This represents the power and culture of sharing in the workplace. Something that started as an idea among a small group became viral. Bharat Mediratta, a software engineer at Google, told *The New York Times* in an interview, “These grouplets have practically no budget, and they have no decision-making authority. What they have is a bunch of people who are committed to an idea and willing to work to convince the rest of the company to adopt it.”<sup>27</sup>

According to a recent New York University Stern Business School study, sharing information about work tasks with colleagues and even members outside your

immediate work circle, pulls employees together, builds relationships, and even increases productivity over time.<sup>28</sup> They even found that giving employees a communication forum such as blogging increased productivity after about seven weeks. The mechanics of sharing commentary on both work-related and non-work related matters had a profound effect. The study further found evidence of “migration from blogs to real life.”<sup>29</sup> As workers developed ideas over conversations online, they tended to spill over into conversations offline. What the study ultimately revealed was that connecting with people around us beyond work— through casual conversation and interaction, such as on company sports teams and during company-sponsored volunteer projects— prompts us to work better as individuals.

Keith Sawyer, a professor of psychology and education at Washington University in St. Louis, MO, has written widely on collaboration and innovation. In his study of jazz performances, Keith Sawyer made this observation, “The group has the ideas, not the individual musicians.”<sup>30</sup> Some of the most famous products were born out of this moshpit of interaction— in contrast to the romantic idea of a lone working genius driving change. According to Sawyer, more often than not, true innovation emerges from an improvised process and draws from trial-by-error and many inputs, “with sparks gathering together over time, multiple dead ends, and the reinterpretation of previous ideas.”<sup>31</sup>

Unexpected insights emerge from the group dynamic. If increasing interaction among different peer groups within a single company could lead to promising results, imagine the possibilities for solopreneurs, small businesses, and indie workers— if only they could reach similar levels of peer access as those experienced by their bigger counterparts. It is this potential that coworking tries to capture for its members.

\*\*\*

Coworking’s promise for today’s creator, thinker, worker, and employee is an ambitious one. It claims to help us harness innovation, as well as to unite the laptop-toting telecommuters and independent businesses and organizations out there into a cohesive but fluid community. Such diverse communities under one roof can create thriving places to work.

But is coworking just buzz, a novelty? Or, is it part of the greater zeitgeist of our time, a profound shift in how we do things? Let’s dive in and see how coworking started, where it is today— and most importantly— how you can make the most out of the coworking opportunities out there.



**We hope you enjoyed reading this excerpt! That was just a quick peek. To find out more about coworking and to buy the book, visit [www.CoworkingGuide.com](http://www.CoworkingGuide.com).**

**Thanks!**

## **NOTES:**

### ***Preface***

<sup>1</sup> “Coworking’s steady growth: 820 spaces now active worldwide”, *Deskmag*, <http://www.deskmag.com/en/820-coworking-spaces-worldwide-statistics> (accessed 6 June 2011).

### ***ONE: Sharing How We Work and Thinking Outside the Space***

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘accelerated serendipity’ is used to describe one of the key benefits of coworking. It was reportedly coined by Chris Messina and Tara Hunt, the original founders of Citizen Space in San Francisco, CA.

<sup>3</sup> “The Geefle and the Gonk”, *Sesame Street*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUHOPEcJU3s> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>4</sup> “The New Sharing Economy”, December 2010, *Latitude Research report*, <http://i.swapt.in/sharestudy> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>5</sup> “The New Sharing Economy”, December 2010, *Latitude Research report*, <http://i.swapt.in/sharestudy> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>6</sup> “Here’s The Problem With Google Buying Groupon: A Massive Culture Clash”, 24 November 2010, *Business Insider*, <http://www.businessinsider.com/google-groupon-culture-clash-2010-11#ixzz1Be5QjrSk> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>7</sup> “Learning to Trust Each Other, Online and Off”, 11 October 2010, *Shareable blog: Work and Enterprise*, <http://shareable.net/blog/learning-to-trust-online> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>8</sup> “Rentalship is the New Ownership in the Networked Age”, 4 February 2011, *Wired*, <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-02/04/rentalship-is-the-new-ownership> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>9</sup> “The Reputation Economy”, November 2010, *AFR Boss*.

<sup>10</sup> “The Everyday Entrepreneur”, Winter 2010, *RSA Journal*, <http://www.thersa.org/fellowship/journal/archive/winter-2010/features/the-everyday-entrepreneur> (accessed 15 April 2011).

<sup>11</sup> “Brand We”, June 2010, *AFR Boss*.

<sup>12</sup> “Millenials: Portrait of Generation Next”, 24 February 2010, *Pew Research Center* <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf> (accessed 22 August 2011).

<sup>13</sup> “The New Sharing Economy”, December 2010, *Latitude Research report*, <http://i.swapt.in/sharestudy> (accessed 15 April 2011).

- <sup>14</sup> “The New Sharing Economy”, December 2010, *Latitude Research report*, <http://i.swapt.in/sharestudy> (accessed 15 April 2011).
- <sup>15</sup> “The Latest Telecommuting Statistics”, *Telework Research Network*, <http://www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/telecommuting-statistics> (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>16</sup> “The Future of Workplaces”, 16 March 2011, *GigaOm Pro*, <http://pro.gigaom.com/2011/03/the-future-of-workplaces/#company> (accessed 30 April 2011).
- <sup>17</sup> Bollier, David, March 2011, *The Future of Work: What It Means for Individuals, Businesses, Markets and Governments* (Aspen, CO: Aspen Institute), p. 10. Available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/future-of-work> (accessed 4 June 2011).
- <sup>18</sup> “Technology Trends and Small Business”, June 2007, *Intuit Future of Small Business Report*.
- <sup>19</sup> “Savings Potential”, *Telework Research Network*, <http://www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/cut-oil> (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>20</sup> “The Latest Telecommuting Statistics”, *Telework Research Network*, <http://www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/telecommuting-statistics> (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>21</sup> “Workplace Flexibility: the Key to Unlocking Talent”, 10 March 2011, *Watermark for Exceptional Women*, <http://www.wearewatermark.org/2011/03/workplace-flexibility-the-key-to-unlocking-talent/> (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>22</sup> “The Job Satisfaction Paradox for the Self-Employed”, 1 April 2010, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, [http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/apr2010/sb2010041\\_151187.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/smallbiz/content/apr2010/sb2010041_151187.htm) (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>23</sup> “Where Neo-Nomads' Ideas Percolate”, 11 March 2007, *San Francisco Chronicle*, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/03/11/MNGKKOCBA645.DTL&ao=all> (accessed 26 April 2011).
- <sup>24</sup> “The Latest Telecommuting Statistics”, *Telework Research Network*, <http://www.teleworkresearchnetwork.com/telecommuting-statistics> (accessed 2 May 2011).
- <sup>25</sup> “Twenty Trends That Will Shape the Next Decade”, October 2010, *Intuit 2020 Report*.
- <sup>26</sup> Bollier, David, March 2011, *The Future of Work: What It Means for Individuals, Businesses, Markets and Governments*, (Aspen, CO: Aspen Institute). Available at: <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/future-of-work> (accessed 4 June 2011).
- <sup>27</sup> “The Google Way: Give Engineers Room”, 21 October 2007, *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/21/jobs/21pre.html?fta=y> (accessed 19 April 2011).
- <sup>28</sup> New York University Stern School of Business Center for Digital Economy, <http://www.stern.nyu.edu/CeDER/> (accessed 19 April 2011).

Buy the book at [www.CoworkingGuide.com](http://www.CoworkingGuide.com).

<sup>29</sup> “Personal Blogging at Work Increases Productivity”, 1 March 2011, *Forbes.com blog*, <http://blogs.forbes.com/susanadams/2011/03/01/personal-blogging-at-work-increases-productivity/> (accessed 19 April 2011).

<sup>30</sup> Sawyer, Keith, 2007, *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration* (New York: Basic Books) p. x.

<sup>31</sup> Sawyer, Keith, 2007, *Group Genius: The Creative Power of Collaboration* (New York: Basic Books), p. xi.