

BIZBASH

Why Hotels Have Hopped on the Co-Working Craze

For small meetings or getting business done on the road, these spaces go beyond the typical hotel business center.

By Adele Chapin January 23, 2019, 7:00 AM EST



Photo: Courtesy of Harbor Court San Francisco

The hotel lobby is no longer just for checking in. Today's travelers are happily turning hotel public spaces into their offices, bypassing the lonely and often inconvenient hotel business center. Hotels are responding by setting up hubs for co-working, where guests can connect to Wi-Fi, plug in their laptops, and get work done in an inviting atmosphere—alongside tourists, locals, and business travelers alike.

These hotel co-working spaces are a response to new attitudes about working, according to Aytan Litwin, the founder and C.E.O. of White Space, a company that manufactures interiors for hospitality and commercial spaces. “That type of worker that says, ‘I need to go use that cubicle in the side office of the building and sit there only for a few minutes to do this email and use the printer’—that’s not really the reality that we work in anymore. There’s a lot more of a need to be comfortable,” he says.

Besides providing the millennial business crowd with the vibrant, creative atmosphere and communal experience they expect, co-working areas provide an in-between space that’s less formal than traditional meeting rooms. Litwin notes that adding a dedicated co-working space in a hotel can open up a new revenue stream while engaging the surrounding neighborhood. Here’s how hotels are embracing the trend.

Lobbies As Living Rooms

[Harbor Court San Francisco](#) unveiled a \$10 million renovation this summer that transformed its lobby into a co-working space with a communal work table, comfortable sofas, glass-enclosed meeting rooms, and a café serving up lattes and other treats.

General manager Todd Metzger says that the lobby’s renovation has been a hit with millennial business travelers from tech companies like Google and Salesforce. “The workspace in the downstairs space of the hotel is important to us because we have smaller rooms. People seemingly like to get out of the rooms and really come for the experience of San Francisco,” he says. The redesigned space has been popular with locals too: Entrepreneurs book the lobby’s meeting rooms and neighbors stop by for a coffee.

In Los Angeles, [Montrose West Hollywood](#) wants to capture a similar buzz in its new co-working space called Tone Lounge, part of a \$15 million remodel that wrapped up this summer. “We felt that today’s traveler—especially the creative types that stay in West Hollywood be they associated with entertainment, wellness, fashion, or finance—need to be able to work outside of their room as well as inside,” the hotel’s general manager Andrew Maffei says. Networking guests can rent headphones, use a printer, and then wrap up a workday with the lounge’s Vino & Vinyl happy hour.

On the East Coast, the [Hilton McLean Tysons Corner](#)'s atrium lobby is a place for impromptu breakout sessions, and the hotel's six-year-old Technology Lounge is an offshoot of the lobby, with cozy seating options and LG technology like television panels and wall monitors. "It's not a standard hotel business center," explains the hotel's director of sales and marketing Kevin Feldman. General manager Dori Familiant adds: "This is more of a living room."

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What Locals Want

The first official 24/7 co-working space to debut in Vail is located within the new [DoubleTree by Hilton Vail](#), which opened in March. Hilton partnered with co-working management company Proximity to provide business travelers and Colorado entrepreneurs alike with user-friendly workspaces, conference rooms, and free coffee. Local co-working members of the Pivot62 space also get discounts on the hotel's restaurant and bar, along with validated parking.

Vail's outdoor scene lends itself to the co-working lifestyle, according to the hotel's general manager Jason Polland. "This summer we would have people come in from mountain biking or hiking all morning, grab their laptops to shoot off emails, and then meet up for brainstorming sessions, so it's definitely a trend that's growing," he says. "We expect to see more people take advantage of Pivot62's co-working space during ski season."

Getting access to a hotel's amenities can be a big draw for entrepreneurs. In Washington, D.C., the new 209-room [Eaton DC](#) hotel opened its 370-member co-working space Eaton House in November. The complex boasts an open-desk area, private offices, and conference rooms. It also offers outlets for members to blow off steam, like a rooftop bar, spa, theater, and even a radio station. Looking at hotels globally, in Dubai, Nest, the co-working space within the Tryp by Wyndham Dubai, sells membership packages that include access to the property's pool and gym.

Co-Working to Co-Living

On the flip side, dedicated co-working companies are getting into the hotel game. In April, New York's the Assemblage opened [John Street House](#), its second location, which also includes a 79-room hotel for long- and short-term stays. "Opening the Assemblage John Street with the living component allowed us to complete our vision for the brand and deconstruct the everyday loop of waking up, going to work, going to sleep by offering a space that can support continuity in our lives with luxurious amenities designed to promote personal and professional growth," says chief creative officer Magdalena Sartori.

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