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THE DYNAMISM AND PRODUCTIVITY OF CO-WORKING SPACES



By Ajay Malhan, CEO, NCUBE Planning and Design Pvt. Ltd.

NCUBE is a pioneer in providing corporate interior Design and Build solutions to major corporations across the nation. Its services start from advising you on your new workplace strategy to designing it and finally building it within budget, time, quality and safety parameters.

Office Office was perhaps one of the most iconic Indian television sitcom that used to air on Sab TV. Starring Pankaj Kapur as Mussadilal, a humble customer taking rounds in government and corporate offices to get his work done, which usually ended up with him having a mental breakdown. Amongst the turbulent office politics and the games played by the organisation on the customer, the peculiar character about the sitcom was its spatial setting. Each episode conveyed the office

organisation as a composition of sluggish, work-shy and unenthusiastic people, occupying standalone desks and cubicles in discrete corners and alcoves of the office, placed far away from each other that made it tougher for anyone to navigate through from one place to another, let alone create a meaningful accord.

And it was done rightly so, because at the time, offices were designed in a similar vein and since office layouts over time come to delineate the culture of the organisation – all offices were witnessing distressed environments

that lacked communication, hampered work productivity and negated customer values. Since such office layouts were created on strict hierarchal system, not only were these offices responsible for creating unnecessary social barriers, but also demanded more maintenance. With the advent of consumer based technology, which reduced dependency on static workplaces and paper-based operations, employees were slowly understanding the limitations imposed on them because of the rigid office setup. Almost all social, economic and logistical problems were attributed to spatial order and hierarchy of the offices.

With this realisation, came a massive refusal to take part in such spaces. Need for more interpersonal relationships and team-building capacity during office operations, an atmosphere of free speech and communication of ideas, along with reduced expenditure of office setups and resources marked by global market meltdowns and socio-economic shakeups across the world, forced millennials to reject the traditional office spaces right-away. Borrowing from the idea of traditional street setups, where multiple ventures contest on common resources simultaneously to create a sense of place, collaboration, interaction and gathering; the idea of new offices that rented space based not on floor area but strength of employees became the new norm.

These new setups, looking chaotic at first glance, were marked by reduced costs by means of resource sharing, a more dynamic professional environment where ventures from different fields could contest in the same space simultaneously and learn organisational values from each other. In a manner, the office became an interdisciplinary setup facilitating cross-cultural learning. While the trend saw faster decay of poorly managed organisations, the setup being more competitive in nature, turned the employees more target oriented, thus, making performance the evaluation criteria for each company. This boosted individual growth as well as helped forward group goals and collective values. Over time, such office setups rented-out spaces, each with a slightly different business strategy targeting particular sectors of professional groups. Some co-working spaces failed to make their mark, while many learnt, re-iterated their business models to project continuous growth.


As a result, today most organisations and start-ups prefer working in co-working environments because it provides the initial setup and atmosphere that small organisations cannot afford, and a chance to mirror growth, learn from competition while working, and constantly innovate in the manner work is done.

The story of co-working spaces, is one of turbulent contexts, disruptive changes and continuous growth patterns. It demands constant innovation that can be applied to the domain of corporate and government office setups too. The premise of talking about the story is to convey that office setups do not sprout on their own, they have to be thoughtfully designed. From understanding the visual atmosphere, to the carrying capacity, spatial segregation and orientation, to understanding cost,

materiality and technology imperative to the functioning of the office – all of it has to be considered thoroughly, brought on paper, and made to undergo many improvements and tests, to finally be delivered for use.

This is where NCUBE Design has been consistently putting its efforts. Our relationship with the most notable Indian co-working venture, AWFIS, dates back to its formation. Through the years, while working on numerous co-working projects, each with a different context, requirement and character;

we have acquired the wisdom to understand human behaviour and collective needs in a workspace, and have gathered immense data on organisational values and brand ethos to make them a part of our design process. With this experience, we have been able to transfer our knowledge to the design of corporate workspaces to optimize them furthermore and help them incorporate current trends and market changes while retaining their core values.

Today, the premise of Office Office seems to be losing ground, since, if Mussadilal walked in a co-working space or any new-age corporate setup designed by us, he would witness an active office setup, where communication was effortlessly merged with work, where small segmented spaces were drawn out to sit comfortably and talk, where people and values were entertained, and where accomplishing work-objectives was the imperative to sustenance. And we, at NCUBE Design, are at the forefront of driving this healthy up-gradation in the Indian industry. 



Ajay Malhan