



▶ A Look At Co-Working Spaces

A New Work Movement: Personal Stories

By Wesley Verhoeve

▶ **A FEW YEARS BACK I SPENT MY MORNINGS COMMUTING FROM BROOKLYN TO AN OFFICE IN MANHATTAN.** I

had my own small staff, a beautiful space in a prestigious area, but also the constant financial pressure to keep it all going in a very challenging creative environment. It was very hard to balance creative freelance work with the financial realities of high fixed costs in a volatile environment, and in the end it didn't work out.

We closed the office, I had to cut back on staff, and I found myself working from home and coffee shops. While there was relief in removing the financial burden and management time

required from having an office, I also found myself missing the social interaction and inspiration derived from being around other creative people. After a few months of back pain and creative loneliness I was invited to join Studiomates, a creative co-working space in

commiserate with, the quality of my work slowly returned to form, as did my level of happiness. It made all the difference to combine the good parts of having an office, with the good parts of not having an office: the flexibility, the inspiration, the friendship and sense of community,

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Brooklyn. It changed everything... for the better. For a fraction of the trouble, and a small chunk of my previous office rent, I now had a work home again. Surrounded by other creatives to collaborate and

the lower financial burden, and most of all the peace of mind of having somewhere to go for work that doesn't also have your bed.

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO'S

transitioned this way and reaped the benefits. It's happening all over the country in every creative community. We are living through a special time of cultural and economic change. An increasing number of people are pursuing self-employment, while others are

crafts to those building the most advanced digital products and all the small business owners in between.

CO-WORKING SPACES serve as organic incubators for this new work movement. Being around like-minded creatives creates a

environment where one can easily pull in an unaffiliated office mate to gain a fresh perspective on a problem.

Being in a room filled with people working on the edge of tomorrow leads to a playfully competitive atmosphere that has entrepreneurs striving to be great, inspired by the accomplishments of those they are surrounded by. At the same time, as we observe this shift in work culture and spaces, our eyes are being opened to the unbridled creativity pouring out of a co-working spaces in variety of cities where we previously didn't expect them.

As I travel around the country, I find inspiring spaces and

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focused on freelance or remote work. These changes are taking place across the board. From those pursuing the oldest physical

synergy that's equal parts inspiring and stimulating. Large open spaces with small teams and individuals working on projects allow for an

individuals creating incredible products, companies and experiences everywhere. From freelancers, to small business owners, to craftspeople, to community builders. It's a privilege to share some of their stories with you.

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TO ILLUSTRATE HOW PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED across different demographics and creative fields I picked a young writer with kids (Brian), a season startup veteran enhancing his surrounding community (Chris), a fresh college graduate designer (Mallory), and a woodworker fully dedicated to making products that will outlast him and his customers (Michael).





Brian Bailey (Austin, TX)

▶ **BRIAN IS A PROJECT MANAGER AT TECH STARTUP PINGBOARD.**

In his free time, he runs Uncommon in Common, which is an online home for a community of kind and curious people. As such, it functions as a front porch for the Internet, where people share their favorite things

and add meaning as a community. Brian is an example of someone who has been able to utilize online tools to foster and empower a varied community of creatives, by emphasizing commonality. As the new work movement helps us spread out across the country, and

WHY CO-WORKING?

"I've spent the last three years co-working. At first, I saw it as a distracting mix of transient people. Now, I see co-working as a daily opportunity to meet creative people doing interesting things."

even the world, online tools will continue to help us find those that can make us feel like we belong and are being heard.

Chris Onan (Denver, CO)

▶ **CHRIS IS A CO-FOUNDER AT GALVANIZE**, a startup focused on building and coalescing communities of a different kind. They tackle the fact that entrepreneurship can be lonely, and create a home where tech startup entrepreneurs can learn from each other, grow and even get funded. The principle that the sum can be greater than its parts is an especially relevant one when creating a space where dozens of startups coexist in the same building. To be around Chris, is to feel his unbridled passion to help others grow. To be around his entrepreneurs, is to sense that it's working.



WHY CO-WORKING?

“Entrepreneurship can be lonely and hard. Our community members at Galvanize build their businesses in and amongst other technology entrepreneurs that face (and have faced) similar challenges and issues. As a result, the pace of learning and iterating can be accelerated.”

Mallory Box (Brooklyn, NY)



WHY CO-WORKING?

"I love co-working spaces because, honestly, I get bored easily. It's really motivating and inspiring to be around people doing their own thing. I can feed off their energy when I get into a creative rut, and maybe even start to look at my own work through the angle of someone else's process or craft. And it's always good to have a second (and third, and fourth) pair of eyes to review your work. Another huge plus is that because I end up meeting a lot of really cool people (and all their cool friends that stop by) that you might not be able to get to know otherwise."

▶ **MALLORY IS A TEXAS-BORN GRAPHIC DESIGNER** that loves people-centered design, playful aesthetics, and thoughtful solutions. Mallory is one of the new breed of designers that can also program. Matter of fact, as the only girl on her high school's computer science team she started by learning JavaScript, and finding her way to graphic design later. She landed a job with a prestigious boutique agency before even graduating, and recently left that job after a year of voracious learning, to see about a new challenge. She's not yet sure if she will stick to a freelance career, or if she will find her way to another small company, nor is she sure which coast she will end up at, but she's excited about the journey ahead and figuring it out on her own terms.

Michael Moran (Charleston, SC)

▶ **MICHAEL IS A WOODWORKER AND FURNITURE BUILDER** that was born in Kentucky and found his way to Charleston after stints in Tennessee and Wisconsin. Michael and his wife Celia have been running Moran Woodworked Furniture as an independent business since 2004, and are a prime example of the maker movement that has taken hold in the last ten years. Their core values include honoring the natural beauty of wood through traditional craftsmanship, the responsible selection of materials and a modern approach to design. They seek to balance form and function, but also the interaction of the natural and man-made worlds. The Morans mostly source their wood through



relationships in the surrounding community, formed over the past few years. And community is important in more than one way. As independent creative business owners they face very similar challenges to those of a freelance designer, coffee shop owner or food truck operator.

WHY CO-WORKING?

"Being part of a supportive community of like-minded creatives helps make it all a little more fun, and a little less stressful."

About the author

- ▶ Wesley Verhoeve is a tall, bearded, Brooklyn-based fellow, often found exploring creative communities across the United States, camera and laptop in tow.

He is a co-founder at GNTLMN, a handmade men's accessories and home goods company. He is fortunate to be involved in a few other exciting projects as well, as founder at music company Family Records, art curator for tech startup WeTransfer, and a volunteer at Creative Mornings.

In a nutshell, he creates beautiful things that move people, and seeks out other creatives that do the same so he can capture, enhance, and share their stories.

In his personal life, he is passionate about porches, dogs, magazines, LL Bean, and farm style tables surrounded by friends sharing food, wine, and stories.