

THE COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

PROVIDING A CREATIVE CO-WORKING SPACE REQUIRES MORE THAN JUST STRONG WIFI AND A COMFORTABLE PLACE TO SIT. YOU NEED TO AIM FOR YOUR HOTEL TO BECOME A HUB OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WITH AN EMPHASIS ON COLLABORATION, CONNECTIVITY AND INTERACTION. WE DISCUSS HOW IT CAN BE DONE.

The rise of the fluid Millennial has forced hoteliers to up their game.

They are fast-consuming, fast-reacting and fast-paced individuals always on the hunt for the 'next big thing'. This hugely impacts the way hotels operate and has driven hoteliers to invest in better technology, keep up to date with the latest trends and developments and create spaces that can be used however they wish.

And it's these forms of interaction that have dictated the emergence of the co-working space and seen hotels across the country invest in their public spaces to make them accessible to all. Whether freelancer, start-up, student or member of a business, peo-

ple are wanting to work differently, and in different ways, and hotels can plug this gap by providing them with a space to make their own. While also opening up a new revenue stream for savvy hoteliers to capitalise on.

Co-working however is not just about having free Wifi, a table, some chairs and coffee or tea on tap, they need to be cultivating a sense of community and provide a comfortable space where people can share ideas and establish a hub of creativity.

Without this, hotels are just building a work space that shares amenities.

"Extending a brand's values as a 'host' is critical to ensuring a shared purpose between space and co-worker, rather than merely providing an-

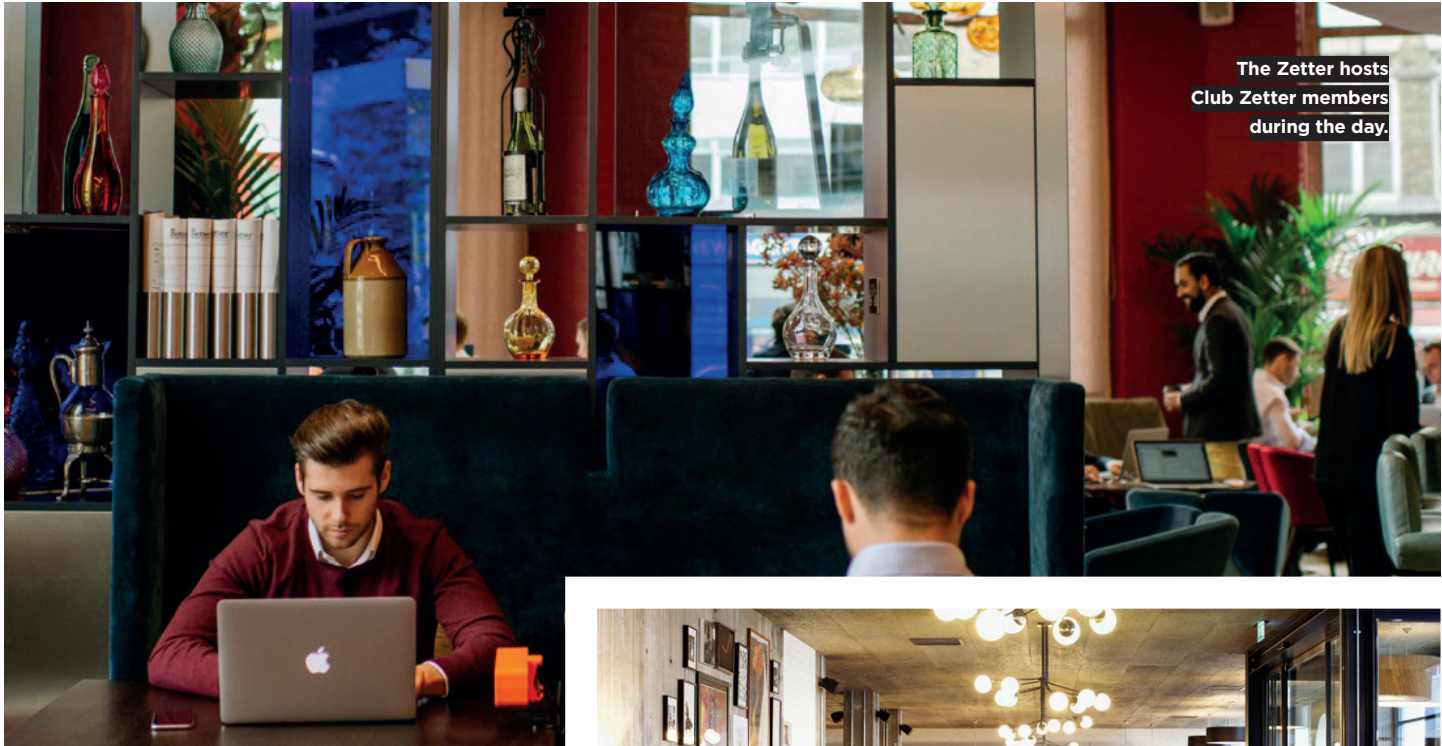
other desk or sofa space," says Michelle Du-Prat, strategy director and co-founder of Household.

"For example Google's Campus is a venue to teach, incubate and support people and their next big idea; We-Work is tapping into future talent by encouraging families and kids to use the space to develop their skills and have fun too," she adds.

With industry-leaders Ace Hotel and The Hoxton having lobbies of envy in the hotel sphere, creating thriving spaces that are 'cool' to be seen in, it's something that many hotels across the country are looking to adapt to.

Grant Powell is CEO of Central Working, an innovative and unique





shared co-working space with several hubs across London, Manchester and the South East. The company has recently started a partnership with The Zetter to create Club Zetter, a space for collaborative working at the hotel in Farringdon that makes use of the restaurant during the day.

“To me, the mark of a successful coworking space has always been whether the space has a sense of community, whether the different businesses located there end up collaborating,” Powell explains. “However, it’s an aspect that many spaces don’t take into consideration with their design. We focus the design of each of our spaces around engineering these connections. Our clubs are primarily private offices but designed with collaboration in mind, featuring plenty of ‘break out’ spaces and open



kitchen areas that encourage our members to mix with one another as much as possible. Some of these features sound obvious, but they play a major role in helping us engineer meetings between our members that almost feel serendipitous.”

A modified lobby or old business centre shoehorned into the textbook definition of a co-working space is often the half-hearted attempt from some hotels who have misunderstood the concept. The key is to try to build a community of people who consistently work, interact and collaborate within a space, not just use the terminology as a marketing ploy.

Understanding what your guests need will be your first port of call and then you can design according-

ly. Power points in the right place, break-out areas, hidden-away display screens can be accommodated for in clever ways. The difficulty comes when designing a space for different kinds of workers who will have very different requirements.

“A business development contractor might spend their whole day on the phone or in meetings, chasing up leads or securing contracts. By comparison, a coder or a writer will want a more quiet or focussed environment in which to work. A designer will want high quality, large screens. Some might be happy with great coffee, whereas others may benefit from on-site catering to fuel their day,” explains Du-Prat.

Technology will be key for every

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sector and getting this right will be crucial. Secure, reliable and strong Wifi is the priority; a poor connection and people won't hesitate to go elsewhere.

"Technology is king and needs to be supported," says Patricia Bessey, managing director, Engine Room. "Acoustically soundproofed phone and meeting pods are great for those moments when you need some privacy – but they don't have to take up a lot of room. Access to refreshments and good coffee and a quick way to order it and an app that they can use for payment and/or keep a running tab."

One of the trickiest parts of designing a co-working space will be the need to create somewhere that encourages people 'off the street' to stay, work and relax – contributing to your profit during the day – but in turn not alienating residential guests

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CLUB ZETTER

Club Zetter is a partnership with Central Working that started in February 2016. The new venture was created in partnership with entrepreneur James Layfield, chief executive of the workplace provider and together with The Zetter's owners, they launched the new members club for collaborative working over two years ago.

Club Zetter is home to office and lounge space, where companies can work how they wish by day and then by night, Club Zetter is a wine room and bar, serving a selection of wines, beers and the famous Zetter cocktails.

Various menus are available throughout the day, serving a variety of dishes from the hotel's kitchen.

when they then want to use the space how they please.

Bessey comments: "The priority needs to be for guests; a guest should never feel they can't use the facilities they've already paid for as part of their stay. Offering passes is a good way to manage available space. If you know you have x amount of people staying and they've indicated they will need access to the space, you then know how many others you can reasonably accommodate. Share this information on social, offer a booking system and offer incentives to use the space to encourage regulars."

Accessibility to the space comes down to its design. It will need to be an organic, evolving space that can be transformed to suit all types of guests from day to night, playing on the fluidity of work and social play.

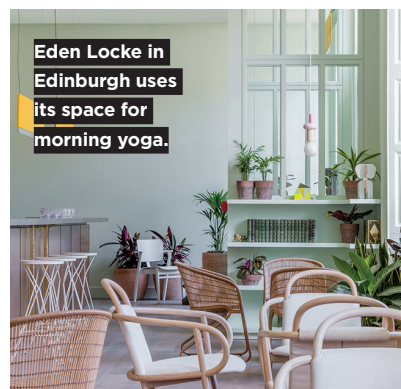
"Work and play may be intertwined more closely than ever before," says Bessey, "which makes it all the more important for thoughtful management of a space to help guide us through our working day and then to subtly help us switch off when the time is right."

"Could a co-working space become a social venue as the evening draws in? If the music became a little louder, the

The space is also used to host certain events each month, from talks to wine tastings.

Layfield, who was made a tech ambassador for Boris Johnson in 2015, said at the time that the area is "one of London's fastest growing entrepreneurial hotspots".

Speaking to the Evening Standard, Michael Benyan, partner at the Zetter Group said: "We know how to create memorable, luxurious spaces, how to look after our guests and to provide them with the best possible fuel for their day so we are looking forward to extending the Zetter approach to hospitality to our club members and the Central Working network."



lights a little dimmer, the space could help workers transition from work mode into relaxation and leisure time."

Powell says: "Delivering a mixed-use space is the key to success. We've already seen big name restaurants partnering with hotels to create new destinations, and hotels are now looking towards the workspace market. The same lessons apply here – hoteliers must partner with a known brand and think outside the box to offer something new, not just a room with desks and an internet connection."

Creating a co-working space will bring you a new stream of revenue if you can make it appeal to the Millennials, your in-house residents and those looking for a trendy place to set up their work desk for the day. You'll find that you can drive profit independent of the seasons and nightly rates and become a hub of productivity within your local vicinity.

Du-Prat adds: "Forming a space around a community need should maintain an open and inclusive environment, which is attractive to hotel guests just as much as workers. Flexibility with the way a space is used throughout the day, perhaps by offering different services through the morning, evening and night time. Again, close links between the hotel's brand attributes and the design of the space itself will make sure this happens."

"Setting the tone and purpose of the coworking space from the start will provide the parameters for quality, flexible experiences to add value for guests and workers, year round."