
The Risk of Taking None

The other night my wife jokingly (kind of) referred to me as the super risk averse Ben Stiller character in the movie, Along Came

Polly from the early 2000's. And she was right. We were considering some relatively benign vacation activities and I was coming up with every possible Armageddon scenario possible to scare myself out of it without appreciating the almost inevitable outsized benefits. In life, the risk of taking none usually has to do with not living the life designed for us to its fullest possible extent. However, based on some recent conversations with people from all aspects of the office industry, the risk of taking none here becomes something far more financially punitive in this moment. Once again, I'm seeing a couple of themes play out that I will admit are entirely frustrating for a GSD (get-stuff-done) type-A wanting to see us all get better.

Thinking Busy is Productive: We all have those friends and family in our life who seem to think they are in the "who's busiest" contest and trying to out-busy the rest of us. The last I checked everyone around me is living their own version of very busy in today's hamster wheel universe. However, the people I most admire are the ones who I know are busiest but make it look so dang easy. Usually what I discover is that those people are actually super intentional, prioritize well, and are gifted at the art of saying "no". What I hear right now from many in the office space is the idea of being sooo busy. It is almost as if we reward hours worked and to-do list length instead of results. Don't get me wrong, there is significant work in front of the industry to refocus it around the way people will work going forward. But that's all the more reason to avoid doing anything not going in that direction.





Majoring in the Minors: I was in a meeting the other day and was asked if I was interested in possibly helping with the implementation of an initiative being deployed. However, it seemed clear that if I had played that painful youthful game of “but why” a couple of levels deep with this person, the answers were going to quickly reveal a real lack of basic justification. I am not even sure that a “successful” deployment was not going to help advance their portfolio beyond its current state and would have been at a considerable cost. It is not easy when you are swallowed up in that busy death spiral, but I always want to quickly drill down to the most basic level and build from there. This asset exists for this specific reason at this location and currently is not operating at the level required to attract and retain the customers we have and/or want to have in the future... we need to take these 3 big steps forward which require these 8 supporting tasks and this team... everything else, within reason, will need to wait until we knock those out and then we move to the next phase in route to this agreed to plan with built in learning along the way. Without this level of discipline, plan on owners and proptech to go round and round wondering why success for either side is so elusive, and where the loser is ultimately the customer left scratching their head at the disjointed experience.



Don't Be Kodak: By now we are all pretty familiar with the story of the demise of Kodak Film. They were the dominant player and actually had the upper hand early on and the digital technology necessary to evolve, survive and thrive. But they could not envision that post-film world and as a result the post-film world eventually could not see a reason to need Kodak. They took on far more risk by avoiding the perception of it, counting eroding revenues and profits. So while it is fine to evaluate what worked and did not with coworking and flex operators of the past 10 years, owners make a very big mistake to miss the real rallying cry of customers who want to see flexibility, relevant and well executed tech, and let-me-answer-your-question-before-you-ask hospitality oriented teams all synched up in unison, under the direction of a hyper-focused new world operator like Workng.



The daily risks associated with inviting thousands of various companies' employees in an out of office towers will always be significant. We can and should do everything possible to mitigate those through responsible management practices. However, to transform these boxes back into dynamic ecosystems where new ideas spawn and grow, then owners and operators must endeavor to reach out past arbitrary busy work, and use that finite resource of time to its fullest and do those things right now that help get us to that level of dynamism... even if it feels "risky".



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