

---

## Office, Please

# Try Not to Get Fired

**I read a great post from Josh Fraun, who recently “fired” Home Depot in favor of Ace Hardware. He describes an experience**

where he went into Home Depot, already intimidated by the prospect of shopping for a drill as an unhandy homeowner, only to be further intimidated by the numerous offerings and lack of anyone interested in helping him. He sheepishly walked out and went to Ace Hardware, where it was more intimate and, more importantly, the team there attentive and interested in getting him comfortable with their store and his needs. He walked out and declared that he had hired Ace going forward while firing Home Depot. As someone who oversaw countless big box office projects, it pains me to read this, but it doesn't surprise me. My quest has always been to try to make big feel small and intimate because even way back in that amazing pre-Covid world I knew it would be easy to get fired. Now it would appear the entire office sector is on the verge of getting fired and I continue to observe too much of what amounts to moving deck chairs on the Titanic.

**Stick to the Basics:** My wife and I recently went to a friend's themed birthday party. It was hosted in coworking space of a tired three-story building in a so-so location. My initial snobbish reactions (to myself) as we walked in was to start imagining the multitude of potential improvements needed for the property. But thankfully, we rode the elevator with the young guy who owned both the building and coworking space. He was bright and engaging, and also serving there as helper for the evening.





I found him a little later to just learn more. He was dialed in to his target customer so well and he was keenly aware of the competition out there. It was refreshingly uncomplicated and I can almost guarantee you that he enjoys some of the strongest retention and occupancy numbers of anyone in a town struggling for both. He was thinking growth and recognized the need for increased sophistication, but his willingness to stick close to his customer makes him a tough guy for me to bet against.



**Commander's Intent:** In one of my favorite recent reads, Chip and Dan Heath's *Made to Stick*, they provide some great background on the history of the military's creation of Commander's Intent. It was birthed out of the real problem the military was having with very exacting, step-by-step plans falling apart as soon as bullets started flying and chaos ensued. By creating the overarching intent and desired outcome for a given mission, it gave leaders and teams the freedom, if not the responsibility to adapt and overcome, even if it meant deviating from the exact original plan. What I hear and observe more than I would expect right now is "frozen". The bullets are flying and office as a whole is missing the commander's intent. Sitting still in this moment almost ensures getting fired by occupiers is in your future. But inferred in this quest are two immediate needs: leaders setting commander's intent and feeling confident and comfortable in the team to achieve that even though it will require that team to call a couple of audibles en route to success.



**Everyone seems Ready to Fire their Employers:** In this space at the birthday party, I saw the name of a huge company on the glass of one of the single offices. This was unexpected, but I learned this employee had opted in this moment to pay for this space that was close to home out of pocket. Even as this company very clumsily starts their reentry program, he has opted to keep this for all days he is not now required to go to the office.



---

In this bizarre, hopefully once in a blue moon window of time, companies have struggled mightily in the no-win quest to be all things to all people. Big office owners and operators need to be an advocate for employers and employees alike in their efforts to grasp what's next. Because, we are likely on the verge of seeing one of the biggest startup surges in history.

There was a hyper efficient version of myself just 5-10 years ago who was fine with the big and unintimate experiences. I was busy and sacrificed quality interactions for speed too often. However, I think we have all swung 180 in this moment and recognize that life absent quality interactions isn't much of a life. Not to worry Home Depot, I'll be back at my usual time in a couple of months for the Christmas lights. As for office, we should be worried. Unlike Home Depot, online shopping isn't an option for this CRE sector – that's called WFH and you don't get paid for that.



Mike Fransen  
Founder / CEO, Workng

