
What is it like to be across from you?

That was the question posed in a book I read recently. In truthfully answering that personal and introspective probe, there is not a lot of wiggle room. Oh crud, maybe I am not as patient as I think I am or maybe I don't look people in the eye when we're talking. Or, maybe there is some other vibe that I give off that if I really saw it the way others do would make changing it a priority for me. But I sense that is the question staring at office owners and operators at this continued fork in the road for the sector. Here are three thoughts in and around the question and answer.

Pull don't push: I'm not sure the tension around us today could be much higher. We are feeling pushed on several fronts, and no one likes that feeling. Feeling pushed to do something makes us edgy, bristles our sense of independence, and induces tension. However, when we are pulled into an idea or project, we feel included in something worthwhile, like an unmet need has been satisfied, and generally feel cohesion with those around us who've shared in the same experience. Companies are trying to push employees back into the office and exit numbers are showing its effect. Office owners take an unnecessary risk by trying to get caught up in that quicksand and satisfy all the screaming voices they think they hear. The answer: keep it simple and remind people through technology, clearly communicated messaging and products, and frictionless transactions and environments, that the best solution is your office ecosystem... the one that facilitates and extracts the very best human interactions and qualities as no other environment can offer.





Don't forget to "make it": Twenty years ago when I first got to Kosovo on a deployment in the Army, Steve, who I replaced, simply said, "Fake it 'til you make it baby!" as he ran out the door. While I gifted my successor almost 7 months later with a different approach, Steve's was not altogether terrible. My experience is that "fake it" eliminates all the excuses early on not to move forward, but it also should create a sense of urgency to get to "make it" as quickly as possible. Especially as it comes to next generation workplace solutions, we have gotten stuck in the "fake it" position too long. It's time to take operations and hospitality to the next level and do the tough teamwork required, time to not just casually test drive PropTech without a road map and plan, and time to not just leave the deep thinking about flexible offerings to WeWork and Industrious Office. Give your customers a complete offering that demonstrates real interest in their success and not just your exit cap and/or fees.



Become Essential: It seems like a long time ago, but especially for small businesses, being categorized as an "essential business" was the difference between business life or death early on in this Covid experience. The beauty of the world in front of us on the work front is that we are entering a more multi-dimensional existence that shouldn't and won't be just one solution. WFH, when done right, buys us back valuable time with family and restores balance. However, it lacks community and limits idea generation and ultimately is showing alarming mental health implications. Wake up office owners and operators. You really are sitting on a huge opportunity to become that "essential" community center where people thrive, grow, and learn like they can't and don't anywhere else.



Our teenage daughters probably tire of me saying it, but I tell them (and myself) with some frequency to make sure that coming out of every conversation, whoever they have interacted with is able to say, “I’m better for having had that conversation.” That’s what I strive for it to be like, to be across from me. And while that is unfortunately not always the outcome, it definitely helps keep me focused on what matters to me. One of the main reasons I’m a total sucker for the office sector is the immediately actionable steps available to help curate, create and place-make human-centric ecosystems where people and companies leave, better for having been there.



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