
The New Office will be for Quitters

It seems somehow surprising that I would use the “q” word at the first of a new year. But hear me out on this one.

There are moments when stopping ahead of schedule will let people down and reveal some character flaws. However, there are things in life we have all done that we needed to quit doing because they were unproductive or worse, destructive. With Covid, the world experienced an unprecedented, almost 100% participation rate, and thus there is not a single worker, executive or janitor, who has not done serious self-evaluation to determine how best to move forward. We are now seeing many Americans “quit” their current job/career to chart out a path that was probably inconceivable pre-pandemic. The pandemic has been a period of loss which has reminded a busy world that time is a precious and uncertain resource. We’re suddenly more intentional about how we spend it. The fact that people have left and are leaving companies at all levels with little or no desire to simply transfer, tells me there is a formidable new wave of companies about to form. They will think different, work different, and ultimately want different things from their work environment. Traditional enterprise users will soon have no choice to take notice to not lose the talent war. Here are my takeaways for office owners.





Takers and Makers: Elon Musk, in his classically blunt style, has broken us all into two main categories: takers and makers. The corporate environment has been a taker world. Owners build a basic work box and take rent checks, corporations take as much sweat equity and work out of employees as they will give up, and workers take as many benefits as the market conditions will bear. However, no one is winning that game at this point. From these rogue quitters, I believe, will be birthed a new generation of makers. When the company and employee get back into harmony around “making”, the work solutions will need to be ready to appropriately engage and support these reimagined companies. As an owner and operator, skate to where the puck is headed now before it is too late.



Lessons from Lifetime: There was a window of time when I was running portfolios where we were building several fitness offerings simultaneously and learning a ton. The most challenging, rewarding and extensive was a Lifetime facility we deployed in place of a legacy, traditional health club. I became a huge fan of their culture and approach and found them to have one of those brand names that really says it all. They leverage a hyper-attentive staff to build a strong community anchored around healthier living. There are no throw aways in the gym – everything worth doing is worth doing well. They even build spaces that allowed for changing fitness preferences and adapt quickly. A member pays a basic membership and from there can customize to their hearts content (paying for it of course). Office owners and operators can get a sneak preview of their new world through this dynamic. It’s not surprising that Lifetime has even dabbled in creating workspaces for its members and beyond.



People and stories: I beat on this drum a lot because that’s how important both are to the future of reimagined work ecosystems. Without the right team to embrace and authentically deploy office’s version of Disney’s Happiest Place on Earth, newly built spaces will have a shelf life of about three months. Once that team and plan is in place, communication of this world is key. We need to



figuratively and effectively scream, “hey, we get IT and we get YOU... we’re all different now and need and want different things. We have started that journey over here in creating spaces and places that better align with your reimagined vision for YOUR work. Let’s travel this journey together this time. We’ll learn together.” Sound cheesy? It sounds honest, and I don’t know about you but at this point, I only have time for honest and trust-filled relationships.

Quitting isn’t always good, but sometimes it is lifegiving. There will be many, myself included, who will say, I’m better for the person I became coming out of that strange window of time. I could have gotten bitter, but I chose to get better. I could have kept being a taker, but it was time to take on some risk and become a maker. It should induce a similar attitude across the corporate sector over the next decade. And it sure sounds like a maker’s dream, where the assets making the most money are filled with the companies saving the most money because both sides are willing to deliver and consume work space differently than we do today.



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