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# Top Gun, Advocacy, and Office

## The collision of our youngest daughter's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, Memorial Day, and a small Colorado mountain town theater

offered us the absolute perfect conditions to view the latest Top Gun. It almost felt like I was part of one of those Geico parent commercials at the end where the packed theater applauded – somehow it seemed warranted for such an epic sequel (I want the Tom Cruise anti-aging genes). But this movie also highlights another Office theme that has been percolating in my head for a couple of weeks: the critical role of advocacy in the midst of intense industry headwinds. Just like in Top Gun, where, predictably, there was an impossible task and an assortment of characters who had to rally together to achieve success, I find a similar set of mountains in front of Office that necessitates a similar level of historic (and first-of-its-kind) cohesion.

**The Necessary Ingredients:** Every big challenge or problem and its ultimate success seem to have a few consistent and necessary ingredients all anchored in advocacy. In Top Gun, Maverick possessed a set of unmatched skills and experiences. However, he needed the mission, equipment and ultimately belief from others to best put that expertise to use. The world had a unique challenge that only a handful of people in the world had a chance to find a “win” in. Even with the match finally made, challenges and risks remained extremely high. What held this intense relationship together at the end? Advocacy. Both sides had to rely on advocacy to have any chance of success.





**Required of Advocacy Receiver:** Maverick's success ultimately meant that the Navy had succeeded. While his rebellious streak made for fantastic movie watching, it was still the case that even he, in that moment, had to harness all of those experiences and skills and focus them around the needs of the mission. There is a small group of operators in the office world that possess a set of experiences and skills needed to corral asset management, proptech, flexible offerings, and service delivery under one roof that simultaneously delight occupiers and create value for owners. Some of the quick characteristics of this advocacy receiver that stand out as critical are: servant leadership, accountable, huge appetite to learn, great communication, transparency, ability to adapt quickly, and the skillfulness to move very quickly and efficiently.



**Calling All Advocacy Givers:** There is a classic part of the movie where the admiral, finally free to rid himself of the headache that is Maverick, realizes his best chance for success lies in the hands of this one-of-a-kind pilot. He knew that there was no longer any other response but all in – 100% of his support and resources were behind not only the mission but those leading the mission. I will never forget the meeting when Jayson Lipsey, now CEO of Parkway, sat in a meeting in Austin in 2015 as COO and had to decide whether to move forward with Fareground, an ambitious Food Hall we were considering introducing at the base of our downtown office building. I had poured months of energy and time preparing for this moment, but I needed his advocacy. At the end, he quietly turned to all of us in the room, smiled and said, “Burn the ships! Let's go!” With that vote of confidence, we proceeded. We encountered many tough obstacles during that project, but with the weight of Jayson's support, it offered us the confidence from which to not only create value for the asset but for downtown Austin. Some of the quick characteristics of this advocacy giver that stand out as critical are: decisive, consistent, supportive, and available without being intrusive.



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A few weeks ago, I attended the memorial service for an absolutely amazing mother of four who lost a seven-year battle to cancer. Her joy, spirit, and grit during all those tough years was nothing short of amazing and inspiring. When it came to courage and bravery, which I think we all just assumed came natural for her, her advice to others was to “choose” to have both. Office, we can’t control what has happened in the world to get us here, but it’s time to choose courage and bravery, focus on the mission, and work together to create communities worth coming into throughout the week.



Sincerely,  
Mike Fransen  
Founder / CEO, Workng

