
Affliction

Entrepreneurial, Washington D.C. based pastor and bestselling author Mark Batterson once wrote that his role

was two-fold: 1) To comfort the afflicted and 2) To afflict the comfortable. The first one feels about like we would expect and frankly what we all hopefully aspire to do. The second of these two takes a minute to digest and process. What I learned from Mark is that this very delicate task involves helping people move from the inactive place of complacency, that place that renders people unprepared to handle the inevitable next crisis and/or unable to look beyond themselves, to grow and maximize impact on those around them. I've realized that those are the two basic things I find myself doing these days with Workng.

Comforting the Afflicted: The afflicted I attempt to learn from and encourage include a few different groups: PropTech, coworking operators, occupiers (especially smaller ones), and individuals working somewhere inside of property management. So, what do I hear from the afflicted? From PropTech: "How do I get and keep the attention of owners and operators long enough for them to commit more than just the initial fee and recognize the bigger picture, value creation opportunity? Hey, and should we have someone on our team with more operational experience?" From coworking operators: "I think they need me and then they don't... I think I have a future continuing to do this but I'm not sure. No, we're not WeWork and don't have parties like that." From occupiers: "Are you kidding me? It's really still this hard to get the exact space I need to support my business? When will office environments really start lining up with my pain points? Also, I'm confused too and struggling to make sense of how to operate in a post-Covid world."



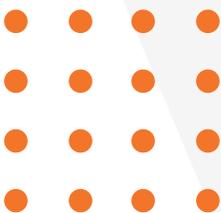
And from employees sitting inside property management shops: “Wouldn’t it be amazing one day to be well-led and part of this new hospitality world I hear so much about but never see...and not be the fall guy every time an asset underperforms?”



Afflicting the Comfortable: This remains the trickiest of tasks – walking on eggshells around the very ownership groups I’m in pursuit of, to help, and trying like crazy to not be that amateur salesman that leads with, “you really stink but if you pay me, I can help you stink less.” So in Office terms, comfortable could also be called “those in denial”. To be fair, no one in any of these ownership decision seats ever thought they would be here on the cusp of one of the most pivotal and disruptive moments in any industry. But they are and staying comfortable and in denial will prove devastating (just ask those groups sitting on historically, full buildings that are suddenly half empty – with no plan – heard about one today in a major city – this is for real). As I wrote in the last article on *Summitting Everest*, the most prudent time to get through a crisis is to prepare for it well ahead of getting there. It’s great to get a couple of percentage point bumps on occupancy today – use the coverage of that extra NOI boost to scramble and get your assets and teams ready now for the occupancy drops that are coming in the next 3-5 years as leases roll and occupiers get their first post-Covid opportunity to resize and reorganize.



Viewing Afflicted and Comfortable at 30,000 Feet: I can’t imagine Office getting to a better and more stable long-term position without there first being alignment of all the groups and/or functions that comprise the afflicted and comfortable above (plus a couple of other comfortable groups like traditional leasing, lending, and even industry trade associations being disrupted). If I was asked to paint a picture of what that looks like under the Workng thought process, the elevator pitch is something like:



Workng, tasked with both driving the strategy and execution of key assets of well capitalized and focused owners, leverage human capital, solution-oriented technology, and a variety of occupier-centric office solutions to create real value for all described stakeholders.

One of my personal goals over the last few years has been to work towards operating in the tension and balance of love and truth in my relationships. Love not anchored in a set of absolutes isn't really love at all while truth absent love becomes harsh and alienating. When I do this well, I unearth that sometimes evasive "trust" factor and real growth starts to happen. Figure out how to unlock the Office version of this and we'll suddenly see these dynamic work ecosystems experience an almost immediate and explosive resurgence.



Sincerely,
Mike Fransen
Founder / CEO, Workng

