

In the right environment, everyone is creative

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Scroll back if you can, to the office of the 1970s - 'working 9 to 5' was the norm and employee happiness had little or no bearing in a largely autonomous corporate environment. Today we know that the employee experience businesses create, could decide whether they keep or lose talent and profits.



The '9 to 5' or eight-hour principle, though a sentence for many, was only introduced in the 1800s after massive protest against the 10-hour system carried over from the Industrial Revolution. Workers banded together to complain about desperate work conditions, poor ventilation, low wages and long hours. The campaign slogan - "8 hours work. 8 hours recreation. 8 hours rest."

And it seems some of these factors have never been eradicated, with many office workers who admit to working 16- to 17-hour days. Couple that with overcrowding in cities, traffic, lack of natural light in high-rises and it could make for an endemically unhappy workforce.

So, what can you as a leader do to create a work environment that will get the best results from employees and increase their bottom line? Studies have shown that the increase of productivity in a business is directly related to a variety of factors including aesthetics, creativity, training opportunities and flexibility.

Aesthetics

Decor, lighting, office furniture and temperature - all have a positive effect when it comes to creating a space where work is no longer just work, but a place of fulfilment. A mixture of natural and unnatural lighting (warm and cold) is needed depending on the purpose of each space.

Soft, warm light works best in relaxation areas, where bright or cold light stimulates the brain and increases productivity in general working areas. The same goes for temperature.

Interestingly, comfortable office furniture sways men, in particular. Although it is obvious that spending most of your day in an uncomfortable chair, will launch you back into the job market faster than you can say 'LinkedIn'.

Either way, it must be a space where you are proud to host potential or existing clients. Who knows how many business deals have been lost due to empty pizza boxes left on the boardroom table on Friday, only to surprise you as you walk in with your client on Monday.



Creativity

Serious play is not an oxymoron; it is the essence of innovation.

— Michael Schrage

Fostering an environment which stirs passion and innovation is important, especially in a creative industry. Being around like-minded individuals, access to creative tools and tech and (again) aesthetics, are all ways to get the creative juices flowing. You don't have to build a bowling alley, but taking a leaf from Google's book and adding a "bring your dog to work day" or free music lessons could be just what your employees need to come up with the "next big thing".

Training opportunities

All staff, but millennials particularly want to know 1... that they make a difference and 2... that they are growing. Creating opportunities for growth through training propels employees on their career path and can (and should) lead to promotion. Talented people are no longer willing to stay where they stagnate. Quality networking opportunities almost provide a platform for 'training by immersion'.

Flexibility

In a study done by the International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR), employees were happier and more productive when they felt supported and didn't feel separated from their home environment. When companies are flexible about where employees work and when, employees will may actually be willing to take a reduced salary to gain better work-life balance.

Studies also showed that mothers who were able to work from home or had flexible working hours are less likely to job hop, saving companies the high cost of training new staff.

Investing in digitisation and mobile technologies that enable colleagues to collaborate more easily in their own time is the ideal scenario.

Reliable equipment

Small things like slow computers, unreliable internet connections and bad phone lines all have a bearing on job satisfaction. If employees don't have the tools they need readily available to enable them to do their job readily, they will get demotivated and negative and start looking elsewhere.

Whether you are a business owner needing to inspire and ignite creativity and keep your employees, or a freelancer battling out your work life in coffee shops or at home between Barbie and this morning's cereal bowl, the environment you work in has more effect on your productivity than you think. This new trend of work is fast becoming the dominant trend for entrepreneurs, freelancers and new businesses who want to be taken seriously.

Spaces, the Amsterdam-born, flexible workspace solutions, arrived in South Africa in September 2017, with close to 15 centres already in prime locations, and is setting a trend, offering a different kind of creative work environment with a unique entrepreneurial spirit. The dynamic workspaces help you think, create and collaborate – while the team makes sure you feel welcome, based on the idea that work is about people and ideas.

The centres, designed with an acute appreciation for aesthetics and beauty, are more than just a place to plug in your laptop. The high-quality furnishings, inspiration, business networking events, training opportunities and state of the art technology, is fast becoming the new way to create an environment that sees employees becoming more productive than ever.

About Spaces

Spaces offer an inspiring work environment for professionals and growing businesses. Next to office space, there are memberships and meeting rooms to help you think, create and interact with like-minded people. Spaces' goal is to offer inspirational surroundings with an entrepreneurial spirit where ideas are born, a company evolves and valuable relationships are built.

For more information or to contact a specific centre visit: www.spacesworks.com.

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