The Complete Guide to Growing Your Flexible Workspace Business

9 PILLARS TO ACCELERATED GROWTH



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Executive Summary



Space providers are facing growing demand for flexibility in the office sector. Long-term traditional leases are being phased out for shorter term, service-driven real estate solutions. With an increasingly competitive landscape and inherently complex business models, the pressure is on to deliver effective space-as-a-service solutions.

The spectrum of occupier requirements for flexible real estate products ranges from coworking and private offices to spec suites and short-term leases. It's more critical than ever to remove complicated business processes and identify value drivers that meet the changing needs of a growing addressable market.

Staying ahead of the curve and defining the right operating models that deliver on agility and flexibility can accelerate growth and offer a better member experience. We've gathered our 16 years of first-hand industry experience into this guide, designed to help you run and grow your flexible real estate operation. We'll walk you through the nine flex-space pillars that touch on the entire customer lifecycle.

With the help of seasoned industry thought leaders:

Jamie Russo, Executive Director, Global Workspace Association

David Kinnaird, Chief Operating Officer, essensys

Ashley Buckner, Senior VP of Sales & Operations, Carr Workplaces

Jean-Yves Huwart, Founder, Coworking Europe

Claire Luik, VP of Customer Success, essensys

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Industry Thought-Leaders & Contributors



JAMIE RUSSO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GWA

Jamie is Executive Director of the Global Workspace Association, President of Everything Coworking and leads a Community Manager flight school. Jamie ran Enerspace Coworking in Chicago and Palo Alto for over 8 years.



JEAN-YVES HUWART FOUNDER, COWORKING EUROPE

Jean-Yves is the founder of the Social Workplaces and runs the Coworking Europe Conference, the largest of its kind in Europe. He also operates two coworking spaces in Belgium.



ASHLEY BUCKNER VP OF SALES & OPERATIONS, CARR WORKPLACES

As a long-term Carr Workplaces employee, Ashley believes the key to a successful operation is the team members. As long as you're engaged, happy and constantly learning everything flourishes.



DAVID KINNAIRD CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, ESSENSYS

David distinguished himself across the flexible workspace industry through a decade long residency as Operations Director at Avanta Serviced Office and led the US expansion of essensys in 2015.



ALAN PEPPER CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, ESSENSYS

Alan is a seasoned flexible workspace financial expert. He was the CFO of Avanta Serviced Office for over a decade and has most recently led essensys through an IPO on the London Stock Exchange.



CLAIRE LUIK VP OF CUSTOMER SUCCESS, ESSENSYS

Claire has over 15 years of experience in the flexible workspace industry. She oversees the Customer Success team and helps operators to leverage technology, operate more efficiently and improve the member experience.

The 9 Pillars to Accelerated Growth

1 ACCELERATE DEMAND

2 OPTIMIZE THE TOUR EXPERIENCE

3 EFFECTIVELY MANAGE YOUR SALES PIPELINE

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Accelerate Demand



Jamie Russo
Executive Director
GWA

The workspace-as-a-service market has developed a wide range of offerings tailored to the demands of the modern-day worker – from entrepreneurs and start-ups to corporates and enterprise occupiers. With both supply and demand side drivers, **it' is essential to have effective systems in place** to capture and manage leads.

Supply is pacing with demand

At a high level, generating demand for services in the flexible workspace industry doesn't seem challenging given the year over year growth rates across the globe. In my five years of experience operating a flexible workspace, I've learned that the key success drivers to running a profitable space are:

1) signing a good lease
2) maintaining high occupancy rates by driving both demand and member retention



Accelerate Demand

To create a sustainable business, it's imperative to focus on the sales funnel – from getting a prospect through the door and nurturing the relationship to converting leads to long-term customers by providing an outstanding membership experience. Here's my tried & trusted tips to demand generation & lead management.



Sourcing your leads

Develop, document, & systematize an approach to lead generation that reflects your market and your positioning in the market.

The first step is to analyze your data to determine where to focus your marketing efforts (and dollars!).

Where do your leads come from?

- SEO?
- Google AdWords?
- Social Media?
- Web brokers (Instant Offices, SOS)?
- Value Added Resellers (Davinci, Liquidspace)?
- Referrals?
- Walk-ins?



If you haven't tested one or more of these channels, start doing so. Having the right CRM system and software in place to manage and track these channels will help you understand lead flow over time so you can analyze performance and make resource allocation decisions more easily. Allow plenty of time for testing – at least six months. It can take time to build relationships and see leads start coming in. Don't discount any potential source until you've tested it for a reasonable duration. It's all too easy to deem an approach unsuccessful before you've given it sufficient time to perform.

Accelerate Demand

It's important to note that your lead generation mix may look different from other operators. There's no one-size-fits all approach. It depends on the size of your space, the mix of product offering, market forces, what competitors are doing in the market, how your SEO performs, and many other factors. And your mix may change over time.

Your website

Your website should be a primary focus of your lead generation resources. If you follow a well-advised SEO strategy, consistently over time, you can rank high enough in organic search results to make your website your primary traffic source. This is not easy.

The only way to win here is to have the right plan in place and to do the work very consistently over time. This involves creating content that targets industry keywords, using social media to promote the content, & optimizing your website to rank for keywords.

You may want to budget for Google AdWords to augment your website traffic until your SEO starts to kick in. Again, this can take time. In my opinion, it is well worth the money to hire a professional to set it up, advise you on budget and keywords, and to help you review and interpret results. If you attempt this on your own, a lack of confidence, experience, and ability to track results correctly may cause you to abandon your efforts too early.



Accelerate Demand



Your Website: Highly Visible and Accessible as Possible

- A live webchat option that captures name and email address and allows you to interact with the prospect in real time.

- A prominent phone number to reach your business. People still use the phone. Make sure you have someone to answer it. Data from a major metro in the US shows that 38% of calls to shared workspaces self-identified as “coworking,” went to voicemail rather than to a live human.* Forty percent of callers hang up after 60 seconds, and 34% never call back again** Don’t lose that lead. If you can’t man your phone at all times during business hours, consider using a live answering service that will answer your phone and capture leads for you while you are away from your desk.

- A lead capture form (contact us) that allows users to ask questions or schedule a tour if they reach you off-hours or aren’t ready to talk to a live person.

- A newsletter capture form for the casual browser not ready to commit to a tour but wants to get to know you. Don’t discount these folks. They may sit higher up in the sales funnel for some months, but the goal is to continually fill the top of that funnel!

**Kate Leggett, “Trends 2016: The Future of Customer Service,” Forrester Blog, January 5, 2016.*
***Jamie Russo, “Are you Answering your Phone? 1/3 of your Competitors are not!,” GWA Blog, November 2016*

Accelerate Demand



Walk-ins and referrals

Despite our heavy focus on digital tools to bring in leads, about 10% of your leads will come from walk-ins and referrals. These leads will increase if you can place signage in the lobby of the building, in front of the building or even on the side of it.

While a small percentage of your leads, referrals can be high converters. Don’t assume that your members will think to refer you. They may need a nudge, so motivate them with cold hard cash.

Determine the cost of acquisition for a new member through Google Adwords or a broker fee and use that amount to price your incentive accordingly. Take it a step further and incentivize your center staff to get customers to be referrers. A word of advice: the best time to ask for a referral is when a customer moves in and is proud to show off their shiny new office.

Brokers

Plugging into lead brokering hubs boosts demand for your workspace across various customer segments. Your acquisition cost for using a broker will generally be a 10% commission of the annual license fee. Note that when you accept a lead through a broker, you are by default accepting the commission. When you reject a lead, and that lead becomes a customer, you must also be prepared to show that the lead came from another source. Working with several different brokers can drive lead volume but will also be time-consuming. Evaluate the quality of the relationship by tracking lead conversions & time spent managing the relationship. You can reduce the amount of staff time this takes with smart workspace management and CRM software that integrates dynamically with broker platforms. This way you can route leads into your system with auto-assignment rules, capturing full lead and broker information, while also removing duplicates.

Growing Demand for Your Workspace



Scrub your existing database

While web and broker-generated leads are an essential part of maintaining high occupancy rates, don't forget the opportunity under your own roof.

A large part of potential business may already be in your database in the form of guest and non-member meeting room bookings. How are you capturing long-term client potential in those one-time and even repeat visitors?

Creating smart lists and automating email messaging that meets specific criteria will help you communicate your other products and services to sporadic clients, bringing them into your pipeline and one step closer to becoming long-term clients.

Leads are in. So now what?

Qualify them! Engage as quickly as possible with a new lead. If you don't, your competition might get to them first!

Answer the live webchat, return the phone call, and respond immediately to email inquiries. Your goal should be to listen and learn. Have a standard list of questions that you ask each lead to understand their needs.

- What type of workspace do the need?
- How many people will need space?
- How often will they use the space?
- What amenities are important to them?
- Where are they currently working?
- What other options are they considering?
- When will they need the space?

Acclerate Demand



Make an honest evaluation if you can serve their needs. Then manage the leads – efficiently. After expending resources to generate leads and paying out broker commissions to secure them, it's critical to spend the time, energy & effort on nurturing them.

Maintain frequent communication with your prospects and diligently track lead status so you have visibility into where your marketing efforts are paying off.

While we know how important this phase is, it's easy to lose track of email correspondence in your inbox and to forget to follow up with prospects.

- Set auto-responses to new incoming leads
- Schedule check-in emails
- Auto-add prospects to your newsletter list
- Send special offers & discounts based on interest expressed

The Challenges

When it comes to demand generation, the main challenge for operators isn't usually a lack of access to leads, rather the meticulous work that goes into sorting the data, qualifying the leads and converting them into actionable prospects that can enter the sales funnel.
In contrast, lead management tends to be more time-consuming and straining on your resources. Develop a process and stick with it. It will pay off!



Optimize the Tour Experience



David Kinnaird
COO
essensys

After hard work & spent resources generating and qualifying leads, a booked prospect tour is an operator's Nirvana.

This is your time in the customer lifecycle to shine. Show off your workspace, captivate your prospect and close the deal.

It's not all smooth sailing, as you may have experienced. Having a process in place to promote tours and manage bookings will facilitate the process and result in greater business opportunity.

Define your goals

Set clearly defined goals and objectives. For example, aim to complete the booking process from the time a lead comes in to qualifying it and booking the tour in less than five minutes.

The most efficient way to achieve this is to define a workflow and leverage tools that push the lead through the sales cycle, such as auto-responses, task assignments & reminders.

Do the math. Of all the leads you capture, what percentage of those become tours, which then become deals won? Having processes and workspace management software in place to help you measure this data can make your sales cycle predictable & controlled.



Identify your challenges

Conduct a website audit and evaluate if there are sufficient resources to pique the interest of a perusing prospect. Don't miss potential tour bookings – make sure you have a web to lead form that captures as many pre-tour details as possible. It will help you curate the tour experience to the prospect's needs.

Your web to lead form should sync with your CRM to facilitate lead entry into your database and sales cycle. Automatically send tour booking confirmations and calendar invites to prospects and the sales reps within a pre-defined time frame. Be sure to include your complete address & any specific arrival instructions, to avoid confusion.

Optimize the Tour Experience

Visibility is critical. Does your website show your prospect everything about your workspace? Does it answer the basic questions and entice them to book a tour?

Use simple and accessible tools like street view in Google Maps to showcase the location and even the detail of the building entrance. In some cases, it allows the user to virtually enter the building and tour the lobby. Get fancy and include a virtual tour video.

At a minimum, you should have photos of meeting rooms, suites, coworking areas, shared and collaborative areas, and the kitchen or coffee station. Include all your available inventory online, giving prospects better insight of your product options. Track your website analytics to see who is clicking on your website inventory to understand products in demand.





Capacity and bandwidth

If you're fortunate, you'll have more tour requests than vacancies. Even if you have limited vacancy, bring the prospect in for a tour of the space. Generate as much pipeline as possible. With shorter lease terms and the nature of flexible office sector, you could have an opening before you know it.

It's important to determine enquiry criteria for your business, which staff members will handle those enquiries, and the process is to manage them. Leads with larger revenue potential should be handled personally and follow-up tailored as much as possible.

To facilitate tours and follow ups alongside other operational requirements, tools that integrate and streamline processes, such as mobile lead management, are a must.

TOOLS THAT ENABLE MOBILE LEAD MANAGEMENT ARE ESSENTIAL

Optimize the Tour Experience



Tour Day

Everyone is busy nowadays and even a tour can fall by the wayside. It's imperative to use any means possible to remind your prospect of the upcoming tour. No one has time for a no-show! Schedule reminders via SMS, e-mail and even a personal phone call. Offer the option to reschedule if the original time is no longer convenient.

Once the tour is scheduled and confirmed and you've captured all of the necessary information, you can tailor the experience to exactly what the prospect is looking for.

First impressions are everything. You need to up your game and make them feel special. Make all tour bookings visible to your entire workspace team. Greeting visitors accordingly sets a warm and professional tone for the tour. Hospitality is essential. Offer the prospect coffee, tea, water, or snacks to welcome them.

Optimize the Tour Experience

The space might sell itself, but the market is competitive. So check, and double check, that everything is in tip-top shape. Stage the office space if you must.

A tour is generally straightforward but have a plan before you take them through the space. Make a checklist of areas to show them based on their tour request form. Aim to have multiple options ready to showcase.

Keep the tour brief but thorough, showing them as much of the space as you can without boring them.

At this stage, everything is key, from meeting rooms, to the kitchen and reception area. Make light conversation with customers you run into along the tour, but don't divert the attention from the prospect. Provide your guest with a brochure and a business card as a takeaway and offer the contact information of existing customers who are willing to give (a positive) recommendation.

Follow-up is key

In the UK some prospective occupiers may have six to seven viewings before deciding. In faster moving markets like NYC, businesses tend to move fast and furious, especially when real estate can be snatched up quickly by the next person in line if a commitment isn't made.

Strike while the iron is hot. While the experience of the tour is still fresh in their mind, follow up immediately with a thank you note, and a custom quote. Include the license agreement and e-sign capability for easy execution to close the deal.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW ANY TOUR WITH A THANK YOU, PROPOSAL & LICENSE AGREEMENT FOR EASY SIGNING TO CLOSE THE DEAL

Effectively Manage Your Sales Pipeline



Ashley Buckner
VP of Sales & Operations
Carr Workplaces

Sales and pipeline management is an integral step in the customer lifecycle. The goal is to drive a revolving door of revenue opportunity while building lasting relationships with your prospects.

At this point, you've secured your lead, provided a tour and there is a promising opportunity to close the deal. How you juggle the many moving pieces of the sales process can determine your success.

Let's analyze the sales process from the tour onward and highlight what you can do to maximize business opportunity.

Post tour sales

After a prospect has toured your space, be agile and efficient in managing the opportunity. For due diligence and to safeguard from fraud or payment default, research the prospect ahead of time, especially if they're an international organization. Immediately follow up with the proposal, legal terms, license agreement, and facility to execute the contract electronically to clinch the conversion.

The objective is to make the entire lifecycle as seamless and effortless as possible for your members. Your quoting engine should run like a well-oiled machine. Track correspondence and be quick to respond to any further questions they may have on services and pricing.



Win some, lose some

Not every tour will lead to a sale. Some prospects will prefer another workspace over yours, some operators will be quicker to respond or to negotiate on price, prospects may lose their funding or just not need the space anymore.

There may be other reasons for osing a deal but having a license out should not stop you from selling the space.

To prevent this, you need to have full visibility at all times of your space inventory, client moves and license renewal dates.

Effectively Manage Your Sales Pipeline

Pricing

There are many factors that affect space pricing. In order of importance, they are location, density, duration of the lease and quality of the office.

1. Location

In my experience, location has the biggest impact on price. If you have multiple central business district locations, there is more business potential and you can set your prices at a premium. Compared to a suburban location, where you may be one of few operators, a city location means a higher concentration of competitors.

2. Density

Density is determined by how many people you can fit into your workspace. The more people in a flexible desk area or in private offices, the less you should charge.

While you may be able to offer cheaper space and attract more prospects, cramming your clients into your workspace like sardines just isn't a good member experience.



Effectively Manage Your Sales Pipeline

3. Duration of lease

As a rule of thumb, the duration of a lease is a function of availability, lead flow, and a sense of the market.

If the market is on the rise, you'll be less inclined to write longer leases. If it's falling, you'll want to lock your tenants into longer leases.

High lead flow and low space availability allows you to charge higher prices, while fewer incoming leads and greater space availability limits how much you can charge.

You may need to evaluate whether writing a longer-term lease is less lucrative compared to writing three short term lease deals that can be priced higher. If you're confident you'll fill the space, you might opt for the multiple short lease deals.



4. Office quality

The devil is in the details. Keeping your space in tip-top condition and ensuring frequent and thorough cleanings are a must. There is no room for visible dust, crumbs or dirt.

Encourage members to treat the workspace as their own home and keep an eye out for troublesome or abrasive members. Both the state of the facilities and the quality of the community are factors that contribute to greater member satisfaction, which enable you to price your workspace at premium.

Offer basic services such as Wi-Fi, printing, and (free!) coffee. Making premium services easily accessible can distinguish your space and offer a slicker member experience. For example, provide mobile and self-service access to flexible products such as meeting room bookings and enhanced connectivity.

Effectively Manage Your Sales Pipeline



Seal the deal

Compared to early days of flex-space when the buying cycle was long and transactional today's market is all about immediacy and flexibility of services.

Build pipeline with positive first impressions, a reasonable price-to-quality ratio, and provide friction-free experiences.

Underpin your business with the right tools and software that seamlessly connect the steps of the sales cycle and make service management immediate, agile and flexible.

Onboard New Tenants & Members



David Kinnaird
COO
essensys

There is nothing simple about running a business, much less a flexible workspace. You must have control and visibility over every aspect of your operation, from sales and lead management, services and billing, to building community and meeting tenant expectations.

Having visibility and control largely depends on your service delivery and management platform. Below look at licensing and onboarding tenants in a friction-free way that makes the transition from opportunity to customer smooth and easy – for your employees and your clients.



A license to license

By the nature of the dynamic and growing flexible workspace industry there are a number of license agreement options: short, long and longer term resident licenses, virtual services, day passes, coworking, hotdesking, flex-desking, rolling or fixed terms, or on-demand service offerings, just to name a few.

Understand market trends, evaluate demand levers, and identify the limitations of your workspace business to accurately differentiate your proposition.

Onboard New Tenants & Members

Real-time insight

Having real-time insight across your service & product inventory allows you to respond quicker and more accurately to inquiries. Generating & sending proposals and license agreements that match prospect needs with just a few clicks should be a given in your process. Workspace management tools and delivery platforms that underpin inventory, CRM, service, and comms are crucial.



Tracking messaging and receiving feedback from your prospects in one place make it easier to adjust license agreements or service packages quickly and easily. Working from a single interface, empowers you to respond to occupier requirements quickly and easily.

Integration wins

Onboarding new tenants is a critical step. It requires adding multiple end-users to your contact lists, member directory, events board, announcements list, invoicing & billing systems, and provisioning multiple endpoints and services.

Using multiple systems most likely means you are managing various spreadsheets and manually entering data as many times as the number of systems you are using.



This creates confusion & duplicate or incorrect entries, which can compromise the integrity of your operation, frustrate members, and waste your valuable time.

When a prospect signs a license agreement, automated workflows can convert their status in your system from an opportunity to a member, triggering the complete on-boarding process and activating them throughout all your sites – services and all.

Onboard New Tenants & Members

Operational efficiency

Today's occupiers largely consist of Millennials and Gen-Z workers. Their expectations are unique in that they value immediacy and opt for digital experiences.

Service delivery should be operationally efficient & carried out with little to no friction, getting your members to work as quick as possible.

Make service access easy for components such as Wi-Fi, wired connectivity, telephony, access to meeting rooms, and advanced services such as access control and any other marketplace services you offer.

Service orchestration

Traditionally, service provisioning required a series of complex administrative tasks and an IT team. Today, with on demand software & infrastructure platforms, adding a new customer can be done with process automation & service orchestration.

Provisioning secure services is possible with a touch of a button. What's more, integrated & modular platforms give you a bird's eye view of usage & consumption patterns - at the click of a button.

The days of calling an IT freelancer to patch a cable or setup a new phone are over. Integrated platforms and on-demand services reduce resources and time spent on mundane administrative tasks that distract you from the bigger-picture – maximizing customer facing time and growing your business.



Onboard New Tenants & Members



FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE OPERATORS NEED TO BE FLEXIBLE & PREPARED FOR MEMBERS' EVER CHANGING NEEDS

Onboard, upsell, cross-sell

Bringing a new customer onboard is exciting. But the process doesn't stop there. Customers' needs are constantly changing, & you need to be flexible and agile to accommodate license agreement changes, especially at renewal time.

Having a detailed view of what customers are paying and, importantly, the changing usage of your workspace over time, will give you the ability to maximize service and space uptake.

A platform that integrates all pieces of the puzzle will give you the freedom to make quick and easy changes while offering new and updated services to your clients.

Manage the Full Customer Lifecycle



Claire Luik
VP of Customer Success
essensys

Understanding your customers, responding to their needs, & nurturing relationships with them after the sales process are almost just as important as closing the deal.

Member diversity

No two customers are the same. It is of utmost importance to understand what type of members you have in your community and what their expectations are of your workspace.

We've identified three key types of members.



UNDERSTAND WHAT YOUR MEMBERS WANT FROM YOUR SPACE

1. The dependent member

The dependent member will ask you and your staff for the most basic needs and transactions. Despite offering self-service tools to on-demand services like bookings and meeting rooms, the late adopters and dependent members live for human interaction and will rely heavily on you to guide them.

2. The all work, no play member

These members didn't sign up to play ping-pong in the common area or to attend events. They signed up to come to work and be productive every day. They are reluctant to engage in much conversation and are generally self-sufficient in using the services and workspace tools available to them. They don't always sign up to community events but still consider the option to partake attractive.

3. The life-of-the-workspace member

These members live for community and thrive off social interaction in the workspace. They're champions of generating attendance to your events and will be the life of the party. While enthusiastic about the social element of your space, these members appreciate productive collaboration and will find their own way about your workspace with little fuss.

Manage the Full Customer Lifecycle



Managing your members

Given these unique member profiles, it is key to establish a healthy balance between being helpful and involved and being intrusive. Here are some tried and tested tips:

Consider renewal dates

For the reluctant, all-work-no play member, your attempts to interact may be regarded as an intrusion. Keep it friendly and short on the day to day and limit excessive communication or visits to see them. However, engage them at least three months prior to their renewal date to determine if they'll stay in your space.

Depending on your renewal policies and the state of the market, it may be in your interest to allow the contract to roll on at the existing rates. Vice versa, if the market is up, this is your chance to increase rates if favorable. The worst-case scenario is disrupting a satisfied customer with a renewal conversation that may prompt them to reconsider staying in your workspace, resulting in a loss of business.

Build trust

Maintaining a balance between heavy contact and isolation is important for your less active members in the community.

Consider a mechanism to engage with these members in a non-intrusive way.

For example, if delivering mail is not a routine service you offer, surprise them with a mail delivery once a week. This gives you an excuse to see their office, check-in on complaints and see how their business is doing, all while providing a service.

Manage the Full Customer Lifecycle

Leveraging Tech for a Better Member Experience

The digital transformation has impacted how you can interact and build relationships with tenants. Software platforms facilitate both operator to member & member to member communication.

Offering an interface for members to access their services, billing information and on-demand bookings gives them greater flexibility to stay productive and tailor their workspace experience to their objectives.



Get feedback

Leveraging technology is a great way to tailor communication to your members. Send periodic (short!) surveys to evaluate how your business is performing. Capturing negative feedback before it snowballs and correcting it quickly will prevent complaints and escalations from arising and impacting customer retention.

Knowing your members and what their future objectives are allows you to accommodate their changing requirements for space and services. Align as close as possible to your customer base to project their flex-space needs. Are they planning to upsize, downsize, split teams or relocate? The idea is to interact sufficiently with your members to keep them happy and growing within your portfolio.

Focus on Member Experience

The shared workspace industry is akin to the hospitality industry. Formally training your staff on customer service techniques can be a huge advantage. Not only will you give your staff a career and qualifications that are transferable, but you also offer added quality when it comes to communication, problem management and customer care.

In summary, the simple secret to running a shared workspace is to attract and sign-up new members, move them in with little hassle, and keep them happy during their stay. Managing tenant expectations & offering premium experiences enable you to increase rates, gain more referrals & drive revenues.

Meet Tech Service Expectations



David Kinnaird
COO
essensys

We live in a constantly connected digital world in which internet access is considered a commodity. Just about every aspect of our lives – especially conducting business – depends on the Internet. Your customers simply cannot function without core IT services.

For a space provider, the most dreadful situation is losing internet. It is vital to provide reliable and secure internet, Wi-Fi and telephony services. It's not as simple as it sounds, but it doesn't have to be complicated either.

Core services

Before the existence of purpose made flexible workspace platforms, operators contracted services from multiple vendors to deliver telephony, internet, and Wi-Fi. This approach typically required hiring an in-house IT resource or outsourcing the tasks to a third-party consultant.
Very often this resulted in multiple vendors, multiple contracts and disparate services that are out of your control and limit your ability to deliver to the specific yet varied requirements of tenants. It was complex, time-consuming and resource intensive.

In our fast-evolving industry, there is little time to deal with complexity. Implementing an integrated software-as-a-service, technology infrastructure and private network solution that can be managed via a simple interface gives you a competitive advantage to deliver better, faster and more reliable services to your customers.

Get a head start

With the influx of new players in the market, from national flex-space brands, landlords and franchises, competition is heating up and you want to get it right from day one. It is essential to fit out and provision your core IT infrastructure and workspace management platform between three and six months prior to opening your space.

Investing in the right tech solutions that supports scalability and a wide spectrum of modular service options gives your members access to enterprise-grade business services and technology they need. It also prevents tenants from sourcing their own solutions. Providing a solution gives you more wallet share as well as control over the quality and security aspects of the network.

Meet Tech Service Expectations

Digital Transformation

Moving to a digital workspace management interface removes the traditional IT worries and on-site server room hassles, allowing you to focus on running your business more efficiently.

Benefits are gained when you streamline people, services, and tech processes within a single solution. Digitizing systems and operations management lends greater control and visibility over your business, enhances service reliability, and improves the member experience.

Keeping on the forefront of technology is possible with a trusted adviser. Reduce risk and future-proof your portfolio with the latest digital trends and tools. Working with a partner helps manage phasing out of legacy systems and identifying new solutions to continually improve services and contain costs.

Going digital means you can manage your space and services from any location and time zone with web and mobile-based access. You can continue to drive revenue and deliver on expectations with a simple touch of a button.

Telephony Services

As corporate occupiers flock to flexible workspaces, telephony services remain an essential service in the office sector.

Crisp, high definition, voice quality is must have for any shared work-space, especially for video and group conferencing, which is a key revenue driver for many operators. Members will be pleasantly surprised to make and receive calls over a crystal-clear connection with no drop-offs, unlike the experience when using cell phones or Wi-Fi based calling.

Using a handset can free the Wi-Fi network from Wi-Fi-based calling and messenger apps like Whatsapp, Skype and Viber.

Don’t allow for friction or a loss of occupier productivity because you lack the infrastructure. Deploying a comprehensive software and technology solution gives you access to extend these services to your customers.



Meet Tech Service Expectations



IT and Cyber Security

IT security is a top priority in the flex-space industry. Where HQ offices previously ensured network security and service delivery, the responsibility has shifted to the workspace provider to deliver on advanced tech security policies & requirements.

It's critical to ensure data governance policies & procedures. The financial, legal and reputational implications of a security or data breach can be devasting for both you and your tenants.

Through enterprise grade private cloud technology, you can offer end-to-end security for critical data, services and intellectual property & adhere to regulatory standards and compliance requirements.

Meet Tech Service Expectations

A Strategic Tech Investment

With secure and high-performing IT infrastructure, the sky's the limit for delivering reliable services, flexibility and agility to your customers.

A robust platform facilitates growth, bridges the gap between physical and digital environments and enables you to meet the diverse needs of a growing and discerning occupier market.



Looking to the Future

As more Millennials and Gen-Zs enter the workforce, their expectations will increase for technology to support their daily routines, both professional and personal. This trend is set to continue.

The line between home & work is disappearing, and employees require location flexibility and services that can adapt to their needs. Equipping your workspace with on-demand tech services creates an environment that is superior to working from home.

A strategic technology investment is one that enables you to scale, easily adding new sites to your portfolio without technology being an obstacle. Private cloud architecture minimises on-site hardware and offers consistent, quality services for your members.

Future-proofing your business not only means meeting tenant requirements, but also being ready for the latest tech advances without disruption or increased risk.

GO-TO TECH RESOURCES FOR FLEX-SPACES

Tech Security for Flexible Workspaces
The Complete Guide to Flexible Workspace Technology Security

Guide to Managing Your Workspace
The full guide to sourcing tech and software services

The Finances to Growing Your Workspace
What you need to get your ducks in a row before you grow

Wi-Fi 101 for Flexible Workspaces
Everything you need to know about delivering connectivity to your tenants

Offer a Premium Experience



Jean-Yves Huwart
Founder
Coworking Europe

The flex-space market is all about services. As a space provider, your objective is to provide office space and services to companies so they can focus on their business growth & well-being.

We can compare our business model to a hotel or AirBnB model. It's flexible, on-demand, easy-to-access and prevents tenants digging deep into their pockets to cover costly real estate overhead.

Akin to the hotel industry, now offering more than a room to sleep in, you must be extending services beyond a mere office or desk to work from.





Standing Out in a Growing Market

Despite market growth, many operators have been slow to tap the revenue-driving potential of a complete services marketplace within their offering. From standard office packages and membership plans to third-party services, the service experience can differentiate your brand from the rest. Make your services easy to access and consume. For this, it is key to implement the right workspace management tools that remove friction, offer service levels and keep members productive.

Standard workspace marketplace

If you fail to offer a variety of flex-space products and options, you risk falling behind the competition. From hot and dedicated desks to conference rooms and private offices, make your online inventory available to your members and prospects.

Regardless of what they book, the process should include the option to add-on other services. For example, meeting room bookings should include the option to add a catering service, a private VLAN, increased bandwidth or specific A/V equipment. When you book a flight it is rare if you're not offered a rental car, airport shuttle, tourist attraction or tickets to a show.

Generating service revenue can be effortless when you make add-on services easily available and friction-free at the point of booking space services. The idea is to offer more to your customers while driving retention revenue to your business.

Offer a Premium Experience

Technology services

As we saw in the previous chapter, tenants require IT services such as Wi-Fi, wired connectivity and telephony services. The quality & service levels are deal breakers for members.

Slow or constantly dropped connections or worst, a security breach, can ruin brand reputation and drive members to your competition. Getting IT right from day one is critical. Also compelling for members is the ability to manage their own IT services.

Providing self-service allows tenants to increase or decrease bandwidth, turn on or off services, access voice capabilities remotely or add phone features such as call recording or IVR (Interactive Voice Response).

Displaying all ICT options for purchase or upgrade in your services marketplace empowers your members with the tools they need to be productive and gives them the flexibility to consume services as they go. This in turn can increase service revenue and wallet-share, a key indicator that your business is growing.

Community

The member community plays a vital role in your services marketplace and can grow wallet share, retention and revenue. The workspace community – both physical and digital – gives your members access to new services.

Your community is an integral part of your services marketplace, opening the door for members to make connections, grow their business, and facilitate third-party transactions via your platform.

In the digital community, members can promote their own services and products, whether via the social feed or member directory.

Enabling members to connect and exchange services in a digital environment creates a tighter-knit community where more members can benefit. Helping your tenants grow their business, helps you grow yours.

Within your digital marketplace you can promote new or pay-as-you-go services, offer upgrades and discounts, and take advantage of up or cross-sell opportunities that drive revenue and tenant satisfaction.

Offer a Premium Experience

Events play an essential role in expanding your member community and should be added to your services marketplace.

Operators can coordinate events that are open to both members and non-members, increasing traffic to your workspace, and potentially driving leads and revenue from ticket sales.

Promote events on your community page, website, social channels, and send frequent reminders to your members and mailing lists using automated workflows and an integrated CRM system. Consider marketing your events and training spaces to members and non-members for a fee.

Utopia: Third party services

Partner with third-party and local businesses to extend discounts on products and services. The value driving possibilities are endless. Think gym memberships, insurance plans, catering, or discounted cell phone services.

It's an opportunity to increase revenues by negotiating a reasonable commission while offering a wider service market-place to your members.

Open your services marketplace to businesses to promote professional services that target freelancers, start-ups, and small business tenants in your workspace. Example services could include QuickBooks resources, digital marketing, advertising or social media services – plus many more.

Tying it all together

Your services marketplace plays a pivotal role in the success of your workspace. The more services you provide, the greater revenue you can drive and the better member experience you offer.

Be smart about your operation. Enable your members with self-service and integrate each step of the process, from inventory and bookings to payments.



Streamline Billing & Invoicing





Claire Luik
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To run a sustainable & profitable shared workspace largely depends on reigning in your processes and simplifying complexity with a platform that supports every pillar of your business.

Here, we'll look at the single most critical part of running any successful business: invoicing and billing.

Workspace billing utopia

Managing the minutiae of day to day tasks in a workspace as well as the more strategic elements when running a business is challenging. It requires laser focussed attention on metrics and processes around business profitability.

Without a well-oiled billing and invoicing machine your operation will crumble. For optimal accuracy, automation and integration are critical.

With self-service thrown into that mix, members can view, download, and manage their payments.

Getting it right means that you need to start from day one with a digital workspace management solution.



Streamlined Billing & Invoicing

Online member set up

The first step to accurate billing is going online. Get your members to purchase and consume your services via your website or your management system. Aside from giving them easy access (and easy to earn revenue for you!) it ensures you are capturing accurate data and remove the risk of human error implicit in manually processes.

Give members and prospects access to your services marketplace where they can select the workspace plan or member package, execute the purchase with an e-signature and finalize the agreement by simply entering their billing information. For consistency, bundle services into your membership plans, packages or tiers that seamlessly feed into your billing system.

Rather than relying on your community manager, who is busy juggling multiple tasks, set up customer accounts from an online form or credit card authorization form, and use an automated system for optimal accuracy. This will shorten your bill run and reduce errors. Now, when you invoice for monthly memberships or meeting room bookings you avoid credit notes, adjustments and keep your customers happy.

Any mistake can cost you hours in corrections. Your and your staff's time is precious. Rely on software that integrates each step of the billing cycle, automates data capture and invoice creation to save you hours.

Point of sale

A point of sales station at reception, whether a desktop, tablet, or mobile device makes it simple for community managers to capture charges to an account, keeping invoices accurate on the first try so you spend less time doing bill runs, fixing billing queries and losing revenue.

Point of sale (POS) is the best alternative to a notepad, an excel spreadsheet or a voice memo that requires you to transfer or enter information more than once. It eliminates the need to input data manually, removing human error, it demands minimal staff training, and is easy to teach to a new or temporary staff member. More Importantly, POS can integrate with your workspace management platform making your invoicing routine a breeze.

Streamline Billing & Invoicing

Services Integration

Driving revenue is a key determining factor in keeping a workspace profitable. It doesn't need to be complicated or time-consuming.

Integrating your services marketplace, IT platform and billing system significantly impacts how you levy charges and can simplify the task of driving revenues.

Take IT and Comms services, for example. If deeply integrated with your billing system, your members can easily increase or decrease bandwidth without worrying about being overcharged and you won't lose sleep over losing revenue.

Any member utilizing telephony services will see their charges and rates in real-time, while without integration you will be faced with the tedious task of exporting usage data from another system and importing it into a separate billing system.

The same school of thought applies to the use of online calendar solutions such as Google for meeting room bookings. While seemingly a great resource, if it doesn't integrate with your billing systems, you won't effectively capture booking charges and you risk high levels of revenue leakage.

Financial Integration

Linking your accounting system with your workspace management platform has significant benefits.

A real-time bank feed means your staff has visibility into any customers outstanding balance from any location at any time without giving them access to your accounting system.

This protects the privacy, security, and integrity of your accounting platform and your customers' private information, whilst being able to delegate the billing and invoicing tasks.



Streamline Billing & Invoicing



Workspace software can make your life and your accountant's life easier. For example, calculating deferred income automatically, without the use of spreadsheets and formulas, saves time and money. It can also coordinate advance payments for rents and services and run the billing without human intervention.

Integrating process management solutions is the most efficient way to streamline billing and invoicing. Automation will save you money, resources, and time from these tedious but crucial tasks, so that you can spend more time with your member community.

Using data and analytics for better visibility of performance across the business can help improve decision making, spot weak areas in the business and identify new opportunities.

Collect Payments



Alan Pepper
CFO
essensys

Cash collection is the primary objective of your efforts and is what defines how you manage your overhead, reinvest in your workspace and grow your business. What many operators don't define prior to opening a space is how they will manage the debt collection process or even what it entails.

Payments are collected via credit card, recurring bill payments or autopay. There is more to it than meets the eye. If you plan correctly, it can be a very simple process, and if not, debt collection can become a monthly recurring obstacle. Here's what you need to know.



Collect accurate data

Securing payment for your services begins with collecting data during member onboarding and generating accurate invoices. Streamline the collection process by gathering payment information at the time of service bookings prior to sending the license agreement and Ts and Cs. Give members the option to setup direct payment options via ACH, credit cards, check or POS, and tag your customers based on their payment method.

Collect Payments

The key to invoice generation is tracking all products consumed from your services marketplace and seamlessly integrating the data into your financial software so that all charges are captured accurately. Generating invoices can be done effortlessly with the right tools. With software automation, you can run payment collection at the touch of a button.



Payment gateways

Operators generally integrate with payment gateways such as Infintech or Stripe to authorize and process credit card or direct debits to collect payments. As for any other merchant, credit card processing fees are incurred by the operator.
This is a cost of doing business in exchange for strong technology capabilities. For example, Stripe has advanced capabilities such as verifying credit card transactions, fraud risks, credit card expiry dates and can function across multiple countries and currencies. Investing in these services can result in greater benefits.

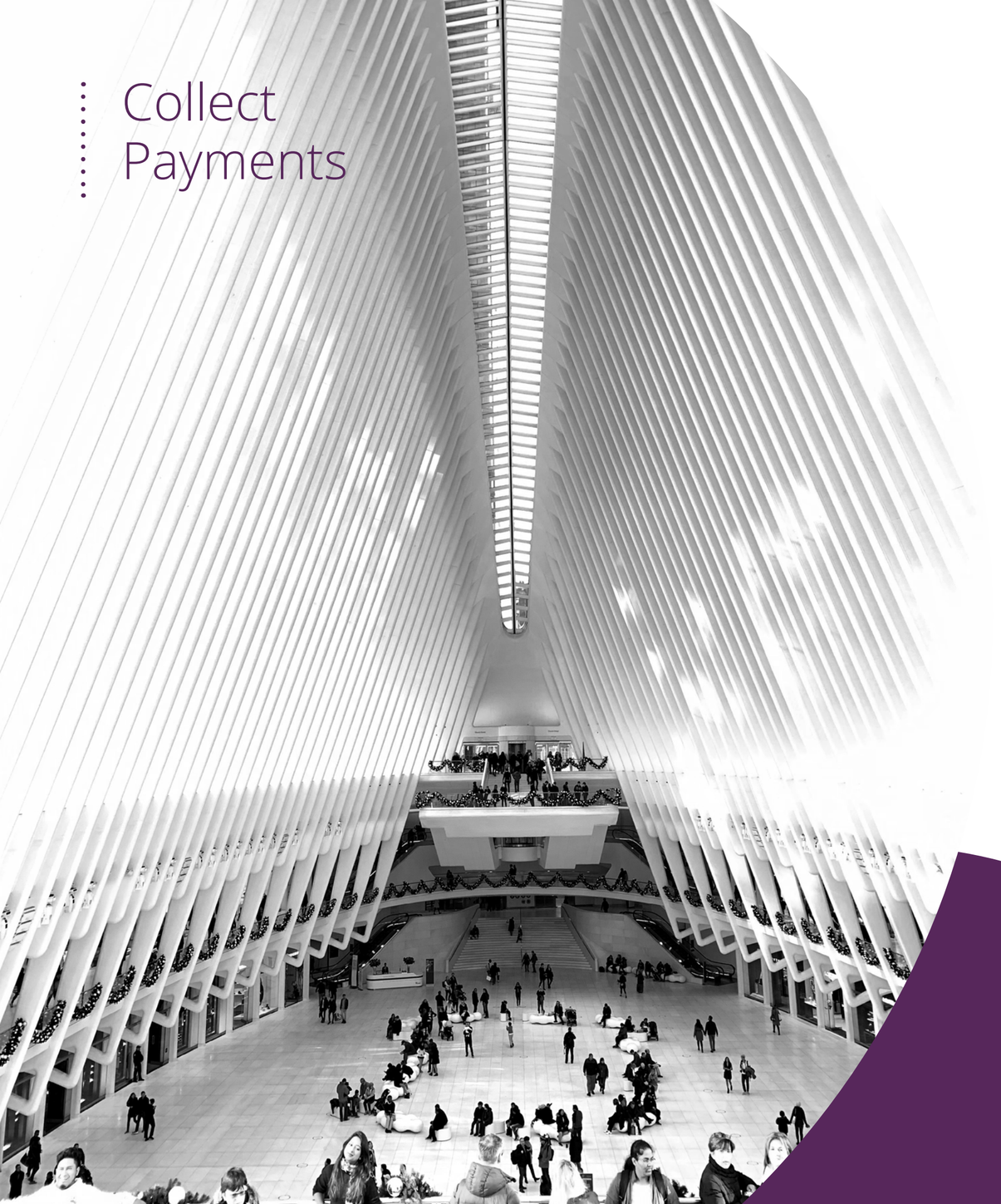
There are newer, industry-specific platforms such as Place Pay that charge the customer a fee rather than the operator, much like a broker would charge a tenant. Direct debit or ACH transfers allow you to collect payments without incurring a charge from the processing gateway. Once payment information is stored in your system and your members are signed up for credit card or recurring payment, and a secure connection is established to process the transaction, you can run collections in one batch. Automatic payments reduce debt risk and increase the speed that you can collect payment for your services.

Reducing risk

Protect your credit rating, business integrity and private customer information with PCI compliant tools and integrations. This means that your business is meeting the data security standards set forth by the Payment Card Industry for accepting, processing, and transmitting payment information over a secure link.

If dealing with unreliable customers, enable a point of sales system from which customers are forced to pay for services on the spot. This ensures cash collection and reduces your debt risk.

Collect Payments



Reporting

Accurate and efficient cash collection comes down to reliable and automated processes. Reporting is also critical. You need visibility over everything from debtor reports and batch credit payments to ensuring that payments collected match the amounts invoiced.

This expedites identification of bad debts or repeat defaulting customers. Advanced reporting capabilities lends business insight that helps guarantee you are collecting the amounts owed to your business.

A flexible workspace management platform helps to drive financial strategy and improve commercial performance. With better revenue visibility and accurate financial reporting, you can ensure faster cash collection improved cost control.

MISSION-CRITICAL SOFTWARE FOR THE FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE INDUSTRY.

Born from our unique first-hand industry experience, we empower ambitious operators to accelerate their growth.
Our secure platform combines technology, infrastructure and operational processes into a simple, efficient and easy to manage service experience. At the touch of a button you have complete control of your business, allowing you to deliver amazing experiences while gaining valuable and actionable insights.

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