

Co-working space vs. working from home

The current economic climate in South Africa has meant that businesses are letting people go at a rapid rate and more business professionals are finding themselves out of a job. One of the positives of this is that it has created a bigger culture of entrepreneurship and many professionals across a variety of fields are stepping out on their own and offering their services on a freelance basis.



Source: pixabay.com

A problem that many freelance professionals face is the choice between working from home and signing up to a co-working space. There are perks to both of these and each one comes with its own set of challenges, too.

Working from home

Most professionals enjoy working from home. It's convenient in so many ways.

For one, you can work in your pyjamas, and working from home also means you completely miss the commute, so there's no threat of being stuck in traffic.

One of the top reasons that freelancers decide to work from home, however, is because it's cost-effective. There's no extra rent, no extra Wi-Fi charges, and no added fuel expenses.

Working from home also gives entrepreneurs flexible hours, so if you need to do some work late at night or early in the

morning, the office is always open, so to speak.

There are, however, a number of professional disadvantages to working from home. Waking up and sauntering over to your workspace means you have to jump straight into work. There's no priming or mental preparation that happens.

Many business professionals who commute to an office or even a coffee shop use the commute time to mentally think through the day, draw up a to-do list and prioritise tasks.

Working from an outside space also tends to make you slightly more productive as you are not tempted by Netflix, an afternoon nap or even household chores.

Before you know it, you could find yourself down the rabbit hole of YouTube and puppy fails of 2019.

It also becomes tough to separate work life from home life when you work from home. This could mean that it becomes increasingly difficult to switch off 'after hours', and the home starts to feel too much like a place to work rather than a place to play.

Let's be honest, it can also get rather lonely working from home. With no colleagues, there's no one to talk to. This brings us to co-working spaces.

Working from a co-working space

It was back in 2005 that San Francisco-based software engineer Brad Neuberg first coined the phrase "co-working" to describe the physical environment he had created in which like-minded individuals in his field could come together and share the structure of office space.

At the time, and as the idea began to blossom, the concept was aimed very much at freelancers who had traditionally worked from home and who had begun to feel isolated, as well as startups trying to bridge the gap between home and committing to their own office space, uncertain of their future or the amount of space they would require when their ideas took off.

Successful co-working spaces have always been about far more than just the physical environment in which they operate. For the freelance professional, a space like this is about building communities of "open-source" individuals who want to collaborate and exchange ideas with other people in a socially interactive community.

Co-working spaces may mean that you have to fork out a membership fee every month, but these fees work out to less than you would spend on conventional office space and it includes a number of perks.

Memberships to coworking spaces include, as a minimum, access to the coworking area for a set number of days per month, (limited) use of meeting rooms, access to event space and more.

Co-working environments also provide small businesses with access to much larger infrastructure they would not have been able to afford on their own. Working from home or from a stand-alone office puts the pressure on the small business to ensure that all the required infrastructure is in place, such as a generator for when the power goes out.

Another added benefit of coworking spaces are the regular events that happen in these spaces. These events provide its members with networking opportunities that they would not have otherwise had access to working from home or even working in a regular corporate office.

Co-working spaces are even great options for large corporates as it takes the strain of building and maintaining office space away from the company.

If a coworking space is what you are after, you have to find one that works for you and what you are trying to achieve. If you are a creative or a graphic designer and you crave to be in a space filled with your peers, there are a number of co-working spaces that cater for this. If you are a more serious business professional needing a more sophisticated business-oriented space, you would be hard-pressed to find co-working areas where you can sit among like-minded people.

Overall, there are pros and cons to both set-ups. But if you want to be surrounded by people who drive you whether it be through competition or simply being surrounded by the right type of people who you could network with and potentially use to grow your business, or if you want reliable and modern infrastructure in your workspace, then consider a co-working environment.

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