



GOING

BY ELIZABETH M. ECONOMOU • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN KEATLEY

MOBILE

+ FROM LOCAL COFFEE SHOPS TO CO-WORKING SPACES, TODAY'S MOBILE WORKERS ARE FUELING NEW, CREATIVE WAYS TO SHARE SPACE AND STRETCH THAT PRECIOUS CORPORATE DOLLAR. ➔

IT'S A TYPICAL Friday afternoon, so Delicious Monster's Wil Shipley and his executive team are hunkered down over their laptops at the company's Seattle headquarters.

But this is no ordinary office space. The Delicious Monster home office boasts deft baristas serving tasty blends of organic coffee, as well as luscious pastries and hearty scones. There is even an impressive array of board games nearby.

Another perk-filled workplace for pampered employees? Hardly.

Since its inception in 2004, Delicious Monster has established its official home at a long wooden table at the Zoka Coffee Roaster & Tea Co. store in Seattle's University District. Shipley (a.k.a. "Chief Monster") is gearing up to ship Delicious Library 2, the sequel to Delicious Library 1, a successful cataloging application for books and CDs.

But it's not just free wi-fi that lures him to Zoka; it's also roomy seating, lots of electric outlets and not having to lease an office. Which isn't to say that Shipley skimps on latte purchases: He spends about

\$600 at Zoka every month for himself and his four co-workers. He also tips generously. Such payments are a steal compared to the overhead at his former company, The Omni Group, where he says his bosses were paying about \$11,000 a month for rent alone.

Though Shipley admits that Zoka can get a little too noisy sometimes, he says he likes feeling that he's part of society instead of being locked away in an office somewhere.

"I also love working side-by-side with everyone in my company," Shipley adds. "There are no politics over who has the nicer chair or who has carpeting in their office or a corner seat or whatever."

CO-WORKING CRAZE

Shipley and his employees are in step with one of the new trends in offices: unconventional workspaces for today's mobile workforce. This burgeoning crop of freelancers, independent contractors, telecommuters, small-business owners and entrepreneurs has traded in traditional 9-to-5 office jobs for more flexible gigs and more flexible office arrangements.

A 2004 study by the Dieringer Research

Group revealed that about 45 million American workers are considered "mobile." Advances in technology and large corporations bent on cutting costs are also driving the mobile workforce locally and nationally. The 1,110 ticketing agents for low-cost airline JetBlue, for example, all work from home.

But working from home, says Shipley, whose company meets at Zoka seven days a week, can become monotonous and isolating. Many independent workers looking to get out of the house want a flexible office-like environment minus the pricey lease. Thus, cafés, coffeehouses and co-working spaces—community office settings offering desks, the internet and other standard amenities to mobile workers at hourly rates—are stepping up and changing the office as we know it.

Shauna Brennan, meanwhile, hopes that My Day Office (MDO), a co-working space she opened in a Belton high-rise last September, will attract Shipley and others like him. "Mobile workers are looking for that kind of water-cooler place," Brennan says. "Sometimes it's a coffee shop, and sometimes you need something a little more formal."

Marketed as the "workplace of the future," the 5,000-square-foot MDO features floor-to-ceiling windows, an open work area, individual workstations, state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, conference rooms and a cyber café, as well as every office amenity imaginable (internet access, fax machines, printers, copiers, shipping services, etc.). Mobile workers can walk in off the street and pay an hourly rate (\$10 per hour, with a \$25 minimum), while monthly members pay more (dues vary) for extras such as rented mailboxes and license-hanging privileges. But amenities aren't the only factors attracting mobile workers; MDO also offers homemade cookies on Fridays.

Both Shipley and Brennan are at the forefront of different aspects of the co-working movement, which is generally described as a collaborative space for developers, writers and independent workers. Originally the domain of free-agent programmers and writers, co-working spaces, such as MDO—with its flexibility and its low-cost, communal setup—have turned out to be a good option for startups that don't want to sign a lease but

TOP 5

Flexible Design Tips

If you want workspace flexibility, you don't necessarily have to work out of a coffee house. Many firms with conventional offices are heeding workers' calls for communal spaces. **The Hacker Group** (hackergroup.com), for example, will move to the heart of downtown Seattle in May after 21 years in Bellevue. Each of the three floors that the advertising firm will occupy in the Financial Center building on Fourth Avenue and Seneca Street will include a different layout, tailored to meet the needs of each department. **Spyro Kourtis**, president and CEO of the Hacker Group, shares with us what his company learned while planning the design:

TREAT PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS.

"Each employee deserves equal respect, but that doesn't always mean equal treatment. Our account managers are on the phone with clients all day, so they need offices with doors. In the creative department, workstations in an open environment make better sense to allow for brainstorming."

KEEP IT FUN.

"We were told to keep employee amenities at a minimum, but we think our team is a more important resource than the facilities they work in. So, we added a few fun things, like a game room and a café for them."

DESIGN FOR TOMORROW.

"We put our green philosophy front and center, choosing LEED-certified building materials, such as recycled carpeting and concrete floors that use fewer adhesives. Interior walls are also made of glass, which lets in natural light and saves on electricity."



CONSIDER HOW YOU WORK.

"Collaboration is extremely important for us, so there will be plenty of meeting spaces—conference rooms of all sizes and informal seating areas scattered around the space."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE DIFFERENT.

"Most advertising agencies feel they need to show they have an eye for what's hip. But rather than try to look like something we're not, we went for a classic, modern look and color choices that are both contemporary and timeless."



Hanging out at the U-District's Zoka coffee shop is just another "day at the office" for Will Shipley of Delicious Monster.



Chris Haddad, who used to work from home, prefers the human contact he finds at Office Nomads, which allows him to set his own hours.

Nomad No. 1

CHRIS HADDAD IS PART OF THE INDEPENDENT WORKER REVOLUTION.

For a long time, Chris Haddad, a self-employed marketing consultant and professional copywriter, had little reason to leave his one-bedroom condominium—or even put on pants.

But, Office Nomads, a Capitol Hill-based co-working space, has recently changed all that.

After working exclusively from his home for the past four years, Haddad, a Boston native, became Office Nomads' first paid member after the co-working space opened in November 2007. Office Nomads, which boasts the tagline "Individuality Without Isolation," is now where Haddad, 30, spends a lot of his time.

To get a mental picture of the Office Nomads space, imagine a large coffee shop full of tables and chairs. The back room, which Nomads man-

agement has dubbed "the café," has couches, working tables and three separate meeting spaces.

"My desk is here. My computer is here. Everything is here," he says.

Haddad says he pays about \$475 per month to have his own dedicated desk and access to the space 24 hours a day. He also gets free use of the meeting rooms, use of the printing and fax machines, high-speed wireless internet and lots of coffee. It has been reported that beer is sometimes found in the Nomads refrigerator and it is common for interested Nomads to meet in a conference room for a brown-bag session of shooting the breeze.

The result is a laid-back, collegial environment for independent workers. "I work weird hours," he says. "I can come in on weekends or I'll come in at two in the morning."

While Haddad says he looked for office space in years past, he admits he didn't want to "get stuck" with a lease. "It was always too expensive," he says, "and you had to sign con-

tracts and all this other stuff."

Haddad—whose clients include Microsoft, Washington Mutual and Carbon 56—also got sick of working from his living room. Although he's quite fond of his new work digs, Haddad admits, it took a little getting used to. For the first few days, he says, "I kept being worried that someone was going to yell at me for checking my personal e-mails."

Aside from working out of an open, 5,000-square-foot space, Haddad especially enjoys the social perks of his new co-working site, like playing board games with fellow office nomads. "I have a great little community of folks to hang out and work with," he says. Haddad claims he's much more productive now than he was before joining Office Nomads. "It's all the good things about having an office and none of the bad," he says.

A FLEDGLING MOVEMENT

The roots of the new co-working movement are generally traced back to the 1999 opening of the Tribeca-based Nutopia Workspace in New York City. Nutopia, whose tag line is "A Different Way of Working," provides a "valuable setting for a new type of community—one that avoids the uninspired mindset of conventional executive office suites, yet provides a professional, inviting and exclusive setting."

Today, there are about three dozen co-working spaces worldwide, according to *Fortune Small Business*. In the United States,





Shauna Brennan, founder of My Day Office in Belltown, says she plans on opening at least three other co-working branches in Seattle.



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SOUND SOURCES

If your business needs space but you fear the idea of leasing an office, one of the following shared office options in the Puget Sound area might just be the ticket. If you are looking for even more Spartan surroundings, a local coffee shop might be the answer:

+ **My Day Office** (2820 Elliott Ave.; 206.853.9402; mydayoffice.com)

+ **Office Nomads** (1617 Boylston Ave., Second Floor; 206.323.6500; officenomads.com)

+ **Suite133** (703 Pacific Ave., Tacoma; 984.02; 253.223.6451; suite133.com)

+ **Zoka Coffee** (1220 W. Nickerson St.; 866.ZOKA.NOW; zokacoffee.com)

co-working sites have popped up in Denver, Philadelphia, Portland and San Francisco, among other cities. Internationally, co-working venues are flourishing in Toronto, Vancouver, B.C., and Paris.

Meanwhile, the Silicon Valley-based Institute for the Future recently pegged co-working as a trend to watch during the next decade.

Bothell-based Arbutus Software is a prime example. Founded by Wayne and Karen Bishop, the five-year-old startup specializing in custom web development has never really had a home office. Since the company's inception, Bishop and his two employees have been working virtually, playing musical chairs at various libraries and coffee shops. But recently Bishop decided it was time to, in part, give up the wandering life.

While still skittish about signing a lease, Wayne and Karen Bishop felt they needed a space that would help them foster team collaboration for development of the company's products, such as Joint Contact. Last December, Bishop became a corporate member of MDO. He paid a one-time initiation fee of \$1,250. Additionally, every month he pays \$150 for himself and \$50 each for his two employees. The fee allows Bishop to use MDO anytime and his two associates can visit the office three days a week.

Bishop says he'd been waiting for something like MDO to come along. "When we set up shop, we wanted to have a place that was conducive to working but also a place where we could collaborate and be proud to show to our customers and partners so they would do business with us," Bishop says. "The nice thing about this place [MDO] is that I get to work with my team in a collaborative space."

Bishop also says that co-working appears to boost the company's productivity. Things that

would sometimes take half a morning because of the number of back-and-forth e-mails required to communicate, can be taken care of immediately. "I've been telling my wife it's almost like night and day," Bishop says.

So far, he maintains the only downside has been the lack of whiteboards. "Usually, in an engineering environment there are always whiteboards because people are always talking about things. They always have ideas."

There are some other obvious drawbacks to the coffee-shop environment, such as the lack of privacy and control over one's space. Also, these offices may not be the best places to impress a client. Over at Zoka, Shipley occasionally wishes he could listen to his own music or decorate the walls the way he'd prefer.

But for both Bishop and Shipley, the pros of co-working far outweigh the cons. And Bishop is optimistic that co-working from MDO will help his startup's bottom line. "Being in a place like this" he says, "is definitely going to help our company grow in 2008."

LIFE IN BALANCE

More Spartan and philosophical in nature than MDO, Capitol Hill-based Office Nomads is another kind of co-working space. The space, which opened last November, is not as posh as MDO. Members pay a monthly fee of \$475, plus a first and last month's deposit. Members receive various amenities, have personal keys made for them, and have day and night access to the 5,000-square-foot open workspace. Nomads' daily drop-in rate is \$25.

"Co-working embraces individuality without sacrificing community," says Office Nomads co-founder Jacob Sayles, who also works as a Java programmer three days a week. When asked why co-working is taking off locally, Sayles explains, "People are starved for community. In many cases, they don't even know what they are hungering for, and when they learn about co-working, it just clicks."

He should know. For four years, Sayles ran a free taxi service and realized how disconnected people are from one another. "We have this culture where we're isolated; it's under the guise of convenience. You have your drive-through windows and your automated check-out stands," Sayles says. "I think it's important to get people thinking about community because it is so overlooked."

Sayles' partner and Office Nomads co-founder Susan Evans says co-working encourages sustainability and life balance. "It's about allowing people to work closer to their homes in order to decrease their commute and maximize the quality time they have at home, as well as to be more

efficient in their work life," she says.

The ever-evolving Office Nomads has also partnered with Biznik, an event-centric social networking group for independent professionals founded in November 2005 by Dan McComb and his wife Lara Eve Fetlin.

"We're a sponsor on their website," says Sayles. "They have us listed in their event section and we offer up our space for Biznik events," he adds.

Biznik—whose membership has swelled upward of 5,000 members in a little more than two years—emphasizes "collaboration over competition."

Co-working, meanwhile, has found its way to Tacoma as well. Last September, when Shauna Brennan was putting the finishing touches on MDO in Seattle, Derek Young and two other co-founders were unveiling Suite133.

Young, who quit his corporate job in February 2007 to work full time on "Exit133," a Tacoma-inspired blog, says, "I quickly discovered a need for social interaction and that I couldn't work very well with my dogs and refrigerator nearby." Subsequently, Young started working out of coffee shops and wi-fi-enabled restaurants. After only two weeks of that routine, he realized he needed an office.

Located on Pacific Avenue in Tacoma, Suite133 occupies 1,700 square feet in a vintage brick building that, for many years, was the location of a brothel, Young says.

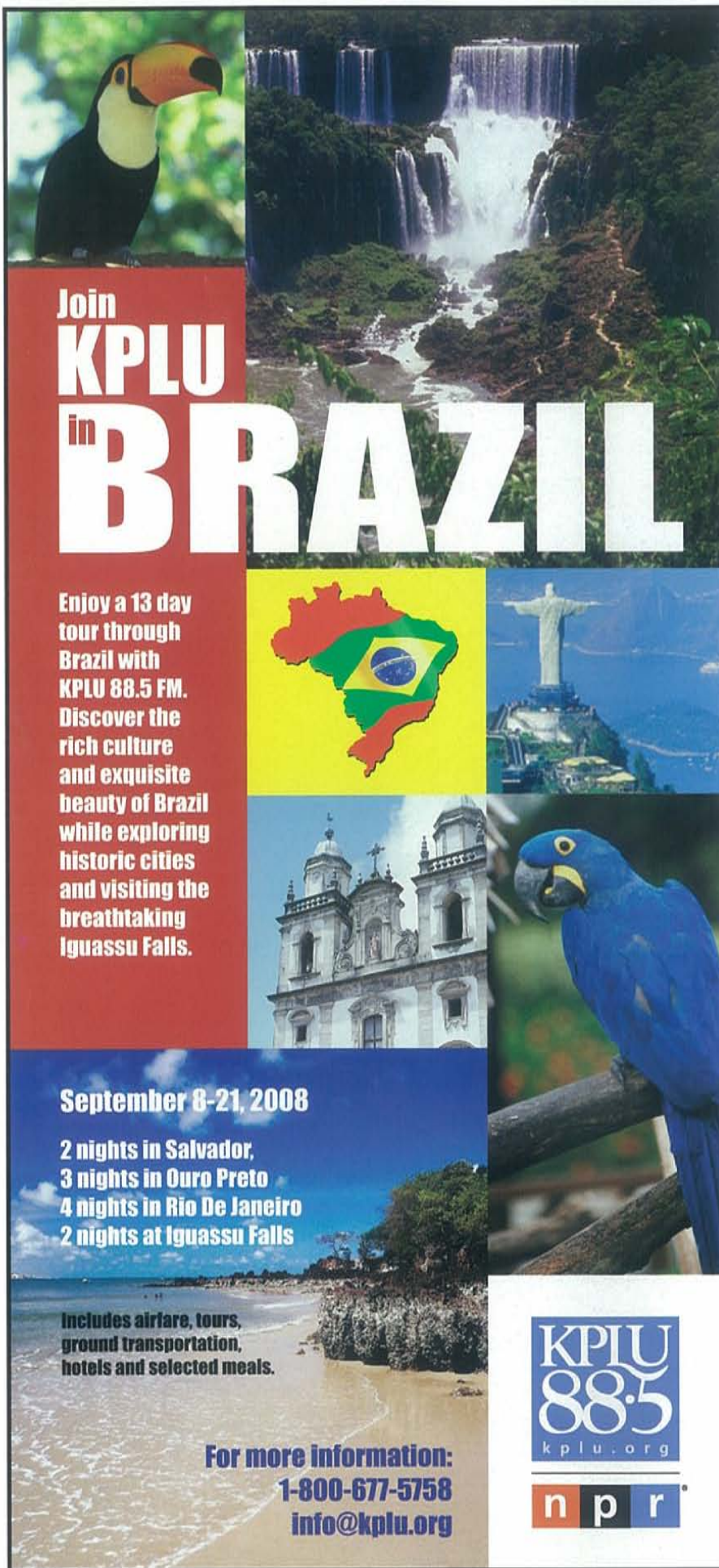
"We're a pretty minimalist space," he says. For \$250 a month, members have access to a room full of tables and two conference rooms that are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Suite133 is also equipped with a printer, copier and fax machine. A stereo is controlled via iTunes over the wireless network. Young and his crew are currently working out their drop-in policy.

The response, says Young, has been positive. "Nearly 100 percent of people that visit the space want to be a part of it," he says.

Young, who expects Suite133 to turn a profit by the end of September, says the benefits of co-working include "networking opportunities galore" and "social interaction with a community of people [who] are trying to make a living doing the type of work that they enjoy."

It remains to be seen whether co-working in its various forms is a fad or the beginning of a new and successful way to use office space. For now, at least, companies like Delicious Monster and Arbutus Software benefit from the freedom, low prices and community that co-working affords.

"People want to belong to something," MDO's Brennan says. "And there's a sense of community in the work place." **SBM**



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Shauna Brennan, owner of My Day Office, is one of the leaders in Seattle's "co-working" movement (page 29).

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