

Shared work spaces – a great WFA opportunity

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The WFA concept suggests that it is both possible and feasible to literally work from anywhere – on a plane, a train, a ship (with some issues relating to WIFI access), in a hotel, an apartment – for that matter anywhere that has WIFI connection. The notion of a shared working space – available commercially – provides another excellent option that is well worth considering.

The working from anywhere (WFA) phenomenon – or at least the growth of the idea in more recent times – has also highlighted other options such as shared work spaces that can be scaled up or down depending on daily, weekly, monthly (or even longer) requirements. One such option is **wework**.

Working from home provides a simple and straight forward option for a single person or even a working couple. An interesting development is with regard to new homes being built – that now include one and often two office spaces for this very purpose. Bedroom conversions have also been a feature driven by working from home opportunities. In many cases the option is ideal – but productivity can be restricted with interruptions and diversions.

Working collaboratively, though, provides more of a challenge – and especially if that collaboration is changing on a day to day basis. For some digital nomads having a retreat or quiet space away from the pressures of the home also presents challenges. When travelling around the globe hotel and apartment scenarios are often less than ideal. There are solutions available, though, that provide both flexibility and stability at the same time.

Strategic Locations

Wework (established in the New York in 2008 with facilities around the world) have four (4) set-ups in Melbourne and five (5) in Sydney. There are no Adelaide options at the moment (this will change no doubt). All nine (90 of the Melbourne/Sydney facilities are located in the CBD with easy access to public transport or bicycle paths (also a growing phenomenon).

All four of the Melbourne based centres have easy access and a range of support facilities. For the purpose of the discussion I have selected the *Exhibition Street premises in Melbourne* as my sample for consideration.

Ideally located in the heart of the Melbourne CBD –



The building is a short walk (3 minutes) from Parliament Station (city loop stop) with easy access. Located to the east of the CBD it has excellent café and dining options – ideal for breaks and meetings.



Working space options

In my view the most impressive element is the variety of space options available – and with flexible (changeable) opportunities and costs as needs vary and change. There are five (5) options within this particular facility –

Private Office for up to 2 people that is move in ready and lockable. The space includes furniture, mail and package handling, credit towards booking meeting rooms and a printing allowance. The setting is functional and comfortable.



Private Office for up to 3 people with the same add-ons.



There is even a window view option available -



The cost variation is minimal and a lot depends on specific needs and comfort levels. There are equipment hiring options – but mostly users bring their own devices.

There is a hot desk option -



Shared space facility -



Meeting room availability -



The space options are extensive and can be adapted and/or changed as circumstances change (working independently, working with others, working with a group). This represents, to my mind, the most important issue – flexibility. As noted, the costs vary according to choices – but the plans are reasonable and competitive.

Other support facilities

Essential to all current work is the need for speed – that is high speed **WIFI**. From the perspective of a digital nomad WIFI is the most essential element for effective work. Having worked in various apartments and hotels throughout the world – the speed has varied – and this can be debilitating especially when it comes to internet based meetings – Zoom, TEAMS. Access to high speed WIFI then is imperative.

The access to **meetings rooms** – when needed – is an added bonus. Whether weekly or monthly meetings with colleagues provide a valuable source of focus and interaction. For the lone wolf – the opportunity to meet with clients is a genuine option. I have on occasion rented conference/meetings rooms in hotels – these have often been quite expensive and often not ideal for purpose.

Onsite support staff – particularly with matters relating to IT – are a bonus gift. So much time can be wasted trying to troubleshoot problems alone. I suspect we have all experienced the time consuming problem solving involved with computer glitches, difficulties in accessing the internet, and general data projector problems. Having someone on site to call and problem solve is a genuinely positive thing.

Cleaning services – particularly in this COVID transition period – are vitally important. There is a certain degree of relief around knowing that the facility you are using (especially when sharing) is regularly cleaned and refreshed. Attention to detail in this space is essential – and having professional cleaners on site is an added bonus.

Printing services are also very useful – if and when needed. In truth I have essentially walked away from hard copying – but on the odd occasion where it is essential it is good to have a facility available. I think the shift away from printed copies has been a positive thing in my line of work and has certainly changed (for the better) the way I present and support.

Common spaces encourage interaction and also provide a degree of socialisation – if and when sought after. Using a shared work space can often be very isolating – especially in the single desk scenarios. The opportunity to wander to the café style common spaces and interact (even briefly) with other nomads is a positive thing – and is available as needed. Meetings can also be held in the common spaces – and often this can be more productive than isolated meetings rooms – a lot depends on the nature and number of participants.

Parking, outdoor space options, bike storage, showers, mothers' rooms and wellness rooms are also available as required. The 3 additional spaces are extremely useful. The growth phenomenon in Melbourne is the number of cyclists now commuting. Having a safe and secure place for your bicycle is a very handy aspect. Privacy and fresh air are also premium needs for many – and these are catered for accordingly.

A genuine working option for the digital nomad

In circumstances where apartment and hotel options are not workable the notion of these hired facilities is a splendid alternative. On closer examination of **wework** premises in London, Melbourne and Sydney the opportunities are both cost effective, comfortable and viable.





Some of the spaces viewed are quirky and others inviting. The facilities are very well maintained and managed. The big issues – for me at least – are the range of options available, the affordability and the flexibility in place. The **wework** premises (and there are a number of other like options) are well worth exploring and provide the perfect haven for a day, a week, a month or even long term for the digital nomad.

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