

# Groundwork – shared office environment that provides teamwork, networking and inspiration for today's business minded

America is the land of opportunity and choices. A first world economy presents ample opportunity to strike out on a business venture of your own as opposed to working for someone else. Many people have grown frustrated with the old business model developed in the 1950s of working a "9-5" for the "man." Being one of many on an assembly line and getting little recognition for hard work or extra effort while massive profits are made for a small group at the top isn't a highly rewarding way to make a living. The ratio of pay often does not match the amount of effort. While there was a time when this model was effective and rewarding, times have changed. Drastically.

Job security used to mean finding a company that offered benefits, an annual cost of living raise, and some type of investment options. However, the reality is that lay-offs, cutthroat firings, and corporate buy-outs mean that ones job is anything but secure. And as the world economy "flattens," factors like outsourcing and offshoring – the relocation of warehouses, plants and headquarters, lend even more instability to that "security."



*Groundwork, co-founded  
by Cape Cod natives  
Sarah Athanas  
(Director of Marketing  
and Business  
Development) and Dena  
Haden (Director of  
Sales and Community  
Management.)*

While there are bastions of companies where the old model actually does apply, their ranks are thinning. For many the new job security is working for oneself. Some find security in entrepreneurship – whether through diversity of projects, or confidence in one's abilities that your effort will determine whether you will have a pay that week or not. Many find comfort in knowing that if they want a raise or more money, they will need more clients, have to work more hours or be more clever and efficient.

In the past 10 years the internet's popularity has grown exponentially. Once relegated to the realm of geeks, hackers and nerds – these days everyone is digitally connected. Men, women, children, elderly, organizations, corporations, and just about any other demographic uses the internet to garner information, promote their business, sell products and more. We have reached a point where a business simply must have an online presence, even if you do the vast majority of your sales out of a brick and mortar facility.

This is why in the past few years, the cafe and home have become the “offices” for many new and experienced entrepreneurs. People who struck out on their own needed a facility to plan, organize, meet with employees, have sales meetings, or anything else that a typical business would need a roof for. The home wasn't the perfect place for it – too small, too many distractions – so people naturally gravitated

to cafes. When you factor in that there is a “kitchen” in-house, you can have breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks and all the caffeine you need to keep in motion, the cafe made much more sense.

The problem with this is that the cafe has become increasingly more difficult to function in. An inability to find a seat can throw a monkey wrench in an important meeting with a potential client. Not having a large enough table means you’ll have to cancel that team sales meeting or relocate it. Have a table? Bummer – no outlet means you have to clear out in 45 minutes when your laptop battery fizzles. The din is too much, too loud or too distracting? It can hurt the focus of the meeting or affect comprehension of your listeners.



*Whether one or many, starting up or already established like Ted-X: Groundwork is a productive environment that has many benefits.*

That’s the tip of the iceberg, but you get the picture. When you are getting a business idea off the ground, or have an established business where you need to focus on instruction and production, you want a quiet facility, with plenty of seating. You want a place where you can stop to refuel with some coffee or fare and only be “down” for 10 minutes when the crunch is on. In essence, you want all the positive aspects that you get when you work out of a cafe, but none of the

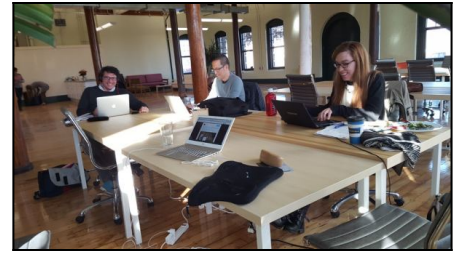
negatives.

All ideas must evolve or die. The new entrepreneur took a back seat in the cafes and was forced to mingle at the expense of production. Now they or we, are large enough to make some noise and be noticed. Change was in the air. This is where coworking comes in. Simply put this a shared work environment. A common facility that mimics the old corporate offices e.g. tables, chairs, markerboards, conference rooms, a break room, etc.

The American workplace has come full circle: from a facility where the many make a lot for the few, to migrating to cafes, and now returning to that office space but with a completely new structure to it. Instead of working for “them” we are working for ourselves – whether as individuals or business partners. I’m a big fan of passion. I like progressive ideas. Coworking spaces are a place where you will find passion and progressive ideas in spades.

Now, I’ve been in some coworking spaces that were tiny, that were just spaces with tables, a few chairs and a spotty wifi connection. I’ve been to some pretty horrendous spaces in my day. The coworking facility has morphed into a legitimate work environment and there is no better facility on the South Coast than Groundwork, co-founded by Cape Cod natives Sarah Athanas and Dena Haden.

The idea came to Sarah while living and freelancing in Buenos Aires – a large city saturated with cafe entrepreneurs and shared workspaces. Upon returning to Massachusetts it didn’t take her long to pine for the energy and sense of community – those intangibles that make coworking far superior to a home or cafe office. Being surrounded by other creative freelancers, knowledgeable business owner sharing their enthusiasm, ideas and inspiration is an invaluable aspect to a shared office environment like Groundwork.



*In addition to membership, conference rooms can be rented, one can purchase a day pass, and there are special corporate memberships.*

Further inspiration came to Sarah when she saw what Dena was doing in community building and with her art critique group. "I thought, why don't we work together and build something close to home? So Dena and I really set out to build the workspace that we dreamed of working in ourselves."

Their objective is to reach reach entrepreneurs, freelancers, and people who work independently in the area. Having first-hand experience of the benefits of such an environment they are excited to be able to actually provide it and watch people and companies prosper and grow as a result.

So how does a coworking space actually work? I'll leave Dena's words unchanged since she says it far better than I can "A coworking space is a shared office space that typically works on a membership model. For a monthly fee, members can work in the space and get fast internet, printing and copying, free coffee and snacks, and use of conference and meeting rooms. But the real benefit of coworking is the community that forms when people have repeated, face to face interaction in the same space every day. Because members work across a broad range of industries and skill sets, collaborations happen naturally."

Whether you are a planning a new business, an established

freelancer, have a short-term project (non-members can rent conference rooms for a reasonable hourly rate), or need a place to meet uninterrupted and surrounded by people with a wealth of experience you need a place like Groundwork. While I enjoy working out of cafes, when we at New Bedford Guide need to hunker down, focus, and be really productive we know there is nowhere better than Groundwork. We get more done in a shorter period of time at Groundwork than anywhere else.

If you were a member of Groundwork when they first opened their “beta” space on the second floor of the Quest Center, you may recall that it was small – though brightly lit, and had a large enough kitchen. If you haven’t been there since, you are missing out: they have grown the community into the ground floor of the Quest Center now. It’s a much larger space (5,000 sq. ft.) in terms of size, seating, and amenities, including the kitchen area.



*Groundwork is more than a shared workspace: you will network, inspire one another, share ideas and get feedback from other members.*

Membership comes in three forms, Part-Time, Full-Time and Dedicated Desk. More flexible options are also available in day prices, use of the conference rooms, and there is special pricing for corporations. All memberships include access to members-only workshops and events, online networking with the

Workbar Network, free snacks and locally roasted coffee, and copying and printing. You can request a tour online [here](#).

In addition to the coworking services that are offered at Groundwork, there is a genuine altruistic focus on the community. Spend one minute with either Sarah or Dena and you will see that this is not simply a business idea. This is a lifestyle for them – one that they are enthusiastic and passionate about. They schedule many events to bring the Groundwork community together. This can be anything like a fun pie contest, a music jam night, or workshops on creativity, marketing, accounting, etc. Groundwork! is like a big family and they work hard to make all of the members feel welcome.

This is not lip service – when Sarah discovered that a few of the Groundwork members were musicians she and Dena scheduled a “jam night” a few weeks ago. That was a proud moment for the duo – while laughing and playing songs it struck Sarah how diverse a range of people were members – different age groups, social status, and political ideals – all of whom were together and enjoying each other’s company.

Groundwork is a fantastic facility – one that should be on every freelancer’s or entrepreneur’s “must check-out” list. One visit and you’ll ask yourself why you punished yourself for so long at home or at a cafe. The wifi is always up and fast. There’s always someone smarter than you in some field milling about. There’s always an ear willing to listen to your ideas and give you feedback. There’s always someone to network with. Members are automatically enrolled in the Chamber of Commerce at no additional cost.

It’s an environment that no start-up, established business, or freelancer should be without.

*Sarah Athanas studied art at UCSB and then directed and produced a documentary while living in Chilean Patagonia. She then transitioned to marketing for a language and travel*

*company and eventually directed a team of web designers and developers based in Buenos Aires.*

Dena Haden has an undergraduate degree in Painting from UMass Dartmouth and a Masters of Fine Arts from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She then went on to teach art and design at Newbury College and at several nonprofits in Dorchester and on Cape Cod. She is also the director of the Boston Critique group, an artist collaborative that fosters community and growth for working artists in the greater Boston area.

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