Businesses Can’t Run from Kitchen Tables Forever. Here’s Why Coworking Will Make a Comeback.

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The pandemic has rapidly disrupted our marketplace like almost nothing else in modern history, with many companies going bankrupt while others were forced to radically reshape their operations overnight. Some industries have fared far better than others, with certain sectors of the economy being wiped out in the blink of an eye. Coworking arrangements, for instance, were some of the first commercial operations to go under when social distancing efforts became seriously practiced, largely because they were replaced with remote work arrangements that helped limit the spread of Covid-19.

The pandemic won’t last forever, though, and when it finally subsides a number of key sectors are going to come roaring back to life. Here’s an exploration of how coworking can succeed after the pandemic passes us by, and what companies can do now to take advantage of this forthcoming development.

Remote workers can’t stay at home forever

There’s no denying that remote work arrangements are currently keeping our economy alive despite the economic turmoil brought about by Covid-19. Workers who have previously never operated from the comforts of their own home are now managing their

responsibilities from the living room, and in many instances, they're finding out that they like this workstyle. Nevertheless, it's imperative to realize that most remote work arrangements were assembled in an ad hoc fashion on the basis of necessity and that many of them weren't built to last. This means that remote work will likely remain popular in the future, but that remote work arrangements will manifest themselves in a very different fashion than what we're seeing right now.

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So many people are enjoying remote work arrangements that the *New York Times* recently explored the possibility that many of these workers may never return to their traditional offices. In many cases, however, those workers who love their current work-from-home arrangements are privileged white-collar professionals who enjoy such luxuries as a home office or a similar dedicated workspace where they can focus on their responsibilities. While it's true that many homes built in the near future will be replete with home offices to allow more professionals to manage their duties from home, it's undeniably true that many people can't maintain their ongoing work arrangements forever for want of space, or simply a lack of peace and quiet.

This is why we can expect the demand for coworking space to skyrocket once the pandemic begins to slowly but surely abate under the direction of professional health experts. Remote workers have to work somewhere, after all, and many of them will find in the long run that their homes are only good for ad hoc, emergency scenarios. Others will want a professional space near their home — but closer than their former office — to manage their professional responsibilities. Those with children will find it particularly important to have a coworking space nearby, as raising newborns and toddlers in the same space where you have to raise profit margins is far more difficult than it may seem to the child-free.

Mental health will become an issue

The pandemic is chiefly a public health threat because it can literally take the lives of those who are infected with Covid-19. As we quickly discovered in the early days of the lockdown, however, there are many other threats to our health that we must be aware of. While Covid-19 is a dangerous respiratory disease, its continued spread has also led to an increase in deaths elsewhere. Medical professionals predict that more than 10,000 cancer deaths over the next decade will be a direct result of COVID-19 related delays, illustrating how one virus can lead to a massive change to our healthcare system that leads to unexpected casualties.

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It’s thus important to realize that this pandemic is more than a respiratory threat. It’s been taking a huge toll on the collective mental health of our society, for instance, as many people are being deprived of the social contact they need to remain fully functional. Video conferences and other means of digital communication are helping to bridge the isolation gap, but there’s no denying that these technologies simply can’t match the effect of seeing your friends, loved ones, and coworkers in a face-to-face fashion.

For many years, clever entrepreneurs have understood that high-stress companies must invest in the mental wellbeing of their workers if they want to remain profitable for very long. What too few people understand is that current economic conditions make nearly every business a high-stress operation; spending most of our days cooped up indoors is threatening the mental wellbeing of many workers in a wide variety of industries, which will necessitate previously unimaginable levels of investment in our mental health. Coworking can succeed after the pandemic by arguing that these arrangements

allow companies to maintain social distancing amongst their employees while also providing them with some interpersonal human interaction that’s necessary for the preservation of mental wellbeing. Those businesses which fail to take this into consideration will quickly find themselves depleted of a capable workforce before losing ground to their competitors.

Networking will remain important

Finally, it’s crucial to understand that networking will remain incredibly important in the marketplace of tomorrow. This means that professionals will need to maintain and grow their personal networks to pursue future career opportunities, but it’s also meant to illustrate how important networking is for small businesses, too. Local companies depend upon one another for growth in a wide variety of ways, and businesses that are currently depending entirely upon remote work arrangements are struggling to connect to local business networks that previously offered them unparalleled access to capital and expertise. If you review a list of ways that small businesses benefit from coworking arrangements, you’ll quickly see that aesthetically-pleasing workspaces and employee productivity are some of the most compelling reasons to adopt this model. More important, however, is the fact that coworking arrangements allow entrepreneurs and professionals to tap into local networks that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. This means that they can get their hands on financial opportunities that they would otherwise be bereft of; otherwise, their business could plummet to the bottom of the marketplace when it should instead be soaring upwards.

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Those who would normally be competing with one another are, through coworking spaces, coordinating and cooperating with one another like never before. This means that a dearth of

coworking arrangements in the near future will frustrate many business owners who have come to depend upon such arrangements in order to maintain their access to otherwise inaccessible financial institutions or opportunities. It would thus be incredibly foolish to argue that this temporary pandemic will spell a permanent end to the budding coworking industry.

Entrepreneurs and corporate professionals are correct in assuming that coworking may suffer incredibly from the pandemic. They would be wrong to insist that this is the end of coworking entirely, however, as it’s a simple matter of fact that this emerging industry will be reborn in the post-pandemic period and become stronger and more useful than ever before. Whether we’re talking about enabling companies to bolster the mental health of their workforces or pointing out unique networking opportunities that businesses in coworking arrangements can enjoy, there are a plethora of reasons to believe that coworking will survive and thrive in the aftermath of Covid-19.

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