COWORKING SPACES AND SKILLS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE WORK IN THEM

Rasa Pocevičienė
Šiauliai State College
Lithuania

Rūta Gavėnavičienė
Šiauliai State College
Lithuania

Annotation
Constant change in all spheres of life, new challenges for humanity, and at the same time new opportunities to overcome them, rapidly evolving ICT, the increasing use of artificial intelligence, even in areas traditionally associated only with direct human participation and action. Naturally, all this is changing, and will change even more in the future, not only the nature of work and activities, but also the environments and spaces in which those activities take place. One such environment / space is the coworking space. Coworking is the new path of melding life and work in a sustainable fashion. It is the global linchpin at the intersection of real estate, technology and community, which will shape the way we work in the future. Although the advantages of coworking spaces have been repeatedly mentioned in both practical and theoretical discourse, there is still little in-depth research on this phenomenon, especially on what skills are needed for constructive and successful work in them and what role higher education institutions should play in this context in educating a new generation of managers and entrepreneurs.
Keywords: coworking, coworking space, business administration, self-directed learning and working competencies, communication, collaboration.

Introduction

Constant change in all spheres of life, new challenges for humanity, and at the same time new opportunities to overcome them, rapidly evolving ICT, the increasing use of artificial intelligence, even in areas traditionally associated only with direct human participation and action. Naturally, all this is changing, and will change even more in the future, not only the nature of work and activities, but also the environments and spaces in which those activities take place. One such environment / space is the coworking space. The first space of this type was founded in San Francisco in 2005 by entrepreneur Brad Neuberg and called "The San Francisco Coworking Space". Despite the fact that in the beginning it was open only 2 days a week, it was a major innovation that fundamentally changed the approach to business organization and administartion, specifically to the places and environments where that business could be conducted. Occurring just over 15 years ago in one particular location, in one particular city, now coworking spaces are popping up in most major cities with an annual growth rate of 24.2%. It is predicted that there will be more than 30,432 coworking spaces and over 5.1 million coworking members by the year 2022. (What is coworking, 2018).

Although the advantages of coworking spaces have been repeatedly mentioned in both practical and theoretical discourses (Everything you need to know about coworking spaces, 2020; The 7 most underrated benefits of coworking spaces, 2019; What Is Coworking, 2018, etc.), the deeper research is still limited, so this article aims to at least partially fill this gap.

Research problem

The object of the research - the coworking spaces and the skills are needed for constuctive and successful work in them .

The aim of the research is to analyze the coworking spaces and to clear up what skills are needed for constuctive and successful work in them .

Research tasks:

1. Define the concept of the coworking spaces;

2. Identify the main features of coworking spaces and thier advantages in comparing with tradicitional working spaces in companies and organizations;

3. To determine the main skills needed for constuctive and successful work in them.

Research methodology

Justification of the investigation and enforcement procedures. The analysis of collaborative environments and the analysis of the skills required to work in them is based on the analysis of theoretical and practical discourse. The areas of cooperation and their creation are a relatively new phenomenon in the world, especially in Lithuania; therefore the analysis of theoretical discourse was chosen to substantiate the idea, the concept of cooperation, its advantages and limitations, and the challenges arising from their work. The analysis of practical discourse and empirical data provided opportunities to take a deeper and more detailed look at the competencies necessary for successful work in such spaces, which in a sense can be identified as general competencies of self-employment and learning. It is the possession of these competencies that was one of the essential preconditions for successful learning due to the sudden transition from the pandemic situation and the transition to universal distance learning and work. The analysis of the latter was based on the operationalization of self-directed learning competencies previously prepared and published by one of the authors of the article, R. Pocevičienė.

Investigation period. The analysis of theoretical discourse took place in 2020 and 2021 at the beginning. An empirical study was conducted in 2020 on June, immediately after the relaxation of quarantine conditions, so that the acquired academic, organizational, emotional experience of working (studying) at a distance would be as vivid as possible. Later, an analysis of practical discourse was also performed.

Research methods. The general research methods were used to substantiate the research - analysis and synthesis of scientific literature; questionnaire. Data analysis was performed by selecting content analysis criteria and quantitative and qualitative amalysis of empirical data.

The survey sample. 82 students of social and business and public management studies of Šiauliai State College participated in the empirical research. In the absence of significant differences across different demographic criteria, their responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in a pooled sample.

The concept of coworking space

The idea of coworking spaces is based on the essential functions of any business, and in a broader context and of any activity in general: communication and especially collaboration or coworking, which many theorists and practitioners perceive as a special, crucial activity as a guarantor of constructive action and success in almost all activities. According to N. Večkienė and I. Dirgėlienė (2010), collaboration is described as an activity when specialists from different or the same fields find a common, most acceptable way to solve a problem for a client. M. Teresevičienė and G. Gedvilienė (2000) name collaboration as an integral part of human existence, which is inseparable from human activity and ability to learn by applying one's experience, and believes that collaboration must take place constantly and with everyone. Equally important in this context is communication. According to M. Teresevičienė and G. Gedvilienė (2000), every human activity is like constant communication: we all know how to speak one language, we have laws that guide us, we live between people or we spend time in different communities linked by common goals. Because all social systems are based on the coordination of the actions of individuals, the pursuit of common goals, we also live in this world, to connect with each other. According to scientists (Teresevičienė, Gedvilienė, 2000), each individual must be able to communicate with each other and share their experiences with others, therefore communication and collaboration are integral parts of human existence. Proponents of collaborative management theory also emphasize the importance of collaboration, arguing that the best results can only be achieved through collaboration, and collaborative work or according to new concept coworking not only promotes people-to-people relationships but also improves company performance (Tariq, Aslam, Habib, Siddique & Khan, 2012). Perhaps because companies, businesses sometimes invest quite a lot of financial, material, or even human resources in buildings, in the design and equipment of various spaces, as well as in ICT in order to create the most effective conditions for constructive communication and collaboration, although, in fact, they are not always fully utilized afterwards.

On the other hand, business today is conducted quite differently than it was in previous decades. The Internet and other information and communication technologies have significantly changed its nature, organization and management, but jobs, work places are still very traditional, which in part slows down the pace of work and hampers business development, also due to the investments already made in creating and maintaining a suitable business environment. Which in turn, especially for small businesses, not to mention start-ups, freelancers or self-employed people who usually set up and run a business in their home environment. Meanwhile, new requirements also require new organizational and managerial

solutions. One such solution would be areas of cooperation, collaboration and coworking. The very word "space for coworking" says that it is a kind of common space for working together. In a sense, this is the case in the increasingly collaborative world of business, where many different and self-employed entrepreneurs and business people can come together to pursue their own goals. In other words, different employees work in a common space - in coworking space. Works as a community connected by labor relations and as is constantly changing and flexible, but in any case the community. (Everything you need to know about coworking spaces, 2020; The 7 most underrated benefits of coworking spaces, 2019, etc.)

Coworking is the new path of melding life and work in a sustainable fashion. It is the global linchpin at the intersection of real estate, technology and community, which will shape the way we work in the future. (What is coworking, 2018). On the other hand, coworking is not just about the sharing of infrastructure and cost, it is about belonging to a community, accessibility and sustainability. Coworking is the new way of working and sharing. Coworking spaces are designed to provide a productive and collaborative environment for their dynamic inhabitants, and created without corporate constraints on what is perceived to be an "office" environment offering flexible memberships to suit most needs. (What is coworking, 2018). According to the entrepreneurs themselves, there is a space for coworking - "a social gathering of a group of people who are still working independently, but who share values and who are interested in the synergy that can happen from working with people who value working in the same place alongside each other.". In Google's dictionary (2021) terms coworking is a type of work that includes "the use of an office or other working environment by people who are self-employed or working for different employers, typically so as to share equipment, ideas, and knowledge".

As we can see from the above concepts, coworking spaces are primarily for those who, for one reason or another, are unable or unwilling to have large offices, e.g. start-uppers for whom setting up any office is already a cost, while starting your own business requires investing first in the service, product, or what will help build it, rather than in the business administration itself. They are also suitable for freelancers, homemakers and so on. Not only that, for all of them, coworking spaces not only alleviate the financial burden, but these spaces are great opportunities for exchanging ideas, discussing, collaborating and coworking at different stages of business, which is important not only in realizing the right area, but maybe even and an impetus to develop new ideas, products, services.

Unlike traditional office environments, where many people work in the same company, and even if they belong to different parts or departments of organization, they are all brought together by an umbrella company, and people working in coworking spaces not only work on different projects and tasks, but also belong to different companies. Just at that point, they are working in one physical space. Only differently than in traditional offices or businesses, there is no form of direct competition, local policy or caring image here. Another distinctive feature of those to types of working spaces is that the employees of these spaces have stronger a working sense of identity. There is no fear or threat here that someone may be laid off, and freelancers or entrepreneupes have the opportunity to participate and share the information, what they do, what plans they have, what the results might be, as such sharing can become new business projects, partners or even young - niche - a branch of business. In addition, those who work here are characterized by a high sense of self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for their work, which also has a positive impact on business success. (Why people succed in coworking space environments, 2019)

Main features of coworking space

Thus, the main features of coworking spaces, as well as the advantages identified by both entrepreneurs themselves (especially small ones working in their own households and individually) and researchers exploring these spaces (Everything you need to know about coworking spaces, 2020; The 7 most underrated benefits of coworking spaces, 2019, What Is Coworking, 2018, etc.). True, there are very few such studies so far, so this article seeks to fill this gap at least in part.

Thus, one of the essential features of coworking spaces is the **ability to separate work from personal life**. Entrepreneurs face many situations that require intense mental work, thinking, concentration, and retention. When working on your own, at home, it's not always easy to do that. This can easily be seen in the quarantines announced during the COVID-19 pandemic, when working from home and working in a distance became an form rather than an exception. Not one has had to make sure that working in such conditions and keeping workability and responsibilities, especially for extended periods of time, is not always easy. Not only personality traits but also relevant abilities such as e.g. the ability to manage time, set priorities, distance oneself from the external, sometimes distracting, environment, motivate oneself for work and manage it in any other way. (Pocevičienė, 2019, Kazlauskienė, Gaučaitė, Pocevičienė, 2015, 2016).

Meanwhile, the coworking spaces, which contain all the necessary tools for work and business administration, at the same time discipline and motivate those who work there in their own way. Thus, a work space separate from home, in this case a coworking space and such a coworking environment as is typical of such spaces, as other working people are visible nearby, not only helps to separate personal life from work, but also enables to work more constructively and productive.

Another important feature of coworking spaces is the **ability to reduce costs and increase flexibility**. It is obvious that office equipment (tables, chairs, especially high-speed Internet connection, communication office equipment, printer ink, etc.) is costly, so the costs of maintaining it and renting it can also be a brake on faster business development. (What is coworking, 2018). On the other hand, not all of these measures are needed by every business on an ongoing basis, so the investment in them does not pay off immediately, if at all, or in a sense those costs are passed on to the customer, e.g. through a higher price of the good or service. Meanwhile, such coworking spaces have all the necessary (in addition, sufficiently new and high-quality, because with a larger number of users, they pay off faster) physical, informational, communication, etc. tools and equipment. In addition, the entrepreneur himself does not need to take care of their maintenance, renovation, even repair, so it is possible to focus on the business itself, rather than on the management of the office building. In addition, there is a greater chance of taking business to the next level in less tangible ways. And while working in such coworking spaces requires a certain membership or one-time fee, it is certainly not high and, as the entrepreneurs themselves claim, performs a more motivating function. In addition, you only pay for the hours you actually worked and the tools you used at the time. So, coworking spaces are great for those people who need to think about one problem or task to solve a problem and don't want to think about all the insignificant details of renting or buying an office. They are also great for short-term, sole proprietorships or those who are just tired of working from home.

In addition to the advantages already mentioned, coworking spaces also meet the social needs of each person - **the need to be in the community**. As we have already mentioned, communication, cooperation, social interaction are necessary for everyone, especially for entrepreneurs. After all, in order to build a successful business, it is necessary to know what is going on around you, what people are living in, what they like, what is missing, and so on. After all, the needs and desires are the basis of any business. In this respect, coworking spaces are a great place for social interaction, where there is a high probability of meeting other entrepreneurs and other people with similar interests and ideas, and not only in their professional activities, but also in their personal lives. In this way, a community of coworking space is created - although very flexible and constantly changing, it is still a community. (Dunedin, Brown, 2012)

Coworking spaces provide excellent opportunities not only for establishing business relations, but also for developing them. Great networking opportunities are created here. Working in one coworking space, people get to know each other at different stages of business development, see how others are working, keep commitments, and behave when problems or challenges arise. In other words, you can get the best, proven, evidence-based information about your potential business partners here. On the other hand, it is a great place for self-knowledge and even self-promotion. And getting to know others and especially in self-activity, reflection not only on the results of work, but also on the process of achieving them are among the essentials in creating and developing a business. In addition, it is one of the essential skills of self-directed entrepreneur. On the other hand, a person with these abilities is much better and easier to work in coworking spaces. This was confirmed by the analysis of the experience of working remotely. After the first quarantine in Lithuania (in June, 2020), a survey of students of management, business and social sciences at Šiauliai State College (82 respondents participated in the study) showed how important the above-mentioned competencies are in working independently. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Skills and Experience that helped to be successful in distance learning during the quarantine: students opinion

Skills and Experience	Percentage of Choices
Perfect organization of the whole process by the academics	58
I have skills of independent work	46,4
I often had consultations with the teachers	31,9
I have skills of time management	30,4
I have distance learning experience	14,5

We can see that, in the students' own opinion, their ability to manage time and work independently, to be precise, even self-directed, was a guarantee of their successful and constructive learning during quarantine.

The same is confirmed by the results of the survey of academics (see Table 2)

Table 2

Skills and Experience that enabled to achieve success in organization of distance treaching/learning processes during the quarantine: academics opinion

Skills and Experience	Percentage of Choices
I have skills how quickly adopt to new and changing working conditions	66,7
I have skills of time management	60
I have experience in distance teaching/learning	60
I have skills of independent work	53,3
I am open to changes and innovations	46,7

Here, too, we see how important it is to be able to manage your own activities and their processes in order to work constructively, adapt quickly to change and experience success. On the other hand, Table 1 shows how important communication and collaboration, and help and support from other participants in the process are, especially for a beginner.

Another feature of coworking spaces that makes them attractive and functional is **the professional environment for meetings with clients or business partners**. This is especially useful if the client is a proponent of tradition who may not want to hire, buy a product or service from an entrepreneur who does not have their own professional environment, in other words, their own workplace or office. And a business meeting in a cafe may be unacceptable not only because of such a traditional approach to business, but also in general due to the nature of the environment itself (noise, a completely different purpose of the place) and the equipment and tools needed for the meeting or transaction. Meanwhile, coworking spaces provide any business not only with an environment, and an office address that you can provide to your client, but all the tools you need to work.

In addition, they **ensure quality and mobility**, as each time you can choose between geographical, supply, working environment, microclimate, and so on, in terms of the most suitable space for coworking or at any time - according to the need (eg., close to your or your client's place of residence, price, communication, supply, etc.) or the desire to change them.

Another advantage of coworking spaces is that there will be more and more people here, which means new ideas, experiences, acquaintances, and maybe **new business perspectives**. This can be a good way to try everything before settling in permanently in your office. As we have already mentioned, there are many specialists from different businesses, industries and fields, with whom even great business niches can be found in communication and collaboration. Traditional office buildings are usually very isolated, while the doors of coworking spaces are wide open for meetings, communication, collaboration, coworking with many different people. As already mentioned, working here is useful not only for the reasons already mentioned, but also because it is possible to create social networks, look at the same phenomenon or thing from different angles, see things from a different, sometimes very unexpected, perspective. As you know, many businesses and big startups were born to solve a problem, so it goes without saying that being closer to different industries and seeing what their struggles are and which problems are more universal in business can help find a new solutions to these problems.

It has been observed that people working in these spaces are more likely than their non-working colleagues to succeed. This could perhaps also be explained by the fact that, as various studies show (Ockels, King, 2021; Dunedin, Brown, 2012, Cantor, 2010, etc.), there is a direct relationship between job satisfaction and job success. That such coworking spaces have a future can be judged from a study conducted in the USA (Ockels, King, 2021), which showed that working in coworking spaces **changes employees' thinking, self-esteem, attitudes towards work, motivation**, etc.

There is also a **high sense of social value**. The culture created in these workplaces acquires social value. Professionals working here can help each other when needed, as there is no or minimal minimization of competition, and helping each other becomes the cultural norm. Employees met in these spaces have unique skills that they are able to share with each other. A high sense of social mission is also ensured by the Coworking Manifesto, signed in more than 1,700 such coworking spaces. (Coworking Manifesto (global - for the world), 2021). The manifesto states that these areas of coworking are designed to develop and ensure learning, cooperation, collaboration and coworking, community and sustainability. This means that people here not only work or report for work, but also feel part of the community and social movement.

It is important to note that the concept of socialization is not coercive here. Employees working in coworking spaces are free to decide when and how they want to communicate and collaborate, so it is only natural that there are those who prefer meaningful discussions over coffee while others are serious. Understandably, there are still those who choose to work alone, but it is interesting to note that even for those who foster such a strong sense of identity, a sense of community was important (as shown by the analysis of the results of the above study). The fact that employees know they can communicate freely, and do it when they want, helps foster **a sense of community and freedom**.

On the other hand, no matter how strange, the sense of **control of work is strengthened** in the coworking space. These spaces are available 24 hours a day and employees can choose the right and convenient working hours for them. People decide whether they want to work day or night. They also have a space where they can work very intensively, especially when it comes to meeting certain deadlines. These coworking spaces also have places where you can relax. In other words, there are so-called quiet spaces where people can relax, reflect and so on. A sense of control over work, especially self-employment, is also encouraged by the fact that people can simply choose to work from home without any information, apology or request (eg., your child's nanny has not come, a master has to come home - you don't have to ask or apologize. You just stay at home to handle those things).

The research revealed that those working in coworking spaces especially value independence, which is not only the basis for self-study or work, but to a large extent also the basis for successful business. However, on the other hand, they also mentioned that in their life and work they need a certain structure, a system. In their opinion, too much independence can hinder their productivity, therefore it is necessary to maintain a balance in the coworking spaces. Being close to people who are very focused and motivated about their projects and work also enables them to be disciplined and to follow order. It even motivates you to work harder and meet deadlines.

The way forward for traditional businesses

The usefulness of coworking spaces is also evidenced by the fact that even more companies and organizations (eg., Uber, Instagram, Indiegogo, Wonderfly, ect) are beginning to apply the coworking spaces model and its core principles as part of their corporate strategy, while maintaining traditional workspaces and developing their strengths. (What Is Coworking, 2018) This is usually to help employees become more productive. It has been observed that in companies that have already applied such a model, there has been a marked increase not only in the willingness of employees to use such spaces, but also in their productivity. It has become even easier to attract employees who want flexible working hours and jobs. Due to these factors, the need for such coworking spaces is increasing. Naturally, for the reasons mentioned above, such a work model is also welcomed by employers. They say working away from an established office helps employees spread new ideas. When working in coworking spaces, employees show more effort to work as a team, greater listening and interest in the work.

On the other hand, in the absence of opportunities to go to work in such spaces, it is possible to try to adapt traditional offices, traditional spaces for coworking. People can adjust the circumstances of their work according to what they think gives a sense of purpose and meaning. For example, to change the layout of office furniture, to supplement their purpose, to create quiet areas for reflection. The same can be said for communication and interaction, which should go beyond business meetings. This can be promoted through the creation of online spaces, social events, summer camps and more. All of this fosters a sense of unity that can drive innovation. These changes also allow people to relax and freely share their ideas and thoughts about the projects they are working on.

In summary, these studies show that a well-organized workplace and environment are important for labor productivity. (Ockels, King, 2021) This is why independent professions and collaborative people show a greater sense of job satisfaction (compared to traditional office conditions).

Studies show that there is a strong link between productivity and autonomy. Companies must therefore strive to strike a balance between structure and independence. While employees want to be free, they also need a structure to keep them focused. Coworking spaces are a great opportunity for such a combination. The coworking space not only provides an excellent basis for developing ideas and innovations, but also leads to less staff turnover.

However, to work in such spaces, we need to develop the necessary skills (such as the ability to work and learn self-directedly, the ability to manage time and priorities, the ability to motivate oneself, communicate and collaborate constructively with professionals in one's own and other fields, etc.) and this devbelopment should begin even at school. (Pocevičienė, 2019, Poceviciene, Stasenaite, Jakutiene, 2018, Kazlauskienė, Gaučaitė, Pocevičienė, 2015, 2016).

As stated by N. Cantor (2010), times demand that higher education play a transformative role. The future of democracy itself, as Martha Nussbaum wrote (2010), will depend on our ability to educate "complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements." It's true that we must have technology, science, commerce, and innovation, but they are not sufficient, in and of themselves. They must be embedded in a humanistic landscape that fully accounts for culture, history, and difference, and that strives to reduce inequality, spread opportunity, and strengthen community. And the coworking spaces are important for higher education institutions educating of future generations of managers and entrepreneurs, not only because future professionals are properly prepared to work in such spaces, where to have appropriate skills, such aability to work and learn self-directedly, ability to manage time and priorities, ability to motivate oneself, communicate and collaborate constructively with one's own and other specialists, etc., but also because educational environments organized according to such principles would also provide better learning ans study outcomes and ensure quality of studies.

Conclusions

• Coworking is the new path of melding life and work in a sustainable fashion with high intersection of real estate, technology and community, which will shape the way we work in the future. Coworking is not just about the sharing of infrastructure and cost, it is about belonging to a community, accessibility and sustainability. Coworking is the new way of working and sharing.

• Coworking spaces are designed to provide a productive and collaborative environment for their dynamic inhabitants, and created without corporate constraints on what is perceived to be an "office" environment offering flexible memberships to suit most needs. According to the entrepreneurs themselves, the coworking space is „a social gathering of a group of people who are still working independently, but who share values and who are interested in the synergy that can happen from working with people who value working in the same place alongside each other".

• The main features of coworking spaces, as well as the advantages identified by entrepreneurs themselves (especially small ones working in their own households and individually) and by researchers exploring these spaces, are the following: the ability to separate work from private life; reduce costs and increase flexibility, ensure the need to be in the community, establish and develop business relationships, meet clients or business partners in a professional environment, ensure quality and mobility, and even anticipate new business prospects. In addition, it has been observed that people working in these spaces are more likely than their non-working colleagues to succeed, have positive changes in employee thinking, self-esteem, attitudes towards work, motivation, a high sense of social value and even a stronger sense of control.

• However, successful work in such spaces requires certain skills, such as the ability to work and learn self-directedly, the ability to manage time and priorities, the ability to motivate oneself, communicate and collaborate constructively with professionals in one's own and other fields, etc., which need to be developed while already studying or even studying at school.

• Coworking spaces are important for higher education institutions educating future generations of managers and entrepreneurs not only because future professionals are properly prepared to work in such spaces, so they will need to have appropriate skills, such as ability to work and learn for self-directedly, ability to manage time and priorities, ability to motivate oneself, communicate and cooperate, collaborate and cowork constructively with specialists in one's own and other fields, etc., but also because educational environments organized according to such principles would also provide better learning and study outcomes and ensure quality of studies.

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