

New coworking spaces let you take your kid to work, every day ^[1]

The Workaround is one of several coworking spaces that offers child care to customers

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EXCERPTS

After having kids, Amanda Munday realized that child care was often inaccessible and unaffordable. That's why she opened The Workaround, a parent-friendly coworking space housed in a converted bank in Toronto featuring a play area for children supervised by an early childhood educator.

"[The vault] is where we relax," said Munday. "It can be a nursing suite. It's also, surprisingly, the place where the most babies have slept."

The vault is the former bank safe and regular customer Jen Allison says her son Jack loves it.

"I come about three times a week [for] between four to six hours," said Allison, a self-employed family photographer. "That includes maybe napping in the vault with Jack, some lunches and getting some work done or collaborating with other people in the space."

For Allison, being able to get some work done while staying near Jack is a relief. She doesn't want to be too far from him because he's still young and he has congenital heart disease.

"I can be on site with him and it relieves a lot of the anxiety of taking him to daycare, especially as an entrepreneur and a business owner," said Allison. "It's just such a fantastic space for that. Already the benefits I've had from coming here, to me, are going to be long term."

More coworking spaces opening with child care

The Workaround is one of several coworking spaces opening with child care. And the timing couldn't be better.

Close to half of Canadians live in areas with very few available daycare spaces, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, so there is an unmet need for this type of business model.

Entrepreneur Madeleine Shaw is working on a project called Nestworks, which partners a shared office space with a licensed daycare provider to allow entrepreneurs to bring their children to work with them. Shaw hopes to open the ten thousand square foot Vancouver space in 2019.

Meanwhile, other smaller ventures are emerging such as the Coworking Parents Studio in Guelph, which exists in multiple rooms on the main floor of a house.

'This isn't an experiment,' says coworking expert

Ashley Proctor says we can expect more of this type of business model.

She's a coworking pioneer who has opened spaces or consulted for others since 2003. She's also the executive producer of the Global Coworking Unconference Conference Canada, billed as "the largest coworking conference series in the world."

She says adding child care services to coworking spaces makes sense.

"This isn't an experiment, this is a fully formed business idea and I think we're going to see more of it because of these incredible operators who are coming on," said Proctor. "They're gonna really lead by example and show many other operators that it can be successfully done. It can be an added amenity to a traditional space."

Proctor says the space itself, which could include the practical needs of child care, is only a small part of the coworking community.

"A real coworking space is more about the movement, so it's more about the people," said Proctor. "It's about dismantling loneliness. It's about economic development and increasing productivity and supporting social enterprise and small business."

She says as more people learn about and utilize the coworking model, customers will expect child care options at their coworking space. And businesses that already offer that service will likely see the benefits.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

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