RIGOUR

HOW TO CREATE WORLD-CHANGING SPACES
The Centre for Social Innovation catalyzes and supports social innovation in Toronto and around the world. We create community workspaces, incubate emerging enterprises, and develop new models and methods with world-changing potential.

We believe that society is facing unprecedented economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges.

We also believe that new innovations are the key to turning these challenges into opportunities to improve our communities and our planet. We are working together to fix our future.

WANT TO HELP?
The Centre for Social Innovation opened its doors in June 2004. At that time, we had incredible passion, extraordinary vision, and only an inkling of how we would make it all work. It was, needless to say, an adventurous start. At the time, we weren’t aware of any other similar models. It felt like everything we were doing was new. We were making it up as we went along, and through hard work, clear vision, and a fair amount of good fortune, we made it work. Our model and our team proved their mettle and within a few short years we were running a 23,000 square foot facility that was home to over 180 members representing missions from arts to environment to education to social justice.

Slowly, as our model grew, we began to attract the attention of others who were interested in what we were accomplishing. Some were at the idea stage and interested to know ‘how we did what we did’. Others were already building shared spaces and wondered what they could borrow and adapt to their community. Still others were asking if we would come to their city to establish a Centre for Social Innovation.

What began as an occasional trickle began to gain steam. By our fourth year we were overwhelmed with requests and inquiries about our model. We were, and continue to be, absolutely delighted and honoured by this attention. But we struggled with our own capacity. We are a small social enterprise that has been stretched to the limits evolving our own community and programs.

We tried to share as much information as we could, as frequently as we could, but we began to realize that we needed another strategy to meet the growing interest in creating shared spaces for social innovation...

...So we created this series.

Shared Spaces for Social Innovation is about sharing our story and empowering others to learn from our experience. The Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) has always been open with its model. We’ve long preached the benefits of shared spaces and we’ve been doing our best to encourage as many new spaces as possible. We figured that the best way to open our model – to reveal everything we’ve learned in hopes of supporting the emergence of new and better spaces – was to document what we’ve done and make it available to anyone who was interested.

It has taken a fair amount of courage for us to let it all hang out and give it all away! Many people advised us that we should be franchising, licensing, and holding our knowledge close to our chests. But this went against our values. Instead, we are putting this whole series into the creative commons for others to benefit from and contribute to.

We believe that good ideas scale when they are open. We also believe that ideas get better when we share. We look forward to working with you on this journey to create and grow new strategies for social innovation.
A WORK IN PROGRESS

Of course, the story of the Centre for Social Innovation is still unfolding. And yet the challenge with writing a book is the finality of it all. We therefore invite you to participate in our online space. At first, we’ll have pdf versions of the series publications and a set of templates and tools available for download. In time, we’ll make amendments to these books, release additions to the series and create a platform for a community of practice.

OPEN SOURCING OUR MODEL

Shared Spaces for Social Innovation reveals just about everything we’ve learned about creating and growing shared workspaces. We’re telling our story, sharing our research, and offering the tools and templates we’ve created along the way.

But sharing is a two-way street. Actually, it’s more like a highway interchange!

While it is truly our pleasure to provide this material, our hope is that you will embrace the Creative Commons spirit. This means recognizing our contribution and letting us know what you’ve used, adapted, and developed. More importantly, it means sharing your experiences and tools with other shared spaces.

By contributing to a shared body of knowledge, we’re empowering others to be even more successful, building this field and advancing our own spaces in the process.

We’re not yet sure what it will look like, and we’re very sure that it won’t be up to us alone to determine. But we’re hoping this effort starts us along a path to an open community of practice that is creating the spaces where people change the world.

The Shared Spaces for Social Innovation Series is made up of three books:

- **Emergence**: The Story of the Centre for Social Innovation.
  In this book we weave a narrative around our genesis and development. Starting back when the Centre was just a glimmer in the eyes of a few social entrepreneurs, Emergence follows our growth from concept to operation to scale.

- **Rigour**: How to Create World-Changing Shared Spaces.
  This book is a manual for those planning or operating a shared space. It reveals the accumulated knowledge of six years of experience and offers a ton of tips, lessons and tools for developing a strong organization and vibrant community.

- **Proof**: How Shared Spaces are Changing the World.
  This report shares our most recent research on the impact of the Centre for Social Innovation in order to demonstrate just what shared spaces for social innovation can accomplish.

Each book can be read on its own. Together they provide a comprehensive picture of the Centre for Social Innovation.

Looking to build or grow your own shared space for social innovation?

CSI offers tailored consulting, training, and speaking services to help you with challenges from start-up to scale. Get in touch by sending a note to sssi@socialinnovation.ca.
Looking Forward

This series starts with the Centre for Social Innovation. But we know there are dozens of like-minded spaces around the world, and we hope to add other stories, experiences, templates and tools over time.

Our vision is a vibrant, shared platform that includes the experiences of shared spaces dedicated to social innovation around the world – your experiences. We’re hoping to work with a community of likeminded people that is sharing ideas, strategies and… who knows?

Just imagine a network where we can share promising practices, collaborate on joint projects and infrastructure, replicate good ideas and leverage investments from community to community.

Let’s work together to support each other, our members and to build this exciting field!

Thank You

We would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to the many people who have made the Centre for Social Innovation and this series possible. First, a thanks to the CSI Staff and Board team, whose vision and industry have made the Centre what it is today. Second, a special thanks to our incredible network of partners and supporters, including Urbanspace Property Group, Canadian Heritage, The Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canadian Alternative Investment Co-Operative, Ashoka, Harbinger Foundation and the Province of Ontario, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

A publication like this only comes together with incredible dedication. Eli Malinsky has played author, editor, project manager and overall superhero on this project; Shared Spaces for Social Innovation provides only a glimpse of the value that Eli brings to CSI and to this emerging field.

Hamutal Dotan deserves special recognition for her writing on Emergence and Proof – her effortless style perfectly captures the tone of the Centre for Social Innovation. For turning beautiful words into compelling publications, The Movement continues to mesmerize and engage. We’d also like to recognize Margot Smart, who meticulously designed and analyzed the 2008 member survey, which forms the basis of our statistics.

Finally, we would like to recognize our members. They are the reason we do what we do. They inspire us, they motivate us, they ground us and they challenge us. Their passion, commitment and creativity are what make it all worthwhile, and it is truly our honour to support their work.

Now let’s change the world together!

Tonya Surman
Executive Director
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Creating the spaces where change happens
Co-location refers to spaces that are shared among a number of separate organizations. Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Centers are types of co-location spaces that focus on the nonprofit sector.

Coworking refers to the sharing of workspace among freelancers and other independent workers. Coworking spaces provide workspace and community to people who are often working on their own.

Community Hubs are shared spaces that provide direct services to the geographic community in which they are situated. Community Hubs co-locate service providers that offer a range of supports such as language instruction, job training, after school programs and drop-in groups.

Hot Desks are temporary, shared workspaces that are typically found in coworking spaces.

Incubators provide programmatic, strategic, administrative and/or financial support to small projects and organizations.

Social Innovation refers to new ideas that resolve social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet. Even more simply, a social innovation is an idea that works for the public good.
The incentives for cost sharing have been growing. Nonprofits and charities are enduring ongoing cutbacks in administrative budgets while facing increasing demands from communities and individuals.

For-profit and nonprofit strategies are blending together. Shared spaces – and frequently their members – are examples of how mission-based and market-based approaches can coincide.

There is increasing recognition that the problems we face are too complex to be addressed by any single player. Shared spaces connect diverse organizations and individuals, giving them the chance to collaborate, share knowledge and develop systemic solutions to the issues they are trying to address.

The incentives for cost sharing have been growing. Nonprofits and charities are enduring ongoing cutbacks in administrative budgets while facing increasing demands from communities and individuals.

Alongside new technologies has been the rise of ‘independents’, who work with several clients but who are not bound by the restrictions of any one physical space.

Real estate prices are soaring worldwide, making it increasingly difficult for small groups and individuals to find affordable workspace.

The pendulum is swinging from global back to local. While the 90’s promised ‘virtual work’, the new millennium is reinforcing the importance of space.

Shared workspaces are themselves a social innovation – an entirely new way of working. The dominant workplace model has been separate organizations working separately. That may have made perfect sense at one time and it may still make perfect sense in many instances. But it is by no means a universal or desirable approach. The nature of work is changing – and with it the workplace. These changes offer incredible potential for economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress in the coming years.
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

As we’ve built and expanded CSI over the past few years, we’ve developed our theory of change— it’s our way of capturing how the Centre for Social Innovation creates the conditions for social innovation to emerge.

Serving as the foundation is the physical space, the environment which our members see and feel and touch and inhabit every day. It’s at the very base of the pyramid because it’s what sets the tone for everything else: our members want to come to work simply to enjoy the space. The physical space is the container for everything that occurs at the Centre.

The physical space sets the conditions for community. Community develops as people start to feel comfortable in a space, are happy to spend time in it, and develop relationships with other members doing the same. A kitchen, for instance, isn’t just a place to eat; it can also allow for shared meals and impromptu gatherings, and those, in turn, are the basis of the relationships which lead to a real sense of kinship among the members. With some delicate animation, the bonds of community are forged and strengthened, building social capital and a network of relationships.

Community relationships allow members to exchange ideas, to collaborate easily, to find services and access knowledge that might otherwise be hard to come by. In short, community is what leads to innovation, because a community of other creative, engaged people is what blows away the cobwebs, allows you to see an old problem in a new light, and helps you find creative ways of implementing solutions you might not otherwise have considered. And that—all the myriad ways in which space and community foster social innovation—well, that’s the whole purpose of the Centre for Social Innovation.
A THREE-PRONGED MOVEMENT

The shared spaces movement is exploding. While various forms of shared workspace have been around for decades, the idea of shared space as a unique field of practice is more recent, and the past few years have seen a dramatic rise in the number of shared spaces and in the interconnections among them.

We have witnessed the birth and growth of three distinct but related movements. The first is a movement toward co-location. Co-location generally refers to the more-or-less permanent sharing of space among organizations. Within this field, there is a particular trend toward co-location of nonprofit organization within a single facility, often known as a Multi-Tenant Nonprofit Centre. The members in these centres are individual organizations who have decided to share space, often an entire building, as a strategy to save costs and advance their missions. The Nonprofit Centers Network in San Francisco (nonprofitcenters.org), a project of Tides Shared Spaces, is the primary organizing body for a network of over 200 such shared spaces, mostly in the United States, and is leading the charge in developing and connecting the field. CSI is a proud member of the Nonprofit Centers Network.

The second movement is often referred to as coworking. Born of ‘independents’ (freelancers, sole practitioners, consultants, etc.) primarily in the tech and design sectors, coworking spaces are generally more informal and of smaller scale than co-locations. Many members are motivated by opportunities for social connectedness; as independents, they are too often working alone. Coworking spaces provide shared space for part-time members and are popping up all over the globe. This movement, more ad-hoc than the co-location movement, is being loosely connected and organized through the Coworking Wiki (blog.coworking.info). While most coworking spaces do not apply a ‘social change’ lens to their work, one notable exception is The Hub (the-hub.net), a global network of coworking spaces now reaching into over 20 countries around the world. CSI is an affiliate of The Hub Network.

The third movement is a movement toward incubation of social change projects. Although it’s a fuzzy term, incubation generally refers to support given to early-stage projects and organizations. This support can include programming, trusteeship, shared services, investment and financial back-end services. The past few years have seen an increase in the application of traditional incubation strategies for commercialization to social enterprises.
THE CSI TWIST

The Centre for Social Innovation is a hybrid of these movements. Like co-locations we provide permanent, stable office rental to organizations. Like coworking spaces, we provide part-time desk spaces to ‘independents’. Like an incubator, CSI provides programming and shared services to its members, and offers a handful of projects support ranging from strategic advice to back-end financial services.

This makes us unique. In fact, there are a few other unique characteristics of the CSI model.

A SOCIAL CHANGE LENS

The Centre for Social Innovation is designed to support and foster social innovation. All of our members are selected based on their commitment to that goal, and all of our programming is designed to increase the capacity of social enterprises, non-profits, charities, green businesses, artists, designers, creators, and activists to improve the well-being of people and our planet.

A FOCUS ON SMALL

We focus on groups with five or fewer staff. The vast majority of our members are one- and two-person operations. It is these small groups that are in the greatest need of shared facilities and administration; it is also these groups that are best positioned to collaborate and connect with others.

PHYSICAL DESIGN

We understand the critical role of physical design in setting the tone of a space and the behaviour of its users. We have developed a very specific approach to physical design that has been a key ingredient in our success and in the ‘experience’ of the Centre for Social Innovation.

ANIMATION AS PRACTICE

Community animation is what turns “a place to work” to a space of social innovation. We’ve been building the practice of animation and developing its role as a central feature of successful shared spaces.
MEMBER SNAPSHOT

In November 2008 we conducted a comprehensive member survey. The survey comprised more than one hundred questions, investigating everything from customer service to the effect of membership on organizational revenues. The results include, in addition to quantitative measures, more than 2,000 submitted comments, anecdotes, and suggestions. We are honoured and grateful that so many of our members were willing to share their thoughts and insights with us, and thrilled to now be sharing them with you.

52% of members describe themselves as working on the environment, 39% in culture, 31% in social justice, and 25% in technology (respondents were allowed to select multiple sectors).

Incorporated for-profit and incorporated nonprofits are equally represented among our members, at 23% each. 25% of members are registered charities, and 24% are unincorporated.

We are a community of the small but mighty: 94% of CSI members have three or fewer full-time equivalent staff.

Two-thirds of members are under the age of 40, doing their best to keep the other third feeling young! Thirty-seven percent of members bicycle to work every day (fewer in Toronto winters!).

So, just who are the members of CSI? It’s an eclectic mix that cuts across sectors and organizational types, ages and skill sets, and it’s an altogether glorious jumble.

[1] Throughout this report, unless otherwise noted, any statistics or feedback attributed to CSI members refers to the information gathered from the 80 respondents to our November 2008 survey, who represent about 30% of our membership.
THEORIES AND MISSIONS ARE GREAT, BUT IT’S THE BUSINESS MODEL THAT DETERMINES VIABILITY.
OUR BASIC BUSINESS MODEL

At its most basic, we are a landlord. We rent space from a building owner and sublet it to other organizations and individuals. We add a layer of shared services to alleviate the administrative burden that many of these small groups experience. We charge a premium on the space that is sufficient to cover our operating (primarily staff) costs.

THE THIRD PARTY OPERATOR

Most opportunities to share space are among a small number of organizations who band together to create a shared space, or when a single organization suddenly finds itself with more space than required and must consider inviting a new organization in as a way to collaborate or save money. These models can and do work. But our finding is that the most successful models have an independent, third-party operator whose sole mission is to manage and develop the shared space. Successful operation of a shared space requires dedicated attention and expertise.

In some cases, this simply isn’t an option. We therefore suggest that in cases where several organizations are coming together to create a shared space, you create a separate committee of representatives whose responsibility is to manage the space. Resources must be allocated, and roles and responsibilities defined, if you want a successful relationship. In cases where you are an organization with excess space – or when you have been invited to join an existing space that was not originally created as a shared space – make sure you spend time on courtship… and a strong pre-nuptial! You should have a shared clear sense of responsibilities, expectations, and financial obligations.

TIP: SCALE MATTERS

The Centre for Social Innovation operated for three years in 5,000 square feet. But the truth is that we would never have been self-sustaining at that rate – the margins simply weren’t sufficient and we had to bring in additional revenue through consulting, grants, and other activities. It was only when we scaled to 19,000 sq ft that we could approach and achieve self-sustainability; finally, our space was big enough that our margin could cover our operating costs. That’s not to say that you can’t make it work on 5,000 sq ft, but you need to carefully estimate potential revenue and expenses. Our experience tells us that small spaces only succeed with Hot Desks, which have the highest possible margins (and risk); office space provision requires an overall larger footprint.
GOVERNANCE & INCORPORATION

The Centre for Social Innovation is a nonprofit organization governed by a voluntary board of directors. Our board includes a mix of nonprofit sector leaders, private sector representatives, a lawyer, an academic, a CSI member and former member, and the landlord of the building.

Shared spaces can be successfully run as charities, nonprofits or for-profits. The choice is really up to you. Consider carefully the relative advantages and disadvantages. A nonprofit is perceived as part of the sector; simply being a nonprofit can carry you a far way in reputation and trust. On the other hand, a for-profit generally has a bit more freedom in its activities, greater opportunities to generate financing, and strong ability to respond quickly without navigating a board of directors. Ultimately, the question may come down to resources. If you intend to rely in part on grants, donations and volunteers, then you must incorporate as a nonprofit. If however, you seek loans through debt or equity, then you may elect to become a for-profit. It is important to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages when wrestling with this decision.

If you do decide to become a nonprofit, your own board should reflect the realities of operating a share space. Consider finding board members or advisors who occupy some of the following occupations: architect, developer, lawyer, city councillor, member, voluntary sector leader, and business leader.

However, what is more important than who is on your board is how you decide to operate. In our case, we prioritized board members and a board culture that was entrepreneurial, nimble, and strategic, rather than mired in day-to-day administration. Spend time developing a shared vision and acclimatizing new members to that vision.

NO MATTER HOW YOU ARE INCORPORATED, YOU NEED TO OPERATE LIKE A BUSINESS WITH A FUNDAMENTAL COMMITMENT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS.
STRUCTURING THE DEAL: BUYING, LEASING, & FINANCING

Will you buy? Or will you rent? Who are your investors? What will you offer them?

These are questions that you must carefully consider. The Centre for Social Innovation, without any pre-existing assets and no major investor backing, became a tenant in an existing building rather than purchase its own space. But that certainly doesn’t mean that there are no expenses to incur! Consider:

- leasehold improvements
- capital infrastructure investments
- the costs of rent during the build-out
- estimated vacancy rate before full occupancy
- a million little things from forks to flipcharts!

Ownership has the advantages of greater control and equity. Tenancy has a lower bar of entry and does not require the property management expertise of building ownership.

Raising funds for your shared space is a challenging task. You must cultivate relationships with funders, corporate sponsors and other private investors who see value in your project. In our case, we had an angel investor who offered a significant loan and a donation to get the space up and running. When it came to our expansion, we secured a combination of a no-interest loan, an interest bearing loan, a capital grant and a sponsorship deal. (See Emergence: The Story of the Centre for Social Innovation for more.)

Now that CSI has built its reputation and relationships over six years, we have positioned ourselves to purchase our own space. On May 18, 2010 we assumed possession of a 36,000 square foot building in downtown Toronto—a major milestone in our growth. We purchased the new building through a combination of a traditional mortgage, private debt financing, and community bonds.

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR THE 2007 EXPANSION

We had a budget of approximately $300,000 for our expansion into an additional 14,000 square feet that would ultimately support 150 members. $100,000 to leasehold improvements, $100,000 to technical systems and equipment (internet, VoIP, A/V), $100,000 to furniture and furnishings (including desks, reception area, meeting rooms, and kitchen).
RAISING MONEY

You may have more than you think! What are the assets of your shared space? Does it provide any sponsorship opportunities? We decided to sell naming rights to one of our boardrooms to a co-operative bank (Alterna Savings). This created a true win-win scenario. We secured important core revenue and entered into a relationship with an organization we trusted and with whom we were proud to associate. Alterna Savings gained incredible exposure to thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations in their target market.

Create the investment documents and sponsorship packages that will convince funders and financers to support your project and collaborate on your vision.
We have seen several variations on the Hot Desk model. In some cases, the desks will be split by two individuals. In others, the desks are sold by the number days they will be used in a month. In others, you are simply granted access to the workspace and there is no specific amount of time you are entitled to. In other words: you need to create the packages and protocols that work best for your mission, space and bottom line.

One interesting consideration that has recently come to a head at CSI is the question of whether the base unit of membership is the organization or the project. Can three staff share one desk or one Hot Desk package? Can they all be there at the same time? We’ve resolved this by explaining that our desks and Hot Desks are rented to individual users. We’ve added a $50 charge for those who want to share and offered a $50 discount on second desks rented on behalf of the same organization or project.

The lease – or sub-lease – is a critical document that defines the legal and financial relationship between you and the member. Make sure it is carefully reviewed by a lawyer and then be prepared to stick to it; we find that some office members will request changes based on their lawyers’ opinion, but unless you want to manage a dozen variations of the lease, keep it simple and standardized (but certainly consider any legitimate changes). We prefer one year leases for any permanent members and 6-month leases for any Hot Desk members; however, we allow any member to break the lease with 60 days notice. We attach to the sub-lease a copy of our own Head Lease as an appendix, as well as a set of Member Co-operation Policies that outline the expectations regarding shared behaviour in the Centre for Social Innovation.

Finally, we charge a $125 set-up fee to cover the initial costs of administering the lease process and to cover the costs of signage and pass-keys. We have seen several variations on the Hot Desk model. In some cases, the desks will be split by two individuals. In others, the desks are sold by the number days they will be used in a month. In others, you are simply granted access to the workspace and there is no specific amount of time you are entitled to. In other words: you need to create the packages and protocols that work best for your mission, space and bottom line.

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A GREAT COMMUNITY WORKSPACE REQUIRES THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION AT EVERY TURN.
THE DIMENSIONS OF SPACE
In the past six years we have done a lot of research and conducted a fair number of experiments—some successful...others not so much! This section shares our best suggestions, tips and lessons for creating a dynamic, healthy and attractive workspace for members and visitors alike.

The most important thing to remember is that you are not just creating a physical space—you are creating a social, environmental, and psychological space too. Each of these elements deserves careful and deliberate “curating” to achieve the vision and goals you have set.

#1
LOCATION
Location was the single most important consideration for site selection. Within location, several variables were identified, offered here in order of priority:

• Accessibility by transit
• Proximity to the downtown core
• Proximity to surrounding personal and professional amenities (printers, restaurants, professional services)
• Proximity to clients and colleagues
• Proximity to/availability of green space
• Availability of parking
• Safety and security

#2
BUILDING
The building itself is the second most important criteria in site selection. Here’s what our respondents told us they valued most:

• Plenty of natural light
• Interesting aesthetic features; exposed brick/beam, high ceilings, etc.
• A sense of history and spirit to the building; perhaps a former incarnation that can be woven into the present plan

SITE SELECTION
In 2005 the Centre for Social Innovation undertook a small research project to explore the factors that were most important in our members’ site selection.
Good community design is essential. Put a chair in a reception space. Now replace it with a couch. What changes? Try the same thing with a harvest table instead of a small table. Your design informs behaviour and action!

Create unstructured social space; serendipity is more likely to happen around the kitchen table than the boardroom table. It is easier to build community horizontally than vertically! Look for spaces that keep people on the same floor rather than splitting them between floors.

Create unstructured social space; serendipity is more likely to happen around the kitchen table than the boardroom table.

Tear down those walls! Glass reflects values of transparency and openness and fosters a sense of collaboration and dynamism; create large open spaces for open sightlines and mass connection.

Use comfortable and communal furniture: couches, cosy chairs, welcoming rugs and harvest tables.

Beauty, eh? We all love beautiful things! Make your space attractive – it makes people feel healthy and happy.

Lockable space is essential for members – they need some closed storage for their essentials.

Fabrics need to handle dirt – invest in ones that are heavy-duty.

Kitchens don’t make money – but they do build community. Don’t cheap out or box it in – this is where the magic happens.

Cohesion matters – all these elements need to hang together in a design that works and feels harmonious.

Build in an environmentally considerate way.

Go industrial – there will be hundreds of people using the space and it will show – get the most durable that you can afford.

Foster mobility – put services and amenities in different parts of the space so that people move around – it’s mobility that gets people to explore new spaces and people.

Put things on wheels and keep them light – you want to be able to move them easily.
Tips for a functional – and profitable – space:

- Consider designing meeting spaces for the external community as well as members; your visitors will need various room sizes, including a good workshop space.
- Use modular furniture: let people configure and reconfigure the room to serve their various purposes, from yoga classes to boardroom meetings to workshops.
- Design for flexibility: All organizations change size over time. Can you use a mixture of office spaces and desk spaces to accommodate growth and shrinkage among your members?
- Private office spaces generally give you stability and require little administration; permanent desks and Hot Desks require a bit more work but have a higher profit margin. Find the balance that suits your vision.

Design for the bottom line

Couches, harvest tables and rugs – it all sounds so romantic. But don’t forget that you’ll need some office spaces and work stations too! First and foremost, think carefully about the proportion of private space to common space that will help you cover your operating costs. But remember that a shared space without sufficient common spaces won’t be attractive enough to retain members – and won’t serve your community-building goals. At the Centre for Social Innovation we have a 40:60 ratio in favor of private space. We’d suggest that you’d need a minimum of 30% common space if building community is part of your goal.

TIP: Utility vs whimsical

Your space must first and foremost be functional for members. This means keeping the space clean and keeping the amenities (photocopiers, printers, internet, etc.) working. But all work and no play makes Jill a dull girl! So remember to spice it up with the little features and interventions that breathe life and levity into the space, like message walls, member photos, member profiles – or even board games and building blocks! (yes, we are serious!)

- Design sensible areas for printing, faxing and copying – make sure people can work easily in those spaces.
- Re-use materials wherever possible – it’s more affordable, and it models the environmental principles your members will likely care about.
- Beware of high-end design – keep replacement costs in mind when making purchases.
- Don’t try to do everything at once – the needs of your space and your members will become clearer over time.
MEETING ROOMS

Every organization has meetings at least occasionally; your space should offer a variety of meeting rooms to accommodate different purposes, from workshops to interviews. Our rental model includes a set number of free hours for each member every month; we charge for overages. Rooms are available on a first come first serve basis and we encourage users to take the smallest room that will serve their purposes, saving larger spaces for others.

For years, we have used a manual system for booking – literally a calendar on which users themselves block out the time they require. It’s only now that we are exploring an online system, but you may find that an online system is the best way to go, and several options are available. Online systems allow members to book spaces remotely and make it far easier for you to track usage (helpful for keeping an eye on overages and for understanding usage patterns).

You must also decide if your meeting room space is going to be rentable by the public and set prices accordingly. Renting meeting room spaces to the public serves a few key goals:

- generating revenue for the organization
- helping turn the space into a community resource and shared learning space
- raising the profile of your centre and your members by ensuring a steady flow of people through the space.

However, your decision to serve the public must not come at the expense of members, who are your first priority. Make sure that the traffic doesn’t interfere with your members’ ability to perform their work and that they are still able to access meeting space when they need it.

We generally advise that members and guests are responsible for their own room set-up and clean-up. It’s important to do a quick sweep after meetings to make sure the space is clean and ready for the next booking. Consider levying a charge for rooms that are left in disarray as an incentive to maintain cleanliness.

Tips for Meeting Spaces

- A good shared space will have sufficient meeting rooms relative to the number of members.
- Consider meeting rooms of variable sizes: several small or medium-sized rooms plus a larger workshop room.
- Add flipcharts, whiteboards and chalkboards for idea development.
- Use modular furniture to maximize flexibility.
- Locate meeting spaces in publicly accessible areas and away from member offices whenever possible.
- Proximity to a kitchen is important if there are going to be catered events or need for other kitchen facilities.
- Have a clear request form and an insurance waiver for external clients.
- Consider a minimum 72 hour-in-advance request policy to give your team time to prepare for the event.

Download the room booking agreement: socialinnovation.ca/sssi

Creating the Space
SECURITY

The security of your shared space is absolutely essential. Members must feel comfortable and secure in the space and you must put into place the systems necessary for security:

- Provide some separation between your most highly trafficked common areas and the workspaces.
- Situate the Hot Desk area close to an exit as a strategy to minimize the flow of these more transient members.
- All offices should be lockable and all desk spaces should have a lockable drawer; consider having lockers for any Hot Desk members.
- Install a security system for arming and disarming every day (last one to leave, first one to enter) that uses unique, trackable codes for each person. Consider swipe keys for access to certain spaces or work with the landlord on a coordinated solution for monitoring sensitive areas.
- Most importantly, encourage members to be security conscious and to act as an informal ‘community watch’ that disarms any uncertain situations with a few friendly inquiries.

TIP:

DESIGN AND BUDGET ARE MUTUALLY INFORMATIVE

You cannot design without giving consideration to the budgetary implications. And you can’t set pricing without thinking about the design. This needs to be an iterative process: Try a specific design and layout and run the numbers, those results should then inform the design. Do you need more desk spaces to meet your budgetary goals? Have you created too many meeting spaces? Budgeting and design go hand in hand!

TIP:

GET INSPIRED!

When designing your shared space consider visiting other similar spaces, either in person or online. Take or cut-out pictures of spaces or furniture you like, or pictures that reflect the mood and culture you want to create. And know your limits! Hire architects and interior designers if you don’t have the skills you need, as well as contractors who understand your vision. Find the supports you need to bring your vision to life!

"I love the open concept and the lounge area. You really don’t feel like you are in an office, more like a home away from home."

"I love the space. It’s cozy and inspiring."

"I like that I am a very proud tenant and proud of being part of the place. Anybody that I bring to the place gets a great impression of the space."

"I love the open concept and the lounge area. You really don’t feel like you are in an office, more like a home away from home."

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"I like that I am a very proud tenant and proud of being part of the place. Anybody that I bring to the place gets a great impression of the space."
MANAGING NOISE

This is a big one! The problem with an incredible, dynamic, and collaborative community is that they can make a lot of noise. Certainly, your shared space is unlikely to be a very quiet office – and that’s a good thing! But noise abatement can become a pressing issue if decibel levels challenge your members’ productivity.

- Be upfront about the probability of noise – shared workspaces are not libraries.
- Create a set of noise policies and include reference to them in the Member Cooperation Policies.
- Limit the use of speaker-phones.
- Divide the space in such a way that the noisier elements are clustered together. Hot Desks should be self contained instead of scattered amongst the permanent members.
- Create phone booths for members who are working in open space so they have a comfortable option for personal or lengthy calls.

KEEPING IT CLEAN

Noise may be the second most important issue in your space, but cleanliness is likely to be the first. Shared spaces with collective responsibility can turn into spaces with no responsibility as members duck their role in keeping the space as clean as possible. This is especially true of the kitchen, where it all seems to come to a head!

- Outline an expectation of shared responsibilities for cleanliness and orderliness of the space.
- Get enough dishwashers to process the kitchenware you are regularly using so they don’t pile up in the sink.
- Get a big sink with space for washing.
- Have cleaning products on hand – make it easy for members to pitch in.
- Hire weekly, bi-weekly or monthly cleaners for a deep clean.
- Do a comprehensive clean up every morning before the space opens and again late in the afternoon; the cleaner your space, the more likely that members and guests will keep it that way.
- Create clear signage and policies with visitors that explain it is their responsibility to maintain the space and clean up after themselves.

Download our noise policy: socialinnovation.ca/ssi
WE MAY BE A NONPROFIT, BUT UNLESS WE OPERATE AS A BUSINESS WE WILL FAIL.
BUSINESS ORIENTATION

Succeeding as a business means fostering an entrepreneurial and professional organizational culture and staff team. It also means keeping a careful eye on expenses and revenue – and receivables. As a business-oriented nonprofit we need to market our services and build our profile, treat our community as customers, and work to deliver above and beyond expectations.

It also means that sometimes we need to make tough decisions – like increasing rates or evicting members who can’t pay their rent – without apologies. But this “business orientation” must be softened with the realities of our sector. Sometimes a little flexibility can go a long way and will ultimately better serve your needs and your mission.

CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION

In order to be a successful business you must serve the needs of your customers. Our staff team and our organizational culture is dedicated to excellence and to extraordinary customer service. We are pulled in a million directions by our members and clients, asking for support on professional and personal issues, demanding attention and service, and offering feedback or criticism of our actions. At all times it is absolutely essential to serve the needs of these customers – with diplomacy, expediency, and a sense of humor.

Our staff team must be willing to drop whatever they are doing to immediately address any substantial problem that arises. In the end, your dreams of radical social change are worthless if the photocopier isn’t working; your first priority is a clean and functional workspace for members and guests.

SELF-SERVICE ORIENTATION

Customer service, however, does not mean that you cater to every whim or that you wait on members hand and foot. Your role is equally to empower members. Give them the information, tools, and means to solve their own problems as much as possible. It is an extraordinary task to meet the needs of 180 customers on a day to day basis – this can be mitigated by finding ways to help members help themselves.

TIP: LABELS!

When you are asked twenty times a day where the spoons are, you learn that labels can be your best accomplices in creating a “self-serve” space. Affix labels on all storage that let members and visitors know where things are, and have instructions written beside your equipment. These will prevent a lot of repeat questions. (But not all of them!)
BUDGETS

Careful budgeting is the cornerstone of a successful shared space. You must work to anticipate all of your costs – both start-up and ongoing – and your revenue. Be realistic and grounded in your estimates; err on the side of caution and plan out at least three years in advance. And make sure to have dedicated attention on this activity – budgets require ongoing revisions, especially in the early days as revenue and expenses are in fluctuation.

ONGOING BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Our budget and cash flow forms are based on a five year prediction. We created this five-year template when we were seeking support for our expansion. Annually, at the close of our fiscal year, we break-up the next year into 12 separate months of activity, and add a “new” fifth year projection to the budget.

The best way to ensure that this doesn’t happen, of course, is to insist on rent payments in advance. You can require post-dated cheques, or consider invoicing one month in advance. We’ve tried to show some flexibility – perhaps to a fault – to accommodate the fluctuations in our member’s budgets as an effort to show good faith and understanding of the challenges of their work. But you must find a balance between “good faith” and “hard business”, as a small loss is perhaps inevitable, but you should be protected from any substantial or ongoing losses.

The following are some tips based on our experience.

ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE

We have learned a lot about accounts receivable in five years of operation – through some very painful lessons! And unfortunately, we are still learning and our systems aren’t yet quite perfect. We have encountered about four or five cases where members have disappeared with a balance owing to the Centre.

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The following are some tips based on our experience.

REQUIRE A ONE MONTH DEPOSIT

This means that you have recourse for any member who defaults on a given month or who seems like they will be unable to pay.

CHECK YOUR A/R REGULARLY

If possible, provide options for payment and use an online billing system so clients can see their own invoice and payment histories. We’ve recently moved to Freshbooks and moved from an exclusive reliance on cheques to bank payments, and may eventually permit credit card payments (we’re uncertain now owing to the associated fees which would compromise our revenue).

ENFORCE REGULAR PAYMENTS

Have a clear policy for rental payments. At CSI, we issue an email within five days of the start of the month, advising any members who owe for rent that they have 15 days to catch-up or their membership will be terminated (this gives you ten days to find a new member and sign the paperwork). If they don’t pay, you can apply the deposit against the outstanding balance. You should also have a policy to protect against NSF cheques – we charge $50 for cheques that bounce.
At the Centre for Social Innovation we distinguish between base rent, shared amenities, and fee-for-use revenue.

**BASE RENT**

Base rent is the set amount that members pay on a monthly basis for workspace, and this amount is static for the term of the lease. One of the first and easiest calculations you should do to begin thinking about pricing is to determine the ratio of common space to private space. Let’s say that you have a 1:1 ratio: 50% of your space is rentable and 50% is common space (kitchen, hallways, reception area, etc.). You immediately know that you must double the square foot pricing you are charging members in order to meet your own rent obligations; your goal is to have members cover the full rental costs of the space. However, you still have a staff team to consider. Therefore, this calculation should be the baseline for further adjustments; you may need to layer an additional percentage – anywhere from 10–50% – to cover all of your operating costs of the space. However, you still have a staff team to consider. Therefore, this calculation should be the baseline for further adjustments; you may need to layer an additional percentage – anywhere from 10–50% – to cover all of your operating costs of the space.

As a result, we don’t sell our spaces based on square foot price, which can often appear high given the added costs that the rental fees cover, but on an overall price for the office or desk. Remember, there is always cheaper office space out there: your compelling offer is the added value you provide – community, connectedness, shared services, well managed facilities, profile, and a happy workplace.

When it comes to pricing, we do have some accommodation for office features, such as windows, exposed brick, privacy, etc. You should also recognize that there are different margins for different spaces; you’ll have the slimmest margin for office space and the largest margin for Hot Desk space (where you can get multiple people into a very small footprint), with permanent desk space sitting somewhere in the middle. Keep in mind that any decision about the relative number of such spaces not only has design and budgetary implications, it also has deep implications for your community – these decisions must be grounded in your vision for the space.

**SHARED AMENITIES**

Shared Amenities – or shared services – are aggregated into a monthly fee that members pay over and beyond their rent for the facilities and services that are shared in common (think of them like a condo fee, but a fair one!). You should decide on which amenities to offer based on those that are common across the majority of organizations, those which provide a value-add or cost savings to members, and those which you can administer with relative ease. Our shared amenities fee includes:

- Cleaning supplies
- Internet access (wired and wireless)
- Photocopyer leases
- Fax machines
- Shared equipment costs (e.g., audio-visual)
- Repairs and maintenance
- Security systems and monitoring
- Coffee/Tea

Your shared amenities fee should be determined by the total cost divided by number of members, plus a margin that covers your costs of coordination and provides some flexibility in case of price fluctuation. Keeping this fee separate from the base rent allows you to make changes to the shared amenities fee as you add or decrease services, or as the price of existing services fluctuates. It also shows members that there is a real cost behind these services that is tied to their actual usage. Currently, CSI charges a monthly $130 shared amenities fee to office members and a $65 shared amenities fee to permanent desk members. For Hot Desk members, we built the shared amenities fee directly into the pricing. Crucially, we don’t tolerate exceptions for members that want to opt out of some of the services in the package (e.g. The “but I don’t drink coffee” refrain). This is part of being in a shared community!

**FEE-FOR-USE**

Finally, some expenses are charged based on actual usage. These are all based on individual usage and a coding system allows us to charge back these expenses on a quarterly basis.

- Photocopying
- Printing
- Long-distance charges
- Telephones

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The majority of our space is dedicated to offices. Offices are easy to administer and provide stability in workplace culture. Hot Desks can be densely packed into a small footprint. You want to make sure permanent desk members have enough room to comfortably work; our permanent desk workspaces are approximately 8’ x 5’.

This chart illustrates a key characteristic of the model: Hot Desks generate six times more income relative to their footprint. Remember that you’ll have multiple members cycling through the same spaces; in our case, we have 100 members in 20 workstations. As a result, the most profitable workplaces are those that focus on Hot Desks. But Hot Desks require heavier administration and ongoing recruitment. Think carefully about your approach - the layout of the space should flow from your vision.
### STRATEGIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

When it comes to pricing your spaces, you need to consider your own operational requirements, your member’s budgets, and the market in which you are competing. Your space must be somewhat in tune with other workspace options in your city. But hopefully you are creating something unique - something of value. For this reason, a relatively higher cost is going to be an inevitable and natural outcome. This is something you shouldn’t have to apologize for. The key is to ensure that your “value add” amenities (community, profile, facilities, services) really are of value to the community.

With respect to our own pricing, the base rent for our offices ranges from $700 (for a small 80 sq ft office) to $2,600 (for a beautiful 400 sq ft office with a gorgeous view of the city).

Generally, the sq ft price increase may be highest on your smallest offices. This is because:

1. There needs to be a significant price differential between an office and a desk space
2. Small, one or two-person offices are often very difficult to find, and hence the market can bear a higher price.

### Business Basics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Hours of Monthly Workspace</th>
<th>Hours of Monthly Meeting Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$75</td>
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<tr>
<td>$250</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Shared Amenities

- **$300** + **$65 for Shared Amenities**
  - 1 desk, shelving & lockable filing
  - 10 hours of monthly meeting space

### Private Offices

- **$800-$2400** + **$130 for Shared Amenities**
  - 80 - 400 square feet
  - 10 hours of monthly meeting space
  - Self-furnished
  - Private offices are lockable spaces that belong to a single organization or individual and cannot be accessed by another. CSI does not provide office furniture.

### Permanent Desks

- **$300**
  - 60 hours of monthly workspace
  - 6 hours of monthly meeting space
  - Permanent desks are private desk spaces in a shared open environment but which belong to one individual and cannot be used by another. CSI provides furnishing for the desk spaces.

### Hot Desks

- **$200**
  - 60 hours of monthly workspace
  - 6 hours of monthly meeting space
  - Hot Desks are desks that are shared by members. Members work in a shared space called the Workspace Commons which has approximately 24 work stations available on a first-come first-serve basis. CSI furnishes the Workspace Commons.
OUR SUCCESS IS A TESTAMENT TO OUR TEAM.
There needs to be a true leader at the helm of the organization. This doesn’t mean someone who will control everything and boss everyone around. It means having a leader with vision – someone who inspires staff and the member community, who paints a compelling vision and sells the vision to the world. Of course, selling a vision isn’t enough. Your leader needs a proven track record and the capacity to balance visionary leadership with basic and effective management.

LEADERSHIP

Someone needs to focus on the overall operations of the space. This includes budget development and management, space construction and infrastructure improvements, member relationships, vendor negotiations, and overall facilities management. Look for someone who enjoys spreadsheets and checkboxes.

OPERATIONS

Roles and responsibilities
It needs to build its profile and attract new members. An effective and coordinated marketing and communication program allows you to define and build your brand while engaging an internal and external audience.

Administering leases, paying invoices, issuing invoices, tracking accounts receivable, and administering all require a very thorough mindset. Make sure you have systems in place to manage these details and the right control freak at the helm.
A shared space that seeks to go beyond simply a “collocation” must invest in the programming, energy and “atmosphere design” that only a Community Animator can provide. Community animation is serious business – it takes work to have fun!

You may not have a staff person in each of these roles – they may be blended or shared among a few people. CSI, for example, did not have anyone in charge of marketing and communication until its fifth year, when it grew from four to seven staff. And at one time, the executive director was occupying all roles in a half-time position!
Shared services are the basic ingredients of a collaborative workspace.
Shared services are an essential part of the support we provide to our members. These are the core services of our model.

1. Photocopying and printing
2. High-speed internet
3. Fax machines
4. Mailboxes
5. Kitchen facilities
6. Meeting rooms
7. Coffee/tea
8. Security
9. Cleaning
10. Audio-visual equipment

Shared services are an essential part of the support we provide to our members. These are the core services of our model.
TIPS AND LESSONS

The provision of shared services and shared amenities is one of the key reasons why members join a shared space. This is especially true of small organizations. When you are a one-person organization and the internet goes down or the copier breaks, it’s you that has to address it; it isn’t much better in a two or three-person organization. A shared space should save members from the administrative burden of managing shared services, allowing them to focus on their missions rather than administration. It should also save money and increase access to facilities through economies of scale.

There’s a basic formula that underlies your decision of whether to offer a specific service to your members: Can you achieve economies of scale that are low enough for you to take a margin that covers your time investment and still offer the service at a discounted price to members? For example, if your members can walk down the street and get a black and white photocopy for $0.07/page, offering photocopying services is only worthwhile if you can beat that price for them while still generating some revenue for yourself.

But there is a twist! Sometimes a shared service doesn’t make economic sense but it makes community sense – it makes your members happy. If we couldn’t make any profit offering b/w printing at $0.05/page, we’d still want to make this service available to our community.

One of the most attractive features of a shared space can be a shared technical infrastructure. But unless you have technical expertise on-site, be careful with the technology you decide to offer. Technology is often more expensive and complicated than originally anticipated and you must not underestimate the potential drain on human resources, which is all too easy to overlook. Human resources are a cost to your organization that doesn’t always appear on the balance sheet but needs to be carefully considered. We learned this lesson in spades when it came to our investment in a VoIP telephone system!

It’s probably not a good idea to start right off with a shared insurance plan! Trust and camaraderie take time to build; there is no insta-community. Start with the simple things like copiers and refrigerators. Over time, layer on more and more services as your community develops, relationships solidify, and you have a more nuanced sense of your members’ needs.

A member community can often achieve economies of scale and drive down the costs for the individual members. But who are your vendors? What does it mean to strive to be an environmentally and socially conscious organization if your vendors aren’t doing the same? Consider prioritizing green businesses, socially responsible companies, and social enterprises when it comes to your procurement. Always remember, at the same time, that the baseline is excellence – if you strive toward excellence but your coffee, copier or telephone provider keep letting you down, your brand and reputation are taken down too.

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THE SYSTEM FOR BOTH PHOTOCOPIERS AND PRINTERS SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF ACCOUNTING FOR PER PAGE USE BY USER – YOU NEED TO EASILY TRACK AND CHARGE FOR USAGE.

A/V EQUIPMENT
It’s generally a good idea to offer A/V equipment to support meeting space users.

- Consider all variety of a/v equipment, including projectors, laptops, TVs, DVD players, a PA system, flipcharts and markers, whiteboards, and chalk boards.
- Keep the equipment in good working order, manage the inventory, and keep a close eye on all associated cables and peripherals.
- Write clear instructions for all technology – even the most obvious! – to make it easier for users and to limit questions.

PHOTOCOPIING & PRINTING
Photocopying and printing are required by most organizations and are a relatively straightforward service to offer. Here’s what you should look for when shopping for a copier:

- Get a robust machine – you will need something that can handle the traffic of your members.
- Users should be able to download the drivers themselves – this process should be straightforward.
- Make sure that the printer can handle multiple platforms and operating systems; you may have Macs, PCs, and users of Windows and open source platforms.
- The system for both photocopiers and printers should be capable of accounting for per page use by user – you need to easily track and charge for usage.
- Get at least two suppliers to bid on the machine; compare initial costs and ongoing/maintenance costs, plus reputation for service.
- Scanning is a great and useful addition to the copier.
INTERNET AND WIRELESS
Reliable high-speed internet is a must-have for a shared space. It’s also a very appealing service to offer because it can be a massive headache to manage. Here’s a checklist of things to consider:

- Look for high bandwidth.
- Find a reliable provider with great support.
- Wireless is a huge bonus, and more or less essential if you are offering Hot Desk services.
- Make sure to get access to technical support for your internal infrastructure.
- Get a clear sense of all the costs involved, including cabling, routers, servers, maintenance, etc.

VOIP TELEPHONE
We provide a VoIP system to our members. VoIP can require a steep upfront investment, and is associated with expensive ongoing costs. In our case the math made sense, but we didn’t adequately account for the expense of changes, additions and deletions, over and above that of routine maintenance. Anytime someone wants to add a line or change a staff person you may have to get involved. Think carefully about whether it’s worth it. If it is:

- Compare a few proposals and make sure you learn enough to understand the differences.
- Look into hosted or open source solutions.
- Clearly understand ongoing maintenance costs.
- Determine the scalability of the system; what if you expand? Does the system have the capacity to grow without being replaced? And what about costs for additional lines or licensing?
- Cabling is expensive! How can you tie your internet and telephony infrastructure together?
- Will a staff person be trained to make changes to the system or are you reliant on external providers? Do you have the in-house skills and capacity?
COFFEE/TEA

Such a seemingly simple topic deserves its own section! If your space is anything like our space – i.e., on earth – then coffee will be a serious issue:

1. We accommodate a high number of coffee drinking members and guests so we got very robust machines that tie directly into the plumbing.
2. Freshly roasted organic fair-trade coffee is delivered weekly, alongside organic milk and cream.
3. Get multiple urns so you can serve multiple events simultaneously.
4. Consider providing coffee service – or at least coffee access – to visitors and meeting room renters as a way to generate revenue.
5. Put a piggy bank near the machine so guests can drink guilt-free.
6. Remember the tea drinkers!

KITCHEN MANAGEMENT

A fully stocked kitchen is a massive environment saver and a great resource to offer your community and visitors. We adopt a strict “no waste” policy for all external events and use our facilities whenever possible.

7. Provide the basics: plates, cutlery, glasses, mugs, etc.
8. While we don’t have cooking facilities, we do provide a toaster, microwave, cutting boards, etc.
9. The kitchen is often the focal point of the space – this is where the magic happens! Keep the space open, bright and big…if you want to build community, don’t scrimp on the kitchen.
10. The kitchen is also the most contentious space, prey to abandoned moldy items, battles for space, and never-ending dirty dishes battles. Use clear signage, outline expectations, and model the behaviour you want to see (and occasionally call out the folks who aren’t doing their part).
11. Get a large robust refrigerator and dishwasher, and consider getting a second of each if your space warrants it.
INSURANCE

There are three kinds of insurance worth considering: contents, liability, and health and dental. We found that it was too expensive to insure all of the contents of the members under our own policy, so our sub-lease has a stipulation that they require their own contents insurance. We do have liability insurance to cover all possible injuries in the space; this is part of the shared amenities fee.

After four years, as levels of trust had grown in our community, we began a shared health and dental program. This is a great benefit but can be an administrative drain, especially dealing with members coming in and out of the program. Again, consider the human costs in your decision-making.

We do not get involved in any shared general operating or Directors and Officers insurance.

CAN YOU CREATE A CARPOOLLING SYSTEM?
CAN YOU SECURE DISCOUNTS FOR RAIL TRAVEL?
WHAT ABOUT A REDUCED ‘BULK ADVERTISING’ PRICE WITH LOCAL NEWSPAPERS?
THE IMPORTANCE OF VARIOUS AMENITIES TO OUR MEMBERS

For each of the above amenities, to what extent do you agree with this statement: “This amenity at CSI is essential to my work.”
Members are the reason for your existence and the centre of your business model.
With hard work and a little luck your space will be thriving, and filled to capacity with a waiting list of eager members. But things don’t often start that way! Attracting the membership you want takes deliberate planning and work. As with most aspects of shared space management, this starts with your vision. Who is the space intended to serve? What is your vision for the culture and dynamic among members? These questions form the baseline of your member recruitment strategy.

Start early and build momentum

Planning a shared space? Then get started building your community! There’s no reason to wait until you open your doors before inviting people into your vision. Once you have a sense of direction and a reasonable plan for development and launch, start spreading the word. Here’s where your brand and tone really come in handy. Let people know about your vision. Invite them to join a mailing list, a meet-up, a Facebook group or some other device that allows you to start collecting names and sharing the word. This momentum will come in handy when it’s time to start later stages of promotion and member recruitment.

Define your offer

What is it that you are offering members? Why should they join your space? You must define your offer. We don’t think you should ever attempt to distinguish yourself by price; there will always be another organization or building that can provide space at a lower cost. And don’t just sell office space – a million places sell office space. A shared space can sell many things: community, social capital, profile, flexibility, health, happiness etc. Build these ideas into your messages.

Information sessions

When your space is secured and you are beginning the leasehold improvements, hold a few information sessions to welcome potential members into the space, share your vision, and generate excitement and member leads. Choose a few dates at different times and days of the week to accommodate people’s varying schedules.

- Use all possible colleagues and networks to promote the message. Make the invitation compelling and get people excited about the vision and possibilities from the get-go.
- Prepare a set of information packages that include the vision, floor map with pricing (even if it’s tentative) and the application forms.
- Start the session with a brief presentation about the vision — use the right salesperson to get people energized.
- Encourage everyone to introduce themselves; this simple act can show the variety of potential colleagues.
- Take the members on a tour and encourage them to identify those offices or spaces that they would like to apply for — even if the space is being developed, illustrate the details of your plan.
- Let people know that not everyone will get in; create some cache by describing your selection process and your vision.

Ongoing promotion

Just because you are full doesn’t mean you should stop promoting yourself. What if you decide to expand, or what if some members lose their funding or outgrow the space? Have on-site materials that promote your centre.

- Create and grow an external mailing list to promote your member community and programs so that, when the time comes, you have a great promotional channel.
- Encourage members to promote their association with your space through their website, printed materials, etc.
- Maintain a waiting list so you can go back to the list whenever a space opens up.
- Consider monthly tours to promote the space to potential members.
- Use social media to build networks and to connect non-members to your work.
- Host events and activities that welcome a broader audience - connect to the community in which you are situated and build a name for your work.
- Be excellent. The best promotion is word-of-mouth from happy members.
The majority of our members worked from home before they came to CSI. This poses two interesting challenges: First, How do you motivate people to begin incurring rent expenses? Second, how do you reach people who work primarily from their own homes? To answer the first question, your message needs to focus on what’s needed by those would-be members. This includes office amenities like photocopiers and meeting rooms, but it also includes the soft stuff like exposure to new people and a sense of community. For the second question, see the next page.

Never underestimate the power of networks. The statistic for ‘word of mouth’ demonstrates the importance of your members’ experiences and relationships. We try to incentivize members to ‘spread the gospel’ by offering a $50 referral fee. But a referral fee is just the icing on the cake; it won’t incentivize members nearly as much as a genuine affection for the shared space. This graph also shows the importance of opening your site to public events – this is how most people first experience the space.
MEMBER SELECTION

Just as you must curate your physical space, you must also curate your membership. This means taking seriously your responsibility to select members on the basis of your vision. If things go well this will be quite easy because most applicants self-select: those who aren’t really a fit aren’t likely to apply if they get a chance to experience the space. But you must prepare for more formal processes and protection.

All members should have to apply for space using a detailed application form that gives you the information you need to make an informed decision about their viability. Remember to ask why they are applying to be part of the shared space – this can be a good way to assess enthusiasm and fit. If possible, move the form online so you can easily store and analyze this data. Finally, you should meet every member before they are approved (invite them to a tour or to check out the space) – never under-estimate the importance of gut feel!

The selection process has two elements: the criteria for selection and the decision-making process. It is absolutely critical for your team to define your member vision in advance. Do you want members of a certain size? A certain sector? Of certain values? Consider carefully your vision for the space and curate your community just as seriously as you curate your space.

The Wildcard: Personality and Enthusiasm

The member selection process can occur at a staff level, board level, or can even include existing members. It could include a grading scheme or a simple yes/no majority or consensus approach. Make sure you have defined the criteria and process so that you can streamline decision making. It can all look good on paper, but what if someone arrives and they insist on complaining all the time? Or gossiping? These can be poison in your shared environment and a very difficult thing to anticipate in advance. Our best suggestion is to have at least two staff meet with members in advance for a tour and a chat so you can get a quick sense of “vibe” or “feel”. Your members should be enthusiastic and excited about being part of your great community. And of course, make sure your member co-operation policies account for any such disruptive behaviour so you have a document to fall back on if a specific individual is really compromising the well being of the community.

The Centre for Social Innovation Board and staff team are responsible for member selection. Here are the criteria that factor into our decision-making process.

Social Mission: Members must be able to articulate how their work is making the world a better place.

Shared Values: Members must align with CSI’s values, such as open-mindedness, respect, tolerance, passion, solutions-focus, etc.

Physical Fit: CSI can accommodate groups of five or fewer staff, and no one organization can have more than two office spaces.

Innovativeness: Priority will be given to those individuals, projects and organizations whose work is new, creative and promising. We are looking for members who are pushing boundaries.

Reach: As a network of networks, CSI is interested in supporting umbrella groups and other connectors into the social mission sector.

Profile: Groups whose profile will add value to the Centre for Social Innovation and to its members will be prioritized.

Community-Mindedness: Members must understand – and embrace – the fact that they are joining a community.

Multi-Cultural Participation: CSI seeks to reflect the diversity of our city and will prioritize initiatives and individuals who represent and work with Toronto’s diverse ethno-racial communities.

Diversity: The overall mix of the Centre for Social Innovation must reflect a diversity of missions, legal forms (nonprofits, for-profits, unincorporated, etc.) and developmental stages, including both stable and emerging organizations.

Commitment to Collaboration: We seek members who have demonstrated that they work well with others.

Energy: CSI embraces entrepreneurs, animators, connectors and others who bring their energy with them. Good energy in the world attracts good energy within CSI.

Nonprofit Priority: A minimum of two-thirds of all permanent desk and office spaces will be reserved for nonprofit organizations.

Download our member selection criteria: socialinnovation.ca/ssi
MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS

Unfortunately, getting members in the door isn’t quite enough. Once they are in, you need to navigate and manage the diversity of personalities and relationships that are an inevitable part of your shared space.

Fortunately, this is often the most rewarding aspect of the work. Members bring incredible experience and ideas, and it is the web of relationships with and among members that make your days so enjoyable.

MEMBER CO-OPERATION POLICIES

Create a set of member co-operation policies that can be appended to the lease as a requirement of membership. This allows you to outline the expectations of members upfront and in a transparent manner, while providing some legal recourse if someone is really contravening the rules and expectations of the space. These policies should include physical and practical considerations (such as lighting, noise, and cleanliness) as well as interpersonal and cultural aspects of membership (such as respect for colleagues, willingness to participate in certain activities, etc.). You can also add a value statement or Community Charter to these policies, outlining the shared vision for the space (this can be a community driven exercise).

ORIENTATION SESSIONS

If you expect a lot of turnover, or if you are offering a Hot Desk service, consider a monthly orientation session for new members. This gives them a chance to meet each other, ask questions about the space, better understand your organization, and familiarize themselves with the services and amenities offered. If you can, make this social – doing it over a shared meal like Salad Club (more on that shortly) will cement the sense of camaraderie. We also provide a two-page quick Orientation document for new members.
MEMBER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMITTEES

Many shared spaces create committees for members, which may address topics such as programming, service offerings, member selection, etc. These committees give members a known channel and opportunity for feedback. We have shied away from such committees: these require a fair bit of administration and can lead to questions of representation, which can add an element of politics and politicking to your space. We don’t operate by consensus – with 180 members this would simply be impossible – or at least a whole other job on its own.

Instead, we make every effort to make it apparent that all staff are available to receive feedback and to follow up on all comments that are received. If we get a sense that a concern is bubbling we host an ad hoc meeting, providing a week or two of notice and inviting all concerned members to attend. We listen carefully and we share our own thoughts. At all times we make sure to follow up with a response indicating how we will address the concern or unmet opportunity, or explaining why we may choose a course of action different than what was requested.

Whatever you do, you must leave room for member input: they experience the space in a different way than you do and it’s critical to have their feedback and perspectives. The best management policy is to walk around the space and engage in it: listen, reflect, adapt, and act.
KEEPING THE PEACE: CONFLICT RESOLUTION

It is well worth it to establish a conflict resolution policy and to append this to your Member Co-operation policies. Hopefully it will never be used, but it structures expectations and provides clarity around the process should it ever be required. This is essential in ensuring members that conflict can be effectively and transparently managed. We encourage members to resolve issues themselves; if this is unsuccessful or impractical then our staff team offers a solution. If this solution is deemed unsatisfactory both parties are required to document their concerns in a letter, which is then reviewed by our Board. The Board then issues a final decision which must be adhered to, or which can otherwise trigger a member’s eviction.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

A shared space can be a source of fascinating conversation and engagement. Unfortunately, a shared space is also a business, and as with any business, it means having difficult conversations at times. In general, these are conversations about financial capacity (i.e., paying the bills); occasionally they are also about negotiating personality conflicts. Take these conversations seriously and address concerns early, before they have a chance to fester – and do so with the same spirit of community that all conversations are held. Respect the privacy of members and do not divulge their financial information or any personal concerns with other members. Remember that you should never say anything in private that you aren’t prepared to defend publicly; treat all members the same way and keep your principles and priorities as the guide for your conversations.

BENEVOLENT DICTATORSHIP

Co-operative and consensual decision-making have their place, but this place may well be limited in a shared space. We have found that too much dialogue and surveying can prevent action and paralyze the community. In general, we don’t cede decision-making to the members but instead retain final say on matters of significance. We absolutely listen to and respect the contributions of our members but in the end, it is our responsibility to manage the overall well-being of the space and community, and sometimes that means making decisions that are not unanimously agreed upon. However, we have earned our ability to make unfavourable decisions because we have demonstrated over time that the community’s best interests are our priority.

MBWA

The reference to “benevolent dictatorship” is somewhat in jest – but just somewhat! In our case, and owing to our legal structure, we have the capacity to ‘call the shots’. This may not be possible in all cases.

The basis of our ability to oversee the space is not based on some kind of power trip – it is based on our heartfelt commitment to our community. This is best exercised through our practice of MBWA – or Manage By Walking Around. MBWA means that our ears are to the ground as much as possible and we have the chance to resolve issues before they become issues. We listen for feedback and we focus on customer service. This gives us the opportunity to address issues that may arise head on and with a solutions-oriented approach. You cannot manage member relationships from the comfort of your office – from there you won’t even get to know your members and their personalities and concerns. Get out and mix and mingle – this is an essential part of the job and should be more than a management strategy – it should be one of the best aspects of the job.

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WE TURN A SHARED WORKSPACE INTO A COMMUNITY SPACE BY INSPIRING AND CONNECTING MEMBERS.
Community animation and programming are the ingredients that turn a shared workspace into a community space, inspiring and connecting members while sparking new ideas and demonstrating the unique value of working together. These activities require dedicated attention and ongoing creativity to serve the emerging needs of your community while constantly pushing the envelope of what’s possible.

Community Animation may sound like a frill but it is at the root of absolutely everything we do.

Community animation is the glue that holds it all together and the air that breathes vitality into the space. The goal of community animation is to create a physical and social environment that:

1. is warm, welcoming and hospitable
2. facilitates the work of individual members and helps them discover their potential
3. contributes to a sense of community
4. maximizes opportunities for idea development, exchange and collaboration
5. solves problems and drives customer service

COMMUNITY ANIMATION PHILOSOPHY

In six years of operation we have learned a few critical things about animation that inform our work. Your role is occasionally to create, but generally to enable and facilitate; to find ways to help bring member needs and ideas to actualization.

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Adopt a light touch – heavy-handed or prescriptive animation will be deservedly resisted.

Don’t expect uniform participation: tenants will naturally dip in and dip out of programming and have different degrees of connectedness to the centre at different times.

Model the culture you hope to see.

Every staff person is a community animator.

Experiment. This terrain is wide open.

Community animation manifests in every action and interaction, and begins with your first contact with a new member or visitor.

Balance the natural and organic qualities of community animation with intentional opportunities for connection and service.

Achieve a balance between relaxation and professionalism; between casualness and excellence.
THE DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY ANIMATION

Our model identifies three dimensions of community animation: physical, social, and technical. None is more important than the others: they work in concert and to varying degrees for different purposes and for different members.

TONE

The tone of your communication is a key component of community animation. Every e-mail, tour, greeting, and conversation is an extension of your brand – who you are and what you stand for. The tone of your shared space is everything, and it manifests in every written and spoken word.

Our tone is open, human, approachable, professional, enthusiastic and empowering, even when we are delivering messages about rent increases. We strive to make sure that all communication reflects our values – that everyone is important, that everyone can achieve incredible social impact, and that everyone is a valuable member and contributor to our shared space.

PHYSICAL ANIMATION

Physical animation refers to the artifacts or interventions that appear in the physical space as a means to foster connectivity and spark collaboration. You must look at your physical environment and consider the myriad opportunities for physical animation.

Some of the things we’ve tried include:
• turning walls into chalkboards
• hanging photos of members with captions describing their missions
• installing comfy couches and harvest tables
• creating maps showing where members sit
• creating notice boards, job postings and events listings
• keeping a coffee and tea station

SOCIAL ANIMATION

Social Animation refers to those activities that allow people to get to know each other on a personal level. We try to do a formal event every quarter and a number of informal events throughout the year.

Some of the things we’ve tried include:
• annual summer picnics
• sailing trips
• holiday parties (featuring the “Cookies & Cocktails” smack-down!)
• CSI anniversary parties
• birthday celebrations
• Salad Club
• Speed Geeks
• drinks night
• salons

TECHNICAL ANIMATION

Technical animation refers to activities that happen in the online or virtual space. Members aren’t always on-site and they aren’t always available. Creating and growing a technical infrastructure allows you to accommodate members so they can engage on their own schedules and at their own locations.

We’ve been exploring:
• e-mail lists to share information
• a members-only website
• online member profiles
• online events listing
• online FAQ

INTRODUCTIONS

Your staff should make a habit of meeting all members – and introducing them to each other! This is the social capital that forms the basis for all the good things that come out of shared spaces.
In addition to ongoing animation activities it's a good idea to create and implement programs to serve the community. These programs may be "one-offs" or part of an ongoing series of activities designed to meet the needs and build the skills of members. There is no shortage of possible programs you could run: it just depends on your imagination, or better yet, the imaginations of your members. Possible programs include:

- yoga classes
- language classes
- marketplace
- lunch-and-learns
- salad club
- skills training workshops
- political/current event discussions
- guest speakers
- speed geeks
- book or article discussions
- communities of practice

Evolving out of ‘open space technology,’ the law of two feet tells us that whoever shows up is who needs to show up: i.e. their own feet will guide them to or from the conversations and events they want to be part of. Members have their own lives and their own organizations to run — they aren’t obligated to attend our events. So give a program a try and see what happens… The law of two feet will let you know if it’s working or not. It’s like throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what sticks!

At the Centre for Social Innovation we have an amazing team of creative and dedicated staff. They truly are exceptional. But even we know that eight incredible staff can’t possibly compete with a community of over 250 individual members. Our goal, therefore, is not to anticipate and serve every possible activity but to create the conditions for members to offer their own ideas to the community — that is, to provide them the conditions for self-organization. This is a cornerstone of community animation.

Your members are the best indicator of the activities and programs that should be happening in your space. Give them the tools and supports they need to let their ideas come to life. Invite them to share their ideas, their knowledge and their experiences with others. Let them organize themselves in your facility: you don’t always need to intervene, you need to make it easy for them to do things on their own. This not only alleviates some of your responsibilities, it creates a sense of ownership among members and helps them to model possibilities for one and other.

Programming

- Law of Two Feet: Follow the Energy
- Unleash the Energy!
- Marketplace
- Speed Geeks
- Salad Club

Community Animation

- Community Animation
A brand is what captures the spirit of your community and your vision.
Branding is often misinterpreted as a dirty word. But branding is about identity: creating an image that conveys the meaning you want to share with the world through words, tone, colour, and imagery. Once created, the brand becomes a touchstone for your work, guiding your decisions and influencing your sense of yourself as much as others’ perceptions of you.

Your shared space deserves its own identity; the creation and maintenance of an identity is an important ingredient in its success. Your brand identity should flow from your vision for the space. In our case, the Centre for Social Innovation is a direct reflection of our goal to create a hotbed of social innovation. Work to define and differentiate your organization. Create a logo that reflects your centre, your members, and your vision. Don’t reject the notion of “brand” as a private sector strategy or sleazy marketing jargon; think about the experience that you want members, visitors, funders, and partners to have when they interact with your shared space.

Design elements should carry through all of your materials and through your physical space – a look and feel built on your vision and resonant with your community and your surroundings. Establish a tone in your writing and in person that connects to your audiences and communicate your identity through every medium and opportunity possible.
A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS

Recognize that you and your members have a mutual interest in drawing attention to the relationship you have with each other, and in raising each other’s profile. The more attention you can bring to them, the greater their success and the stronger the perceptions of your shared space. The more attention they can bring to you, the more resources that can be directed to and invested in the shared space. Raising the profile of members is a key reason for their participation in the shared space. This becomes a virtuous cycle of reinforcement, a rising tide lifts all boats!

- Encourage members to signal their association with your shared space in their contact information, website, and in printed materials.
- Create a logo they can use on their materials, or some standardized language that serves both your interests.
- Do your best to draw attention to members through your own materials and communication channels, through speaking engagements and other activities.
- Position member profiles on your website.
- Promote member events and news via an external mailing list.
- Put signage in the space that identifies who members are and what they are doing.

Public Website
Signage in Space
External Newsletter
Workshops & Speeches

HOW SHOULD CSI PROMOTE MEMBER OFFERINGS?
Many shared spaces serve only their members. CSI operates a bit differently.
PERMEABLE WALLS

Early on in our evolution we decided to open our space to external event renters. This brought an incredible array of people and organizations through our doors. Our walls and our scope became permeable as members and external community members each began taking advantage of our resources. And because of our own interests and curiosity, we began playing with this permeability and finding new avenues for community engagement and impact.

YOUR FOCUS YOUR DECISION

We believe that a shared space can not only serve members but also the communities in which it is situated. Shared spaces can be economic engines, idea generators, learning spaces, and incubators. Each centre must decide for itself whether and how it will relate to the world outside its walls—these activities may prove to be those with the greatest impact.

A HUB OF LEARNING

Open your space to the community by hosting workshops and presentations. This approach can turn your centre into a hub of learning and skills development, as members and external visitors increasingly look to the space as a place of capacity-building and organizational enhancement.

OFF SITE ON MISSION

You may also decide to host, co-host, or engage in events that are off-site but which are consistent with your mission. Since opening our doors we have held a handful of events in other spaces: from a Ralph Nader speaking engagement at the local university to annual Social Innovation Summits and a Sharing for Social Change conference, the Centre for Social Innovation has organized and delivered large-scale community events that build our brand and support our mission.

FILL GAPS AS A TRUSTED PLAYER

Sometimes there are pressing issues and topics that no one seems to be addressing. Over time we found that our organization gained increasing prominence as a “neutral” and respected player in the social mission sector, and so we began to rise to the challenge of considering these subjects. We began to strategically convene think tanks, conversations, and “idea camps” around pressing issues so we could begin moving forward on solutions.
The Centre for Social Innovation has also explored ‘incubation’ as a new activity area. This is a rather vague term but, for us, generally means providing some kind of support to an emerging initiative that is not yet incorporated. The supports we provide range from simple brand association and networking to back-end financial secretarial services (whereby we assume fiduciary responsibility for a project, using our own bank account and administrative systems). These projects rarely cover the costs of hosting them, so only those projects who serve some strategic interest – or whose value is near and dear to your organization or its mission – should be incubated.

CSI is both a service provider and a social innovator itself. Our goal with respect to our social innovation agenda is to develop, discover and share methods and models that others can use to create change in their local communities. In the past few years, we’ve created and shared our work developing new forms of governance, strategies for network evaluation, and insights into the practice of city innovation.
Building a shared workspace is an amazing experience. It is also a heck of a lot of work! The variety of tasks – from design to management to engagement to marketing – requires a broad range of skills and interests...and bucket loads of passion and commitment.

This book was written to support the development of shared spaces dedicated to social innovation. It is based on our experiences here at the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto. We know that your experiences – like ours – are and will be unique. Our hope is not that you will mimic what we’ve done, but will instead adapt our model and innovate your own solutions to fit your community.

And we want to hear what you’ve done! The whole purpose behind this series is to shed some light on how different organizations are creating shared spaces for social innovation. Did our work inspire you? Do you have improvements to what we’ve assembled or your own experiences and materials to offer? We want to work with you – to form a community of practice that will grow this field and allow us to exchange experiences, tools and ideas. So please do let us know what you’re up to by visiting our online space and adding your name to our growing community.

Ultimately, this isn’t even about shared spaces. It’s about changing the world. Shared spaces are just a vehicle to support the people who are making the world a better place. By connecting shared spaces in a community of practice, we’re improving our ability to support their work. We imagine a world where change agents are connected, empowered, and thriving – a world where we’re working together to fix our future.

CONCLUSION

Join this growing community of shared space practitioners:
socialinnovation.ca/ssi
This book was designed by The Movement, as part of our effort to work with people and groups who are doing better. Working with social entrepreneurs and innovators, we use the power of design thinking & doing to give form to complex ideas. We’re a network of committed people ready to tackle complex problems, and a studio dedicated to delivering results. We work openly with groups, on challenges that matter.

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