



Unconventional Ideas For Using Empty Office Buildings

So much energy and space goes to waste after quitting time. 10 unconventional ideas for putting your office's off hours to use.

By Rana Florida

The global economy runs 24/7, but big pieces of the skylines of even our busiest cities go dark every night as office buildings and other places of business empty out. Walk down Wall Street, Chicago's Loop, or San Francisco's Financial District on a Sunday morning and they are ghost towns. It doesn't have to be that way.

Even with their lights dimmed and their thermostats turned down, the amount of [energy](#) these office towers consume is enormous. Car and bike shares and Airbnb are allowing us to reduce waste and increase sustainability in our personal lives. So why are we letting all of that office space sit idle, when it could be put to better use?

Of course there are logistical issues to work out, such as security and cleanliness. But the potential advantages in efficiency, productivity, and extra income are too big to waste.

Here are 10 creative ways we can bring this dead space back to life:

1. Meet Ups

Whether it's Women in Tech or The Writers Collaborative of Queens, meet-ups are an increasingly popular way for like-minded peers to come together to socialize, network, and collaborate. Workspaces and conference rooms are quiet and inexpensive venues where they can do just that.

2. CoWorking Space

So many entrepreneurs are burning the candle at both ends and need to work on the evenings and weekends. Many are confined to their home offices and would gladly pay for a place where they can hold meetings, take advantage of fast Internet and other amenities, and make some human connections.

3. Book Clubs

Non-profits and other businesses often recommend books for whole communities to read and discuss. Conference rooms—and the [video conferencing equipment](#) that come with them—can provide an ideal venue for these meetings.

4. Homeless Shelters

While this would take both an open-minded company and considerable operational expertise, cots can be brought into common areas and cafeterias can be used to prepare meals for homeless individuals and families, especially on cold winter nights when existing facilities are overwhelmed.

5. Professional Development Training

Most companies urge their workers to avail themselves of skills enhancement and professional development opportunities on their own time. Why not make their own facilities available for such programs?

6. International Offices

Share rent with a foreign company whose home office is in an opposite time zone. Much of their staff will work during your off hours.

7. Night Care

Daycare centers run during conventional business hours. Parents who work the night shift must rely on family members or nannies to watch their kids. With a little bit of creativity, ordinary office space can be transformed into a hotel where kids can safely spend the night.

8. Library Zone

With the exception of final exam weeks, most college libraries close by 11 p.m.; public libraries close much earlier. Why not provide high school, college and graduate students with passes that would allow them to utilize a desk for their all-night cram sessions—and common rooms, where they can study together?

9. Health and Exercise

So many freelance yoga, fitness, and exercise coaches and instructors are held back by the want of studio space. An empty office might be just the affordable alternative they need.

10. Test Audiences

Many creatives, whether in film, graphic design, or media, need to test their projects on audiences while they are still in development. Office buildings are filled with ideal spaces where impromptu focus groups can gather. Why not make them available?

The next time you look up at the skyline at night, try to imagine all the important functions and activities that could be going on behind all those dark windows.

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