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# Coworking & Shared Office Spaces

## Industry Guide

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## Coworking & Shared Office Spaces Office Furniture — What You Actually Need

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Running a coworking space is a hospitality business wearing an office costume. Your furniture is your product — members are paying for the experience of working in it every day. Here's what separates spaces that members renew from spaces that lose them at month three.

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### The Must-Have Pieces — Broken Down by Zone

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#### Hot Desk Area

Benching systems at 48–60" per seat are the workhorses of any coworking floor. Go with integrated power spines (2 duplex outlets + 2 USB ports per seat) — members with laptops will vote with their feet if power access is scarce. Surface height of 28–30" standard works for most; add a row of sit-stand benching for the growing population of standing-desk users willing to pay a premium. Acoustic privacy screens at 14–18" height reduce noise transmission without blocking daylight or sightlines.

#### Communal Tables

Cafe-height communal tables (36" height) with matching counter stools create a distinct zone from the standard-height hot desks and signal informal, drop-in work. Go at least 96" long — short communal tables feel awkward. Solid laminate or butcher block surfaces hold up to heavy use and look intentional, not institutional.

#### Phone Booths & Focus Pods

This is the single biggest driver of member satisfaction surveys in coworking. A loud open floor without any acoustic retreat will cost you renewals. You need at least one enclosed phone booth per 20 hot desk seats. Prefabricated acoustic booths (no construction permits required) run \$2,000–\$6,000 each and install in a day. Small 4-person meeting rooms with glass walls serve the same function for team calls.

#### Lounge & Touchdown Areas

Lounge seating near the entrance or cafe area gives members a casual zone and makes the space feel like more than a desk farm. Modular sectionals in commercial-grade fabric are the smart play — reconfigure as needs change. Coffee tables at 16–18" height work well for laptop use at lounge seating without being too low.

#### Private Offices (if offered)

For dedicated desk and private office members, the furniture expectation is higher. A real desk (not a folding table), a real task chair, and at least 2 drawers of locking storage minimum. These members are paying 3–5× hot desk rates and the furniture should reflect that.

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### The Numbers That Drive Your Layout

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- **Hot desk density:** 40–50 sq ft per seat is the sweet spot — less and it feels cramped, more and you're leaving revenue on the floor.

- **Meeting room ratio:** One meeting room (4–6 person) per 20–25 members keeps utilization high without constant booking conflicts.
- **Phone booth ratio:** 1 per 20 hot desk seats minimum; 1 per 15 if you have a tech or sales-heavy member mix.
- **Lounge percentage:** 10–15% of total floor area in lounge/collaboration zones is the industry norm for spaces that retain members.

## The Rules You Can't Ignore

- **Durability over aesthetics.** Consumer furniture (IKEA, Target, etc.) fails under 8–10 hour daily multi-user commercial use within 12–18 months. BIFMA-rated commercial furniture is non-negotiable.
- **ADA applies.** A percentage of your workstations need to be accessible — 27" knee clearance minimum, adjustable height preferred.
- **Fire code for enclosed booths.** Prefab phone booths need to comply with local fire egress codes. Verify with your inspector before installing closed units.
- **GREENGUARD Gold or equivalent.** VOC emissions matter when multiple people share a space all day — it's also a selling point for health-conscious members.

## What Most Buyers Get Wrong

- **Going too cheap on seating.** Members spend 6–8 hours/day in your chairs. A \$100 consumer task chair will look and feel worn out in 6 months. Budget \$200–\$400/seat for commercial-grade task seating.
- **Skimping on power access.** If a member has to hunt for an outlet, they leave. Every 2 seats needs a power outlet within reach.
- **No acoustic treatment.** An open floor of hard surfaces (concrete, glass, laminate) is unusable for calls. Budget for acoustic panels, ceiling baffles, or soft furnishings to bring reverberation time below 0.5 seconds.
- **Buying fixed desks when flexibility is your value prop.** Lock-in with permanent desks limits your ability to reconfigure for bigger or smaller member groups as your business changes.
- **Underestimating storage needs.** Hot desk members need somewhere to put a bag and personal items. Lockers (half-height or full) or dedicated cubbies near the hot desk area solve this and reduce desk clutter.

## How to Stretch Your Budget

Category	Spend Range	Notes
Benching workstations	\$300–\$700/seat	Integrated power spines add cost but drive satisfaction
Commercial task chairs	\$200–\$450/chair	BIFMA certified; mid-range ergonomic is the sweet spot

Category	Spend Range	Notes
Phone booths (prefab)	\$2,000–\$6,000 ea.	ROI is in member retention; prioritize early
Communal tables	\$600–\$1,800 ea.	Commercial laminate or butcher block holds up well
Lounge seating	\$400–\$1,200/piece	Modular sectionals offer best reconfigurability
Lockers	\$150–\$400/unit	Half-height lockers at hot desk zones are popular

## Your Quick Shopping List

- Benching systems with integrated power spines — 48–60" per seat
- Commercial task chairs (BIFMA rated) — budget \$200–\$400/seat
- At least 1 prefab acoustic phone booth per 20 hot desk seats
- Communal cafe-height tables (36", 96"+ long) with counter stools
- Modular lounge seating for 10–15% of floor area
- Half-height lockers at 1 per 2 hot desk seats minimum
- Acoustic privacy screens 14–18" high for benching sections
- Sit-stand benching option for at least 20% of hot desk inventory

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