



X marks the spot for the job creation machine in Bethlehem | Steve Williams

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Co-Working is So Sweet at Lancaster's Candy Factory

BY: JOEL BERG, 10/7/2010



Tired of doing business at home and in cafés, Anne Kirby and Max Phillips rented space in downtown Lancaster for their fledgling design and marketing firm, [Not Bad Design](#). Walled off in separate offices, however, they discovered they were as isolated as they had ever been. "We found we did our best work, when we were in the conference room together," Kirby says.

Kirby and Phillips decided on a third option. In July they opened The Candy Factory on North Queen Street. It's a communal office where other entrepreneurs, freelancers and solo business people can work together. "It's not just a space," Kirby says. "It's actually a community."

It's also being called an inspiration. In September, [Mashable](#), an online news source covering social media and new technology, named The Candy Factory to its list of the [world's Top 10 most inspiring nontraditional workspaces](#).

"It's a fun place to work and a creative place to work," says Steve Zimmerman, a self-employed copywriter and public-relations specialist--and one of The Candy Factory's roughly 35 members.



FINDING A HUMAN CONNECTION

Kirby met Phillips three years ago after she started [Creative House of Lancaster](#), a face-to-face social network for artists, musicians and others in the city. The pair founded Not Bad Design in 2008 and began kicking around the idea of a co-working space. They worked out of their respective homes for the first year. "It was really frustrating," says Phillips. "There's just something about working in isolation. You don't get that human connection, that vibe."



Coffee shops made for a change of scenery. But they weren't much better when it came down to business. The Internet connections can be spotty, the tables are small and distractions abound. And buying food and coffee--which Kirby and Phillips saw as a trade off for taking up precious retail space--gets expensive.

After about a year in business, they realized they were spending enough to lease their own space. So they did. After becoming disenchanted with their first office, they jumped at the chance to lease space on the first floor

of a four-story building that once housed a candy company, Keppel's Inc. Within a matter of weeks they lined up financing, signed a lease and started enlisting members via [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Candy Factory consists of a main hall with community tables in the middle and individual desks lining one wall. On the other wall are a kitchen area, a closet and a table partly covered by a collection of office supplies. A conference area sits near the entrance, while a lounge area and library take up the back end. A short flight of steps leads to a sky-lit back room.



Like other



co-working spaces, The Candy Factory offers a menu of membership options. Part-time members, for example, pay \$35 per month in return for a seat at one of the community work tables that they can use for up to four full days per month. At the other end of the scale are premium members, who pay \$300 per month for unlimited access, a designated work station in the back room and other perks, including storage.

Mark Reinmiller and Laurel Wood, the founders of [Catalyst Interactive Marketing](#), are "Lite" members. That entitles them to space at the community table for three full days a week, which they spread out over five days.

"The main thing is it actually gives you that feeling of going to work," says Reinmiller. At home, he says, "It's easy to become distracted or to work halfheartedly."



"There's just less ADD here," says Wood. And while the environment encourages focus and productivity, it is a far cry from the sterile, fluorescent-lit cubicles of a traditional office, she says. Art on the walls, produced by local artists, rotates frequently, Wood points out. "Nothing is stale about this place at all."

In addition to photographers, graphic designers and other creative types, The Candy Factory has attracted a dentist, an event planner and a professional organizer. There's also a tax preparer, David Shiley, who points

out his PC amid the Macs. "I'm the odd man out," Shiley says. "But it's very comfortable. They're very welcoming here." He spends about one day a week at The Candy Factory and has picked up new clients among its members.

INSTILLING COMMUNITY

Kirby had been studying the concept of co-working for several years before opening The Candy Factory. The idea has gained traction in larger cities. Philadelphia, for example, is home to [Independents Hall](#). But it is spreading to smaller cities. [Project Sandbox](#) opened this fall in York, about 20 miles west of Lancaster.

In addition to space, Kirby and Phillips hope to provide freelancers and other independent workers with a sense of community and opportunities to collaborate. "We really encourage people to network," Kirby says. And they also encourage members to make their voices heard and contribute to the space's evolution. Member feedback already has prompted plans for converting a closet into a place for making private phone calls.



The sense of community has been evident in the number of members who pitch in to help whenever The Candy Factory hosts an event after working hours, Kirby and Phillips say. The community's size became clear after the partners put out a call for volunteers to help paint walls. "We had people who weren't even members who came," Phillips says.

Joel Berg is a freelance writer, part-time writing teacher and recovering business reporter living in York. Send feedback [here](#).

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Photos:

Candy Factory members Max Phillips, right; Anne Kirby, center; and Matt Lester, left, in Lancaster.

A business meeting at Lancaster's co-working space: Lester, left rear; Steve Zimmermann, center rear; Phillips, right rear; Kirby, right front; Mark Reinmiller, center front; and Laurel Wood, left front.

Phillips, left, and Kirby are facing forward during their meeting at the Candy Factory.

Phillips

Lester

Kirby

Stacy Caldwell, left, and other members of the Candy Factory work on their projects in the open space environment

All Photographs by [Brad Bower](#)

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