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When you can't work from home, Part 5

New work "club" offers the best of both worlds

By [Toni Kistner](#), *Network World*, 06/14/04



We've talked plenty about the drawbacks of working at home — distractions, isolation, over working — as reason to seek alternatives. But I'm not convinced they outweigh the benefits — namely the flexibility and the ability to deal with the world on your own terms for the most part.

But now, entrepreneurs are creating "third places" to work that take what you like best about working at home and combine it with what you like best about working in the office.

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"So people are building offices again," said a colleague when I explained. (I might have detected a note of cynicism but because we were on the phone I couldn't be sure.)

"Yes — but these offices are better," I said. "Here, you don't have to work with the people you work with. You get to work with the people you like."

The goal of [Gate-3 Workclub](#) in Emeryville, Calif., is to create a new kind of community where neighborhood people can "work and network and hang out with friends," founder Neil Goldberg

says.

Gate-3 (which means portal to the third place) sits just over the Bay Bridge from San Francisco, a less-than-10-minute drive for more than 2 million people. "People go to Starbucks to be around other people. To get to know them would be nice. We'll facilitate that interaction," Goldberg says.

An industrial designer and architect who spent five years at Herman Miller, Goldberg designed the 14,000-square-foot facility and former warehouse into common areas (communal lounges), touchdown spaces (cubicles) and team spaces (meeting rooms). There's full-time lobby reception, and all the office amenities you'd expect such as mailboxes and support services.

The touchdown spaces are further broken down into "neighborhoods" (the buzz zone, the

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hush zone and the inner sanctum) that suit workers' preferences. "Human beings are very different. Some have a hard time with people watching them work. Others don't mind being seen, but they don't want to be heard," Goldberg says. "When they say they're looking for privacy, they're usually seeking some position on a privacy gradient that balances their need for exposure with their need for solitude."

The 40 or so members of the Wi-Fi-equipped club drop in for a few hours a week. They rove around, spending time in the common areas or cafe, a few hours working in a hush zone, or meeting with a colleague or client in a conference area. They make private phone calls in a "cone of silence," (aka phone booth), have support staff make copies, overnight a package or get a laptop repaired. Members can bring in their dog (if he's quiet and passes an interview), and bring the baby (and they'll deal with any crying), Goldberg says.



The reception area for Gate-3 Workclub (right) and cubicle/work area (above).

In the prototype stage now, the club is open but won't be formally unveiled until September. Touchdown spaces will soon feature Herman Miller's new "Intersect" office system, and some conference rooms will feature Herman Miller's "Resolve System." All over will be Mirra chairs, the

next generation Aeron.

Of course, additional clubs are part of the business plan, and some might even include day care centers, says Goldberg, who has a 4-year-old son. To help promote community, Gate-3 will begin offering seminars on how to improve work/life balance, build the perfect Excel spreadsheet and the like.

"This is a completely new model so we don't know what to expect. But we've just started getting small groups of people joining together, so they can work around their friends," he says.

Based on the country club model, a \$135 monthly fee gets members access to the common areas, Wi-Fi hotspots, café, and eight hours of "touchdown" time in an office space. After that hourly fees kick in.

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