

Shared space brings solo workers together



Shared and individual desks are available at Tahoe Mountain Lab depending on membership. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

Boss doesn't believe you'll work in Tahoe? Mom doesn't believe you'll meet anyone being self-employed? Spouse wonders how the home office is suddenly so neat?

Tahoe Mountain Lab may prove working on vacation isn't so stuff, that like-minded entrepreneurs flock together, and working independently and alone are two very different things.

It is tucked along Ski Run Boulevard in a two-story building that opened in June with the sole purpose of bringing freelancers, self-employed people, and others together.

No cubicle to contend with on these premises. Desks are more like butcher block tables. Some are pushed together to make a

foursome, while others are solitary. No problem for those needing to stand to work. Your desk is in one of the corners.

Chairs swivel and are adjustable so the worker can be ergonomically correct.

Most people bring their own phones, but there is one in the conference room if need be. And for the loud talkers there is what looks like an old-fashioned telephone booth so they can duck into it so everyone has privacy.

Probably the most important thing to people is the Internet connection. Charter built-out a high-speed line specifically for Tahoe Mountain Lab.

Shared workspaces are no longer the corner coffeeshop. They've evolved into an office environment.



Jesse Walker, David Orr and
Jamie Orr

The South Lake Tahoe enclave is the brainchild of Jesse Walker, David Orr and Jamie Orr. They had similar ideas, pulled their resources and opened what is now a bevy of activity. But they still have their “real” jobs – urban planning consultant, general manager of Startup & Tech Mixer, and college science professor, respectively.

They know what it's like to work from home. It's not always as idyllic as it sounds. A little structure can be good. Because they knew they weren't alone and had experienced workspaces elsewhere, they were sure Tahoe would be a good fit.

“It was hard to work in a home office where you don’t want to bring people to,” Jamie Orr said.

Walker, who was born and raised on the South Shore, had spent enough time away to solidify his career to where he could work at home. A small baby proved more than he could handle on a regular basis and get work done.

The Orrs moved here about three years ago, also understand the young child scenario, and soon started looking for alternatives.

Tahoe Mountain Lab is now a different kind of baby for all of them.

They equate membership in the lab to like being at a gym. There is full membership, part and drop in. The first two come with a key so people can work any hour. Full-time membership includes a place to store some belongings for the long haul.

Eventually, the goal would be some of these businesses will get so big they will need to find their own brick and mortar location. To the lab owners, that would be a success story.

To help ward against any unsavory characters, everyone must sign a code of conduct.

For those who need a little more space there is room to rent upstairs on a monthly basis. They are private, can be locked and allow a business to have more a permanent space. Sierra Nevada Alliance, Sage Engineers and Spatial Informatics Group are some of the companies calling the lab home.

A small conference room may be rented by anyone. It also comes with video- and teleconferencing capabilities.

While mostly it’s locals who are filling the lab, a number of second homeowners and tourists drop in.

But like any good workplace, it’s not just about work. The

trio is creating social opportunities for people – just like a traditional workplace would do.

Tahoe Mountain Lab plans to partner with other shared workspaces in the mountains so the respective members can benefit when they travel. The closest space to South Lake Tahoe is in Alpine Meadows.

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Notes:

- Tahoe Mountain Lab is online.
- Phone: 530.600.3447.
- Address: 1048 Ski Run Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.
- Prices: \$250/month membership, \$150 for 10 days, \$20 to drop in.