

The Hotel as a third place:

boosting business

research and insights from Steelcase

Hotels are places to stay, to meet, to play, and increasingly, to work. They have become important “3rd places” where business gets done. Meetings with clients. Places for collaborating and building relationships. Even places for “heads down” work. If it happens in business, at some point it happens in a hotel.

The nature of work has changed in recent years. Constant connectivity and mobile technologies allow work to take place anywhere, anytime. The lines between our professional and personal lives have blurred, and this has increased the importance of 3rd places. After home and the office, 3rd places are anywhere you choose to get work done. Professionals

“About one fifth of the workforce in the US are reportedly working from a third place.”

USA Today
Marco R. della Cava, USA TODAY,
Working Out of Third Place

and organizations are relying increasingly on 3rd places, often hotels, to keep pace with the demands of business.

At Steelcase, we believe effective, welcoming 3rd places give hotels an opportunity to increase guest satisfaction and gain a competitive edge. As part of our mission to support work, wherever it happens, we recently completed a major research and development project on 3rd places in hotels.

AS BUSINESS NOMADS SEEK EFFECTIVE 3RD PLACES TO WORK, HOW WELL ARE HOTELS POISED TO CAPITALIZE?

In Spring of 2009, our research team visited 22 hotels in 6 cities to understand how business professionals work in hotel settings; develop insights regarding their work needs, and create new approaches to improving the experience. We documented our findings in interviews, close observations and over 1,500 photographs.



understand > observe > synthesize > realize > prototype > measure

To explore any work space issue, we apply a straightforward rigorous human-centered design process (see above).

In the understand phase we conduct secondary research to assemble essential information about the industry.

Observation involves going on site, and may include contextual interview, focus groups, photos and videography of how users and their work processes function. We synthesize our findings to develop insights about the situation, and develop design principles to help solve identified problems. In the realize stage we create potential solutions. Ideas are shared and concepts are visualized, leading to the next step, where we prototype our hypothesis. Full scale prototypes are built so we can carefully measure their performance. Solutions are refined, tested and evaluated.

“Hotels get half of the revenues from the small segment of travelers who spend about a month each year on the road: frequent visitors make up only 10% of all hotel guests but account for 44% of hotel nights.”

McKinsey | 2004

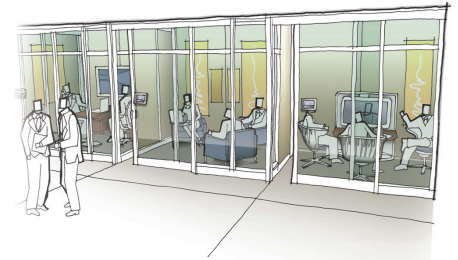
Our research uncovered four gaps:

- > Supporting business nomads can dramatically improve the guest experience
- > Guests working in small groups of two's or three's need support for their collaborative work
- > Different types of business meetings occurring in the hotel can be better facilitated
- > A range of settings providing a continuum of privacy can greatly enhance guest productivity and comfort

STEELCASE HAS DEVELOPED 10 MAJOR CONCEPTS FOR SUPPORTING BUSINESS NOMADS WITH SPECIFIC AND TACTICAL IDEAS FOR 3 HOTEL AREAS:



Public spaces like lobbies and lounges



Collaborative spaces such as meeting rooms



Guest rooms

TO LEARN MORE

For additional information on Steelcase's research findings and our design concepts for improving the hotel experience for business travelers, please contact:
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