upsuite

Practical tactics to find the best coworking space for your team

So, you've been tasked with moving your team into a coworking space or flexible workspace. Seems like an easy enough job until you realize there are dozens and dozens of spaces to choose from, each with its own unique vibe, services, and rules.

How on earth can you sort through all of them without wasting weeks of time?

In this short guide, we hope to answer that question by offering you a simple process that will narrow down your options, tour the right spaces for your team, and negotiate the best price for your company. If you follow this guide, not only will you save time, but you'll have found the absolute best workspace for your team given your constraints.

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Seriously consider what you need

The worst thing that can happen when relocating your team to a coworking space is ending up in the wrong space. Even if you score a flexible month-to-month contract, the cost of uprooting your team and placing them elsewhere carries significant costs when it comes to lost time and productivity.

That's why it's important to get it right the first time. And the best place to start is figuring out your team's needs.

Step 1: Involve the boss

The boss's opinion usually carries the most weight. So if that's not you, then your top priority is to involve your boss(es) at the very beginning. And while some superiors can be really picky, even to the point of dictating everything in the following section about team preferences, the most important bits of information to gather are the following:

• Budget constraints
• Location restrictions or preferences
• Security and/or privacy requirements

Tip: location is the #1 criteria for choosing an office

Countless studies have shown that employees with long commutes are more likely to seek other employment, to be late to work, and to have lower job satisfaction compared to employees with shorter commutes. That means long commutes result in higher employee churn and lower productivity. This is important to consider when tempted to pick a lessexpensive workspace that adds more to your team's commute.

To figure out the best locations for your team's new workspace, start by plotting your team members' addresses on a custom Google Map. From there, get a feel for the midpoint of all the locations. You don't have to be terribly scientific about it. Just get a feel for where a good midpoint would be based on where all your team members live.

Lastly, consider that some employees may be interested in changing the way they commute to work. Some drivers may begin using public transport or cycling to work instead of what they are doing now. Some may even live within walking distance of your new workspace.

Step 2: involve the team

We briefly mentioned that the concerns in this section can extend upward. If they do, you'll need to get your boss's opinion on everything below. However, if they don't then it's okay to move on and get the team involved.

Involving your team from the beginning keeps morale up and ensures that most, if not all, team members end up loving their new workspace. Your team's preferences may seem to vary wildly, but that's okay. The coworking industry is growing so quickly that there are likely many options that almost all of your team members will love.

You'll need to answer the following questions about your team:

- Where does each team member live?
- How does each team member get to work?
- What neighborhoods or areas of town does your team love or hate?
- What amenities does your team want in or near the work site?
- What style or vibe of workspace does your team prefer?

Building and neighborhood amenities

Consider what amenities within the neighborhood and the building itself are desirable to your fellow team members. Consider these options:

- Fitness centers or yoga studio
- Markets and grocery stores
- Bars and restaurants
- Healthy lunch options
- Coffee shops and cafes
- Smoothie or juice shops
- Childcare facilities
- Bicycle storage
- Parking lots or garages

Those are only a few of the possible amenities to look for, and it's okay if your list gets incredibly long. You want to get a complete picture of what the perfect workspace would be, even though such a thing doesn't exist. So, while it's highly unlikely you'll get everything on your team's list, knowing what perfect looks like will get you as close as possible.

Bonus: going niche

Some teams benefit from highly specific workspaces. In the industry, we call these "niche workspaces". While they are often only found in highly dense cities, niche workspace can be a fantastic boon for employee development and your team's sense of connection to their field of work.

We've seen niche workspaces focused on all kinds of industries like:

- Manufacturing
- Media and entertainment
- Social impact
- Emerging technologies

- Healthcare and mental health
- Financial services and technology
- Travel services and technology
- Food and beverage

And much, much more. Suffice to say, if you think your team would benefit from a space dedicated to your industry, that space likely exists somewhere. However, since niche spaces are not very common, you might have to move the team to another city to take advantage of one.

Alright, now that you have some criteria with which to create a shortlist of workspaces, it's time to start the location scouting process. And the first place to start is online.

Conduct truly effective online research

The initial goal when searching for a suitable location for your team is to narrow down your options. Especially in top markets like Denver, Chicago, New York City, or Los Angeles, it's simply impractical to tour the dozens upon dozens of available coworking spaces, most of which won't fit your criteria in the least.

That means somebody is in for a lot of online research, and as a the leader of your team, that responsibility falls on your shoulders.

This section outlines the simplest ways to make a shortlist of potential winning coworking spaces. First, we'll cover using the Upsuite platform to conduct your online research, then we'll offer an alternative for markets where we haven't yet launched.

Upsuite offers more coworking office listings than any other site

We won't fault you for calling out our bias here. Obviously, we recommend that you start your coworking space search on Upsuite because we've done a ton of work building a platform that makes the search a thousand times easier.

There are several critical benefits that come with searching for your perfect space on Upsuite:

- Real-time availability data
- Accurate and detailed amenities info
- Breakdown of each space's work environment and vibe
- Neighborhood analysis for each space
- Super-smooth map integration
- And, of course, verified reviews

Unlike traditional leases, when teams select a coworking space they are actually buying into a pre-built work environment. That's why the features above, but one in particular, are so important. We've put a lot of work into our workspace environment analyses. They sum up the amenities, aesthetics, noise, crowdedness, and other factors present in various workspaces to help you know what to expect right up front. This allows you to weed out non-matches much faster.

Our aim is, and always has been, to bring critical information to your fingertips so you can decide where your team will call home without the need to dig through pages of boring data.

The old-fashioned way: Google

Of course, all that attention to detail means that Upsuite isn't available in every market. Not yet, anyway.

But even if we're not in your neck of the woods, there's still the good old fashioned tactic we like to call "the Google search." Yes, it takes more time and effort, but let us show you the easy way to do it.

Step one: the Google search

With all your criteria from the last section in hand (e.g. budget, desired amenities, preferred locations, commute options, etc.), you should have one or two general areas of town that would be suitable for your team's new workspace.

Now, all that's needed is to pop onto Google Maps for your city and search "coworking." Depending on your city, you may be provided with several pages of results. From there, all you need to do is zoom into the area(s) of the map you've shortlisted and click "Search this Area" to adjust your results.

In most major cities you'll have a several options in the areas you've shortlisted. From this point, click on each result so that you can open their workspace website on a new tab. Then, go back to the search results and repeat the process. Do this until you have opened up all the websites of coworking spaces in that area.

Step two: trust your gut

Now the process can go one of two ways.

It gets easier if the space's website displays clear and useful information without too many frills. Look for simple brand statements, pricing and amenities tables, and get a feel for the vibe and style of the space through pictures and videos.

If something is confusing or unclear, take note of it, and move on to the next space.

The goal of getting a feel for each space is to let your gut do the work. If you navigate to a space's website and feel a clenching in your throat or stomach, it's probably not what you're looking for. If you feel excited and happy, that space goes on your list.

Step three: contact the space

Once you've gone through all the websites, eliminating a few from the list, it's time to get in touch with the workspace manager. You'll want to answer the following questions:

- Can you afford the space based on your team size?
- Does the space match your hard requirements for security, availability, and privacy?
- Does the space and neighborhood have your team's desired amenities?

At the outset, I suggest that you call the workspace, assuming they've listed a phone number (many spaces don't).

First of all, calling will give you a sense of the workspace team's professionalism. Do they sound organized, upbeat, and excited to be there? If so, that's one sign of a great workspace.

Second, calling the space allows you to ask follow up questions more easily, giving you more insight than a static email would.

If the workspace doesn't list a phone number, you'll have to email them. But even if you did call and had all your questions answered, sending a follow-up email to the space is still important to confirm the details you've discussed. You'll likely have missed something during the call that you only remember later. Plus, it's always good to have things in writing in case there are any misunderstandings later.

At this point, you should have eliminated most of the spaces on your original list, and now you're ready to schedule a tour with your top results.

The tour: what to look for and what to avoid

The coworking space tour, especially for first timers, can be an intoxicating experience. From the well-groomed front desk associate to the hip and modern, yet somehow still rustic, decor, it's easy to be sucked into the hype.

The tour is the bread and butter of the coworking industry. Once you're in the door, the workspace is in the best position to make you fall in love.

But if you keep your wits about you, you'll also be in the best position to see if the workspace is suitable as your team's new home.

Upsuite Client Relationship Managers can facilitate tours for you. Contact our Client Relationship Managers today to have them help you get started!

Trust, but verify

The workspace staff may have answered your questions on the phone and via email, but you must verify the reality of the situation.

Come prepared with questions about the workspace's policies, processes, and how your specific needs will fit into them. Here are a few good ones:

- Does the workspace host events?
- When do they host events? Daytime, evening? When do they start setting up?
- What is the workspace guest policy?
- How does the workspace manage shared resources like meeting rooms?
- What is the printing setup like?
- Is it possible to get a dedicated internet line or a separate and secured network?
- Does the space carry insurance that covers its members or are you required to have your own?

And, of course, verify all your amenity related questions which we talked about earlier.

Notice the little things

Other than asking questions, you'll want to look for signs that show how well the space is taken care of and how it's managed. For example:

- When you first arrived, how was the greeting? Friendly, aloof?
- Is there a front desk? Is its setup formal or casual?
- Is the space clean?
- Does the staff seem stiff or are they warm and approachable?
- Are there a lot of members or is it a ghost town?
- Are members interacting with one another or keeping to themselves?
- Is the space silent, loud, or does it have a productive buzz going on?
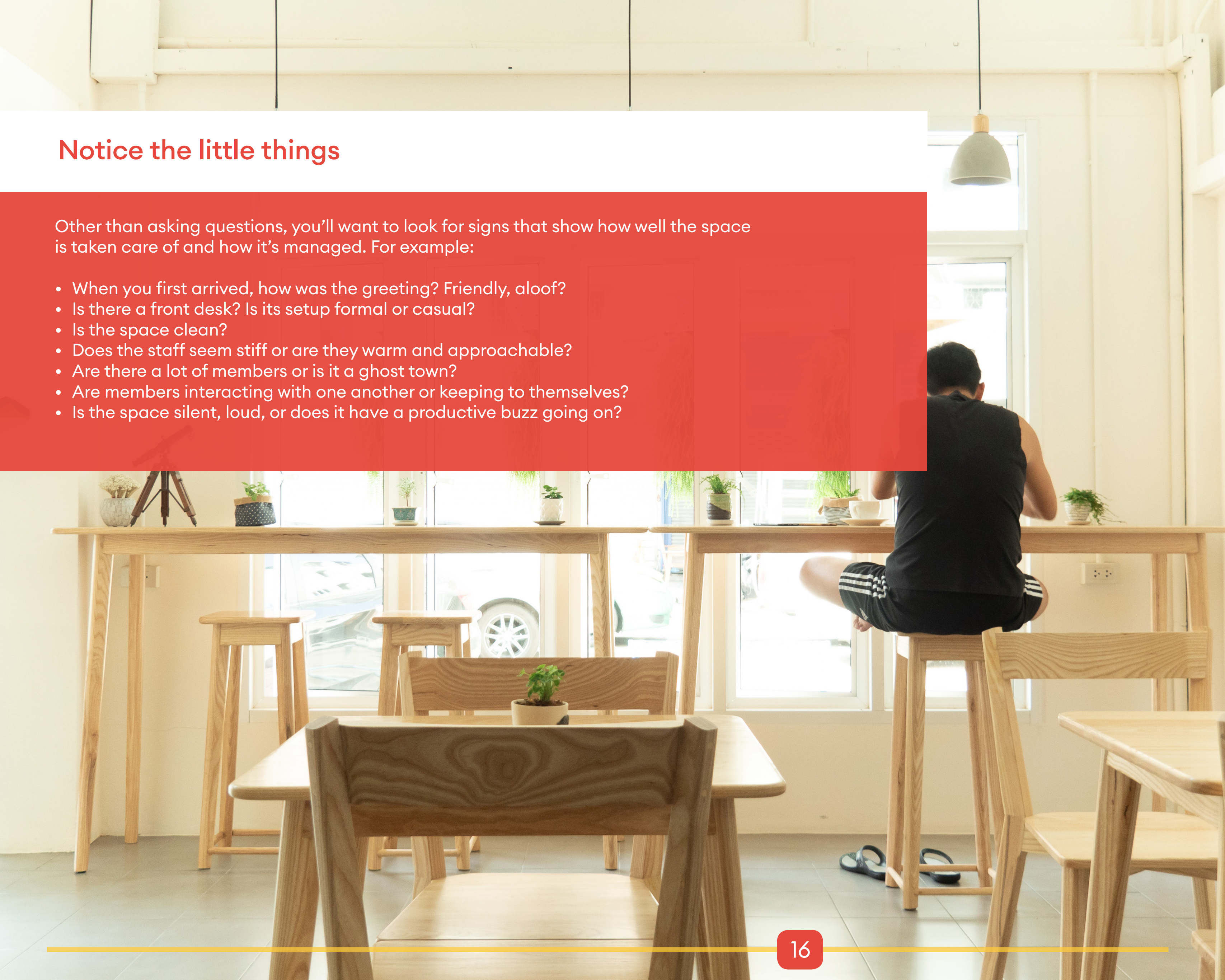
Ask for a trial day

There's one final step to selecting the perfect workspace for your team, and that's letting your team in on what you've found. Assuming you have only one or two workspace options left, it's now time to get your team into the workspace for a day and try it out.

You can ask the workspace manager for a free trial day for your team, but that may be a tall order depending on your team's size. You may end up having to pay for a day pass for each team member, but it will be worth it. Do this on any day but Friday, and obviously not on a holiday.

Work with the manager to ensure sure your team has a reserved area or desk cluster for your trial day. Better yet, find out if you can use an empty private office to get the full experience.

Once you arrive for your trial day, there are a few tasks you'll need to complete.

Test the wifi

Seriously, test the wifi!

Some spaces claim to have "ultra-fast internet," and, while that may technically be true, most internet issues don't stem from bandwidth, but from poor network setup. For that reason, you shouldn't trust the free online speed tests like Ookla.

Instead, I suggest you hop on a video call with one of your colleagues at the home office for a little while, especially during peak hours in the space. Is the call choppy or clear? Try the call from different parts of the workspace like a private office, meeting room, phone booths, and in the open space. Video calls are the critical test for wifi reliability.

Talk with other members

The best workspaces will invite you to talk with members during the tour, but if this hasn't happened, you'll need to initiate conversations yourself.

Let them know you're doing a trial day with your team and you really want to make sure the team will be happy here. Ask questions like:

- What's your favorite thing about working here? What else?
- If you could fix anything here, what things would you fix about this place?
- Have there ever been any wifi issues? How often?
- What's the neighborhood like?
- Have there ever been any issues with the management?
- Have there been any break-ins?
- Are there any good [insert neighborhood amenity] nearby?

Dive into the community

Really let your team get a feel for the vibe of the workspace. On this day, it's okay if your team is less productive. Their only job today is to get a sense for their potential new home. It's an exploratory day. This allows the team to get a feel for the neighborhood, as well as the members.

At the end of the day, go out for drinks or dinner in the same neighborhood, again, breaking into groups if desired. And again, feel free to invite other workspace members.

Get a report from each team member the next day, either verbally or via email. Did they like it? What didn't work for them? Is there anything they would change?

This is another gut feeling thing. You can't expect everybody to love the new space, but the general mood should be positive.

Price: How low will they go?

Assuming you've eliminated the spaces that are beyond your budget, as you should have done during the search process, there's still a chance you'll end up with more than one option. Perhaps you'll even have several options.

That's okay. Sometimes, two spaces are such a great fit that it can be difficult to choose between them.

In these cases, price is the determining factor.

Let's face it, both of these workspaces want your business. Therefore, both will compete to get that business. So, it's in your best interest to make them compete as much as possible.

Let each space know that you're considering other options, but you don't have to tell them who. Tell them you love both spaces and that you'll go with the best offer. Then, get them to bid against each other until one of them bows out. Whoever is left standing is your winner.

Upsuite uses our market data to help you get the best deal!

Summary

Quick Recap
Remember:

- No two teams are alike. Carefully evaluate coworking spaces based on your unique criteria.
- Location is the most important factor for team workspaces. Time spent finding coworking spaces in the right part of town is time well spent.
- The devil is in the details. Thoroughly examine each workspace for clues as to how the space is managed.
- Include your team in the process by sharing your favorite spaces with them and going for a trial day. That way everyone will be excited about the move!
- Coworking spaces want your business, so get your final choices to compete on price.

About Upsuite

Upsuite is where teams go to find coworking spaces. For businesses looking to accelerate their search for the perfect coworking office, Upsuite takes the guesswork out of finding the perfect-fit office for their business. Unlike Googling or viewing individual websites, Upsuite is a matchmaking service for coworking that saves time and is free. Upsuite's mission is to help teams do their best work.
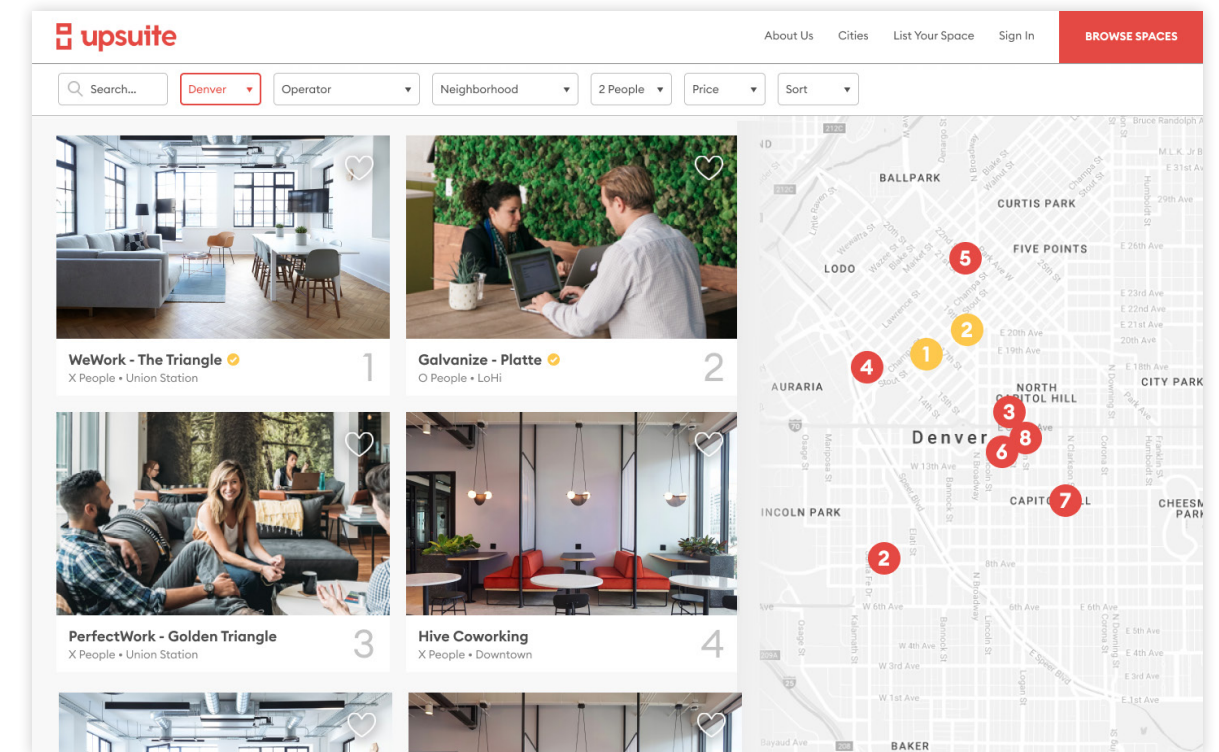
Our Team

Our team is passionate about helping other teams be successful and we know we can help them by connecting them to vibrant and connected coworking spaces. Working in shared spaces has been a huge element to our successes in other companies and we want to share what we know with the world!

Founded on values of efficiency, connection, leadership and responsibility, Upsuite was created to empower teams to do their best work together.
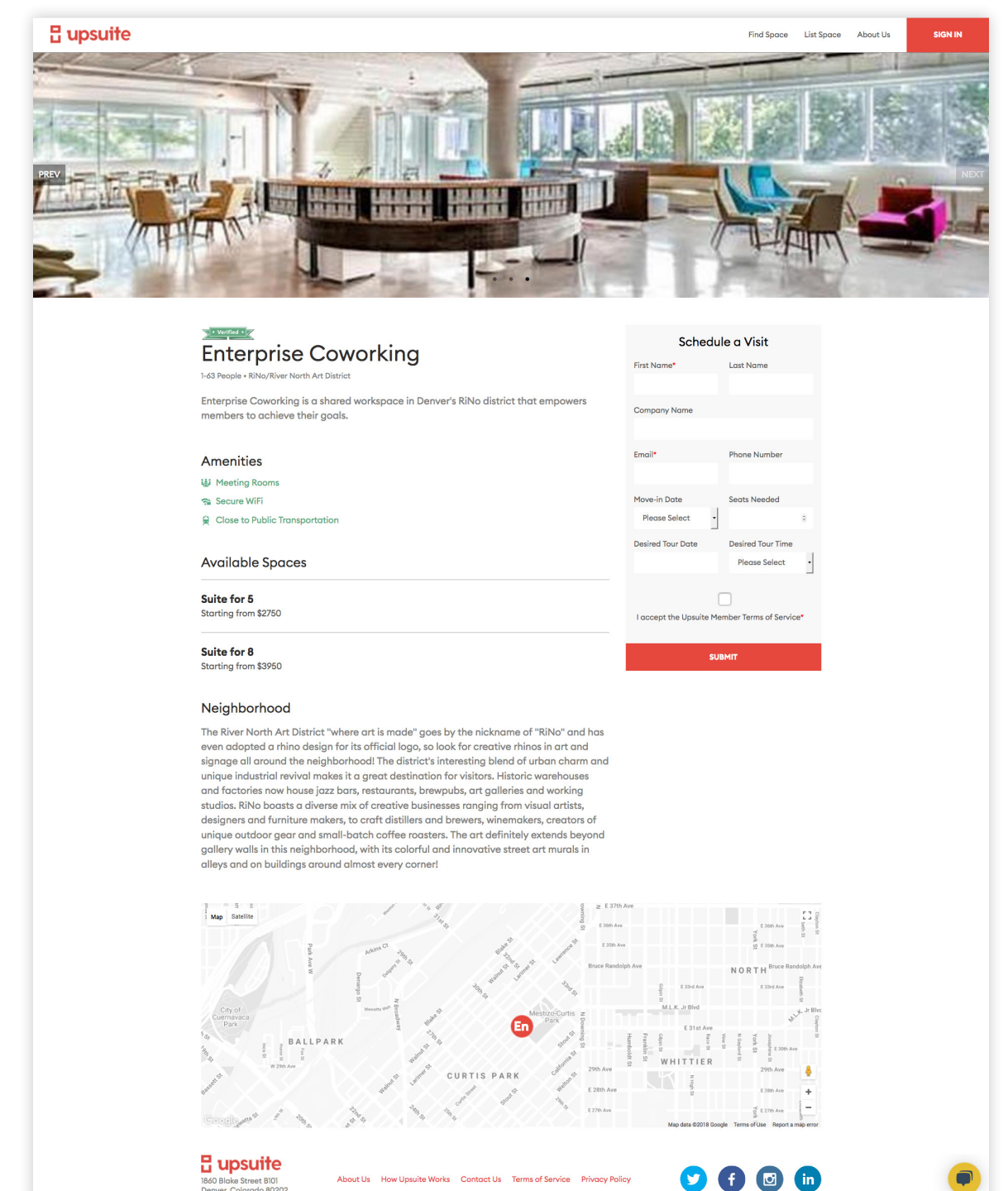
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Prefer working with humans?

Well, it's a good thing our team is human!
Contact our team and we'll be happy to help.

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Where teams go to find coworking spaces.