

By Tom Mangione

The idea for a new enterprise might begin life on napkins in a crowded coffee shop, but once a business starts rolling, the time comes to move into a place that's slightly more professional. However, for an emerging company of just one or two employees, the corporate office, complete with receptionist and high overheads, may be a bit much. Luckily for Shanghai's entrepreneurs the city is well-provided with small, serviced office solutions complete with unique environments and amenities as well as proximity to other individuals taking the exciting plunge of striking out on their own.

Xindanwei

For those looking to make the transition from coffee shop to desk space as easy as possible, Xindanwei (50 Yongjia Road, near Shaanxi Road South, 3428-0783) is your first stop. Fashioned out of a renovated townhouse, for 30 yuan (\$4.60), you can enjoy a cup of coffee, free wireless Internet access and the chance to hang out in the communal first floor space.

well as a meeting room. Located on the periphery of a staircase winding around an atrium punctuated by an intricate wood carving mounted on the wall, these small office spaces have the unique charm of an old lane house. In terms of price, Xindanwei offers highly flexible plans for access to their workspaces. John Pasden, founder of the language consultancy, All Set Learning and a regular user of Xindanwei until just this month said: "I think that Xindanwei is an excellent choice for a small new business due to its flexible hours and pricing. A lot of the other similar options require you to shell out the cash for a one-person desk for a whole month at a time. My part-time staff could work with me at the office, and we could still do larger teacher trainings on the weekends, all within my bootstrapped budget." Plans for access to a desk and meeting rooms start at 15 yuan per hour.

And while Xindanwei's cozy, communal atmosphere might be suitable for some ventures, it's not for everyone. "Because the workspace is designed to be social and highly interactive, it can, at times, be hard to sequester yourself from the community. I think this is one factor that makes the space appeal to creative, sociable types, and less to quiet, business-only types," Pasden said.

Mind Office

While working as a real estate agent, Arthur Chelly noticed that many clients looking to invest in serviced office spaces would often deal with hidden fees which often led to setbacks in their businesses. The difficulty of this model gave Chelly an idea. "My vision was to adapt the concept of all-you-can-eat to an office - it's an 'all-you-can-work' concept." In 2008, Chelly partnered with Shanghai Automotive Asset Man-



Lounge space at Mind Office. Photo: Courtesy of Mind Office

agement, a subsidiary of the Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation to refurbish an auto workshop on Jinxian Road and Mind Office (172 Jinxian Road, near Maoming Road North, 6171-1655) was born.

True to Chelly's vision, Mind Office offers a workstation in an office for a flat fee - 2,488 yuan per month. This fee includes a receptionist and access to the Internet, meeting rooms, 24/7 access and electricity. The only things not included are the use of printers (black-and-white printing for 0.5 yuan/piece) and use of the phone lines (international, 4.6 yuan/min; local 0.22 yuan/min). Chelly said, "Anything that's not easily quantifiable is included in the price."

While there is no explicit community focus as one has with Xindanwei, due to the proximity of many enterprises in a single office, connections are still made in the bright

and airy environs. In addition, Pier 39 (6258-1939), a restaurant on the bottom floor specializing in New England clam chowder serves as an anchor for making connections with those of an equally entrepreneurial bent.

Anken Warehouse

Located in a refurbished factory near Suzhou Creek, about a 10-minute walk from Shanghai's premier art district on Moganshan Road, you'll find Anken Green (688 Hua'an Road, near Suzhou Road West, 6083-1155). Taking a ride up in the wood-paneled elevators to the second floor, you'll find the glass-encased entrance to Anken Warehouse, a workstation-based office space which also offers all-inclusive packages, free broadband Internet access, meeting rooms, a lounge area, reception and kitchen as well as 24/7 access. Depending on the terms of lease, a space can be had from 2,200 to 2,500 yuan per month.

Perhaps the most defining features of Anken Green are at its top and bottom. On the top you'll find the greenest part of Anken Green - a rooftop terrace and events space surrounded on all sides by a layer of planters, offering views of Suzhou Creek to the east. On the bottom, you'll find the Anken Warehouse Café, a casual dining location offering sandwiches and pizzas from 22 yuan.



Workspace upstairs at Xindanwei. Photo: Courtesy of Xindanwei

It's a comfortable affair with a sofa along one wall and a colorful chalkboard detailing upcoming events and talks. When you want to work, the long desk lining one of the walls is made for popping open your laptop and putting in some time.

For those in need of a dedicated (and more secluded) desk space, the upper floors house several rooms supplying desks as



Inside the halls (above) and on the roof of Anken Green. Photos: Cai Xianmin



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