



Qb Studios, Parnell.
Photo credit: Sarah Rowlands

“NATIONWIDE, WE HAVE IDENTIFIED A PIPELINE OF 15,894SQM OF PLANNED SPACE YET TO BE ROLLED OUT.”

ANKUR DAKWALE, ANALYST, BAYLEYS INSIGHTS, DATA AND CONSULTING

CURATED SPACES WITH BENEFITS

“Build a business not an office,” says Qb Studios which offers a network of private, fully-furnished curated offices in the Auckland suburbs of Parnell, Ponsonby, Newmarket, Herne Bay, and Christchurch, where they’ll soon open a second site – the largest purpose-built flexible office space in the South Island.

Director Alex Brennan says with forces like a pandemic or artificial intelligence (AI) coming in unpredictable waves, Qb’s mission is to offer solutions so business leaders can remain flexible, focused and able to surf those waves without getting dashed on the rocks.

“We simplify things so decision makers can focus wholly on their business, making it easier for them to test new markets and initiatives.

“By providing considered office spaces on flexible terms with no fit-out costs for a simple monthly fee, we’re providing an environment with real value where people want to come to work because it takes more than a desk

and chair for our clients to attract and retain the best talent.

“Qb’s environments exude vitality and camaraderie so even if half the team is working from home mid-week, the rest can come into an atmosphere alive with productivity and connection.”

Brennan says the transformative impact of video conferencing on how we work can’t be overstated and ripple effects have spurred various adaptations within Qb’s coworking spaces.

“We’ve got larger board rooms with the latest video conferencing technology, plus more private, soundproof, and bookable booths and meeting rooms for those stepping out for video calls or impromptu conversations on their own devices.

“We’ve also incorporated more members’ lounges into our latest buildings to provide more versatile and casual settings to bridge the home-office gap.”

Brennan says Qb’s membership offerings match more fluid modern

“WE SIMPLIFY THINGS SO DECISION MAKERS CAN FOCUS WHOLLY ON THEIR BUSINESS, MAKING IT EASIER FOR THEM TO TEST NEW MARKETS AND INITIATIVES.”

ALEX BRENNAN, DIRECTOR, QB STUDIOS

AS THE WORK-FROM-WORK NOTION GAINS HOLD AGAIN IN THE OFFICE SECTOR, FLEX SPACE PROVIDERS ARE FOCUSING ON EFFICIENCIES, WELL-BEING AND A SENSE OF BELONGING.

THE RELEASE OF BAYLEYS’ ANNUAL *Coworking+* report – the first to cover all New Zealand regions – shows consistent growth of flexible workspaces in the main centres, and an uptick in regional coworking providers as the work-from-home (WFH) default dwindles and work-from-work (WFW) becomes the norm.

Bayleys insights, data and consulting analyst Ankur Dakwale says Bayleys research shows the total flexible workspace footprint in New Zealand has expanded to 106,052sqm – up 11 percent on 2022’s figures – and there has been encouraging growth in regional New Zealand.

“Around the country, flexible workspace is spread across 111 facilities, with 61 percent of it located in CBDs,” he says.

“There has been a lift in space in the Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Hawke’s Bay, Canterbury and Otago regions, and nationwide, we have identified a pipeline of 15,894sqm of planned space yet to be rolled out.”

Dakwale says this consistent growth reflects the strong emphasis on hospitality and the sense of community that coworking and other flex space providers offer, with businesses wanting fewer desks but more collaboration space as workers return to a physical office.

“Demand for flexible space continues to rise globally as larger corporates look to right-size their office requirements, and green buildings and green spaces are also gaining traction.

“As with the traditional office sector, tenants are seeking a flight to quality resulting in low vacancies and tenant waitlists for prime flex space properties.”

Growth is being favoured through a partnership model with building owners and landlords rather than traditional leases, and landlords of properties with higher vacancy levels are considering activating their buildings by introducing a flexible option with an experienced operator.



Qb Studios, Christchurch. Photo credit: Sarah Rowlands

working styles and drive significant cost savings for businesses that were underutilising larger traditional office spaces.

“Tailored plans for hybrid teams blending remote and in-person work means a larger company of say 30 individuals with rotating schedules can share an office space that would normally accommodate 10 or 15 people.

“We’ve also expanded the use of lounge passes so those who predominantly WFH can access our members’ lounges and meeting rooms a few days each week.”

When it first opened in Christchurch nine years ago, Brennan says most of its members were involved in some way with the rebuild, but now a big percentage are in the tech sector or from large national or multinational companies.

“This reflects corporate decentralisation and the maturing of the Christchurch market, and we’ve also observed fewer people working from home than in Auckland, possibly connected to commute times.”

Brennan says Qb is bullish about the future of “the office as a service” despite lingering questions about the future of work and the office itself, claiming the flexible workspace model is naturally suited to volatility and change.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX THINKING

Changed mindsets, improved productivity and an investment in team culture are some of the side effects flexible workspace provider The Crate is noting among its growing membership base.

Launching its first facility on Auckland’s North Shore in 2014, the collaborative, cost-effective and professional workspace operator opened its Hamilton CBD premises in October 2022.

Although he champions the flex-space office model, The Crate’s founder and chief executive officer Dean Payn says he’s not aware of any truly flexible office space provider in New Zealand – or globally.

“To me, true flexibility would mean turning a four-person office suite into an eight-person suite and a 10-seater meeting room into a 20-seater meeting room on demand at the push of a button.

“With companies’ needs changing so rapidly, the traditional wall is the biggest hindrance to modern office space, and while there’s no easy cost-effective way to overcome this, we’re working on a prototype solution to give real adaptability and flex.”

The challenge of rigid walls aside, Payn says The Crate has evolved an effective flexible workspace model by listening to its clients and responding to their needs.



“WITH COMPANIES’ NEEDS CHANGING SO RAPIDLY, THE TRADITIONAL WALL IS THE BIGGEST HINDRANCE TO MODERN OFFICE SPACE.”

DEAN PAYN, CEO AND FOUNDER, THE CRATE

“Introducing more single, double, and quad hush pods has been a huge key to helping give our clients maximum flexibility, allowing them to work in an open place space but be in a private soundproof room within a few steps,” Payn explains.

Demand for hybrid coworking options has increased as clients reset workplace strategies to allow staff to combine a WFH component with a centralised desk.

“Clients come to The Crate to enjoy any combination of community, collaboration and productive workplace and we’re continually redesigning and reshaping our workspaces to ensure they can find the perfect space to work from regardless of the time of the week or the task at hand.”

Payn says The Crate is working on additional locations in Silverdale, Christchurch, and Wellington to cater to the growing demand for modern workspace that meshes with current work models, yet can morph as the need arises.

GENERATING RELEVANT, TAILOR-MADE SOLUTIONS

Flexible workspace operator Generator, owned by NZX-listed property business Precinct Properties, has five flexible flagship office facilities in Auckland, including two dedicated meeting and events suites, and two in Wellington.



New premises in Pipiri Lane, in Auckland’s Wynyard Quarter, will open in 2025 incorporating a 500-person premium event space with views over Viaduct Harbour.

Generator’s general manager Lauren Joyce says member engagement remains critical to staying relevant and she stresses the importance that the concept of community holds for its members, with genuine and tangible business and wellness benefits.

“The pendulum is swinging back to work-from-work (WFW), with people choosing to come into the office for all the right reasons,” she says.

“The flight to quality has seen businesses choosing modern buildings that deliver great design, amenity and sustainability credentials in prime locations to draw staff back to the office, provide connection and boost recruitment and retention.

“In support, we host events and well-being activities, along with learning and development opportunities to foster networking and growth within the Generator community.”

With around 92 percent of its members having a hybrid working policy, businesses see value in having a clear workplace strategy that supports

“WITH PEOPLE LARGELY IN THE OFFICE TO CONNECT AND COLLABORATE, PROVIDING HIGH-QUALITY MEETING, EVENT AND COLLABORATION SPACES IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR SPACE PLANNING.”

LAUREN JOYCE, GENERAL MANAGER, GENERATOR

the team culture, boosts productivity and aligns with business goals.

“We’ve seen a surge in demand for hot-desking, up 25 percent on 2022, with some desks being booked six months ahead, so we are increasing supply at some sites in response.

“Likewise, our meeting and events business is stronger than it was pre-pandemic, and with people largely in the office to connect and collaborate, providing high-quality meeting, event and collaboration spaces is fundamental to our space planning.

“We strive to keep our membership offerings up-to-date with the latest work styles and market trends, and can tailor our memberships to meet individual requirements.”

Generator recently introduced a Day Pass pilot at its Bowen Campus site near parliament in Wellington, offering access to its premium facilities without committing to a long-term membership, which has resonated with professionals working closely with government.



It also offers a highly flexible ‘Team Membership’ option, tailor-made for fully-remote businesses that occasionally require office or meeting spaces for in-person gatherings or collaboration.

“Meanwhile, we’ve seen growing demand for bigger, fully fitted-out and highly-customised managed suites as global and large local businesses seek to reduce office management inputs and balance sheet liability during these uncertain economic times,” explains Joyce.

“These suites can be designed to align perfectly with specific member needs,

as with a recent suite we did for IBM providing a high ratio of collaboration and meeting space.”

Constantly innovating, Generator has introduced a partnership with Hub Australia allowing its members to work out of Hub’s sites across Australia and vice versa, and its Waring Taylor site in Wellington allows dogs in the office which has been a hit with members.

With several of its facilities located in 5-Green Star accredited buildings, and acknowledging the increased weight given to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies within corporate models, Generator’s new Pipiri Lane site will be a sustainable mass timber structure.

It will provide around 70-percent reduction in embodied carbon compared to a traditionally-constructed building using steel and/or concrete and operationally, will have no fossil fuel supplies like gas or diesel generators, instead purchasing certified 100-percent renewable electricity.

Joyce says a number of its members have office space in both its Wellington and Auckland facilities and believes right-sized flex space plays an increasingly important role in modern business to use space and energy more efficiently.

- To read the full Bayleys 2023 *Coworking+ Report*, go to: bayleys.co.nz/insightsanddata/commercial
- qbstudios.co.nz
- thecrate.co.nz
- generatornz.com