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Top 6 lead generation sources

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In this article I will share the lead generation sources that we found worth our time and effort, as seen from my involvement with Pacific Workplaces, overseeing three business centers and one coworking place in the San Francisco Bay Area. I will share how some of these lead generation sources have changed over time.

As a caveat, I want to stress that this is not an exhaustive list of effective methods. It reflects our own experience in a part of the world that may not be fully representative of all others, although the world is becoming an increasingly small place and our experience may be valuable to many. So in no particular order, here are our top 10 lead generation sources:

1) Your own web site and local marketing efforts

Your own Website and local marketing efforts should always be your #1 source of lead generation. Make sure you follow Google guidelines for optimal organic ranking of your web site, via careful selection of URLs for your key pages, meaningful meta titles, good and relevant content, blog, etc. Index your site with Google and make sure you are listed with Google Places. Consult the GWA library for help on SEO and SEM topics.

If your web site is not listed organically on the first page of Google for relevant search terms like “office space in [cityname]”, “[cityname] virtual office”, “coworking in [cityname]”, consider retaining the services of a reputable SEO specialist. It may cost you anywhere between \$500 to \$2,000 per month, but if you own a single location outside of a large city, you may just pay a few hours of expertise from an SEO consultant once and achieve good results. You can also educate yourself by reading the helpful [Google literature](#) on the subject. Also make sure your web site is listed on the GWA directory, which works as a helpful backlink for SEO purposes too. No need to spend a fortune in SEO support if you can achieve top 3 organic ranking on your own!

If not done yet, we highly recommend to quickly upgrade your web site

with its own e-commerce capabilities, so that you can sell day passes, meeting room bookings, or virtual offices online. Some of the platforms dedicated to our industry are designed to easily integrate e-commerce capabilities with your own web site. At Pacific Workplaces, we use the WUN Systems [HappyDesk](#) platform and are able to make many sales online that way, often outside business hours. We'll typically sell a couple of Virtual Office plans in each location each month, and multiple meeting room bookings each week from walk-in clients who transact and pay with their credit card online. Adding that kind of e-commerce capability is inexpensive. It's easy. And, it works!

2) Use Social Media, Yelp in particular, and other networking venues

How to optimize social media presence is outside the scope of this article but social media should also be an important lead generation source. It's all about creating powerful online word-of-mouth. Refer to the GWA library on how to do this effectively but let me emphasize that proper listing on Yelp is important. You may also consider advertising on Yelp. We have done this with great results, at a cost roughly similar to Pay Per Click on Google. What's important to keep in mind here is that an increasingly large number of users search directly on Yelp and bypass Google.

Five to 10 years ago, local networking efforts, such as attending local chamber of commerce events, or hosting events designed to attract traditional brokers in our centers, were critical. We found that "virtual networking" is now much more effective and we spend more time focusing on generating activities on Yelp (via check-in, reviews, and outright conversations) and with other social media than with traditional networking. You cannot do it all: something has to give.

3) List with Web Brokers active in your area

Web brokers market your location and services on the web, locally and globally, under their brand.

Only when a lead is identified do they inform you, and at the same time release your full information to the lead. Once the prospect is referred to you, it is up to you to close the sale. You keep ownership of the end-user.

Web brokers typically receive a 10% commission for the length of the contract up to 12 months (including renewals). It does not cost anything to list with a web broker, and a 10% commission is very reasonable even though they do a minimal amount of work. If the web broker is active in your area and you don't list with them, the leads will go to your competitors. Web brokers represented close to 25% of our leads 10 years ago. Nowadays they represent less than 2%. So we are not dependent on Web brokers but we continue to list with the two or three that are active in our area: [Instant Offices](#) , [SOS](#) (Search Office Space), and [OfficeList](#). Web brokers tend to focus on Full Time offices. Day Passes, Meeting Rooms bookings, or Virtual Offices, are rarely marketed by web brokers because a 10% commission is not sufficient to make value adding marketing efforts worthwhile, given the lower revenue these services generate.

4) List with Reputable Value Added Resellers

Value Added Resellers resell and augment your services, locally and globally, under their brand. For example, they will resell your local mail services but add to it their own layer of service such as live phone answering, live chat support, concierge services, and corporate account services. They also typically have stronger fraud screening and CMRA compliance capabilities than we and other independent operators have, an important consideration with Virtual Offices.

The Value Added Reseller is your client. He/she pays your bill. The end-user of your services is the Reseller's client.

Resellers can greatly expand your market reach and e-commerce capabilities and are in a better position to reach out-of-the-area individual users and corporate accounts that you would be unlikely to reach on your own.

They take care of the revenue collection and will pay you a discounted price, typically 25% (although we have seen a range of 10% to 50%). Value Added Resellers worth considering include [DavinciVirtual](#) and [CloudVO.com](#). CloudVO (a sister company to Pacific Workplaces) in turn populates your information on their e-commerce sites

CloudVirtualOffice.com, CloudMeetingRooms.com, and CloudTouchdown.com web sites. MeetingRooms.com is also a Value Added Reseller particularly active in Europe and worth considering. Unlike the others, who are listing only independent operators so far, MeetingRooms.com lists Regus meeting rooms as well.

Finally we will mention [Breather](http://Breather.com), as an interesting breed of Value Added Reseller. They provide access to the end-users to a network of meeting rooms that all share the same design characteristics, including Breather's own furniture (and almost always a couch!). Their conference rooms have the same feel everywhere but are hosted in shared office space. Breather rents the room from the operators, typically furnish it, and book it to the end-users who remain Breather's clients. It's an attractive, but also expensive, business model and we will be interested to see how it evolves over time.

[Liquidspace](http://Liquidspace.com) also shares common characteristics with Value Added Resellers but we categorized them as "Marketplace providers".

5) **List with Reputable Network Promoters.**

Network Promoters promote large networks of locations under both your brand and their brand. Examples include CloudVO.com that promotes their CloudTouchdown network for touchdown at day offices and coworking spaces anywhere in the network on a subscription basis, and [Copass](http://Copass.com) that is developing a similar formula focused on coworking spaces globally.

[Preferred Office Network](http://PreferredOfficeNetwork.com) is to my knowledge the strongest network in the US that focuses on selling Full Time Offices via a meaningful corporate account capability offering larger corporations with multi-location needs. Preferred Office Network is a credible alternative to Regus for many corporate managers.

The main benefit of Network Promoters is that they evangelize a network with defined characteristics (for example Amenity-rich professional business centers for Preferred Office Network) while providing a single point of contact and a single point of billing, a critical feature for corporate accounts that have multi-location needs. They will invoice the client and

pay you the discounted price agreed upon in advance, typically 10% for full time offices (but on-going, unlike in the web broker model) and 25% for day office or meeting room usage. They share similar characteristics with Value Added Resellers in that they are the operator's clients and pay you for the usage of your services made by end-users.

We see interesting start-ups emerging here and there going after this kind of concept, [GetCroissant](#) for example in New York City is a Network Promoter in the coworking arena.

6) **List with Marketplace providers that achieve scale.**

Marketplace providers also share common characteristics with Value Added Resellers but their mission is to evangelize the entire on-demand office space industry, not just a sub-segment of it, and to list venues on their platform where a comprehensive set of workspaces can be booked or purchased online (meeting rooms, coworking seats, even fulltime offices).

The main difference with Network Promoters or Value Added Resellers is that their mission is *comprehensive* with respect to the industry, listing coffee shops alongside business centers, coworking places, hotels and any places with on-demand or even free conference rooms. In contrast, Network Promoters segregate the industry by promoting a particular site of locations that share common characteristics (e.g. professional, private rooms, staffed, in high quality business buildings, etc.).

The marketplace that has achieved the most meaningful scale to-date, and the only one Pacific Workplaces lists with today, is [LiquidSpace](#). The discount/commission they retain varies according to whether a user is new or is a repeat customer. In our experience the weighted average discount/commission of the marketplace turns out to be in the 30-35% range, which is acceptable given the additional marketing reach they provide us and how effective the platform has been.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at Becky@PacificWorkplaces.com and check the [Managing Your Channels](#) Webinar, which was produced with our sister company [CloudVO](#) a few months ago as part of the GWA webinar series.