

All in a day's work

With plush interiors, a plethora of services and round-the-clock IT back-up, Workenstein, the latest entrant in the coworking space segment, is more than just a furnished office space



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As I walk into the barely-a-month-old Workenstein, a coworking space, I am struck by just how plush it is. Coworking spaces are many, but this one seems to be set to change the dynamics of the office space environment. Thick carpets line the lobby that opens into a cafe, replete with a wall mural, cosy accent chairs and a high table with bar stools. A key card-accessed doorway leads to corridors flanked by work rooms on either side, some of which are completely sound-proofed conference halls. There are rooms large enough to seat 15, and then there are rooms just cosy enough for a two-member team even.

The front desk doubles up as a concierge service; entrepreneurs choosing to work out of the space can opt to use it 24x7, with round-the-clock IT back-up, high-speed Internet and Wi-Fi, security, and even laundry on demand. "The idea," says Vinod Babu, country head, Workenstein, "is to provide users with end-to-end solutions for their startup or business."

"We are essentially a serviced office space with two brands – Workafella in Alwarpet and Workenstein in Perungudi and Sholinganallur. Workafella was the first centre that we



Designs on you (clockwise) Vinod Babu and Shray Rattha at Workafella; snapshots from Workenstein in Perungudi ■ R RAGU AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

launched last year, and Workenstein launched in April this year," says Babu, adding that plans are afoot to set up nearly 30 new centres in eight key markets, such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai and NCR. In fact, the Hyderabad centre is set to launch by mid-August and newer centres in Chennai, in areas such as Thoraipakkam and Guindy, are soon to follow. "We plan to enter each market with multiple centres and not just one at a time," he says.

Set up by the Rattha Group, which is a well-known name in the real estate and hospitality industries, Workenstein and Workafella come as a breath of fresh air for a city that is home to some of the country's fastest-growing startups. Says Shray Rattha, director, Workenstein, "We'd noticed that there was a huge demand in the coworking and private office space, so we decided to launch these two centres. There was a lot of thought and effort that went into these



NUMBER CRUNCHING

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centres; we've tried to bring all the requisite services under one umbrella. We've tried to follow the serviced apartment concept and decided to test it in Chennai; it is home ground after all." The founders spent months researching the coworking space concept, and even travelled to some centres abroad to see what they could offer back home.

Babu says that the main differentiator for them is that they are extremely plush when compared to the other spaces in the market. "Workenstein, for instance, is for the thinkers and doers, and is a more corporate space. While Workafella is high-energy and more vibrant; ideal with the young entrepreneur." A lot of emphasis has been laid on the design aspect as well, with both the brands

boasting well-thought-out spaces and facilities such as pods with drop-down screens and projectors, to double up as conference rooms, conference rooms that are soundproof and have marker walls for writing on, during those intense brainstorming sessions.

"We've also made a conscious effort to bring a certain disruption as far as service levels are concerned in coworking spaces. We offer everything from a virtual office, coworking space, private office space to meeting rooms, depending on a client's needs. Also, we are a 24x7 set-up, which nobody else in this country offers in the segment. And best of all: we offer simple, all-inclusive pricing that includes services such as HR recruitment services, that are ideal for startups who don't have the time to actually go out there and scout for talent," he explains. Like most other coworking spaces, Workenstein also conducts regular events such as blood donation camps, employee engagement activities, business events, inter-centre events, fitness events such as zumba etc., among others.

"Our clientele ranges from a startup to a Fortune 500 company. This we've managed through the range of products that cater to specific client needs. For instance, a startup might be really busy building its business but will still need an office space for a couple of hours. There are dedicated seats for the coworking space; no need to hunt for a spot every day. Then there are private offices as well that are used by companies as they grow, or maybe a Fortune 500 company that has operations here."

While Workafella has 337 workstations, Workenstein at Perungudi has 260, while the Sholinganallur centre has 568 workstations.

The centres, each offer a plethora of services that range from concierge services, housekeeping, to valet parking and laundry on demand. Says Rattha, "We've also tied up with Startup CFO that is based in Bengaluru. They provide financial and legal services to startups and help them come up with a business plan. So we've basically taken care of almost all the aspects that a startup will require when setting up and growing its business."