

Meet the Merchant

Interview by Abbey McDonald amcdonald@dailyastorian.com

In the Pier 12 building, Open Office Astoria offers a workspace with waterfront views for those looking for a quiet place to be productive.

Open Office Astoria

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Paul Brady is the manager of Open Office Astoria.

The business opened a few years before the pandemic brought more demand for coworking spaces in the Pacific Northwest. It includes desks, offices and a conference room available at daily, weekly and monthly rates.

Coast River Business Journal asked owner Don Vallaster and manager Paul Brady about what it's like running a coworking space in Astoria. Their responses have been edited for brevity and clarity.

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Q: What made you want to start a coworking space?

Vallaster: There was a dentist in that space at one time, and I couldn't find another tenant for it. So, I thought that as Astoria was maturing and business was picking up, it seemed like it was a good area to perhaps try the open office type concept and co-workspace. It's been slow, but I think it's picking up a little bit as more young people and entrepreneurs are moving into the area.

Q: What makes a smaller city like Astoria suited for this kind of business?

Vallaster: There's people leaving Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, etc., and now they can work remotely. And after a while people get kind of tired of working in their extra bedroom or garage or whatever and want to have another facility or a separate place to go to. A place where there's a conference room. This is that option for them.

Brady: We have some people here who have gone on to a year lease or six months lease. And it's often the case that they live here in Astoria but they just need to get out of their home to do their work. And so they've just taken the perma-

nent office here essentially.

Vallaster: If they have kids at home it's hard to focus.

Brady: Things started to pick up slowly. Just before COVID hit there were people interested in the last room that was really available but then it just suddenly stopped. Obviously we couldn't have people share space during the early part of COVID because of the rules on that. People did hold on to some of their rooms here because they loved their rooms, but it's only been recently since they lifted the mask mandate that we let people be in the shared area without a mask.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

Brady: We have super fast Wi-Fi and free coffee. It's pet friendly. People can bring their dogs as long as their pets are friendly and get along with the other pets that are here. I do think it's definitely picking up. We're getting more people just coming in for the day and there's a lot of the nomadic types, people who are on the road and just in a van. There's people that work remotely, but they're just traveling, they're not actually living here. Sometimes they'll be camping over in the Fort Stevens area and they'll come in here and work and then go back to their campground and hang out, so we're seeing a lot of that too.

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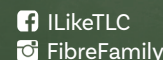
We're pleased to welcome Joe Schulte to lead our Commercial Business Development team on the Northern Oregon Coast. With 25 years of experience in Clatsop County and the financial services industry, he has the knowledge and passion to help local businesses plan for future financial success. **Contact Joe today!**



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