

Space32, connecting forward-thinking teams to new offices

As part of our quick fire questions series - or QFQs - we spoke to Jon Dweck, CEO and cofounder of Space32 about learning from COVID-19, optimising overall work-life balance and building the first global digital marketplace for flexible office spaces.

Temps de lecture : minute

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I was leading the team at PodTalent - the recruitment agency I founded in 2012 - when the pandemic hit. A few days into the first lockdown, I could tell that the 5-day working week as we knew it would never return. As we emerged from the pandemic I set about to find a sustainable hybrid solution for my team that would maintain the flexible working benefits we'd gained while optimising overall work-life balance. A 5-day office week was no longer what my team wanted, or needed. Instead, the consensus was 2-3 set days in the office, with the rest working from home. But when I looked for an office solution that would facilitate this, I came up empty-handed.

The office leases available were all extremely rigid, based on the traditional 5-day pattern with no hybrid alternative. Not wanting to compromise my team's needs to fit these outdated offerings - and unwilling to waste funds on an office space that would stand empty for 2 days a week - I decided to build a solution.

I found a like minded company who were looking for a similar hybrid setup and started leasing our office space to them for 2 days each week. Our "part-time office" was born and soon afterwards I launched Space32 to help other companies do the same.

Tell me about the business - what it is, what it aims to achieve, who you work with, how you reach customers and so on?

At Space32, we're on a mission to connect businesses with genuinely flexible office solutions that are fit for the hybrid working era. We're building the first global digital marketplace for flexible office spaces, which matches companies with spaces catered to their individual working patterns. This includes providing new solutions like the option to join forces with another company to form a "part time office". (Each business can use the same space on different days, enabling them to reap the productivity and culture benefits of in-person working, while cutting the cost of paying for empty office days.)

Through our global marketplace, we aim to provide a solution to the broken office leasing sector, which is currently fragmented, difficult to navigate and over reliant on individual brokerage. We're building a more transparent, holistic system which automates the process for both sides of the market, supporting business leaders to easily find office space that meets their team's needs while helping space providers to ensure that they are offering spaces that businesses are willing to pay for.

How has the business evolved since its launch? When was this?

Since launching in 2022, we've supported companies including Ocean Bottle, World Child Cancer, Anthemis VC and Initials to access flexible office spaces which work for their hybrid teams. We've welcomed over 2000 companies to our marketplace, built evidence to prove the efficacy of the part-time office and begun to grow our own highly experienced team. To date, our part-time office solution has helped save businesses more than an estimated £1.5 million.

Tell us about the working culture at Space32

At Space32, we follow a “fixed hybrid” approach. This means that the whole team is in the office on set days of the week and works remotely on the others. As a result, we’ve been able to cultivate a culture that is equal parts flexible, collaborative and cohesive. On our office days, we prioritise collaborative, team-based tasks and activities, and encourage people to chat and catch up throughout the day. Then, on remote working days, the team is able to focus on more detailed, individual tasks. Everyone knows where they stand and we’re able to maximise the benefits of in-person working while maintaining a level of flexibility that enables us all to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

How are you funded?

To date we’ve received both SEIS and EIS funding from a range of investors within our network, as well as from friends and family.

What has been your biggest challenge so far and how have you overcome this?

We’re building a brand new product in a market that is evolving rapidly. While we’re developing our marketplace to automate the end-to-end process of office leasing, we’re acting as a brokerage in the meantime to support both sides of the market and remedy the current supply and demand misfit. This means doing the legwork for both space seekers and providers, helping them to respectively find and provide spaces which are fit for the hybrid working era. It’s a lot to juggle, but we reckon it’s worth it.

How does Space32 answer an unmet need?

As anyone who has searched for an office space recently will know, it's often an overly complex, fragmented process, and the available spaces simply aren't catered to our hybrid needs. We're building a solution that streamlines this process, while supporting space providers to offer more flexible, tailored office spaces.

With more than one-third of teams now working in some form of hybrid manner, more flexible, adaptable office leases are also desperately needed to provide space in a way which meets workforces' needs. Office space must not only be available in a more flexible format, but it needs to be worth leaving home for, too.

Space32's flexible office marketplace is designed to help enable this by connecting businesses with space providers that can offer the specific structure and support that they need in an office. This enables companies to access their ideal office space, without paying for it on the days no-one is in, while helping providers fill their empty offices by leasing their space in a more effective way.

What's in store for the future?

We're currently working on expanding our global marketplace to deliver an end-to-end flexible office space solution for businesses and space providers around the world. This includes delivering new office solutions which fit the varied working patterns of hybrid companies, streamlining the process through automation to make it easier for companies and space providers to find their ideal match, and unlocking data that will help providers improve their offerings and support businesses' with strategic decision making around cost-efficiencies and sustainability. We also aim to help support wider sustainability goals by reducing the amount of wasted office space and ensuring that new offices are not built

unnecessarily.

What one piece of advice would you give other founders or future founders?

For me, being a truly successful founder means cultivating a high level of self-awareness. No-one is perfect; putting pressure on yourself to achieve perfection will only ever hold you and your team back. Instead, it's essential to really get to know your strengths and weaknesses and lead in a way which acknowledges and optimises these. Don't try to be the leader you think you should be. Being your true, authentic self helps you to build trust, lead mindfully and grow alongside your business.

And finally, a more personal question! What's your daily routine and the rules you're living by at the moment?

'Routine' often goes out the window, as every day is different. But our 'fixed hybrid' working approach helps to give some structure to my week. I'm in the office on Mondays and Thursdays, and tend to work from home the rest of the week. Mondays are all about planning and scheduling meetings and tasks for the weeks ahead, while Thursdays normally revolve around collaborative, team-based tasks. This leaves Tuesdays and Wednesdays free for me to focus on more individual work, helping me to prioritise effectively.

One rule I absolutely live by is tackling the tasks you need to do before the tasks you want to do. It's always tempting to opt for the fun, shiny things, but sticking to priorities is key to being and feeling productive. I also always have a 90-day plan. This helps me to remind myself and the wider team of what we're working towards, which keeps us motivated and aligned on priorities each day.

Jon Dweck is CEO and cofounder of Space32.

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