The founders of Seattle’s premier coworking and incubation space worked with Herman Miller to create an environment that provides functional workspaces for a diverse membership while facilitating the connections that help members grow their businesses.

Serendipity is a constant at Impact Hub Seattle, a coworking and incubation space in the Emerald City’s Pioneer Square neighborhood.

If members aren’t at the coffee bar bumping into developers who can help them build a website for their new business start-up, then they’re likely to be at a member lunch sitting across the table from potential angel investors who are looking for a social venture entrepreneur with whom to partner. Those are the kinds of human connections the space seems to foster organically, but the fact that they occur on a regular basis is completely by design.
Lindsey Engh is one of three Impact Hub Seattle cofounders. As the organization’s Marketing, Communications, and Member Care Director, creating meaningful connections between Hub members is part of her job description.

“Members join Impact Hub because they need a functional workspace,” Engh said. “The reason they stay is the community. They find people here they connect with, who can help them grow their businesses.”

That was Hub member Kamal Patel’s experience. Patel started ÜbrLocal™ at Impact Hub Seattle. The website provides an online marketplace where urban food producers can sell, trade, or give away food or food-related services.

“In a place like this, you get direction,” Patel said. “You get to meet these amazing, talented people. One of our developers was introduced to us through the Hub, and now he’s on our board.”

Impact Hub Seattle’s small, paid staff and team of work-trade members have adopted a number of tactics to facilitate member connections. Intake interviews surface the types of people each new member is interested in meeting and result in two or three such connections made on the member’s first day on site. A hosting team serves as the connectors-in-residence, as adept at making introductions as they are at answering logistical questions. And an online member directory is in the works that will create a database of all 600-plus Impact Hub Seattle members, searchable by interests and skill sets.

The functional workspace that makes the Hub so attractive to new members also does its part to facilitate community. Impact Hub Seattle worked with Herman Miller to offer members a variety of work settings, each of which has been optimized for flexibility and choice.

The building’s open and welcoming Plaza, known by members as “the Triangle,” encourages mingling throughout the day by hosting casual meetings during business hours or providing overflow space during evening events. Two large coworking Hives—groupings of work points where numerous members can engage in individual or collaborative work—offer very distinct vibes. The main level Hive is a more social space outfitted with reconfigurable tables and Sayl® chairs. The second floor space features Canvas Office Landscape® and attracts people looking for a quieter spot for more focused work. Members can also reserve any one of several unique Meeting Spaces, all outfitted with a comfortable seating—including Aeron® Stools and Setu® Chairs—as well as a variety of display and collaboration tools.

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– Kamal Patel, Impact Hub Seattle member

Soft seating creates a sense of welcome in “The Triangle,” Impact Hub Seattle’s two-level lobby space.

The Member Wall attracts people who are looking to make new connections.
In terms of the way the space is configured, I always think about collaboration as the default and privacy as an easy option,” said Brian Howe, Impact Hub Seattle co-founder and CEO. “Having furniture that is highly durable but also flexible and can meet the current demands of any given space is really important. We actually get quite a high level of feedback from people saying, ‘I love that the space is always changing.’”

The space underwent its biggest change to-date in Spring 2014. An expansion into the building next door doubled Impact Hub Seattle’s square footage, adding 18 to 20 private office Havens—enclosed spaces where members can work without distraction—to the Hub’s mix of workspace options.

“We’ve found that our large coworking spaces work really well for the one-, two-, and three-person companies but not as well for the five-, six-, and seven-person companies,” said Kimo Jordan, Impact Hub Seattle’s third co-founder.

“Twenty percent of our private office desk space is actually used by companies that started with us, grew too big, and came to need their own space,” Jordan said. “Several of these companies have moved into the private offices we made available next door.”

Two large coworking spaces each offer a distinctly different vibe. Members looking to sit down and focus on their work without distraction are likely to pull up a Sayl chair in this space on Impact Hub Seattle’s second floor. The main-level coworking space is more social.
Case Study

Kimo Jordan, Brian Howe, and Lindsey Engh are the co-founders of Impact Hub Seattle.