



Will there be anything we don't share in 2017?

By Kelly Pipes

Buying and wasting resources might one day be eclipsed by professional give and take between businesses. Consumers, of course, have already embraced the sharing economy by backing platforms like Uber, Streetbank and Airbnb, where private individuals share personal resources with unknown takers. Perhaps peer-to peer platforms for entrepreneurs and start-ups are poised to launch a similar sharing economy for the business world.

Shared consumption: A key trend defining 2016?

The continued growth of the sharing economy stands out as a 2016 trend for [Fueled](#) co-founder, Ryan D Matzner, while founder and CEO of the co-working-network [Serendipity Labs](#), John Arenas, explains how co-working reflects the rising sharing and circular economy model. For him, rather than propagating a wasteful linear model of consumption, sharing head office real estate saves travel time and offers additional benefits.

"On average, the office space assigned to a company employee is used only 30 to 40 per cent of the time. Far from sustainable, this linear economic model for traditional office space makes for wasteful real estate assets that use up tremendous natural resources to build and require inefficient use of energy resources to maintain.

"What's more, a single centralized head office location requires employees to make long commutes. A co-working-network like Serendipity Labs, that offers workplace communities in urban and suburban locations, reflects the sharing and circular economy model. Existing real estate can be repurposed at higher utilization rates by a variety of groups. It also eliminates the need for wasteful, long commutes, reducing the organization's carbon footprint."

For Anna Moran, Global Operations Director of the cross cultural co-creation network Social Starters, there's no future in the "winner takes it all" approach. She believes one of the biggest 2016 takeaways for entrepreneurs is that the future is in shared consumption.

"The popular commercial models include Airbnb and Uber, and, in the sustainability space, examples include bicycle sharing systems, karma kitchens, micro finance and micro lending (shared asset creation through cooperative structures)," she says.

"Entrepreneurs can draw inspiration from such business models which have been constructed at the crossroads of innovation, technology and understanding the ever-growing resource constrained world."

City-wide sharing: Share Peterborough

Peterborough in Cambridgeshire, has 34 years to become a circular city and 2017 see the launch of a new sharing economy platform - [Share Peterborough](#) - to kick start the journey. Emma McKenna, at Future Peterborough, explains how the peer-to-peer platform aims to support city businesses to start collaborating around their resource needs.

"In a world of finite resources, the sharing economy allows us to make the best of what we do have. Here in Peterborough we've launched a commitment, so that by 2050 we can say that we are operating as a truly circular city."

Success stories include a global construction company contracting in the city, which is offering vacant spaces on their employee training courses to other smaller construction companies. Emma is also keen to stress that the sharing challenge isn't specific to Peterborough, quoting that an average European car is parked for 92 per cent of its life. While an average European office is used only 35 to 50 per cent of the time.

"The idea for the platform came about as a solution to a challenge shared by local businesses in the city: they often worked in isolation with limited resources but as an organization or as a city as a collective, we were also generating lots of waste. This made us think that perhaps, the issue wasn't that there wasn't enough resource in the city but instead that it wasn't managed as efficiently as it could be.

"The sharing and collaborative economy allows businesses to share what they have with others and reduce the amount of waste they produce. In Peterborough we don't just focus on things and stuff but on people and places too. We want to make the most of all our resources! Embracing the sharing economy is a great way for businesses to collaborate with other local organizations and for small and large businesses to work together ensuring our resources and assets are utilized better and that they have the opportunity to find value in someone else's waste."

So perhaps our parents were right when they told us to share. It looks like it might just be good for all of our businesses.

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