

Relocating your business

Consider these moving issues before you pack up the boxes. **By Bill Ehret**

Moving our company twice over the past 24 months has provided new insight to the phrase, "What you do not know cannot hurt you." For us, it now means, "What you do not know can and will hurt you in subtle and multiple ways."

The granddaddy of these unexpected problems is your loss of time and focus on the core business during a necessary relocation. There are key components to every move that consume time and attention, such as telecommunications and data, furniture, stationery and business cards, construction and interior design, as well as the actual physical move.

■ **Telecommunications and data.** Are you buying a new system or relocating the old? When will phones be cut off and for how long during the physical move? Who will be there to ensure everything is up and running come Monday morning?

These questions are basic yet critical. If clients and customers cannot reach you by phone or e-mail, you may not be able to conduct business. In most cases, there are separate providers for voice and data.

The phone company can get you a dial tone, but accessing the Internet is someone else's problem. Computer consultants can get your network problems addressed, but leaving your partner in the next office a voicemail requires a different service provider.

In all situations, coordination is the key. Consider implementing new systems before the physical move in order to work out the bugs, and don't try to install everything at once. Do it in stages.

■ **Furniture.** Relocating always involves furniture. You'll need to decide whether to purchase more than you already have, what stays and goes, and what to do with old furniture that won't be moved. The list and level of detail can be overwhelming.

If you are contemplating furniture systems, check out the parts list of one office cubicle. The decision to choose a furniture vendor will result in several meetings and presentations that require decisions from the top. In addition, discarding older furniture takes some effort. Selling it on the sec-



ondary market or donating it to a nonprofit organization will also require time.

■ **Stationery and business cards.** The letterhead and all the peripheral documents need to be changed. You'll need to determine how much to order between the decision to move and the physical move. And you also have to determine what type of relocation announcement to send out to clients and vendors. The key is planning ahead so that once you've moved, you're not sending out material with old addresses and phone numbers listed.

■ **Construction.** Assign a point person who will be responsible for maintaining construction budgets and schedules, as well as collecting and maintaining the list of material selections, such as paint, carpet and wall coverings. This will make it easier to oversee the process and catch any mix-ups early in the process.

■ **Interior design.** This can be related to construction to some degree, but the real issue is how everything looks and if it promotes the corporate statement that you want. Where do the pictures go and who hangs them? What type of chairs should be in the reception area? What colors go with the carpet and the wall coverings?

■ **Physical move.** The final piece is determining who to use to actually move your company. Choosing the proper moving company may be impacted by various equipment warranties for computers and furniture. Picking two or three companies to bid on the move is always wise. You will be surprised at the range in quotes.

To ensure the entire process goes smoothly, you may want to consider hiring a project manager to oversee and coordinate all aspects of the relocation. And appointing an internal team member to coordinate with that project manager helps at all steps along the way.

Nothing can assure a perfect move, but planning ahead will certainly mitigate the risks.

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