

PLANNING SPACE FOR A NEW WORKPLACE

By MARCIA WATSON WASSERMAN

For the business owner or manager, planning a relocation or remodel is a daunting task. Early organization is key to the successful build-out of new space or the remodel of existing space. Staying abreast of trends which impact the way businesses work today and will work in the near future is also critical. With so much at stake, where do you start?

Begin with a detailed list that covers all categories for a move budget. These categories can be modified for a remodel. The company should retain experts, such as real estate brokers, interior architects, contractors and consultants, early in the process so that they can walk proposed locations and provide insight that will assist the company in its lease negotiations. For example, the interior architect can prepare preliminary floor plans for each of the spaces the company is considering. These experts can help determine which location is the most cost and space efficient. Sometimes the building that has the least expensive rental rate may not be the best choice due to the layout of the building's floor plate (the size of one floor) and the design of the building's useable square footage. If the firm is considering a remodel versus a move, the interior architect can prepare drawings that compare and contrast all possible spaces.

In the twenty-first century, we have entered a new workplace in which technology plays a significant role in the design and utilization of space. More employees will telecommute. Businesses will increasingly communicate with their clients/customers over intranets and the internet. The architecture and interior design firms study these, and other, workplace trends to assist them in designing space that will work now and for the duration of the company's lease.

Once you know where you are moving, it is important to create a move checklist and timetable. This checklist should include critical items, who is responsible for ensuring that each item is completed, the status of each item as work progresses, and the date each item is completed. The following are a few critical items that should be included in your move checklist:

- If your company is moving into an office tower, or any building with elevators, it is important to reserve the freight elevators at the old and new locations at the earliest possible opportunity. After your lease is executed, make sure that the elevators are reserved in your company's name. Many office towers limit moves to weekends and evenings, so the sooner you have a confirmed reservation in writing, the better.
- Another area that requires immediate attention is ordering telephone lines, service and equipment. These should be ordered from your telephone operating company with sufficient lead time (at least four weeks) to guarantee that telephones will be operational on or prior to your move date.
- You should obtain proposals from three movers and request their quotes be on a not-to-exceed basis. This will protect you from open-ended moving costs. Note, however, that if the scope of work for the move changes at your request, an additional fee will probably be charged.
- Again, with respect to movers, the placement of furniture and boxes at the new location is generally done by number. You should assign all employees a location number, and make certain that all office/work locations are sequentially numbered on a floor plan of the new space. This will assist the movers on move day. If you make a last minute location change (e.g. move Employee 6 from Office 6 to Office 12) make sure that his or her furniture and boxes are relabeled Office 12. Although it may require some extra effort on your part, this will prevent the movers from being slowed down while locating out-of-sequence numbers. Of course, this will result in a move that takes less time and costs you less money.