

# office relocation checklist

The 7 best tips on how to plan your next office relocation.

**office**principles

## THE 7 BEST TIPS ON HOW TO PLAN YOUR NEXT OFFICE RELOCATION

There are many reasons why any business would need to relocate, and they are normally a combination of the following:

- Growth, expansion or contraction of staff levels
- Your need to increase efficiency
- A desire to enhance your corporate image
- A desire to improve your bottom-line profits
- The need to retain or attract key staff
- To be nearer or further away from your competition
- A rent review or a lease renewal is imminent

Relocating can be extremely beneficial but, if not planned and executed properly, it can prove to be disruptive and costly. It makes sense therefore to select the best company to guide you through the planning and implementation phases of your relocation and fit-out. The risks of getting it wrong can work out catastrophic for your organisation .....

Consider these **7 best tips** on how to plan your next office relocation so it can proceed as effortlessly as possible:

## 1. PLANNING THE MOVE

Moving is ranked as one of the most stressful events to happen to anyone. Companies move office every 7 years on average and most of the people who are tasked with the responsibility of managing the move are handling it for the first time. Planning is the first key step to take. While the whole process may be daunting, as with any process it can be viewed as a logical series of essentially simple tasks, checklists and procedures.

Adopting this strategy can save companies hours of preparation time and allow managers to understand and appreciate what the costs are in moving an office and produce actionable budgets.

There are certain vital best practice tips and experience gleaned from those who have done it before that need to be considered. These include assessing your new office location space needs; reviewing your existing office lease terms (this is vital and often not considered until it introduces an irritating delay); building a knowledgeable office move project management team; and looking at exactly what systems/furniture you can do without and in what ways you can reorganise.

It cannot be overstressed how important it is for the office move manager not to be left in a position where the same office move mistakes that other organisations have made are once again reproduced. The lack of experience, skills and/or time can be compensated for through talking with practitioners who can work with you to produce the required results.

Throughout the past decades when companies have moved office, certain issues have repeatedly occurred. It is paramount that you know about these highly crucial issues:

- An office move manager underestimates exactly what is involved in an office relocation exercise.
- The office relocation planning exercise is not initiated early enough.
- Professional office relocation services are not utilised for the essential component parts of the office move.

Moving your office is a stressful time beset with sometimes unique challenges. Meanwhile you will need to carry on focusing on your day-to-day commitments, together with overseeing the office move itself. It is not easy.

## 2. FINDING OFFICE SPACE

Certain elements have to be considered for your new office space. You must ensure that you find the space that best suits your organisation's operational and financial needs. The questions that will need answering are listed here.

Where is the best office space location for you? This needs to be broken out into a check list including items such as where do your employees live, what is public transport like, and where is your customer base located? By evaluating these issues you will reach an objective solution.

It might seem obvious, but how much office space do you need? Today it is generally accepted that some 125 sq ft should be allocated per employee – this calculation includes a share of reception areas and meeting rooms, and refreshment facilities in addition to a desk, chair and associated filing systems.

Obviously it is imperative to utilise the space carefully by working through a workplace remodelling strategy. By introducing agile working companies have dramatically reduced their office footprint, removing the need for oversized premises and ultimately improving their bottom line.

Another obvious question is how much can you afford? You must discern how your organisation's property costs can best provide your office space needs. All your moving cost office components will need to be understood, and you will need to identify your office space costs through data provided by property professionals. And do not forget to adhere to your budget.

What do you want the space to do for your business? Remember your choice of building and its location may influence staff retention and recruitment – is this a key factor? Or do you want to push certain corporate values or business issues? Your choice may provide that all important positive first impression of your office to your existing and future clients.

What is the best timing? Considered wisdom is that it is prudent to initiate your office space options up to 18 months before your office lease expires. This incidentally is regardless of whether you are considering renewing, renegotiating or relocating. There needs to be enough time for you to reach the right decision.

### **3. LEGAL ISSUES**

The legal issues surrounding an office move are paramount to the ongoing success and security of your business. There are three areas of an office move that require attention from a commercial, operational and legal perspective. These concern strategies before, during and after the move.

**Before.** You must be aware of what notice you need to provide to end your office lease, and how and when it should be served. This is regardless of whether the lease is about to expire, there is an option to break or you want to take advantage of good market conditions. If you need to vacate your premises before expiry, there may be options open to you, such as sub-letting or assigning the lease to another tenant or negotiating termination with the landlord. Seek advice from a property solicitor on the options available.

**During.** You must ensure the new lease safeguards your commercial interests. Anyone who does not seek professional legal advice will be exposing themselves to risk and expensive operational incidents. Your property solicitor must scrutinise your lease to highlight issues of concern and clauses that require to be further negotiated. Questions you need to ask include whether the length of lease is appropriate for your needs, and if there are options to break the lease and any entitlement there may be for extension on expiry.

**After.** Ongoing legal issues could arise during the course of your tenancy. If this does occur, you need to resolve any issues quickly by arranging for a property solicitor to liaise with the landlord on your behalf. This will avoid any disruption to the business. Staying on good terms with your landlord and paying rent on time will obviously make for a harmonious business atmosphere.

## 4. OFFICE DESIGN AND FIT-OUT

Having made the decision to relocate rather than refurbish, your business plan should drive the fit-out process. Have you challenged the way that your staff are working? Could they be working more productively? Statistics show that the average workstation is only used for 50% of the time. A good designer should strike a compromise between facilitating team-work, accommodating flexible working and providing areas where people can concentrate and work in private. The design and fit-out specialist you select will need to be knowledgeable about your business needs and aspirations. It is therefore vital to allocate time to briefing meetings where ideas and suggestions can be discussed.

Some of the qualities you should seek for in your fit-out specialist include choosing one that has all the key disciplines in-house to fulfil your project, including project management and space planning. Check out the financial stability of your D&B contractor which should provide a relatively accurate appraisal of their long-term viability.

If you are not already fully knowledgeable, it is recommended that you make yourself aware of the following words and phrases, which you will undoubtedly encounter in the many discussions surrounding the selection of your fit-out specialist: warranty, collateral warranty, retention and defects liability period.

Make sure you have access to the 71 steps and advice imparted in The Black Book – the book that reviews the issues you are most likely to face when you are relocating your office.

## 5. IT AND TELECOM

On day one in your new office, it is vital that all of your equipment, IT systems and phones are fully functional. For any of this to happen, you need to plan ahead. In no particular order, you need to plan for IT relocation, look at business continuity and disaster recovery issues, ensure there is no disruption to services, upgrade equipment where necessary, keep existing phone numbers, look at network cabling requirements and consider less expensive phone systems. Also, this might be a good opportunity to consider what solutions virtualisation and/or cloud computing might be able to offer your organisation.

Many people become confused or bewildered with and by techno-speak. However, any issue can be logically explained. You can discuss your organisation's plans for the foreseeable future of your IT and communications strategy with your fit-out specialist's IT and communications adviser.

## 6. BUSINESS MOVES

It is a challenging proposition for the relocation of your business assets and personnel. It really does make sense for you to engage only the best companies to assist you in this process. Your relocation manager should co-ordinate and oversee the project and keep your staff aware of the timetable and identify potential problems and bottlenecks.

Your IT and (tele)communications equipment is key to the continued running of your business and the decommissioning and relocation of these items should be considered before anything else. It should not

be obvious to your customers that your IT capability has been relocated. An option to consider is to utilise a data centre services provider to assume the running of your IT systems for a period around the relocation.

Office equipment such as photocopiers, mailing and vending machines may be leased and it is often the leasing company that can relocate these items. It is important to liaise early on with your relocation specialist to agree the relocation of such items.

A key piece of advice is not to finalise your move until you can be sure your (tele)communications requirements can be accommodated.

## **7. AFTER THE MOVE**

After your relocation and refit, it is essential that you review what you have achieved and measure this against your original objectives. You should evaluate how well your partnership with the fit-out specialist has worked.

Remember that moving office is a progressive step in your organisation's development and is a good time to review all office suppliers and service providers to make sure you are receiving the best value for money, and that you are content with the standard of service being provided. It may be necessary to change suppliers if you have moved to a new location, town or city. But even if you are staying in the same area, you can still save money. Moving office can offer an opportunity for renewing or switching supplier contracts on (more) favourable terms.

The staff will need to know how to use the new offices, and a welcome pack may be appropriate for such things as where the stationery is located, how to use the telephones and information on local shopping facilities. Your fit-out specialist will provide operation and maintenance procedures' manuals for advice on the products and services provided, including the maintenance requirements for the equipment.

## NOTE

The relationship with your fit-out specialist does not end when you move in but carries on as your business develops. Remember, you embarked on a process that was intended to bring business benefits to your organisation, in the process of which you would avoid many traps and pitfalls that beset many unaware and ill-prepared organisations.

### **..... so how can you avoid these traps and pitfalls?**

Firstly, you need to spend some time reviewing and contemplating the guidance provided in the book

**“The Black Book – The ultimate and complete guide to office relocation and fit-out in 71 steps”** – *this really is the bible for all office relocations*

and, secondly, you need to find an office relocation, and design and build fit-out specialist in whom you can have confidence and trust.

In the first instance, contact Lee Parsons at Office Principles

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