

Office Moves – How To Avoid The Hassles!

Moving office can be a daunting task. And no wonder! The vast majority of business moves run into hitches that with a little forward planning could have been anticipated and avoided.

Without question, the best approach is to get organised, to treat the relocation as a critical project and to manage it as such. Do this and you and your staff will be able to leave work on Friday night, step into a new office on Monday morning and simply pick up where you left off – no down-time, no loss of business and no disappointed customers.

Ignore the planning and a world of pain awaits. As they say, “fail to plan and you plan to fail!”

In most businesses, continuity depends upon a few key systems. If you can make and receive calls, send and receive e-mails and your IT systems are working, then your business can probably carry on uninterrupted. Problems in any of these areas will mean you’ll probably struggle. So how do you make sure you’ve covered all the bases? This handy guide gives you a brief run-down of the key things that you’ll need to consider.

Office Telephone System

Connectivity

At the top of the list are your communications links. Lead times for telecoms companies to lay in new services are often measured in weeks so it’s vital that you consider your telephony needs early. What sort of connectivity is required? Think about the number of concurrent incoming and outgoing calls you need. If you know this, you’ll be able to translate it into ISDN2, ISDN30 or leased line services. If you’re not sure, have a chat with your telecoms supplier – they’ll be able to advise you. Check out what services are already available (hopefully your landlord will be able to tell you this) and if these match or exceed your needs, simply arrange for service activation. If not, place your order for the necessary connectivity upgrade. Either way, it’s worth checking and double checking that things are on schedule – that way you’ll avoid any nasty surprises.

Telephone System

The next thing you’ll need to consider is the telephone system itself. Are you increasing your number of offices or merely relocating from one to another? If it’s an additional office, you are no doubt going to have to invest in a new phone system. There are a variety of systems and technologies to choose from. You can reduce costs by using Voice over IP (VoIP) but beware, call quality may not be as good as traditional land lines and there will be an impact upon your internal IT network and the broadband connection into your office. Think also about the call features you will need to streamline your business.

Again, your telecoms supplier will be happy to discuss options and advise on the best course.

A new system will inevitably incur a lead time and don't forget that your users may need to be re-trained to use it. If you decide to re-use your existing telephone system, this will need to be decommissioned, moved and then re-commissioned at the new office. This might be a very straightforward process but you may choose to engage your telecoms supplier to manage it for you.

Telephone Numbers

Portable numbers (0845, 0800 etc.) will obviously move with you, but even if you don't use these, depending upon where you're moving from and to, you may even be able to take your existing STD numbers with you. BT will be able to confirm this. In either case, your telecoms supplier will need advance warning of the move so that the correct numbers can be provisioned at the appropriate point. It is always sensible to confirm the changes before the move to ensure all details are correct and that your move is on their schedule. Also bear in mind that if you're introducing direct dial numbers for the first time, these will have to be assigned and provisioned. Again, this should be sorted out and scheduled well before the move takes place.

Call Redirection

During the move and beyond, a call redirection service should prevent you from losing any important incoming calls. If this isn't practical, you should at least route calls to a recorded message informing customers of the temporary disruption and your expectations of when normal service will resume – much better than allowing calls to ring out or allow incoming calls to hit a "number unobtainable" tone.

Internet Connectivity

Life in the Google age means that a robust internet service is almost certainly vital to the running of your business. Check out what's available at the new premises and compare it to your needs. If the physical connectivity doesn't match your requirements, you'll need to consider laying in a new service. New service infrastructure will always involve a significant lead time. This should be identified early and highlighted in your plan. If the relevant lines are available, it's just a question of ensuring that your ISP (Internet Service Provider) enables the service at the appropriate time. It's always advisable to set this up in parallel to your existing broadband service (don't try to switch the service from your old premises to your new premises) and check that the service is working before the move.

Broadband comes in two flavours; ADSL and SDSL. ADSL is usually suitable for small offices that don't have a huge requirement to upload data whilst SDSL is often more suitable for offices or businesses that regularly need to send large amounts of data and/or have a reasonable number of remote workers. Where data transfer requirements are particularly high, you may even need to consider a leased line.

Having selected your service type, you need to consider the speed of the service. It's worth looking at the difference in pricing between the various service options. Often a modest increase in price provides a much higher speed of service – often worth it in terms of office efficiency!

Finally, remember that you will need your ISP to provide static rather than dynamic IP addresses.

E-Mail Redirection

If your e-mail is externally hosted, you don't have to worry about anything. So long as your internet connection is good, you'll be able to pick up e-mails in the new office.

If you host your own e-mails you'll need to modify the DNS records relating to your business domains. This can be arranged through your Domain Name Host or your DNS Host as appropriate. These changes normally take 24 to 48 hours to take effect, so assuming you are moving over a weekend, this is best sorted out in the middle of the Friday afternoon prior to the move.

IT Network

Redundant Equipment

Office moves are often the trigger for a review of existing equipment. Take a look at your existing PCs and servers. Are they creaking and groaning with age? Are hardware warranties a dim and distant memory? Has performance fallen off to the point where frankly, you'd be better off with new equipment? The lead time for new hardware/software is usually a few days at most, but plan your needs well in advance. Any new servers or PCs should be bought in and loaded with their base configurations beforehand so that they're ready for action when you relocate. This is no problem if there's only one or two but don't underestimate the time needed to do this if you're changing or updating a lot of equipment.

Clearly identify any equipment for disposal and find a technology disposal company to get rid of it.

Office Cabling

Before you move, you'll need to check the state of the cabling in the new premises. Physically cabled networks generally offer better performance and security than their wireless counterparts, but the cabling needs to be CAT5E or CAT6 compliant. Check that it is!

Also carry out an audit on the number and position of mains sockets, telephone points and data points. If these match your needs, congratulations, you've avoided yet another mini-project! If not, you'll need to employ a data cabling company (often your telecoms

supplier can do this for you) and/or an electrician. Lead times will vary so you'll need to sort out the details in advance to ensure that it's all sorted out by the time you move in.

Finally, wireless is sometimes a good option for smaller offices or to provide broadband access to mobile staff who tend to just visit offices rather than being located in them. The key thing is to ensure that the Wireless Access Point is encrypted for a high enough level of security and that only those with the correct encryption keys can gain access to your network. Again, this can all be set up and tested prior to moving in.

Floor Plans and Documentation

It's vital that you know exactly which machines belong to which users and where the various printers and scanners need to be located. You'll need to develop a detailed floor plan and clearly label all equipment before the move so that it can be identified and put in the right place.

It's also a good idea to document your existing network architecture so that this can be replicated at the new site. Although not always possible, mirroring the original set-up often helps to minimise the time taken to bring all systems back online. In any case, you should try and minimise the number of changes you're making – it just makes things easier!

And whilst you've got your pen and paper out, it's usually a good idea to note down any IT/network issues with the old system so that you know these haven't surfaced as a result of the move.

System Back-Up

Make certain your back-up system is working and just prior to the move, take a full back-up and validate it – you don't want to have to recover data only to find it's not there!

Close the servers down in a controlled manner and set out for removal. This should be no problem for stand-alone equipment, but you'll probably need to remove any rack mounted servers and equipment from their racks and don't forget to make sure that all cables are packed away so that you can reconnect everything at the new office.

System Re-Commissioning

Okay, so everything's been packed, moved and unpacked and now you're faced with piles of equipment and cables all over the new office. The next step is to start re-assembling the servers, the UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply) and back-up drives as well as cabling up and plugging in the various PCs, printers and other networking devices. Bring the servers online, clear any errors and check that files can be accessed by your PCs, that e-mails can be retrieved (if you host your own e-mails) and that each individual user has access to the drives and software that they need to continue working. Once the local network has been sorted out, don't forget to set up access facilities for your remote workers.

Don't expect this to be a straightforward procedure – unexpected problems always surface, so you'll need to work patiently through the various configuration and communication challenges that this exercise will throw at you.

Finally, test your internet connection once again. If this is still okay, you're up and running. **Welcome to your new office!**

Okay, that's a lot to remember, so just to be helpful, we've drawn up a two page checklist that highlights the key tasks and decision points (you'll find it attached to the back of this document). Use this to focus on the key things that'll turn your office move into a raging success or a miserable failure!

A primary objective for any office relocation should be business continuity. Your market is an intensely competitive place and the last thing you need is an office full of staff sitting around for 2 or 3 days waiting for e-mails, internet access, telephones or the IT system to come back on line. Avoid this and you've won!

But even the most extensively planned move will be fraught with issues – there are just *so* many things to consider. Our brief guide should give you some idea of the main pitfalls and will help you to focus attention onto a few of the things that really matter.

Of course you could always ask us to help! Movers Transport, working with its technology partner J-Media, can not only move the equipment, we can also help you to plan the process, organise your telephone and broadband services, decommission your IT systems and ensure that you are up and running in the quickest possible time. We can also be on hand immediately after the move to ensure that any last moment teething problems are sorted out quickly and efficiently, giving you the greatest chance to continue generating revenue.

If you want to learn more, if you're worried about a forthcoming move or if you need some guidance with your planning, then why don't you check out our web sites,

www.moverstransport.co.uk

www.j-media.com

or simply call us on +44 (0) 161 442 9999



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Office Relocation Planner

Telephone Lines and System

Telephone service required: _____

Telephone service available at new premises: Y/N

If N: Service ordered: _____
 Service provisioning complete: _____
 Service activation date: _____
 Service availability checked: _____

Existing phone system to be re-used? Y/N

If N: New system ordered: _____
 System installation complete: _____
 System checked: _____
 Staff re-training complete: _____

New telephone numbers ordered: _____

Transfer of existing numbers requested: _____

Number transfers and new number orders confirmed: _____

Telephone number adds/changes activated: _____

Number changes verified: _____

Call redirection ordered: _____

Call redirection verified: _____

Broadband Service

Broadband service required: _____

Broadband service available at new premises? Y/N

If N: Service ordered: _____
 Service provisioning complete: _____
 Service activation date: _____
 Service availability checked: _____

Static IP addresses ordered: _____

Static IP addresses notified: _____

E-Mail Redirection

Externally hosted e-mail: Y/N

If N: DNS changes notified: _____
 DNS changes verified: _____

DATE



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Equipment

DATE

Redundant equipment identified:
New equipment ordered:
New equipment received:
New equipment pre-configured:
Disposal service organised:
Old equipment disposed of:

Cabling and Wireless Access

CAT5E/CAT6 cabling available? Y/N
Adequate power/telephone/data sockets? Y/N

If N: Cable/socket changes ordered:
Cable/socket changes complete:
Cable changes checked:

Wireless access required? Y/N

If Y: Wireless access point ordered:
Wireless access point received:
Wireless access point installed:
Wireless access point tested:

Floor Plan

Floor plan drawn up:
Network documented:
Current IT problems noted:

System De-Commissioning

Additional back-up taken: Y/N
Back-up validated: Y/N

System Re-Commissioning

Servers online: Y/N
UPS set up: Y/N
Back-up system operational: Y/N
PCs running and able to access the servers: Y/N
Access rights configured and checked for each user: Y/N
Internet access verified for all users: Y/N
E-Mail access verified for all users: Y/N
Remote access set up and checked: Y/N

