

Maximizing the Office Move: Phone Considerations During a Relocation

When your organization is ready to relocate to a new office, it's a good time for cleaning house. This can mean a review of files, procedures, policies — and especially technology. If you're clinging to your old phone system as you move from one office to another, you're not necessarily doing yourself any favors.

Typically, 40% of the cost of deploying a phone system to a new building is the cost of cabling and the labor for installation. This means an organization is not realizing significant savings by clinging to an outdated phone platform, especially when you consider the features and functionality that the business is missing out on by not utilizing the latest technology. Upgrading to the latest phone technology when an office is undergoing new construction or renovation is significantly more cost effective than needing to rip open walls at some point in the future if the decision to upgrade a phone system is made at a later time.

Planning the right strategy for an office move is essential. Moves are most often motivated by business expansion and growth. But will your phone system support the extensions you will be adding now and in the future? Will it have the capability that employees need to do their jobs efficiently? There are a few considerations to keep in mind to ensure that both your new building and phone system will support all of your business needs.

Cabling Considerations

When moving into a new building, you should always make sure that it is wired to support any potential growth that you expect in the future. Even if you are not installing a phone or computer to the new location at the present time, you can develop what is known as a "cable-only" location. A cable-only location will have all of the wiring pre-installed during construction. Then computers and phone equipment can be installed at the convenience of the business. The reason to do this is that it will cost 40-50% more to open walls to wire a building later than to install wiring during initial construction.

Always be sure to use what's known as CAT-5 E cabling for your phones and CAT-5 E (or an even better grade of cable) for your computers. And be aware that most building codes require the use of plenum rated cabling. Certain vendors may try to cut costs by using residential cabling. Always double check with your vendor to ensure that your wiring is tested to meet the highest standards.

Typical Cabling Costs		
Type 1	1 CAT-5 Enhanced Run	1 CAT-5E (Phone) and 1 CAT-5 E (Computer) Run (Combined)
Non-Plenum	\$100-\$125	\$130-\$160
Plenum	\$125-\$135	\$160-\$190



102 Timbertrace Ct.
Columbia, SC 29212
1-866-IDEACOM (433-2266)
www.ideacom.org

The Telephone / Data closet in your new office will also need to be spacious enough to allow proper air circulation. We recommend a minimum of 3 feet of open space between the equipment and each wall of the closet. And the equipment should be located where technicians can access it freely.

Vendor Considerations

In past years, IT managers handled only the data side of a business. But with the advent of VoIP, the trend is increasingly for IT managers to be responsible for both the voice and data streams. But whether your IT manager will be responsible for the selection of a new phone system, or you will handle the review personally, there are a few points to consider.

According to New Office Setup¹, vendor selection should begin 1-3 months in advance of your move. When reviewing vendors, you can tell quite a bit by the neatness of the phone room that was previously installed by the vendor. We recommend that you ask for a list of the last 5 installations performed by the vendor that are similar to your project. Then go talk to those companies. Many vendors will have a prepared list of references, but reviewing a random sample of past jobs can be very informative and help you with your selection process.

Our recommendation is that once you select a vendor, you should always try to notify them of a new installation at least 6 weeks in advance of your office move, preferably as soon as you sign a new lease or break ground. Your phone vendor should always be included in conversations with architects, engineers, and your local telephone service carrier. A good written floor plan of the new office should also be provided to the vendor. The best floor plan is an architect's rendering that includes the locations of all phone and data jacks.

There's one final advantage to upgrading to a new phone platform in your new office — you will be able to keep using your current phone system in your old office. You can have the new system installed and ready to operate when the doors of the new office open, and your staff can keep using the existing system up until move day. That's the best way to ensure smooth continuity of operations for your organization, even during a potentially disruptive office move.

¹ "Moving to a New Office, the Fine Art of Commercial Office Relocation-Phase 2: One to Three Months before Moving Day," <http://www.newofficesetup.com/OfficeMove-p2.htm>



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