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Relocation brings challenges, but it presents opportunities

It has been said that the key to success is to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. Such is the case with corporate relocation.

Regardless of whether you're relocating corporate offices, high-tech space, biotech/biomed facilities, or industrial operations, thorough preparation for all possible difficulties is a constant.



**INSIDER
VIEW**



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Before preparing for the worst, however, you must be sure that you're adequately prepared for the relocation itself. This means identifying and addressing several critical issues before anything else is done. Clearly identifying project-team roles and responsibilities, developing workable schedules, ensuring building access and frequent updates and team meetings are all among these issues that must be addressed in any relocation. They are, however, only the tip of the iceberg.

High-tech facilities

Every business needs to ensure that its new location has adequate power supply for computers and related equipment, but for high-tech firms, back-up power sources and sufficient bandwidth and connectivity for data systems are an absolute must.

With the large amount of requisite power comes the need for a well-coordinated infrastructure system for housing the hardware of these companies. Raised-floor systems, convenient power location, uninterrupted power supply and back-up generators, as well as the complex electrical and data equipment that is unique to such firms all require a high level of precision in their placement relative to each other and to shared office equipment. This begets the need for exhaustively detailed designs and sched-

ules, complete with contingency plans for computer-room equipment backup and shutdown phasing.

Data infrastructure and network implementation are also critical elements for the relocating high-tech firm. Companies need to ask themselves key questions: What new hardware will be needed and what are the lead times and power and cooling requirements? What will be the speed of the new network? Will there need to be a test system installed in order to determine how their existing systems will function on the new network? This information is vital for minimizing the impact that a relocation will have on ongoing projects.

Biotech/biomed facilities

The major moving concerns of biotech/biomed companies fall into one of two categories: moving equipment and moving actual work, such as lab formulas, tissue samples, and other ongoing research projects.

Moving lab equipment to a new location evokes many of the same concerns regarding power supply that one finds in a high-tech move. This equipment relies on a great deal of power and requires specialized plumbing and heating, ventilation and air condition—or HVAC—and necessary steps must be taken to ensure that there will be sufficient and available supply, complete with back-up sources.

However, the process with this equipment is a bit more involved; one can't simply unplug an electron microscope or centrifuge and hook it back up at the new space. Lab equipment must be decontaminated prior to the move, and steps have to be taken to ensure complete pre- and post-move support for equipment installation and calibration. Unless you're willing to roll the dice on a \$1 million piece of hardware, you'll want to bring in a qualified equipment vendor—generally, the same vendor who sold the equipment. This ensures that proper procedures will be adhered to in disas-

sembling, moving and recalibrating the apparatus at the new location.

The other part of the equation for biotech/biomed facilities is moving ongoing lab work. This is a process that must be coordinated with exacting precision, along with the equipment. The key word here is "timeliness." Many cultures and lab samples must be kept refrigerated, requiring back-up units throughout the process. It is important to note that, unlike the equipment, if a chemical sample is damaged, it may be impossible to recreate the circumstances under which it was created. A momentary oversight can result in the loss of years of work, which may equate to millions of dollars.

Industrial facilities

Industrial and manufacturing firms have unique issues of their own. In addition to their specialized requirements for electrical and data equipment, there is the additional concern regarding packaging and shipping unassembled electronic components and stock. Antistatic packaging is used to avoid any damage.

Space planning is an important issue as well, and must incorporate the work flow into the design. Issues may include layout of staging areas for raw materials and finished goods, pallet racking and conveyor systems. Infrastructure issues like floor loading of racking and turning radiuses for material-handling equipment must also be considered. Relocation of finished products, stock components and work in progress also involves detailed project coordination at every juncture.

Regardless of the type of company, the relocation process is fraught with possibilities for error, lost equipment, and lost time. Thorough planning and scheduling will ensure a smooth transition and can make a complex and difficult process much more manageable. A relocation is an opportunity to design more efficient space, refine internal processes and provide for better work environments. If planned and implemented properly, the gain can far outweigh the pain.

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