

Smart Office Relocations: Phone System Strategies to Maximize Your Move

If you are an Office or IT Manager responsible for moving or upgrading to a new office, you are responsible for making sound financial and logistical decisions to make the most out of the transition — and that includes your company's phone system.

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 This means an organization is not realizing significant savings by clinging to an outdated phone platform, especially when you consider the features and functionality that the business is missing out on by not utilizing the latest technology.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 demand? 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. You should strongly consider cable-only locations if you are not installing a phone or computer to the location at the present time. The reason 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 a minimum of CAT-5 E cabling for your phones and CAT-5 E or better for your computers. In addition 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 ¹ | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| 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 |

Also make sure that the Telephone / Data closet in the new office is 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.



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Vendor Considerations

While we're on the subject of phone and data cabling installations, here's a tip: When considering a vendor, 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.

You should always try to notify your vendor 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 "Phone System FAQ: How to Select the Right Voicemail System for Your Office," TechSoup.org, (August 21, 2002), <http://www.techsoup.org/learningcenter/hardware/archives/page9670.cfm>



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