



The Big Shift

it's your move

Practical tips for relocation project management

Moving your company can be a complex task. GEOFF WARNER draws up a list of what could go wrong, and how to prevent problems.

MURPHY'S LAW couldn't fit any situation more perfectly than business relocation.

No matter how organised, capable, or experienced you think you are, things could go wrong.

Here are some tips that may help ensure you are still employed after the dust clears:

1. Establish a Realistic Schedule

When a company tries to create unrealistic schedules, it's usually not until they get down to the wire that they realise it's not going to happen. They then have to go through the trouble of cancelling and rescheduling, which confuses people and causes a big mess due to the sheer number of people who are affected by a move. There are multiple factors or components that contribute to the time line, including: size of the facility, and the scope of work involved (i.e. new construction vs. tenant improvements; whether or not planning and design of the new facility is complete; and lead times for ordering new equipment).

2. Create a Realistic Budget

Most people also grossly underestimate the cost of their move. As the average company doesn't move more than every seven years or so, people usually don't realize how much it will really cost. Cutting corners in the beginning often leads to costly remedies in the end. For example, sometimes companies decide to save money by having their employees handle the move. In the end, however, the damage from workers compensation issues that arise, not to mention the employee time wasted due to their lack of knowledge of what must be done, greatly outweighs the extra cost of engaging movers.

3. Conduct Systems Testing

Make sure there has been proper testing of systems. Studies have shown that even 100 employees down for one-half a day can cost a company in excess of \$50,000.

Many things can go wrong with telecommunication and computer systems; you need to leave yourself plenty of time to thoroughly test your systems so this downtime doesn't occur.

4. Ensure Site Preparation

Make sure your movers do proper site preparation. Computer trolleys, dollies, and careless movers can damage your new floors and walls. If the space is newly renovated, you must protect doors, door jambs and walls prior to any goods entering the building. If you are moving furniture, for instance, you should protect walls by putting up wall protection. Elevators should be padded; there are hooks on most elevator ceilings that make this possible.

5. Devise a Box Labelling System

If a box is not labelled properly, it could take weeks for it to get to the proper department. Make sure employees are well-schooled on their preparation. We often suggest that boxes be numbered: one of 20, two of 20, three of 20, and so on. You should also use a different colour label on the boxes according to floor, or department within the floor.

6. Space Plan for the Furniture

Quite often, furniture dimensions are approximated incorrectly, and a room that is laid out with the intention of fitting 15 workstations, for example, fits only 12. A few centimetres really make a difference in a space plan, and the remedy is not cheap.

7. Evaluate Responsibilities

If you're the person managing the move for your company, evaluate your current responsibilities to make sure neither the move nor your normal job is getting neglected.

Unless the person designated has a job that does not require 40 hours a week, it is virtually impossible to pull off both. As the move gets closer, the number of hours that need to be devoted to the project increases. Tasks can fall through the cracks or are simply overlooked, resulting in higher costs. Delegating responsibilities before and during the move can prevent problems.

8. Communicate with Employees

While most employees have little to do with a move, it's still important that there is proper communication of schedules and procedures. E-mail, flyers, and newsletters are good ways to keep employees up to date. When it comes time for the big day, however, the fewer employees involved the better. They may interfere with the move, opening the door for problems.

Employee morale is another potential problem. This is especially true if a company is moving from a space where everyone has private offices to an open-office space.

Employees have a difficult time going from their corner office with a view to a "2.4-by-2.4 cube" without feeling like they have been demoted. Proper communication can help combat this before it becomes a problem. Usually, employees become unhappy if they are not told what is going on with the planning of the move.

An informed employee is usually a happy employee.

9. Last but not least, hire a reputable mover

While the biggest problem you usually hear about movers is damage to, or misplacement of, furniture and equipment, that isn't the only caution you need to take.

A moving company might schedule your move and then to *grab* all the revenue possible, they book additional relocations that leave your relocation under resourced. You spend months and thousands of dollars making sure your relocation goes smoothly,

then you don't even have quality manpower or equipment required to make it happen quickly and efficiently.

Make sure the responsibilities of both the moving company and your organisation are clearly laid out in the mover's proposal.

- ◆ *Who is responsible for sequential packing and reloading the common filing areas or Compactus systems?*
- ◆ *What will be the start time, duration and finish time for the relocation?*
- ◆ *What numbers of movers will be onsite?*
- ◆ *What experience do this crew have?*
- ◆ *How many supervisors will be onsite? What experience do the supervisors have?*
- ◆ *Will the moving company General Manager or owner be onsite in case there is need for last minute operational strategy changes?*
- ◆ *How will the moving company protect the buildings from damage?*
- ◆ *Does the mover provide on loan a range of specialist equipment, and packaging that will reduce potential downtime to your business?*
- ◆ *Does the moving company have adequate insurance for lost or damaged property?*

These things need to be spelled out in writing.

To be sure you engage an experienced, dependable relocation company, check three recent references. (Not hand picked references to make the mover look reputable).

Make sure that the company has performed jobs of similar scope and that you hire an office and industrial moving company (vs. residential movers). An experienced office mover knows that the difference between a residential and commercial move is as different as night and day.

*Geoff Warner is Director of:
Australian Business Relocations Pty Ltd
Phone: 1300 651 180*