

# How to Relocate Your Business

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Aug 2013

Published by - Entrepreneur Magazine

I head Doon Consulting and we recently changed our offices. I have a team that designed the relocation plan and managed the move. I take no credit for the effort that went into this monumental task. As a matter of fact, 'monumental' does not even begin to describe this highly successful project. I say successful because besides a few minor glitches; we had zero down time. All employees worked until Friday evening in the old location and resumed work at the new office on Monday morning. Some of our clients did not even know that we had moved our offices until we formally communicated the fact to them. Also, this is our fourth such move in ten years – and there is a lesson there as well.

First however, let's talk about why one should move. In my mind, that there are a few reasons that prompt businesses to move. These reasons may relate to availability of staff, the need to expand to newer markets, to up-grade infrastructure, to cut costs, to meet one's branding goals etc. An increasing number of businesses will also relocate to give their staff a better quality of life, a better commute etc.

Whatever the reason, it is imperative that the rationale for the move be clearly understood and communicated, because moving is an expensive, somewhat traumatic and risky project. It would be foolish to undertake it and not meet the goals which prompted it in the first place or to settle for something less than one had before.

When you move your office, treat it as seriously as moving your residence or your child's school. I would strongly suggest that a team of professionals scope your requirement and needs properly. Then, set out to find an appropriate location. When we moved, we factored in things like: condition of the building, attitude of the building maintenance crew, build-out costs, the presence and quality of adjoining businesses, commuting distance for employees, condition of public transport facilities, whether the neighborhood was safe for our employees and needless to say the affordability factor. We looked at 20 or more spaces before we chose the one in which we are today.

Second, it is important to know what one can afford and grow into. The new location must fit into one's budget but cannot be too small; otherwise you'll need to move again. A business, especially a young one or a new entrepreneur must ensure that they have at least 1.5 -2 years rental burn with them or have enough signed contracts/business that will allow them to pay for the up-coming expenses. Moving to a new location will involve planning costs, moving costs, infrastructure costs, maintenance costs and other significant hits. So, before you set out to move your business, it is extremely important that these financial needs are factored in.

Having decided where to move, you must manage it like any other project that you undertake in your normal course of business. There need to be all of the trappings of a well run project, including a plan, a budget, clear leadership, sponsorship, communication, risk-mitigation, etc. The team that managed my move set up a Google Docs spreadsheet for project management. This spreadsheet (a) Listed all tasks (b) Set Deadlines against each Task (c) Task Assignments. This list went into several hundred subtasks, including items such as like office supplies, printers, furniture upholstery, telephone lines, communications to Customers and informing various tax and other authorities of our change of address. This became the key information

resource for the entire team and they referred to it, and updated it multiple times a day. The team had a scrum every day, and I reviewed progress once a week.

With such a long list, it was very important for us to prioritize – since not everything would end up getting done by the date of the move. From our perspective, we set ourselves the goal that our telephone lines, internet connections, recording devices and security solutions we in place. Our teams ensured that all of this was in order and properly functional for over two weeks before the entire office was moved.

On the day of the move, we stationed employees with cell phones at both locations to ensure that the packing, loading and un-loading of our servers and desktops was done properly. We deliberately showed our employees the insurance quote which we rejected as too high, and put the onus of precluding damage on them. We then took part of what the insurance premium would have been and distributed it as bonuses.

There is one human factor that most people forget to plan for. I felt very proud when I found out that the team had also planned frequent meals, tea and snacks not only for the employees but also the movers that come from the moving company. This brought about certain camaraderie in the group and lifted everyone's spirits. This enabled us to finish the task at hand on time.

A move also has some very useful side-effects. For us, our most recent move was a good opportunity for us to evaluate our infrastructure, and upgrade, outsource and en-cloud. It was also an opportunity to junk the detritus that collects whenever one is in one place for any length of time – as a consequence we have lower support staff, a lower monthly bill for infrastructure, and a smaller storage footprint, which also saves us money on a square-foot basis.

To conclude, an office move can be a very exciting thing. As with a new car or a new house, it can energize, enthuse and fill an organization with a new sense of purpose. If it goes well. If it does not, you will never stop hearing how wonderful the prior place was. Given this, I will urge entrepreneurs and businesses to think twice before moving. It is hard work, very time consuming, a money sink and a painful process.