



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR COMPANY FOR A MOVE

A GUIDED TIMELINE FOR EXECUTIVES

Planning a move takes longer than you think,
and underestimating the timeline could be costly.

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MOVING IS A PROCESS, AND A LONG ONE. PLANNING A YEAR IN ADVANCE IS ACTUALLY CUTTING IT CLOSE.

A company considering a move need to begin searching for new properties at least 12 months before their lease expiration. Waiting too long to identify a new opportunity for a company-wide move could trap the company in its current lease, with no leverage to negotiate better terms, or worse, to be forced to stay in an office that doesn't meet its needs.

Here's how to prepare your company for a move - without being rushed:

MONTH 1: ASSESSMENT & SPACE PLANNING

The first step is similar to shopping for a new car. Compare what you currently have to what do you actually need, then go out and shop for something that meets that need. 4 seats? 7 seats? 4 wheel drive?

For commercial real estate, look at criteria like location, quality, price and timing. And of course, square footage. How much space does your company actually need?

According to CoreNet Global, the average American office has 151 square feet per worker. That's down from over 225 square feet in 2010! The amount of space required per person varies greatly for private offices and open workspaces. Also, be sure to plan enough space for new employees to match your growth projections.

An architect can provide *space programming*, which is an assessment of your business needs that includes the number of employees, parking, conference rooms, common area facilities and IT requirements. This report can be used to evaluate your current space, available real estate or for new construction.

As part of your assessment, consider what type of building your business needs. The Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) classifies office space into three categories: Class A, Class B, and Class C. Class A office buildings have the "most prestigious buildings competing for premier office users".

MONTH 2: SHOPPING

Next, search the real estate market for available properties that meet your company's needs. Some businesses will choose to hire a broker or procurement manager for this purpose, while others will conduct their own search online, driving by properties in desirable locations, word of mouth or referrals.

It's worth noting that the more space you need, the less options will be available.

Costar and *Loopnet* are search engines for commercial real estate. Here you can find data on availability, reviews, and local trends in the market to help you narrow your search.

Once you find something that meets your needs, the next step is to request a proposal from the property owner. Proposals are based on criteria such as credit and deal terms. Obviously, some negotiation is required, which could easily take a month to conclude.

MONTH 3-4: SELECTING YOUR TOP CHOICE

At this point you know what you need, you've seen what the market has to offer and you might have a couple of proposals from properties that tick all the boxes. Now it's time to make a decision.

If you find after assessing your situation that the current office space suits your business just fine, that's great news! Go hit the links, you're done.

If you choose to go with one of the new properties, congratulations. From this point, negotiations, legal contracts, and attorney reviews can take anywhere from 1-2 months until the deal is executed.

What if your current space is really bad, but you're locked into a lease for a few more years? You should consider the cost of not attracting top talent by staying in an inadequate office space. What could staying in that space cost you in the long run? Paying double rent for a while might just be the cost of doing business.

You may find that the current space is adequate, but can't handle your projected growth. In that case, consider leasing 10,000 sq. ft. to establish a footprint in the building you want to be in down the road.

MONTH 5: ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES

Lease negotiation and architectural design can happen simultaneously. The property owner will likely include a **test fit** with their proposal. This is a simple schematic designed to give you an idea of what the space could look like after build-out while you consider the deal.

Once the lease contract is executed, full construction documents are required in order to get building permits, and those permits will take at least 3-4 weeks to be approved.

MONTH 6-9: CONSTRUCTION

Once the plans and permits have been approved, the build-out begins. This includes infrastructure like IT and A/V equipment, phone lines and power, as well as construction of kitchens, bathrooms, conference rooms, workspaces and private offices. Anyone whose ever lived through a home remodel knows that this process can take a while. Depending on the size of the space and complexity of the design, the build-out will probably take about 3-4 months.

Office furniture must be chosen and ordered. Since these are typically custom orders, they can take months to arrive. If possible, work with the architect to choose and procure office furniture. They can help expedite what can be a tedious process and make sure that your order includes everything you need.

SO WHY DO WE SAY 12 MONTHS?

The timeline we present in this guide adds up to 9 months. But any one of the steps in the process could be delayed 2-3 times longer than expected, and before you know it, you're 12 months in and the space is still not ready. Rather than become boxed in by an expiring lease, we recommend beginning the process of moving at least 18 months before your current lease expires.

DiCicco Development, Inc. is one of Pittsburgh's premier fully integrated commercial real estate developers, offering in-house architectural, construction, development and property management services. Proud to provide headquarter offices to several of the area's largest companies, Providing clients with an outstanding product and service along with meticulous attention to detail remain the core tenets that have guided the company through the course of its 50-year history.

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