CHOOSING THE RIGHT OFFICE SPACE

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People and workplaces can be the two greatest costs any organisation has to meet.

Our checklist will help you with all the things you need to consider for a successful workplace relocation.
The first part of the process is to engage with the key stakeholders and decision makers from IT, HR, Finance and Marketing, to nominate a ‘Project Leader’. This person will be the point of contact and is responsible for cascading information about the relocation to the rest of the organisation. The Project Leader must have good communication skills, respect, authority and ideally some previous experience with budgeting and fit out.
PICK A LOCATION

The location choice must be right for both your business and your employees. Do you have an existing network or connections? Or do you see potential for growth in that location? These are important questions to consider when deciding on the perfect location.

COMMUTING TIMES

You’ll also need to think about your staff’s commuting distance – is public transport close by? A long or difficult journey to the office could affect your workforce and potentially impact on attracting new talent.

The distance between you and your clients must also be considered, especially if you want them to visit you. Likewise if you want your staff to visit clients, how much time will they spend travelling there?

It’s also worth considering car parking facilities – are there enough spaces to accommodate both your staff and visitors?
The location of your office could affect the image of your brand and how potential clients view your company. Think about where your competition is located as it might give them an advantage. It’s important to think about what local amenities are in the surrounding area. Will your employees have somewhere to go at lunchtime? An office close to a shopping area means they’ll have the opportunity to get out and about.

**HOTELS AND AIRPORTS**

If you are a global organisation, will you have visitors flying in from across the world? Do you need to be near an airport or have easy transport links? Will your visitors stay overnight? If so, consider how close the nearest hotel is to your office.
DILAPIDATION COSTS
Your landlord will expect you to return your space in its original condition when you move out, so locking in the dilapidation cost when taking out the lease can save you money later.

REMOVAL COSTS
Although moving offices is an ideal time to dispose of old furniture, computers, paperwork and rubbish, there is a cost to do so which you’ll need to consider.

AGENT FEES
Make sure you budget for agent fees, likely to be approximately 10 percent of your first year’s rent (excluding rent-free periods), and will cover the cost of searching for properties and negotiating with the landlord.

FIT OUT COSTS
Fit out costs will vary greatly, all depending on the scope of works. Reputable office design companies will provide detailed fit out cost comparisons for your shortlisted buildings, free of charge.

FORECAST A BUDGET
A workplace relocation is one of the biggest investments an organisation can make. From rent to legal fees, insurance, furniture and additional security, everything comes at a cost. Ensure you have devised a plan that includes all expenses, expected and unexpected.

Your workplace design and fit out company will help you forecast any required budget that needs to be arranged.

FURNITURE
Furniture that is so uncomfortable will last a long time, because no one will use it. Care when selecting the best furniture is important, not least because it’s expensive, but so your employees use it. Try not to get carried away, identify what you really need by undertaking a furniture audit.

NEGOTIATIONS
When looking for a new space, it’s essential to appoint a solicitor to help get you through the mountains of paperwork. They will help you:
- make sure you comply with laws but also advise you on what insurance is mandatory and what is optional
- check if your business rates can be negotiated
- negotiate rent-free periods as the general rule is the longer the lease the longer the rent free period
- negotiate a service charge holiday between the tenant and landlord
- negotiated the terms, length and possible breaks of your lease through your agent before signing on the dotted line.

Solicitors will often save you money!
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FUTURE PROOF & PRODUCTIVITY

COLLABORATION
Does the space provide the opportunity for a canteen or somewhere for staff to eat lunch? Can they grab a coffee or have a quick informal meeting? Cycle spaces and shower facilities are becoming increasingly important for employees, it’s also a good way to encourage a healthy and active workforce. If these facilities are not already available, can they be added?

FUTURE GROWTH
Do you plan to extensively grow your organisation and with it the number of employees? If so, will the new space allow for this expansion?

LOOKS MATTER
First impressions count! What does the outside of the building currently look like, will it need some work to fit your brand? If there are lifts, do they work well and do they look new? Evaluate the quality of the views from inside the building. Good surroundings and access to natural light can reduce stress for employees. Check for any potential changes to the views to avoid disappointment later.
FLOOR PLATE

Is the space on one floor or multiple storeys? Larger floorplates are more cost effective because it lessens the need for duplication.

CABLING

Some cables require raised flooring and if there isn’t any currently available, you’ll have to get creative with your space planning to get data and power to your employees.

SIZE MATTERS

How many people can the space hold? Will it be a tight squeeze, or is there a need for precise and careful space planning to fit all your employees?

Have you thought about storage? What business storage assets such as archiving rooms, cabinets and cupboards are required? A storage audit will map out a landscape of your data and storage, telling you what you have and what you really need. Completing one might condense the amount of space you need.

SERVICES

Air conditioning, plumbing, heating and waste disposal all need careful consideration, but are often overlooked. Are any of these services shared with other tenants? Will you need to enlist experts to install these?

POWER

Is the electricity supply sufficient to power your data centre and IT equipment? A good office design and fit out company will help you work out how much power is required and carry out a load check to identify if the space is sufficient.
MANAGING YOUR INFORMATION

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
What is your IT strategy and how can it be implemented in the new workplace? Where are you storing your data and at what cost? An information audit should be carried out to identify what data you currently store, how you store it and the procedures around it. This could help cost saving and reduce the risk of data breaches.

DATA CENTRE
Will you be basing a data centre within the space? If so, have you considered the extra requirements that come with it such as air conditioning, security and power? Think about the space you’ll need for a comms room, and if there’s a good place to locate it.

IT EQUIPMENT
It’s not a good use of your employees’ time to move their own desk equipment, plus you’ll want everyone set up quickly and ready to go on Monday morning. Look into the costs of outsourcing this.

AGILE WORKING
Is hot desking part of your working practice or will it be? It can save office space but make sure you have the equipment to support it. Wi-Fi, cloud storage, and digital scanning services can all help to improve your IT efficiencies. This is also a great time to review how you manage your information and how it can be made more efficient in the new workplace.
SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS
As well as being responsible about the effect you have on the environment, the advantages of a sustainable office include increased productivity, reduced energy costs and a more efficient workplace.

THE ENVIRONMENT
A model sustainable office should be sensitive to its environmental impact. This includes energy and water consumption, equipment quality and long-term energy efficiencies. Additionally, it also includes building materials, waste management and furniture quality standards.

BREEAM
Is the building BREEAM rated? If so, under which version of BREEAM? Older versions were less stringent and won’t guarantee a similar rating of the interior space. BREEAM is an environmental standard that rates the sustainability of buildings in the UK.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY
When selling or renting a building, the landlord is required by law to provide an EPC (Environmental Performance Certificate). This will give you clues about the building’s energy efficiency.

DOUBLE GLAZING
Easily overlooked, double glazing can help save money on your energy bills as well as reducing external noise.

NATURAL LIGHT
Natural lighting is a contributing factor towards achieving a BREEAM rating. Not only does natural light increase the productivity of your staff but it can also reduce your energy costs. Visit the space during different times of the day to assess how light penetrates the office space.

THERMAL TESTING
Thermal testing can show you how much heat escapes the building, which can have an impact on your energy bills.
When selecting a design and fit out company, choose one that understands your organisation’s culture and has people that you get along with. Ask about their track record and their financial stability; you don’t want to pick one that doesn’t have the budget or credentials to execute your move. Utilise their skills and let them help you with selecting the space. They can help with space planning and working out how much you really need, giving you peace of mind that the space will work for your business for years to come.

Make sure they can provide and guide you on all the services you require as this will save you time and money. Interview a number of design and fit out companies before making a decision. To help you choose, here’s some of what they’ll provide you with:

- Indicative fit out cost – this will help you form an accurate fit out budget for your lease negotiation.
- Concept drawings and 3D visualisations – giving you a feel of how the space will actually look.
- Surveys – your fit out partner can undertake a number of surveys so that you are completely aware of what to expect in your new space, including mechanical and electrical, environmental, asbestos and contamination surveys.