



How To Execute A Successful Corporate Relocation: Follow These 6 Steps To Ensure A Smooth Move

Odds are if your business enjoys a long successful run, at some point you're going to relocate. Maybe you outgrow your current space or maybe your lease comes due and you find a better deal elsewhere.

The why really isn't important. But what *is* important is that you make the move as smooth and as hassle-free as possible for everyone. Especially your customers and employees. After all, these groups are two key reasons for your success.

We're going to lay out six steps to follow to ensure that your business relocation goes smoothly. As with any other task that calls for a coordinated team effort, proper planning is a must. In fact, all parties with a prominent role in the move would be well served by keeping in mind the old saying: Proper planning prevents poor performance.

As you'll see, proper planning and forethought are at the core of these steps.

Step # 1: Put careful and considered thought into what you will move, what you will dispose of and what you will need to purchase. – Sure, this point is a given. But it's so important we would be remiss if we didn't include it. For example, for those employees with private offices, will their existing furniture and office décor be suitable for the new space? Will all the pieces fit? Or if the offices are bigger will you need to purchase additional components to keep these spaces from looking too bare? Much the same holds true for your cubicles, lunch room(s), conference room(s) and common area(s).

In short, take a complete inventory of your facility and decide what you will move, what you will dispose of (and how you will dispose of it), and what you will need to purchase. As this work typically takes place several months ahead of time you may also want to evaluate your company's workstation,



office equipment and telecommunications needs. If any upgrades are in order by your move date you can plan accordingly.

Additionally, it's a good time to review your hard-copy files to see if any of these materials have aged to a point that they can be destroyed. Once you've carefully thought through all these issues you'll be ready to do the actual space planning.

Step # 2: Designate one employee as Move Project Manager or point-person.

– Now that you know what you're going to move and what's being disposed of and you've done your space planning you're ready to tackle the details of the move. And your first order of business is to designate a move project manager (MPM) or point-person. This employee will oversee all aspects of the move and manage the efforts of all outside vendors and professionals. Depending on the size of your company and the type of space you're moving to...outside vendors and professionals can include: architect/space planner, general contractor, and infrastructure vendors (wiring/telecom, furniture, etc.).

In larger companies the MPM or point-person is almost always the head of facilities management. But in small to mid-size businesses it's usually the office manager. Someone who reports to the company president. Typically, it's an employee who knows a lot about all the nitty-gritty details that keep the office humming. Everything from who holds the contract for the copy machines to who the furniture vendors are...to knowing how to take down and bring back up the postage meter. It also helps if this individual is used to dealing with and has a good relationship with the building manager and the folks in the IT department.





With one competent, well-organized and knowledgeable person in charge you'll assure yourself of a single gateway for outgoing and incoming communications about your move. And there will be a single source to turn to when there are questions.

Next, the president and the MPM or point-person will put together a move team. Then the team will meet and work out a move schedule with the MPM or point-person assigning tasks related to that schedule.

NOTE: Ideally, steps one and two would take place (assuming a lease has already been executed at a new location) four to six months ahead of your planned move date.

Step # 3: Select a reputable moving company. – All the basic rules apply:

- Seek out the referral of reputable movers from people you know, trust and respect. Good sources of referrals are your commercial real estate broker and the building manager. A building manager will often have a list of preferred movers.
- Get three estimates.
- Ask for references and check the references. Better yet, ask for a list of businesses (with a contact name) that they have recently moved and call several of them.
- Google prospective moving companies to see what may turn up in the way of praise or complaints.

This is your business and your livelihood. Depending on the size of your business if things don't go well it could cost your business thousands of dollars (or more) in lost business, productivity or both. So the vendor with the rock-bottom price may not be your best choice. Of course, you don't want to overpay either.



What you want is a commercial mover that can execute your relocation in an efficient and timely manner, enabling you to be open for business again on the date and time you choose. The fact is that most reputable commercial movers will be very competitive with their pricing, usually within 10% or so of one another.

As we've used the term "reputable" twice in this section let me give you two specific examples of what we mean by that term:

1. A reputable and experienced commercial mover will provide you with an in-person review of the items to be moved, a comprehensive written estimate, and conduct an extensive meeting with your employees prior to the move.
2. A reputable and experienced commercial mover will be able to offer you an all-inclusive package of services that includes complete IT relocation support. Everything from uninstalling and reinstalling all hardware and software to the packing and moving of equipment and data center relocation to reinstallation, reconfiguration and testing of all components.

Step # 4: Formally announce the relocation to your rank-and-file employees and be prepared for their questions. – You've done your preliminary work, selected a reputable, experienced mover. It's time now for the MPM or point-person to formally announce the relocation to your rank- and-file employees. Remember that this is change and change can be unsettling for people. There will be more than a few questions and you need to be prepared for them.

In a smaller company the point-person and their move team will know the personalities and with a little forethought can probably anticipate many of the questions. Otherwise, know for sure that you'll get such questions as –

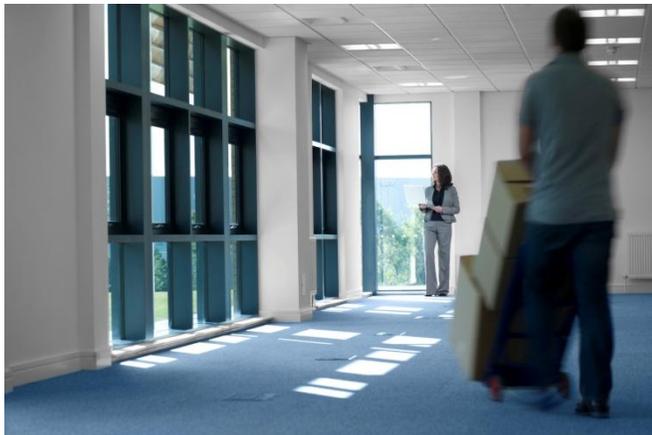
- Where am I going to be sitting?
- Can I take my chair? What about my file cabinet?
- Will I have a window in my new office like I have here?

Simply put, people are possessive about their chairs, desks and office equipment – even if the items don't belong to them. These are by no means the only type of questions you'll get. For example, what if someone has a vacation scheduled for that week or will otherwise be out of the office? Think things through as best as you can. The more questions you can anticipate and the more answers you have at the ready, the more comfortable people will feel about the move.

At this meeting the MPM/point-person will also explain all pertinent details about the move. And they'll hand out instructions for how employees need to go about packing their own workspace and when they need to have it packed up by. The key here is clear, straightforward, unambiguous communication.

Step # 5: Clear anything and everything with building management – for the building you will be vacating and the building you will be moving into. – There are space reservations you have to make to move in and out of a building. Space reservations for the dock, space reservations for the elevators. Every building has a set of rules for moving in and moving out, and you need to know these rules. For example –

- If your moving team shows up at 4:00 PM and the rule of the building is no moving until after 6:00 your movers will have to sit for two hours – at your expense.
- On moving day your mover shows up at the appointed time. But your moving company hasn't bothered to file an insurance certificate with building management. As a result, you won't be moving anything. Not until that insurance certificate is on file and approved.





NOTE: Each mover is required to have an insurance certificate showing that both it and the company being moved are covered. This way if the mover damages the building, or something within the building, it's covered.

You have a responsibility as the customer to know these details. That said, a reputable and knowledgeable mover will be aware of these issues and will see to them well ahead of your move date.

Step # 6: Use foresight, forethought and effective planning to be well prepared for a move day appearance by "Murphy." – You know Murphy of "Murphy's Law." As in, "Anything that can go wrong will go wrong." For instance, what happens if the freight elevator goes out? What's plan "B"? Will you be able to use the passenger elevator? Are you sure? Have you checked with building management? If you haven't, you should.

What else is there that could go wrong? Think about it. Brainstorm it. Have contingency plans in place. So if "Murphy" shows up you'll be ready for him.

This is not, by any means, everything you need to know about executing a successful corporate relocation. But it hits most of the major points and will get you started down the right path. We'll close this out in similar fashion to the way we opened. If we could offer one piece of advice about pulling off a successful corporate relocation it would be to keep this thought firmly in mind: *Proper planning prevents poor performance.*