

# Facilities Focus

## Move It or Lose It!

By the FM Solutions Division of Commonwealth Architects

It is the very end of the project. The space is built out, the client is eager, and you are pleased to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Now, however, is the time for that nerve-racking endeavor that frequently caps off a project—the dreaded relocation! Of course, you have been thinking and planning all along for this step, but now is the time to make it happen. Personally, I am very excited about this article because I love moves. I love them because while they are challenging, they are very satisfying when done correctly. I have discovered a few key issues that when addressed well, can make a move a success every time. The first is communication throughout the entire project. Next is an informative move memo to keep everyone on the same page. The move company you choose is important, of course, as is the removal of the effects, and of course the graphics. Each one, though, should be addressed with the very most imagination and enthusiasm – which will serve as an inspiration to the entire team.

**Communication** – Relocation is commonly a scary proposition for end users. Think about it, their work environment has, over time, become a staple of their productivity. It is a staple which they are about to lose forever. Communication can solve those repetitive issues. One issue is loss prevention. You know that you can relocate their effects without incident, but they do not know that. Another issue is the pertinent dates. Because it may feel a bit as if the rug is being pulled from beneath them, knowing what is happening when will ease their furrowed brows. Finally, another issue is special needs. People have them; I have grown to expect it. These needs are vitally important to that employee's ability to function. The key is making them understand that you believe it to be vital as well.

**Move memo** – as mentioned, communication of dates and particulars is critical. The move memo is valuable not only for the end user, but also the vendors, because each person on staff will have your information firsthand as a reference. You likely have a contact person by move time, who has acted as your funnel for information. Use this person to answer all of the questions necessary for your memo. Keep it as short and easy to understand as possible because you are appealing to a rather diverse audience. The memo should introduce you, to a degree, and include all-important dates. Mention where materials such as boxes and labels are located and remind them to forward questions to the contact. It should also include packing instructions, including how to label and what to label. Finally, the memo should end positively by suggesting that teamwork is the means for a successful move.

**Movers** – The move company you choose is critical. Cost, experience, and availability are all crucial points of interest, but the night of the move, it will be the staff you stand aside of who will make the difference. It is important to find out where the company finds its workers. Some companies have all the in-house staff required. Some companies subcontract with companies who subcontract, and so on and so forth. Some companies subcontract directly with individuals. Sometimes these individuals are military personnel, which is always a winning combination in the field.

**Packing the truck** – Technology commonly takes more time and more consideration than boxes and furniture do. If possible, deliver critical furniture first, such as desks, so that you will have something to place the technology on. Next comes the equipment itself. Then, while the boxes are coming, your IT staff can begin to bring the PC's up. If you have one truck or several, simply regulating the load order so that you achieve the desired unload order, can add a touch of highly desirable efficiency to your move.

**Graphics** – You understand the way you want the movers to function, but do they? Because you may not be around to answer questions everywhere, all of the time, you may need to rely on graphics to get your point across.

- Color Zones – if the space is large, consider dividing it into color zones. Move tags can be color keyed by zone. Centrally locate a large plan indicating where the zones are.
- Plaques for Cubes – Color keyed by zone. Print on both sides so it may be seen from either direction. Also, include the occupant's name so that it will be simple for them to find their workstation after the move.
- Plaques for Offices – Color keyed by zone. Beneath number and name information, include a graphic indicating the desired space arrangement.
- Directional Signage – Color keyed by zone, signage with arrows can help lost movers find their way.

The idea is to take a large space and make it seem smaller for your move team. You may have 250 workstations but it would be easy to locate employee "Smith", number 61, in the blue zone.

I use these principles each time and they have yet to fail me. In fact, I used them—scaled down mind you—last year when my wife and I moved into our new house. Perhaps I went a bit overboard, but my makeshift move staff was quite impressed. So communicate well, ask many questions, pack the trucks smartly, and use colored copy paper for your plaques. The effort will show, the move team will be impressed, and the end user pleased – I can think of worse ways to spend a Friday night.