

MOVING SMART

The move always happens. The question is will your move be efficient or chaotic?

BY GLENN FISCHER

You call a mover. They put the stuff in the trucks, drive to the new building, take it out of the trucks, and put it in the building. What could possibly go wrong? Plenty. That's the message you'll hear at the Smart Moves Seminar. You'll also pickup a workbook packed with handy tips and ideas on how to avoid moving pitfalls. Plus, you might just save your job and reduce the stress level of co-workers several notches.

Source of the ideas is Alan Whitson, a Newport Beach-based seminar leader, author of *Smart Moves Manual & Software* and *327 Questions To Ask Before You Sign A Lease*, and real estate maven.

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"The horror stories in the program aren't isolated incidents," says Whitson. During the next 12 months more than 850,000 companies nationwide will move into new facilities and spend more than \$10 billion on product and services to complete the task. Yet, moves into new facilities account for only 15% of the moves that businesses make each year. According to past IFMA surveys, companies on average move, remodel or relocate 25-30% of their facilities each year based on total square footage.

"A move is the best time to implement new work processes, technology, and create a work place that controls cost, raises productivity and increases profits," says Whitson.

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"Most moves result in companies taking their old problems and putting them in a pretty new box. This is further compounded by the regrettable statistic that two-thirds of those responsible for their company's relocation are fired, demoted or have to take a leave of absence due to stress related illness after the move," says Whitson.

Clearly, moving is a high stakes proposition for both the company and the person responsible for the move. This is why no one falls asleep at the Smart Moves Seminar. The seminar is heavily attended by facilities managers, corporate real estate executives, brokers, and move coordinators. The on-going seminar series is conducted in the nation's 30 largest metropolitan areas (see schedule below) by the Corporate Realty, Design & Management Institute.

"Just moving within the same building can cost from \$400 to over \$1,000 per person," explains Whitson. "And mistakes are costly, as one major firm found out - their final moving bill was 46% higher than the mover's estimate!"

"According to a survey of 231 moves ranging in size from 30 to over 1,000 people," Whitson continues,

"their biggest problems were: Insufficient planning (52%); Design flaws in their new facilities (43%); Telephone and computer failures (39%); Selecting appropriate vendors and movers (37%); Getting staff cooperation and morale (29%); Getting rid of old files (21%); Forgetting important tasks (19%); Keeping within budget and schedule (11%); Matching files and equipment to the right office (10%)."

Whether you're moving across town, down the street or just dealing with the constant churn of people in your facility, here are just a few of the tips you'll pickup in the Seminar:

Who's In Charge? While consensus is important, someone must be the final decision maker. With the responsibility, that person must have the authority to make things happen. Still, a committed move team is invaluable for helping you make the right decision.

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Get Cooperation. Start by explaining why employees should be involved in planning and preparing for the move and how their participa-

tion will make their life easier instead of being a major inconvenience. Tell them the goals and objectives of the project and its timetable. Bear in mind that 30 percent of the people will get with the program right away, 60 percent will soon fall into line and 10 percent never will.

Get The Word Out. Start talking with those involved right away; it avoids conflicts and helps keep morale high. Above all, keep your organization's political structure regularly informed about the status of the move. Nobody likes surprises and you'll need their support. Remember, employees are a good source of ideas even if you use only 10 percent of them, it's helpful.

Start Your Planning Early. Far too many people put move planning on the back burner, because they haven't signed a lease or they're busy with their normal workload. Suddenly, the move is just a few weeks away, and everything must be done tomorrow. This causes things to slip through the cracks and budgeting problems. How much time do you need? For moves less than 50,000 square feet allow at least 6 months of move planning, and at least 1 year for larger moves. Special facilities, like R&D labs may require from 12 to

18 months of planning depending upon the specific issues involved. In hindsight, most people who have managed a move say that; "Next time, I'll start sooner."

Focus On Details. It's never the biggies that cause the problems; it's the "OOPS," especially with high tech equipment and the little things that affect people's comfort. And when senior management hears about it and they always do, their reaction is: "That's a stupid thing you've allowed to happen." At this point, no matter how good of a job you have done, as far as they are concerned, you have lost credibility.

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Use Check Lists. Document everything and develop check lists tailored to the needs of specific departments. Check lists may seem simplistic. Yet, they are an effective tool for making sure nothing is overlooked.

Select Vendors Who Can Ask Tough Questions "People outside your company aren't afraid to ask questions that may seem stupid, but really are quite important," says Whitson. If you move from a high rise to a multi-building campus, how will that effect the wiring needed for computer connections and the phasing of the move? If no one ever asks those questions, you may not have access to computerized data or even your telephones the first day you reopen for business.

Laugh. It is important to keep a sense of humor; it's a lubricant. Problems always occur. Laughter is always cheaper than an ulcer or a heart attack.

The move always happens. The question is — will it be efficient or chaotic? Making the right choices during the planning process goes a long way toward creating efficiency, keeping within a budget and making a smart move.

To learn when the next Smart Moves Seminar is scheduled in your area or to obtain the *Smart Moves Manual & Software*, contact the Corporate Realty, Design & Management Institute at 800-452-4480.

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