



Design New Facilities with Change in Mind

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While the corporate giants continue to wrestle with restructuring and downsizing, the small and medium size businesses are expanding, relocating and updating their facilities.

Why? For many reasons: executives once with major corporations are forming their own companies, growing technology and that new buzzword "outsourcing." Whatever the reasons may be, to these small and medium-sized business owners it means increased sales and service. It also means thinking towards the future for space - office space, warehouse space, and manufacturing space.

Whether it's remodeling of an existing building, expansion or relocating the word that surfaces is "adaptability." A building that is planned well in the beginning will adapt well to change in years to come. The days of building a structure with permanent designated areas for office, warehouse or manufacturing is fading.

The buildings are being planned from the inside out. Increasingly more companies are looking at the smart building. These are buildings whose interiors are designed to provide the occupant with the adaptability to change. Whether it be changing an assembly area to office or adding the latest technology to your manufacturing area. Electrical boxes in concrete floors, excessive amounts of permanent walls in office areas, built in fixtures, does not adapt itself to change easily, at least without considerable cost factors.

Rule of thumb was a business would plan for five or ten years growth. With today's change in the way businesses are run and new technology, in two years or less they may find themselves needing additional space or changing their once assembly area into office space. Once a building and its interiors are set up for adaptability any remodeling or expansion costs are greatly reduced. Also the depreciation time is shorter on non-permanent materials and fixtures.

Companies today are finding that periodic Space Analysis Studies can anticipate when a redesign or updating of interior elements is required. It may be for a single department or other times it may reveal expansion is required in multiple areas. Either condition it is effecting productivity and must be addressed to stay competitive.

At the time when the board of directors or business owners are considering plans for growth, you should if not already, obtain a Space Analysis Study. This, without a doubt, is probably your best-spent money. The study provides decision makers a clear understanding of existing and new space requirements, future areas for expandability, building construction type, and any special conditions related to the project. Preliminary construction, equipment and furnishings costs can be achieved for budgeting purposes.

If the study shows that an expansion is required, take the proper steps in selecting your design team. In addition to your space planner for the study, you will need a real estate broker if a new location is desired; an architectural/engineering firm for the building shell, its mechanical, plumbing and electrical equipment; an interiors planning/design firm for the coordination and design of the interior elements; and a general contractor for the actual building construction.

Depending upon the specific business and conditions, other specialists may be required. Your management team can advise you in these areas. Let's touch on some of the interior items simply for the reason this is where the most intensive part of the project takes place. Some of the elements to be considered include: survey, inventory and evaluation of existing equipment; furnishings; paper flow; staging areas during construction; lighting levels for different areas; power requirements for specific equipment; computer room communication systems; electrical/telephone outlet locations and hook-ups; vendor contract negotiations; bidding documents; artwork, signage, and plants; surface materials, colors, and finishes selections; carpet; door hardware; moving company; vendors payment review/approvals; inspections and punch lists; post installation orientation; and don't forget the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

When selecting your team early on in the planning stage you will find that the project will be well coordinated. In the long run it will save you dollars when the last chair is set in place.

It may seem overwhelming, but handled properly, the building interiors space will serve you well and have years of manageable change.

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