

Insider view

Building a new facility? Don't forget to plan communications

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Building a new facility is both an exciting and stressful task for your company, your employees, and your business partners. It's a journey that can be as smooth as ice or one plagued with obstacles and errors. Having the foresight to pre-plan your most important asset -- your communications infrastructure -- is critical to meeting deadlines or having to continually push back your move in date. Unfortunately, the latter may end up costing your organization significant time and money that you will never recoup.

Your worst nightmare during this process is opening your doors and not having the ability to answer customer calls or write e-mails. The secret to avoiding this tragedy is actually very simple. Give yourself a three-month lead-time from your target date and thoroughly pre-plan each phase of your communications infrastructure.



Constructing a new building can be a daunting project and it doesn't matter how big or small your company is because the same issues have to be ironed out. Knowing where to begin is an enormous hurdle just by itself. When opening a new facility, it is important to examine all aspects of your communications needs.

Whether you're a business owner, IT manager, or CFO, knowing what to do at what time when working with your building contractor or telecommunications provider can be the difference between success or failure. So here's a guide to help you pre-plan each phase.

- Select a telecommunications provider with experience and rely on their expertise. The most important decision in this entire process is selecting the right telecommunications provider. You should elect to work with a company that has expertise in the installation, expansion and relocation of corporate phone systems.

In addition to installing your phone system, will the provider consult with you on how your business can maximize your communications effectiveness. Knowing their breadth and depth of experience and services will empower you to make a better decision when selecting a provider. Even more importantly is their ability to design the construction and implementation plan so you're receiving the right telco services ahead of time. Ask them to provide you with a sample timeline that they utilized with other companies that were in your situation. If they can't provide you with one then immediately, cross them off your list and move on to the next candidate.

- Design now and save later. An experienced telecommunications partner will take the time to review your facility's floor plans and electrical drawings, which will aid in developing a game plan. They should provide you with design input, space planning and a communications layout for your facilities' entire structured cabling infrastructure. This should include drawings of specific technical components such as the equipment room, telephone system, voice mail, server configurations, overhead paging and music, wireless IP, and Internet access.

- Building contractor preparation. In order to properly install the required telco, you will need a backboard, #6 ground wire, and conduit from entrance and pull line/rope that must be in place prior to the phone carrier's engineering inspection. The building contractor or owner and your telecommunications partner should be working in parallel paths to accomplish this goal. You should allow three working days to schedule the required inspection. Once approved the work will generally be completed in about 10 working days.
- Order released to telecommunications partner. The order is then released from the carrier to your telecommunications partner. This occurs immediately following the completion of the entrance facilities. Typically, two or three lines are needed for temporary inspections, in order to satisfy the fire and security contractor(s). If DSL or other Internet service is pending, the preliminary line to associate with DSL will install at this time. Finally, there must be sign off from the building and fire departments. This process takes about eight working days.
- Final installation. Finally, the connectivity order is generally pending installation of the preliminary line service. After this has been completed, the permanent service is installed.

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