

Move Smart, Not Hard

*By Christy McFall
Senior Director*

Have you ever been on a great flight when everything comes together perfectly? There is no traffic going to the airport. You get the perfect parking space. The airline upgrades you to first class and all is right with the world.

And then they lose your luggage. Suddenly that great flight becomes a terrible flight.

Your office move can be just like that. Handled incorrectly, all the strategy and planning that led your company to transition staff into a new space — whether the entire business, a single location, a floor, or even an individual — will be overshadowed by a bad move experience.

A successful move should be a forgone conclusion, like your luggage arriving with your plane at your destination. But when taken for granted and mismanaged, a bad move can leave a lasting impression that makes your people question the business strategy that led to it. And in this post-COVID world, where burnout is all too real for staff managing office transitions, having a strong, reliable, strategic partner in place can make all the difference.

Pacific Program Management (PPM) has helped clients move millions of square footage of office space for hundreds of thousands of employees across North America. Here are some of the top issues that get in the way of a successful move and how to combat them.

UNCERTAINTY

The most common challenge to overcome in a move is uncertainty. Change is hard even when change is good.

Communications and change management strategies guide people through uncertainty to their new office. The more people understand what to expect — even down to details like new parking, new dogs at work policies, new neighborhood with new restaurants — the less uncertain they will feel. Change management is about setting expectations so that the change is, at the least, minimally disruptive and at best, even positive. Setting (and meeting) expectations is important because if left unstated, people will set their own and your chance of meeting them is slim.

Move planning, change management, and communications strategies vary depending on the level required. At the business planning level, your company makes decisions such as what business units should be near each other. For example, should HR be next to the Finance or Delivery teams? At the occupancy planning level, you might identify what functions will occupy what floors. And then there is the micro space planning: this person will sit at that desk.

At each level, move planning can take on layers of complexity due to interdependencies. This might mean that person X needs to move out — and the space needs to be cleaned or altered — before person Y can move in. But person X cannot move out until building A is complete.

Have a plan and be flexible to modify it as interrelated changes may impact even the best intentions.

“A successful move should be a forgone conclusion. . . But when taken for granted and mismanaged, a bad move can leave a lasting impression that makes your people question the business strategy that led to it.”

VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

Managing vendor partners also requires attention to detail. Moves often include ensuring security clearance for movers, working with building managers and facilities to schedule around other tenants, acquiring appropriate certificates of insurance to allow for access to loading docks, and strategizing how to securely pack the possessions of team members unable to do it themselves. PPM works with its vendors to deploy state-of-the-art technology that allows for documentation and tracking of everything moved. This may even include photographs of each person's desk so that when they land in their new space, they remember their original set-up and ensure the new space meets those same needs.

Specific industries can add layers of complexity to managing vendors related to your move. Needs change depending on the type of industry and size of the business. Sensitive, classified information or federally protected privacy concerns may require coordination. Moving across state lines or international borders further adds to that complexity.

Vendor partnerships must be structured to anticipate project needs. From tailored emails that deliver the right information at the right time to the right people, to simply setting expectations and clearly mapping progress, staying in front of the complexities of planning and logistics will result in a more positive move experience.

SERVICE TRUMPS ALL

By the end of 2021, PPM will have moved over 250,000 people and launched into operations more than 25 million square feet of space. In this time, we have learned that having strong commercial real estate experience is not always the most relevant knowledge for a successful move.

An unwavering commitment to service is paramount.

PPM has a deep bench of talented move project managers who come from wide and diverse backgrounds. From hospitality and retail to travel and tourism, our people are accustomed to high-touch, detail-oriented, demanding customers and settle for nothing short of exceptional service. We enjoy working with our clients and thrive on delivering a move experience that is so seamless, it is almost invisible. Those wide and diverse backgrounds also allow us to tailor the team for each client from both an experiential and cultural perspective. We hand-pick our teams to ensure a mix of talent, personality, and drive that meets the needs of the move.

It may seem like a small thing on the surface. After all, how personalized can moving people and property from point A to point B be?

Next time you have a great flight, ask yourself that same question. Did you enjoy the flight more when you felt like the airline staff treated you with both professionalism and understanding? Did you feel like you understood what to expect and your questions were answered?

This same care can transform your move experience and improve employee morale, reduce downtime, and enhance productivity. Whether managing uncertainty, responding with agility to change, or navigating vendor relationships, attention to service will elevate the experience at every step.

So, if an office move is like a flight, the goal should be to ensure a level of service equivalent to getting upgraded to first class and at the end of the journey, finding your luggage is the first to arrive on the carousel.

##



About Christy

Christy McFall is the Senior Director for one of PPM's large online retail clients. She has over 25 years of leadership, management, and project management experience in the automotive, non-profit and commercial real estate industries. In her free time, Christy loves to travel throughout Europe and Asia and enjoys hiking as much as exploring restaurants and museums. Contact Christy at christy.mcfall@pacificpmg.com.