

A seamless transition

Why your team can be a great asset when you're moving your business

INTERVIEWED BY MARK SCOTT

Teamwork and collaboration are two attributes that can make a company's transition into new office space a lot easier to manage, says William Schumacher, Senior Vice President and Market Leader for Westfield Bank.

"When you get everyone involved in the planning, it creates a certain level of energy and commitment to the project," Schumacher says.

As Westfield Bank planned its upcoming move into its new Canton office, Schumacher worked hard to gather feedback from employees as to what they would like to see in their new workspace.

"When you take steps to engage your people about what they need to do their jobs, it has a carryover effect," he says. "They realize that you care about them and their needs and so that feeling of engagement comes through as they deliver your product or service to your customers. It creates a spirit and an energy that is felt by everyone."

Smart Business spoke with Schumacher about how to keep everything on track when moving your business.

Where is a good place to start if you're planning to move your business?

The relocation of your business needs to be a very coordinated process. You'll be working with contractors, utility companies and vendors, in addition to your employees. You need to develop a definitive timeline so that everyone understands when things need to be done and when people need to be ready to take certain steps.

A strong recommendation is to appoint a person to serve as the head of your relocation efforts. This person can manage the bidding process and the logistics of the move so that you and others on your

WILLIAM SCHUMACHER
Senior Vice President, Market Leader
Westfield Bank

(330) 493-5135
WilliamSchumacher@westfieldgrp.com

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team can stay focused on their day-to-day responsibilities in the business.

It will help you keep everything on track and create a sense of discipline and organization that will reassure everybody that the transition is moving forward.

How do you manage the internal transition to the new space?

Make a concerted effort to keep people informed and knowledgeable about what's happening. Hold regular meetings with different teams and different leaders to make sure needs are being addressed.

Identify functionality and work flow and coordinate relocation plans so that they support and/or create efficiencies both during the transition process and in the new location.

When you maintain a dialogue and keep everyone updated with what's happening, you reduce the chance for surprises. It's likely that you won't be able to implement every suggestion that is made. But the effort you make to be transparent with people should soften the reaction in those instances.

What are some important considerations that need to be addressed when moving your business?

Look at your respective needs and what you want to accomplish. But as you do so,

make sure the customer is always part of the discussion. Be certain that any plans you make boost the convenience and accessibility of your business.

For instance, if you move into a beautiful location with state-of-the-art technology, but find that the traffic surrounding the building makes accessibility difficult, that's a problem.

When we were looking at locations for our Canton office, we visited a location that was ideal from a marketing and visibility standpoint. But it was at a major intersection where traffic would have been a significant issue. If it's not good for clients, it's not going to be good for your business.

How do you communicate the move to customers?

As you discuss the logistics of the move of your business, you also want to craft a strategy to inform customers. Develop temporary signage and marketing promotions to share the news. Coordinate an open house to welcome customers and get the new location off to a great start.

Work with your marketing and design team to develop literature that can be distributed to help customers understand what they need to know about the transition, allowing time for them to adjust their routines. A successful move takes time, patience and communication. ●