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"Lean/Green" relocation strategies: Value-engineered sustainability legacies

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Because no two relocations are ever the same, the process is comparable, in a sense, to "white noise," defined by both the Business and Merriam Webster Dictionaries as: 1. Any random, collective occurrence of unrelated things and 2. Meaningless distraction, commotion or hubbub.

From a cost-based or conventional perspective, relocation is: 1. a disruptive event which 2. must occur within a defined period of time with 3. many moving parts that 4. must be controlled and mastered absolutely and simultaneously.

Basic requirements are that it be 1. fast, 2. painless and 3. cost-effective. As explained by Fred Wasserman, principal of Interior Move Consultants, NYC, "Companies bring us in to provide proper planning, excellent communication, minimize downtime and reduce cost through efficient management of the RFP process."

Akin to a root canal...once complete...a move is gladly forgotten....and life goes on.

Such "open/-shut," "beginning/end" cost-based thinking was appropriate in the context of yesterday's consumption behaviors, coupled with the fact that few technologies were available which could create long-term value.

However, today, from the point of view that one intends to leverage technologies to create value-based sustainability legacies, we can adopt "lean/green" as a business discipline and become so bold as to insist that sustainability legacies become an additional requirement to the RFP.

Key factors in extracting "lean" from the "white noise" of relocation lie in identifying the types and frequencies of activities which occur in a non-standardized process that can be standardized. Any analysis must address: (i) availability of new technologies, (ii) costs of standardization, (iii) organizational impact, (iv) time to payback, (v) sustainable outcome and (vi) life cycle of sustainable outcome.

Low hanging fruit for creating sustainability legacies from lean/green relocation strategies:

1. Digitize documents - reduce real estate footprint and cost of printer including: toner, electric and maintenance contracts. A near-paperless office costs less to operate compared to a conventional file-filled one.

2. Donate underused office supplies or assets. A cornerstone of creating a sustainability legacy is social responsibility, and donations can generate positive tax outcomes.

3. Utilize plastic moving crates for any relocation over 15-20 people - crates reduce move labor costs by 30% on average, and no trees are cut down...no waste is created.

4. Evaluate communications and IT technologies which can reduce/eliminate onsite server rooms, hard-wire phones and other outdated computers/electronic equipment. Reducing energy load in this manner creates a long term sustainability legacy which furthers PlanNYC's energy reduction goals of 30% by 2030.

Two recent examples of creating a sustainability legacy come to mind. Kristen McGowen of The Advance Group reports: "In both cases, the office furnishings went for 100% reuse, resulting in an affadavit for tax donation in one case of 7k and in the other for 10k. In the case of the large job, we were able to offset the cost of the relocation by 5k just by arranging donation of the items. We donated the furnishings to a great charity - offset the cost of the move and left a substantial legacy via 501c3.

As illustrated by the above examples, economic, sustainable and social objectives can all be served through sustainable initiatives. Such initiatives open the possibility of achieving the great promise that is now known as the "Triple Bottom Line."

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