What tenants want to know: Optimizing IT for build-outs

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Amanda Prasow, business development manager of Streeter Technologies, asked Alex Gibbs, COO for their IT consulting firm, the most important questions asked by new tenants when designing their new office.

Q: Who should I talk to about IT decisions for my build-out?

A: Most decisions will be between the tenant and the architect, though the bigger the decision, the more likely the building manager or owner will need to be involved. Ultimately, it's up to you as the tenant to ask the questions and define your needs based on your particular business, but the earlier you can start talking to the architect, the easier everyone's job will be!

Q: When would the building manager or owner get involved?

A: As faster and better Internet becomes more important to people, the Internet media already available in a building may very well make or break a tenant's decision to rent a particular space. We have one client going through exactly this process at the moment! As a tenant you can't just "order" fiber technology to your building. The owner will need to give permission to a particular Internet service provider to run the tracks, though the costs will often be shouldered by the ISP themselves or even the city. Some building managers are doing this proactively to make their rentals more attractive. The ISP will lay tracks up until, say, the basement, and then from there an individual tenant will organize getting their particular space connected on their own.

Q: Do I really need a separate server room or can we just put it anywhere?

A: You really do want to have a dedicated server room, sometimes also referred to as a "server closet."And it should be under lock and key! Plan to have a dedicated vent there that is connected to the primary HVAC as well as a 4x8 plywood drilled to the wall. You also want to have two recessed electrical outlets on separate circuits.

Q: Where do I put the Ethernet jacks?

A: As a tenant you want to think carefully about the layout and where all your furniture is going to go, and then talk to the architect about the placement of the Ethernet jacks - get them as close as possible to each workstation! In terms of numbers, on average one jack per workstation is ideal, but for critical areas (CEO's office or management team, etc) you want to double the number of jacks planned. Think you'll need six? Install twelve. Trust me, you'll be glad you did.

Q: Speaking of Internet, what about wifi?

You want to plan for wifi as early as possible in your build out process. Best practice is to have two different Internet media set up whether you use co-ax, fiber, etc. You'll use one as your primary and the other as your backup.

Put each access point (like a router) as physically high as possible in the space. In the earliest stages, plan for one access point for every 2000 square feet, but it really depends on how many people will be using the wifi and what they'll be using it for. A better rule of thumb would be one

access point for every eight devices, a device being a desktop, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

When you're planning well in the early stages, you'll save a headache later on!

More tech questions? We've got answers! E-mail us at outreach@streetertech.com.

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