

### General Information

March 12, 2010 • Vol.32 Issue 6

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## Equipment On The Move

### Planning & Communication Are Key To Avoiding Mishaps When Moving Data Center Equipment



It's often said that the only constant in business is change, and this rings especially true in the data center. Evolving business needs increasingly challenge data center managers to have the right balance of hardware and network infrastructure on hand. As those needs change, moving the

equipment around becomes more common.

The complexity and interdependence of today's data centers necessitate a methodical approach to the process. Moving a server—even if only a few feet—is a far more involved process than moving living room furniture. Whether the hardware is being relocated across the aisle or across town, the basic needs are similar: Minimize business disruption and assess the risks associated with the move before the first plug is pulled. Consider the following pitfalls and related solutions before the first device is moved.

#### ■ Insufficient Focus On The Data

In virtually all respects, the hardware is immaterial; rather, the data is paramount.

“While IT professionals give long thought to the infrastructure involved in a data center relocation, moving the data itself can be just as difficult and sometimes even more so,” says John Luludis, president of Superior Technology ([www.superiortechnology.com](http://www.superiortechnology.com)). “It is easy for IT professionals to lose sight of the data, as many firms have increasingly adopted the model that the business group leadership owns their own data.”

The impact, says Luludis, could be devastating. “Data quality may suffer when it is quickly moved to the new data center as an afterthought,” he says. “At best, critical data may be temporarily unavailable. At worst, records could be lost permanently. For companies that are increasingly reliant on data, the ramifications range from immediate lost sales and abandoned shopping carts to long-term damage to company reputations and customer relationships.”

### Key Points

- Data center moves impact data as well as hardware, so ensure that your relocation plans focus strongly on data integrity during and following any move.
- Resist the urge to save money. Don't lump a relocation into another project, and don't take on a complex move without proper help. Even small moves can become overwhelmingly complex.
- Proactively communicate with the widest possible audience to minimize the potential for confusion and loss of productivity.

With that in mind, admins should approach key business areas to understand and document data ownership early in the data center move planning process. Establish benchmarks such as database response times and end-user application performance to ensure post-relocation service levels match those experienced before the move.

### ■ Do-It-Yourself Errors

As many homeowners have discovered, it's easy to get in over your head when scoping a home repair project. The complexity of most modern data centers can similarly overwhelm cost-conscious IT managers.

"There are so many things that go into a proper data center migration and these need to be captured in a detailed project plan," says Kevin Bloom, Bick Group's vice president of IT infrastructure services ([www.bickgroup.com](http://www.bickgroup.com)). "First-time data center movers will invariably forget or underestimate one or more critical activities or completely leave risk analysis unaddressed."

Bloom advises IT shops to build detailed project plans, even for the smallest moves. They should involve key systems and business experts and external resources if these skills aren't available on staff. Planning should also follow classic project management methodologies, including scope definition, activity prioritization and tracking, sequencing, duration and effort estimates, and risk analysis.

### ■ Ignoring The Risks Of Moving Older Equipment

Whenever equipment is moved either internally or externally, it's exposed to a certain degree of additional risk. If a server, for example, fails as a direct result of relocation, business continuity could be impacted. In the case of older hardware that may no longer be available, the risk is even greater.

To protect yourself from the risks of moving legacy hardware, reach out to vendors and have contingency plans in place for all hardware that is directly and indirectly affected.

"The data center equipment move plan should include activities that identify solutions to replace all components/equipment within a definitive amount of time," says Superior Technology's Luludis. "For example, if you are moving components or equipment that is not widely available in the marketplace, then potential replacements, with a predicted delivery timeframe, need to be identified prior to executing the move."

### ■ Misguided Project Combinations

To save money, time, or related resources, some organizations attempt to consolidate relocation projects with other IT or business technology initiatives. The results could be disastrous due to rampant complexity and blown timelines. Irwin Teodoro, the director of engineering and systems integration at Laurus Technologies ([www.laurustech.com](http://www.laurustech.com)), says that in one case, a client's attempt to combine projects resulted in significant financial penalties because the company failed to vacate the old facility on time.

"Moving a data center is a major project in and of itself," says Teodoro. "It is not the time to virtualize the computing environment, incorporate a new tiered storage philosophy, or move to virtualized desktops."

He advises IT to move the data center first and then consider moving forward with other projects. "If your operations or finance team insists on trying to combine projects, work with your vendor or reseller on a quote for sequential projects," he says. "The costs should not be significantly more

expensive.” ■

*by Carmi Levy*

## **Top Problem: Insufficient Communication**

Many organizations fail to advise employees and other stakeholders potentially affected by the move. Even non-technical workers often need to know what's going on because if things don't go according to plan, productivity could take a significant hit.

“Neglecting to tell non-technical people about a major change in the data can result in a lot of unneeded phone calls, emails, and complaints,” says Douglas Hanna, customer service manager at HostGator.com.

“If a major change is about to take place, it's a good idea to get into the habit of letting everyone know what's happening and what the implications will be,” says Hanna.

To minimize data and business productivity risk, companies should integrate comprehensive communication steps into relocation project planning. Strategically, they should err on the side of communicating to the broadest possible audience.