

Outlining Your Needs

by Gordon Carter

We're still going step-by-step through a major studio move, and the trick now is to get the capabilities of the firms you hire to meet the needs you communicate to them.

When you have assembled your moving team (real estate agent, architect, studio consultant and key staff members), you are ready to get to work. However, this may not be the type of work you expect. Most people would say the next step is to go looking for suitable spaces. But how do you know what space is really suitable?

Before looking at any space, your team needs to sit down and determine your specific needs. Many questions need to be answered as part of this process, and doing so now will save

lots of time and hassle later. The goal of this process is to find out how much space you really need and what special needs should be considered with your new space.

How Visible?

An old adage is that the three most important items when looking at real estate are location, location, and location. This is especially true of a radio station. The very nature of broadcasting puts a radio station in the public eye.

Some stations may want to increase their visibility to their public. Others may need a location that is more out of the way. Still others may need a site that is convenient for frequent guests to drop in.

Considering on- and off-air needs will help you pick out a general location for your building search. And while you are looking at various areas, be sure to consider accessibility and security for your staff and visitors.

During the process of evaluating your needs, you need to take a good look at the way your station works from the inside. Consider office space as well as control room and studio space. The architect can be a big help here in de-

termining the appropriate amount of office space for various people and their jobs.

Space Study

A good starting point is the space your people are currently using. Watch them work and see if they are working efficiently, without a lot of wasted motion. Too large an area can be as much of a culprit here as too small a space. If the work space is too large, they may have to move around too much in the course of their normal work. If the space is too small, you may find them constantly moving things to change from one task to another.

After you have evaluated how everyone works, be sure to allow for adequate common areas. You may need a conference room in which your sales people can make an effective sales pitch. Of course, a comfortable reception area that conveys the image your station wants is a must.

Another vital area in many radio stations is a kitchen or lounge area. Your night and weekend people will find this space absolutely essential, while your 9-to-5 staff will enjoy the convenience of not having to leave the premises, especially if you are a bit off the beaten track.

One often overlooked area is storage space. Be sure to allow room for technical equipment storage, office supplies, and long-term records storage (remember, you want to keep those logs and tax documents for at least seven years).

If your station owns a remote van or other vehicles, a garage or parking area is essential. Of course, don't forget to allow for staff parking in areas where such considerations are feasible.

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The Technical Side

Once you have evaluated your office needs, it is time to start looking at your technical facility requirements. Of course, you need a control room for broadcast. But what else do you need? A lot will depend on the way your station operates.

If you take most of your programming from a satellite-delivered service, you will need space for a satellite dish, but maybe not much more than a master control room.

If you do a lot of local news, a newsroom with space for people to edit and write copy, as well as production facilities for actualities and drop-ins will be necessary. On the other hand, if you are a rip-and-read news operation, you need little more than a space for a printer or computer.

Likewise, your local spot production needs will determine the size and

number of production rooms, as well as the equipment in them (more on this in a later installment). If you do any recording work you may want to consider a studio or two. Again, the exact nature of your work will determine the size and equipment.

While you are evaluating your technical facilities, be sure to give some consideration to the acoustical needs. A room that is too small will never sound right, either when you listen on speakers or talk on a mic.

Also, a room with the wrong proportions may sound thin or boomy, depending on many other factors. No amount of acoustical treatment can totally compensate for an improperly designed room. You may need more ceiling height in the space you are using for your studios to allow for ductwork and wiring, or maybe even a floating floor. Also, be sure to allow for extra space for isolation between rooms. Your studio consultant should be able to assist you with these considerations.

Another part of your technical facility that you should consider is a room that houses your common technical equipment, such as telephone interfaces, routing switchers, satellite equipment, and the like. If you are also moving your transmitter, be sure to allow space for it and your antenna.

Also, be sure to allow adequate space for a workshop. How many cluttered work spaces have you seen crammed into corners? It is much easier to maintain equipment when you have a well-designed shop that allows for efficient use of your time.

Other Considerations

You may also need to allow extra space for 24 hour air conditioning or heating, depending on your geographical location and the services available in your new building.

Janitorial space may also be necessary, especially if you are in your own building. Finally, be sure to allow for adequate washrooms for your staff. You may even want to consider shower facilities to help clean up.

These are just an outline of items for consideration in determining your space needs. Don't be afraid to bring up any ideas or questions to your moving team, no matter how insignificant or silly it may seem. If it hasn't been discussed, discuss it openly so that everyone is aware of the concern.

And, be sure to allow room for possible future expansion in all areas. Remember that you are looking at a space you will probably need to live with for at least ten years, and possibly even longer. From these discussions, your team can put together a minimum usable square footage, and from there you can start looking at buildings and sites.

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