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Tips For Moving Your Data Center

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Advice For A Smoother Move For Your SME

For data center managers, one of the most nerve-wracking tasks to undertake is moving an entire data center without losing any important information. And while the manager may have already chosen a site, selected a data center moving company, and developed an overall master plan, it's the actual move that makes him cringe. So, with that in mind, a variety of tips and advice is available to data center managers to make the transition as smooth as possible.

When moving a data center, nothing can be left to chance. As data center managers are well aware, the entire move must be as quick and as seamless as possible. Because that one element controls everything in the respective business, data center managers should be ready for anything. DataMove (www.datamove.net) CEO Clay Whitney says that understanding the needs of your business is the first step for launch day. He notes, "A thorough analysis of a company's environment is needed to determine if a 'fork-lift migration' (the entire environment is moved en masse) or 'segmented migration' (multiphase) is possible." In other words, will the company need to maintain a temporary site during the move for any unplanned events? This should always be paramount in the minds of data center managers who are beginning the move.

In addition, Aperture (www.aperture.com) Vice President of Product/Market Strategy Steve Yellen points to a general recommendation that data center managers effectively communicate throughout the entire move. If there is a break in communication and the virtual layout that was already approved is not being followed, issues will arise subsequent to its completion. A steady line of communication will allow data center managers to maintain significant control over the move and allow for on-the-fly decisions to be made if problems should arise. All in all, communication is key.

While moving a data center, those who are executing it typically neglect a variety of items. Sometimes data center managers are focused so heavily on the move itself that they forget some of the most important factors involved in executing a total success.

Old & New Differences

As Whitney says, keeping an inventory of products that are "checked in" and "checked out" is especially important: "Check-out and check-in processes at the old and new data centers, respectively, are immensely important. Some data centers have very strict policies (e.g., security might want to personally review and log the serial numbers of every device), which can be very time-consuming, and, if not planned for, might prohibit you from adhering to the migration timeline." Simply put, data center managers must be keenly aware that checking products, while a useful sanity check, can be overdone and create unforeseen issues.

Realizing that a new data center site is not the old site is especially important for the successful completion of a move. Yellen notes, “Most organizations are so focused on the move itself, they forget to think about the operational plan in the new data center. Organizations are building new multimillion-dollar facilities and running the operations the same way they did in the old data center. In these cases, entropy will take over, and they will eventually be in the same boat as they were before.”

In order to curb that common practice, Yellen recommends “evaluating processes and determining which ones are in need of modification in order to achieve the operational improvements [data center managers] are looking for in the new facility.”

While focusing on the more prominent components in moving a data center, many IT managers forget some of the more obvious necessities for the new data center. For example, data center managers should always determine if the mounting shelves and rails are compatible with the new data center. If the sites are quite different in scope and advancements, the old mounting devices may be rendered useless. Along those lines, managers should also be aware that extra network patch cables are always handy when making the move.

According to Whitney, data center managers often do not consult build documentation prior to the data center move. He says managers should "prepare and review build documentation (rack, network cabling, and power cabling) before the commencement of the migration.” Without such consultation, a manager may find herself in the middle of the migration without a solid understanding of the entire process.

Preserve & Insure

Although it’s doubtful that anything will happen to equipment during the move as long as it is properly packaged and stored, one of the most critical times to preserve the integrity of equipment is during the deracking and reracking stages. During these times, the equipment is most susceptible to damage, and managers should give extra attention and care for the preservation of its integrity.

Perhaps the best advice for any data center manager for the preservation of the integrity of equipment is to buy insurance from the migration company. As Whitney explains, “Every legitimate IT services company carries liability insurance. However, liability insurance will not cover the replacement of a customer’s damaged hardware if the damage occurs while the hardware is in the possession of the services company.”

Regardless of the tactics employed during the migration of a data center, the true responsibility lies in the hands of the data center manager. As an expert, a data center manager is uniquely qualified to make a data center move seamless. And while most moves succeed, there are still issues that can arise and items that the manager may have forgotten during the stressful preparation. And it is for this reason that an SME should choose a reputable IT services company for the successful migration of a data center. (For more information on choosing a moving company, see “Finding Help When Moving Your Data Center” on page 12.) If data center managers stay on top of the migration through solid lines of communication and choose to follow the tips outlined above, the successful move of a data center can be relatively simple.