

Selecting the Best Office Option Is a Key Prerequisite to Success *By George Russell*



The Private Office at 800 Westchester Avenue, Rye Brook, N.Y.

In today's "first impressions count" environment, an office is about more than just furniture, four walls and a commute that doesn't leave you worn out before the workday starts.

Whether you're in business for yourself, part of a multinational organization or anything between those extremes, your office plays a major part in determining how you and your business will function, what people will think of you when crossing its threshold and what levels of energy and enthusiasm you will bring to your work.

Business executives should therefore spend time and care on assessing their office options before making a decision. The wrong office literally has you working with one hand tied behind your back; the right office generates a momentum that significantly increases the likelihood of success.

I base the importance of office selection in the new century on several fac-

tors; some caused by today's rapidly changing business environment and some by basic facts of economic life that have stood the test of time. These factors include:

- Technological advances. There are better and faster way of doing things. Chances are some or most of your competitors are using them so if you don't you're at a major competitive disadvantage.

Hence a need to be in locations appropriately wired for tomorrow's technology.

- Vulnerability to computer security breakdowns and incursions. We're all at risk. So we all need to be in an office with back-up systems, off-site data storage and on-site assistance that can fix minor glitches before they grow into disasters.

- The approaching arrival of a 24/7 business world. It's already happening; interaction with customers on other sides of the planet and the need for overnight responses to client demands require being in a building in which things can get done at 11 p.m. And at three or four in the morning, too.

- The importance of first impressions – because they last. Prospects evaluating potential business partners have many choices so they're not going to dwell on those that make an initial poor impression.

- Location, location, location. Yes, the image and efficiency that an office creates are critical. But so is proximity to highways, public transportation and important business hubs. A corollary to the "time is money" adage is "time spent on unnecessarily long trips is money wasted."

Space limitations preclude a discussion of home offices and traditional offices with a full-time administrative staff, so

I will focus the remaining portion of this article on what I know best: office business centers.

Office business centers are a compelling alternative to home and traditional offices because they combine the positive image of being in a first-class building with the budget-friendly appeal of sharing the cost of administrative personnel, conference rooms and state-of-the art technology that a business needs -- but not every minute, or even 75% of the minutes, of a workday.

It is important to remember, however, that there are business office centers and business office centers – and no two are alike. So based on more than 20 years experience managing such centers, my advice to business people evaluating two or more is take your time. Consider the five factors cited above and determine how important each one is to your business. Weigh, too, quality of service, amenities and convenience.

For example, is the center staffed by people with experience and expertise in helping businesses function? Are they on-site or miles and many phone calls away? Is the center in a building that has ample and free parking? Does it have dining facilities? A gymnasium? On-site catering? Does it have a bank and other attractions that make life easier for busy executives? And does the address say you're a start-up or an established, successful business?

The wrong answer to those questions will create time and dollar distractions that are very injurious to a bottom line. So ask questions and keep asking them until you find the center with the right answers.

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