

Demand excellence from a business office center: Eleven tips for selecting the proper location



Owners of office business centers are seeing a growing interest in their services—and for enough good reasons so that if one peters out there are still others in place to keep the interest level high. These reasons include:

- A desire by people in home offices to move to a higher, more professional level;
- a need for more field offices by companies operating in different parts of the country.

• a recognition that businesses don't need to have their own administrative staffs, seminar rooms, conference rooms, etc.; they can share these assets.

The second piece of good news is for the scores of business owners who are thinking about taking space in a business center. It's a buyers' market for them in that there are many providers courting them as clients. This means they can set high expectations and shop around until they're met.

So the key is knowing what a desirable office center should provide. Absent that, some business owners could be getting less than they deserve when they sign an agreement for space in a center. Worse, they could be doing damage to their company's efficiency and image.

Here, in no particular order of

center and visitors. Remember the phrase "if you build it, they will come?" A corollary is "if they can't park they won't come."

4. On-site professional management. If a problem arises, you need to have someone on hand who can address it promptly—and well.

5. Secure Internet access with multiple backup circuits, voice-over-IP, wireless access from anywhere and automatic file backup to a secure off-site location. State-of-the-art technology and computer security you can rely on are critical in today's business environment. Why settle for less?

6. 24/7 access. Today's increasingly international business world requires round-the-clock attention to detail. You have to be able to enter the building at three in the morning, if necessary, and function as if it were noon.

7. Rooms for meetings and seminars—and the highest level of technology. What a comfort it is to know you can conduct meetings and seminars within yards of your office—and have modern equipment to make flawless presentations.

8. Location, location, location. Real estate is cheaper in rural areas or deteriorating inner cities, but will you be close to highways, public transportation, major business hubs, service providers, etc.? If not, the money saved on space costs will be less than the negative hit on your bottom line.

9. Flexibility and options. Would you like to change the design of your office or suite? Want the option of moving into larger or smaller quarters without having to undergo an address and phone number change? Like the comfort of knowing your center can arrange for you to have an office when visiting another city? It's possible with some centers, impossible with others.

10. An efficient and responsive administrative staff. Hiring decisions on the individuals who will be answering your phones, handling your mail and performing other administrative functions are made by others, not you. It's therefore important to assess their ability to make the right decisions.

11. Amenities that allow comfort to accompany image, efficiency and security. Among the "tiebreakers" that can settle a "this center vs. that center" debate are dining facilities, a gymnasium, and on-site features such as a bank, newsstand, cleaning service, etc.

These 11 features are not unrealistic demands. Make them! And look elsewhere if they are not being met.