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## PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

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### How to save time and money with commercial fit outs

**H**ere Are Seven Simple Principles to Use as a Checklist - In Case You Dare a Move or Remodel after the Last Experience.

While seven may seem like a long list, please bear with me. After years of working with clients and making our own office changes, I've learned that there are penalties to ignoring these principles.

The first principle is to start planning early. Early means before you give notice on your current space and surely before you commit to the new one. This gives you flexibility which may mean you actually need less space or can work with less expensive space.

Principle two is to work with the right design expert. By expert, I mean someone who understands how people interact with their space and how it affects their attitude about work. For example, one of the designers we work



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with, Glenn Marthens, owner of Milton Terry Associates in Oak Ridge, NJ, says that "day-lighting" can impact productivity by as much as 16%. He says you can also affect on-the-job injuries by furniture placement and ergonomics. By thinking about how people move through the space, you can position walls and partitions to cut down idle chatter.

So the third principle is a natural flow from this.

Don't commit to space before you see it through the eyes of the designer. It's this person's job to see possibilities and problems in light of your needs. They can help you make the most of the culture you want. You may even be able to eliminate a future move or avoid a disruptive remodel by thinking ahead.

So share your plans! Don't get me wrong, as a contractor, moves and remodels are good business. But I'm taking your side in this. Do you need the financial hit or the distractions from an avoidable move or remodeling project?

The fourth critical principle is to make all the detailed decisions and get buy-in before you spend a dime ordering things or building things.

Change orders or overlooked critical path items are costly in both time and money. I've witnessed how revisiting color choices, hardware for the doors, or

placement of a door can halt a project and actually set it back. (As the contractor, I also know what it takes to still keep things on target!) So, before you sign off, ask for detailed drawings, artist renderings or mock ups - whatever you need -- so you feel really solid about the decisions and your team is fully on board.

The fifth principle is to reflect the health of the environment and your employees in your plans.

Fortunately, being 'green' is easier than it once was with a lot of cost effective choices for furniture, carpeting and paint. There are many water saving devices for washrooms, and clean air and water are not expensive to deliver if they're planned in.

Ergonomics for chairs and desks are available at all price points. The trade off is no longer between budget busting options and doing the right thing. Your

space designer is your expert guide here.

The sixth principle is to put one qualified contractor in charge of implementation. Just as you needed the designer to bring the plan together, you really don't want to be caught up in coordinating permits, electrical, plumbing, carpentry, painting, etc.

The seventh principle is to pick your design and construction team for collaborative attitude and excellent communications.

This may in fact be the most important principle enabling all the others and should be at the top of your team selection criteria. All of us know and some of us have lived the horror stories because people forgot to communicate or cooperate.

Here's hoping seven is the lucky number as you bring about the next space transition for your company!

**Ted Brennan vice president of T. M. Brennan Contractors, Inc. ■**