

# Media Facilities in Transition: Transforming your facilities to serve your transformed business

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Continuous and fundamental flux in the media industry forces companies to look beyond a series of digital upgrades to investigate facility transitions with broader business reasons and implications.

This paper examines the process for realigning real estate and facilities to support new media business models. It is aimed at providing a variety of ways of looking at facilities and the effect that changes have on your company's mission and bottom line.

The promise of digital technology transition has emerged as a driving force changing the nature of traditional broadcast and content creation businesses and their related facilities. At the heart of the change is migration from tape-based workflow to server/networked content workflow and the move from analog to digital delivery. This change is far-reaching and has created a need for the transition of existing facilities as they move to multi-format and multi-channel capability. It has also created the need for a variety of hybrid co-location facility solutions, including duopolies, university/cable station alliances, sport network/venue co-locations, and new facility rental income solutions.

By "facilities transition" we mean any kind of redesign of your work environment through downsizing, upsizing, renovating or relocating your facility to better suit your business needs and goals. Many factors go into this decision-making process due to the mission critical nature of these facilities. At some point, we realize that the facility transition is necessary, but knowing exactly when and how to make that change is difficult. The trick is to take what might be seen as just a series of concurrent routine upgrades and rethink it as a business transformation that will lead to new opportunities.

The digital revolution, with its related workflow change, is the watershed that has allowed many firms to realize a significant transformation in their businesses, facilities and mission critical infrastructure. Here are a few examples of the kinds of transformations we mean:

**A Catholic diocese merged the broadcast facilities for its four cable channels with an affiliated college communications department's two radio and one cable channels.**

Independently, the acquisition of new facilities would have been difficult. By combining, they shared costs, acquired greater educational and work training environment and expanded the college's media reach and distance learning capabilities.

**After agreeing on a duoploy, one 50-year-old news facility was retired and the other station's digital-ready facility was expanded with new studios and work space to house the combined organization.** The digital conversion of the second station was greatly simplified by moving into a building with

strong infrastructure and a trained digital engineering staff. The older station's buildings were sold for redevelopment, covering a substantial portion of the relocation cost.

**A local broadcaster sought to upgrade its facility and recapture underutilized building areas for new production facilities.** A careful multi-year plan resulted in the first major upgrade in 40 years, changing workflow and editing practices, realigning staff to proper work environments, eliminating all hazardous materials in the building and upgrading the building systems. It also recovered 20% of the building by replacing oversized analog technical spaces with new departments and digital production environments.

**A cable network realized it was landlocked with no growth potential and therefore relocated and converted to full a digital production environment.** Moving from a small, multi-floor, windowless building to a former factory building allowed them to locate all staff on one floor with an open floor plan. The entire facility now has abundant daylight





and employees love the new environment. Furthermore, the station was able to grow to a multi-language facility due to the planning for growth, robust infrastructure provided and the flexible work environment.

A sports network located in a sports facility realized its growth had created a complicated and cramped work environment which could not be converted to fit its new business mission. A relocation freed them from years of poor “legacy-planned” decisions and tripled their production facility capacity. This was accomplished without considerably expanding their overall space requirements by reducing corridors, updating antiquated facilities and repurposing inefficient spaces.

All of these clients also reaped a significant change in moral and human resources performance, not to mention technical capacities, and brand enhancement through the creation of new and improved facilities.

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The goal of these examples is to make you aware of the potential that changes in facility realignment can have on your business. Going digital should not be thought of in isolation as an engineering directive, but as an opportunity to achieve multiple business goals and opportunities.

### **More than equipment, people make it happen**

Concurrent with technical changes are significant social and business changes. The basic business models are shifting and competition is intensifying. While professionals in the broadcasting industries are often told that their competitive edge is dependent on the technology they use, they really should be told to look further. One of the greatest pressures on companies is staff recruiting and retention.

As we move toward a fluid, multi-generational workforce, workplace and employee satisfaction become mission critical as well. Facilities are now being re-examined in that light. Are they well-designed, safe, attractive, productive environments suitable for workflow change and provided with robust infrastructure?

Gensler's research has clearly connected appropriate work environments with significant positive effects on employee productivity and overall job satisfaction. This is even more important in deadline-driven, technical and creative environments. Spending money on new equipment and giving it to unhappy employees in poorly designed environments is not a wise investment. It's even worse in facilities lacking reliable building systems, power and infrastructure.



### **What people want**

With the advent of digital technology, a flexible workflow is more possible, and with that comes a much wider variety of workplace needs in order to meet business and employee needs.

Critical factors we look to deliver when working with media clients include higher levels of staff communication, an increase in teamwork environments, a higher level of labor relations/satisfaction and productivity, greater air quality, better lighting, access to daylight, access to amenities, flexible workplace configurations, better utilization of real estate assets, increased engineering system reliability and implementation of healthy work environments including removal of toxic materials.

On the engineering side, planning, proper redundancy provisions, N+ systems, disaster recovery procedures, and well documented systems are all key to the minimum building and engineering systems facility design

criteria. Digital equipment, while able to create a wide variety of new opportunities, is still dependent on a high level of power and control reliability. When disruptions happen, the outage and “reboot” of the system is extensive and expensive.

Corporate demands for increased levels of reliability have mandated a complete rethinking of what had been fairly standard stand-alone systems. The bottom line is that there are far more important things to consider than just the basic idea of going digital. You wouldn’t digitalize an old analog process, so why would you “digitally upgrade” an antiquated work environment and plant?

### **How do I make the change?**

Mission critical facilities are not exactly simple to work within due to the 24x7 nature of operations. There are very few opportunities to create significant downtime for anything but the most critical changes. The result is facility stagnation.

As digital equipment demand has increased, so have the facility challenges and costs. And as we migrate from single-purpose TV facilities (local stations, cable production companies, news organizations etc) to more multi-format, multi-channel facilities (co-location, consolidations, alliances, new media facilities) this logistical challenge increases.

**Going “digital” should not be thought of in isolation as an engineering directive, but an opportunity to achieve multiple business goals. and opportunities.**

Few companies initially want to consider expanding their facilities when challenged to expand the business so they add more of the same to their present facility: more equipment, more heat, more wire, more productions and so on. The result is lower quality work environment, loss of support functions and amenities, more stress, higher staff turnover, inadequate, underrated engineering infrastructure, and increased business risk. At some point you hit a threshold of organizational pain, corporate risk or both.



## Should I upgrade or move?

We are often asked to investigate for clients the process required to upgrade them and fix all their existing facility problems while they occupy it. On average, it takes about three to four times as long to remodel a working technical facility in place than it does to build a new one.

Frequently, when broadcast organizations seriously look at the complexity associated with wholesale upgrading an operating facility while remaining on air, they just decide to look for a new location to start again. Building a new facility creates opportunities while eliminating constraints such as poor location, poor building configuration, antiquated space planning, legacy or inferior infrastructure, and potential risk to ongoing operations.

We encourage clients to consider all aspects of their facility investment in order to arrive at the most business-effective and cost-effective solution. A number of factors should be considered when you are thinking about a relocation or other facility transformation. Each of these items should be tracked on a regular basis:

- Lease expirations and potential rent increases
- Facility quality deterioration and major maintenance expenditure needs
- Infrastructure issues with significant risk for ongoing operations, such as aging equipment, loss of reliability, poor energy efficiency, and poor connectivity
- Changes in business mission, workflow, product delivery, business size, and new opportunities
- Human resource issues such as retention, recruiting, wellness, productivity
- Lack of growth potential; being landlocked
- Change in business environment, such as access, security, expansion options, amenities, utility connections, tax and incentive opportunities



Any and all of these weigh into the decision to consider relocation—but note that we did not list new technology upgrades. If your basic business goals and objectives are left aside or are somehow flawed, technology will not fix them, and will likely make the situation worse. Your decision should first consider your overall business mission and then the technical issues which support your success.

### Best practices for renovation

Whichever way your business decides to perform its facility transition—in place or by relocating—we wanted to share with you some important technical planning and execution lessons learned over the years. Here are some pointers if you decide to renovate instead of relocate:

**1. Create a master plan that addresses all major business decisions and desired end results.** Think “blue sky” to get all the issues on the table. Confirm what motivates your business and what could defeat it.

**2. Build your new work on a solid foundation of mission critical infrastructure.** Try to isolate new work from older legacy systems, remembering that shutdowns to existing infrastructure are costly and a risk factor to be avoided.

**3. Make a detailed “sequence of operations” phasing plan.** This should include temporary relocations, infrastructure upgrades, construction, shut downs, equipment installs and re-occupancies. Remember temporary infrastructures required during the transition.

**4. Select consultants and contractors who are accustomed to working in mission critical environments.** This results in better planning, fewer surprises and lower project risk. Select in-house staff who have the time to dedicate to the project, since nothing slows a project more than indecisive, part-time participation.

**5. Consider your equipment planning carefully.** Control rooms are cooler now, but racks are hotter. Keep in mind that whatever equipment you select, it will be replaced and changed in the future, so think through building flexibility into your solutions—spare capacity is much less expensive now than later.

Rack electrical usage and heat densities have increased and cooling methods need to be matched to equipment spacing and configurations. Take advantage of the potential opportunity to improve your infrastructure reliability and redundancy.

Power quality equipment is more critical than ever in the digital arena. Improving energy efficiency of HVAC systems is becoming of more interest as energy costs increase.

**6. Understand everything that is to be done to your building engineering systems and why.**

**7. Keep people informed of the renovation process.** Notify your employees; keep all your managers informed of schedules, shutdowns, work disruptions etc. Keep your contractor informed of potential disruptions to his/her work—unusual production schedules, “sweeps-related” workload changes, special events, etc. Put them in the project schedule up front.

**8. Commission it! Test it!** Don't take someone's word that it will work in an emergency. Prepare your disaster recovery plan, and train your staff now, not after an emergency.

### Best practices for relocation

**1. Spend time to rethink.** Ask a lot of questions of your business and your needs. Seek an unbiased facilitator to help you with this. Talk to your consultant about investigating your options and defiantly make careful plans before making any commitments.

**2. Fully understand the effect of digital equipment and the new content creation process.** It empowers more people to do more with less facility and is also is much more infrastructure dependent.

**3. Choose your site carefully.** Don't be led around town by someone who does not understand all the implications to your business or your legal constraints. Have your consultant team evaluate all potential sites.



Don't choose a site for the unusual parts of your need such as high bay studio space, existing generator, truck parking—look at sites for your people and office needs first, since this is probably the largest part of the space need as well as the most critical. Look instead for land or other expansion capabilities for special needs, as this gives you more latitude and allows you to build to your unique requirements. Remember that “location, location, location” works for price and suitability as well as for employee recruiting, business relations, corporate and community image reasons.

4. **Look at possible synergies between your business and others.** Consider co-locating options. Spend time to understand the effects on your brand, operations, cultures and growth prospects. Consider the benefits of a campus environment with other activities and amenities.

5. **Remember to review surrounding microwave transmission conditions and constraints.**

6. **Define your mission critical design criteria to insure the facility is “hardened” to protect operations.** This includes roof construction, relationship to the flood plain, multiple power sources, substantial building envelope construction, appropriate security provisions, hardened connectivity, generator provisions (including significant fuel storage).

7. If you are locating in a multi-tenant building, be aware of your own destiny. Craft lease terms to protect your special facility needs and insure that the activities of other tenants cannot disrupt your operations.

8. **All of the above renovation issues relate to building a new facility as well.**

### Seeing opportunities rather than problem-solving

The work we undertake in support of the broadcast and media industry's change management process is both complicated and challenging, but with an eye toward the opportunity of transformation rather than the burden of fixing problems, the process can be far more rewarding than you may initially think.

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