



Our Favorite Five: Building a Brand While Packing the Bags *Moving to New Offices Creates Strategic Opportunities*

Many agency executives see moving their offices as a major headache—unanticipated expenses, new furniture, ordering stationery, lots of boxes, merging and purging, protecting client information, staff downtime—the negatives can quickly make the transition a huge chore. Strategic America (SA), an 85-person integrated marketing firm in Des Moines, Iowa, captured this opportunity to strengthen its brand and build business instead. Remarkably, internally, not one complaint has been made about the new space or wishing the team was still in its old digs.

1. Showcase Clients

Much of SA's marketing is for clients offering consumer products and services for the home. Clients include Lennox Industries, Hunter Douglas, Service Experts, Toro and more. SA redecorated its new facilities, incorporating displays of clients' products and the marketing work SA has created for them.

2. Acquaint Prospects

SA found the move was an impetus for building relationships with prospects who could become clients. "We sought a vendor with green office furnishings," says Lisa Holtorf, the primary move coordinator at SA along with John Schreurs. "We leveraged relationship with a former client to make a connection to MaiSpace, which sold us our cubicle systems. This collaboration has led to a partnership that makes SA a MaiSpace showcase facility for its prospects. We also work with MaiSpace as a client."

3. Increase Brand Visibility

As SA increasingly grows its national client base, being recognized as a strategic yet artsy and fun agency was the brand image it sought. Before committing to a new facility, SA's leadership team surveyed locations for vision and visibility. The newly selected offices sit right off a major highway. Eye-catching exterior signage has dramatically increased the agency's visibility.

4. Commit to CSR

SA has long been accountable to the local community and social commitments via donation of time valued at more than 10% of billable hours annually. "Moving gave us an opportunity to rethink some aspects of our agency," says Holtorf. "After 30 years of counseling clients to commit to corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices, we wanted to further act on our own priorities. As an agency and as individuals, we value environmental responsibility," as proven by an internal survey. SA worked with LEED consultants and eco-friendly architects and is now pursuing LEED certification. Among many steps, SA continues its agency-wide recycling program.

5. Commit to Change

The timing allowed SA to physically rearrange departments and how they interact. The challenge was retaining a creative, sensible energy flow while increasing efficiency and moving people to unaccustomed locations. "We thought long and hard about where to place various associates," says Holtorf. "Ultimately, we found an arrangement that works now and for the future." One key change was centrally placing IT staff. Because IT's vital role has risen with the significant growth of interactive, digital and social media, the agency placed IT where others could readily access them for meetings and assistance.

Additionally, keeping all staff involved through an ad-hoc, yearlong Move Committee expedited office design details and ensured all staff were informed and excited by the change. Moving offices is never an easy feat, but SA was able to leverage this complex logistical move to grow its business.