



OFFICE FIT OUT CHECKLIST

Your step by step guide to making sure your office fit out is a perfect fit



CHECKLIST :

Ensuring a perfect office fit out

There's more to fitting out an office than moving the old into a new space. It can be an exciting and reinvigorating time. If done properly.

It's also likely to be one of the biggest financial outlays your company will have to make. So if you're responsible for getting it right first time, you might be feeling somewhat overwhelmed.

This checklist has been designed to help. Taking it step by step, you can ensure that your office fit out will be an enjoyable process for you and a successful change for your business.

Contents

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Why do you need a new office?	2
Identify your primary concerns	
Consider additional benefits	
What will your office fit out entail?	3
Consider what sort of fit out you want	
Where is your new office going to be?	4
Identify your needs	
Decide on your location	
When is the right time to move?	5
Plan ahead	
Who are the right people to involve?	5
Know your key parties	
Choose the best professionals to advise you	
Find the perfect fit of Fit Out partner	
How much can you spend? Where can you save?	8
Budget, then review your budget	
Get a helping hand	

THE FINER DETAILS

What are your obligations and responsibilities?	10
Get covered	
Talk to your landlords	
Be compliant	
Have you thought ahead?	11
Consider a phased occupation	
Plan well to buy in advance	
Is everything to your satisfaction?	12
Sign the lease	

THE OFFICE DESIGN

Do you know what it is yet?	12
Design for life	
How important is being green?	13
Be green Savvy	
Save with sustainable systems	
What are you going to put into your new office?	15
Make room for storage	
Fit in the right OFFICE furniture	
Rate your tech	

THE GETTING IT RIGHT, FIRST TIME

Are you putting safety first?	17
Safeguard Health & Safety	
Keep track on site	
Are you ready to move in?	18
Keep everyone Informed	
Prepare to move	
Get rid of clutter	
De-snap and move-in	
Celebrate success	

THE BIG QUESTIONS

Before you go any further, it's worth looking at the bigger picture. Yes, later down the line, you're going to be immersed in the detail. But to get you started, it's time to ask those big questions: why, what, where, when, who and, crucially, how much?

Why do you need a new office?

IDENTIFY YOUR PRIMARY CONCERNS

A new office, be it from a refurbishment or relocation, can benefit you in many ways. But what are your primary reasons for wanting a new workplace? And what secondary benefits can you gain?

To ensure your office fit out 'fits' your company's needs, get to know the 'why' well in advance. And if you're relocating, be prepared to answer the question, "Why not refurbish your existing space instead?".

Are your existing facilities outdated or simply unsuitable?

- Moving office, instead of refurbishing, allows you to consider a host of facilities that perhaps your old space simply couldn't cater for

Has your business recently undergone an expansion, contraction or reorganisation?

- In the current financial climate, the shape of many companies is changing on a regular basis. Empty seats or over-crowded offices, neither do much for staff morale. A new office can be flexible with the changing shape of your company - maximise its potential to create a pleasant working environment

Do you want to boost morale and productivity?

- A change is as good as a rest. And it's been proven that morale and productivity suffer in an uninspiring environment. The change of scenery provided by a new office could be just what's required to turn your workforce into a happy, productive team

Would you like to improve your company's image and reputation?

- Your office sells your business just as much as your people do. First impressions count for a lot. Your new office is a blank canvas, so use it to your advantage

FIT OUT TIP:

Think about how your business is likely to change over the next 5 years. Whilst your workplace needs to reflect your current business values it must be able to adapt to any future changes that might be around the corner.

CONSIDER ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Are there other outside influences you have to consider?

- Compliance with existing and future legislation
- Health & Safety issues with existing space
- Walking the Environmental walk, not just talking the talk

What will your office fit out entail?

CONSIDER WHAT SORT OF FIT OUT YOU WANT

Chances are, if you're reading this, a lick of paint isn't all that's required in your new space. But the scope of an office fit out can range hugely.

Before you go any further, identify what it is you want. And more importantly, what it is you're prepared to take on.

Refurbishing a new space

- It can save time and money if you move into a 'pret-a-porter' office. One that only needs the aforementioned lick of paint. Maybe a bit more. But if you go down this route, be aware that moving into someone else's old home may mean it'll never feel quite like, well, yours

Refurbishing your existing office

- Is moving your only option? Could you rework your existing space? This is something a good office fit out partner will be able to help with

If you think that a refurbishment is more likely to be on the cards, Morgan Lovell's *Office refurbishment checklist*¹ can walk you through it, step by step.

Carrying out a CAT B fit out

- This is the most common interpretation of 'fit out'. The new space is a blank canvas with just the basics installed. And we mean basics - raised flooring, suspended ceilings, outside walls, Mechanical & Electrical services, and 'shared' areas such as toilets and stairwells. You get to choose everything else, and really make the space your own

Going back to basics with a CAT A and CAT B installation

- If the space you're looking at is particularly dilapidated, then it might be a case of rebuilding its shell, before starting on a CAT B fit out. This is also a good option if you're planning to make changes to the Mechanical & Electrical systems, etc, for environmental reasons

¹ Our *Office refurbishment checklist* can be downloaded for free at <http://www.morganlovell.co.uk/useful-info/checklists/office-refurbishment-checklist/>

Where is your new office going to be?

Moving office can be as bad as moving house. In fact, it can be worse, because you have many more people to please. It's not just a case of finding the right space in the right building, you have to consider the commute of your staff and the facilities nearby.

Our *Office relocation checklist*² gives you a more in-depth walkthrough of the stages of relocation including searching for the right property. Here's an overview of the key decisions and actions you need to make.

IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

Carry out feasibility studies □

- A feasibility study will help you determine how much space you need, now and in the future. It asks what sorts of spaces you need (kitchen, comms room, etc.), how departments work together and what growth rates you might expect. You don't have to do this alone though, you can get an experienced fit out contractor to carry it out for you

Work out your storage needs □

- Storage requirements are so often forgotten. A storage audit can help you identify where storage is lacking in your current space and how you can plan ahead for the future

Define your location priorities □

- What do you need to be nearby? Transport infrastructure, parking and local amenities are just some of the things to consider. And always bear in mind the commute of your existing employees

DECIDE ON YOUR LOCATION

Once you've built up a shortlist of possible sites, compare them with your specification built up from the actions above. And there are still a few details to consider.

Survey your building □

- A building survey can save you thousands later on. Everything may look fine, but a closer examination might reveal problems with, for example, the heating and ventilation system that could be hugely disruptive in the future

Check out the neighbourhood □

- The best way to find out about the neighbourhood of your potential space is to talk to people who live and work in the vicinity. Neighbourhood can mean inside the building too!

Identify any legal or financial issues □

- Go over the monetary and legal details with a keen eye. Look for unusual clauses, and ask about incentives and future raises in charges and rent

FIT OUT TIP:

Rate your rates. Make sure you don't overpay. Check out the Valuation Office Agency website³ for more information.

2 Download Morgan Lovell's *Office relocation checklist* for free at <http://www.morganlovell.co.uk/useful-info/checklists/office-relocation-checklist/>

3 The Valuation Office Agency website can be found at <http://www.voa.gov.uk>

When is the right time to move?

Time is of the essence when decisions need to be made.

PLAN AHEAD

- Work out an indicative programme early on
 - It'll help you to have some deadlines in mind. They don't have to be set in stone, but they'll keep you on track
- Factor in the holidays and commitments of your key stakeholders
 - Your Managing Director won't appreciate his holiday being interrupted because he needs to sign something by last Friday
- Think about how you might go about the move process
 - You don't have to make any decisions now, but it's worth thinking about how moving into your new office will tie in to moving out of your old one. Will you have to occupy the new space while the fit out works are in progress?

FIT OUT TIP:

A credible office design and fit out company will provide a highly detailed Gantt chart that illustrates every step of the fit out project schedule. This will also highlight lead-in times, especially for big ticket items such as IT and furniture.

Who are the right people to involve?

KNOW YOUR KEY PARTIES

There are certain people who should be involved in the decision making process. Make sure you know who to talk to when the decisions need to be made.

It's also sometimes the law to involve your staff. The Information & Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004 state that any changes directly affecting staff should be discussed with them.

And of course it's just good manners to make sure that everybody is kept informed.

- Your office fit out 'champion'
 - Having a single 'champion' for the fit out can put minds at ease. Staff know who's going to have the answers to their questions. Management have faith that things are under control and there aren't 'too many cooks'.
It's a daunting task for one individual, so who has what it takes to keep all the necessary balls in the air?
- Senior Management
 - Managing Director
 - Financial Director
 - Facilities Director

- Office Manager
- IT Director
- Operations Director

FIT OUT TIP:

Never forget the administration staff. They probably know more about what's going on than anybody else.

Other important departments

- Marketing
- Human Resources
- Administration and PAs

Other stakeholders

- Unions
- Regulators
- Parent company
- Board members
- Department heads
- Staff

CHOOSE THE BEST PROFESSIONALS TO ADVISE YOU

As the project progresses, you're going to rely on many other people to advise you, so make sure you're talking to the best.

Commercial Property Agents

- Will they provide quality references?
- Do they have a good grasp of the technical side?
- Have they enough time to devote to your project?
- Do they know the area you're searching in?
- If necessary, can they demonstrate a national reach?
- Are their fees and charges transparent?

Other key professionals

- Legal and Financial Consultants
- Consultants - IT, Security, Furniture, Health & Safety
- Engineers - Structural, Mechanical & Electrical

FIT OUT TIP:

Your office design and fit out partner may have consultants and engineers in-house, saving you the worry (and additional cost) of having to look for and choose between external advisors.

FIND THE PERFECT FIT OF FIT OUT PARTNER

To save the maximum amount of time and money on your office design and fit out (and let's face it, this is going to be the biggest total cost you have to budget for), choose a fit out partner that offers a full turnkey solution. From appraisals and design to installation and aftercare, they manage everything so you only have one point of contact.

This approach is called 'Design & Build'. The Chartered Institute of Building has proven that this parallel working system is 40% faster and 15% cheaper than the traditional, multi-contractor approach.

For a more in-depth guide to finding the perfect fit of partner for your fit out, see our checklist *Choosing the right office design & fit out partner*.⁴

A fit out company should offer the following as a minimum:

Services

- Assistance with requirements definition and development of your brief
- Project management
- Cost estimating
- Space audits, feasibility studies, surveying of your new building
- Space planning and interior design
- Fit out and construction (Cat A as well as Cat B)
- Advice on and procurement of furniture
- Mechanical & Electrical, HVAC (Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning) and plumbing
- Planning permission and landlord negotiations
- IT and telephony cabling, moving and installation
- Move management

Knowledge

- Are they up to scratch on the latest legislation and regulations, such as the Equality Act 2010 (replacement to the Disabilities Discrimination Act)?
- Can they advise you of your responsibilities where Health & Safety is concerned?

Experience

- Will they provide references of previous fit outs, as well as visits to offices they've completed for other clients?
- Can they demonstrate experience within your sector, and an in-depth knowledge of how your business functions?
- Do they have experience of phased relocation?

Sustainability

- Can they prove their environmental commitment (ISO 14001 and BS EN 16001 accredited)?
- Do they have knowledge and experience of green office design & build, including BREEAM and LEED?

⁴ Our *Choosing the right office design and fit out partner* checklist can be downloaded for free at <http://www.morganlovell.co.uk/useful-info/checklists/choosing-office-design-and-fit-out-partner/>

Financial

- Do they guarantee to complete to a fixed budget?
- Are they financially stable?⁵
- Do they have a parent company which will provide financial backing if necessary?

Additional questions

- Do they provide a full turnkey solution, with one point of contact for your peace of mind?
- Do they have Health & Safety experts in-house? Are they OHSAS 18001 accredited?
- Can they prove their commitment to Health & Safety? Have they achieved recognition from RoSPA or the Considerate Constructors scheme?
- Can they provide evidence of insurance cover?
- Will they guarantee on-time completion?
- Does their team inspire your confidence and trust?

How much can you spend? Where can you save?

BUDGET, THEN REVIEW YOUR BUDGET

Setting the budget for your move and office fit out can be a chicken and egg scenario. Until you have started to make decisions about what you want, it's difficult to work out how much you need to spend.

Most businesses only incur this sort of expense every 5-10 years or so. Therefore it's imperative that you set a realistic budget and are also able to communicate at any given time the financial impact of the fit out on your business.

Get estimates for everything, including the kitchen sink.

Fees

- Fire risk assessments
- Transaction fees (lawyers, property agents, landlord)
- Planning permission
- Environmental assessments
- Insurance costs

Costs associated with the design and fit out

- IT and telecoms (cabling, equipment and installation)
- Furniture
- Mechanical & Electrical and HVAC plant
- Disposals (of old IT equipment, furniture, and site waste)
- Security
- Design and fit out contractor fees and costs

⁵ For more information please see our *Financial Stability Checklist* at <http://www.morganlovell.co.uk/useful-info/checklists/financial-stability-checklist/>

Costs associated with the move

- Printing (new stationery, announcements)
- Mail redirection
- Website updates
- Temporary storage during the move

Bills

- Rent
- Service charges
- Taxes
- Energy and utilities
- Maintenance

Additional costs

- Contingencies (budget an extra 20% - minimum)
- Dilapidations (both for your old space now, and your new space later down the line)

FIT OUT TIP:

Design & Build can save time and money. And is a safer contractual option if you don't want to get hit with additional costs should works overrun. The JCT form of contract puts the responsibility for works completing in the hands of your design and fit out partner. A 'traditional' approach with multiple contractors means the financial and temporal responsibility is wholly yours.

GET A HELPING HAND

Spare money isn't flying about in these uncertain financial times, but you're still eligible for tax breaks and the odd helping hand.

Talk to the people in the know.

- Talk to your landlord about possible contributions
- Depending on the size and type of your organisation, leasing may be a plausible way of financing some of your capital expenditure
- Capital Allowances and Enhanced Capital Allowances⁶ are a great way that your company, as a tax payer, can get money back on the purchase of 'machinery & plant' over its lifetime
- The Carbon Trust in England and The Energy Saving Trust in Scotland⁷, both offer 0%-interest small business loans, where anticipated savings in energy costs fund the loan repayments

6 For more information about Enhanced Capital Allowances visit www.eca.gov.uk

7 Details can be found at <http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/> and <http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/>

THE FINER DETAILS

With the big questions answered, or at least considered, it's time to look at those finer details. Make sure you're aware of all your legal, fiscal and regulatory responsibilities. And keep these in mind later down the line when you get to the fun part - designing and fitting out your new office.

What are your obligations and responsibilities?

GET COVERED

Ensure that you have all the necessary insurance in place. Your chosen office fit out partner should provide evidence of their insurance cover, and that of their subcontractors - it should be a mandatory requirement in any pre-qualification process.

- Public & Product Liability insurance
- Employers' Liability Insurance
- Professional Indemnity insurance
- Contractors' 'All Risks' insurance

TALK TO YOUR LANDLORDS

You're going to have certain responsibilities to your landlords, such as dilapidations clauses in your existing lease. Changes to both your new and existing space are going to need the consent of your landlord, so involve them early on.

Don't burn any bridges with your current landlord

- Get a dilapidations schedule from your landlord. This will determine if upon exit of your current building you or your landlord are responsible for works returning it to the condition it was when you took it over. If the latter, you'll probably have to make a sizable financial contribution
- If your lease hasn't come to an end, and you're subletting or assigning your lease, use your move to renegotiate with your landlord. Also check you're not expected or required to supply a guarantee to cover potential damage by the new tenants

Keep your new landlord on side

- You'll need a License to Alter for the changes planned to your new space. Talk to your design and fit out partner to ensure every change is covered
- Use the investment you're making in your landlord's property to negotiate better terms on your lease
- Check out the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of your new building (your landlord must provide this by law). If you're making changes to services in the building which will improve this rating, your landlord may be willing to contribute to the cost of your fit out
- Review the Heads of Terms. While these are largely non-binding they set the basis for the legal contract between you and your landlord. Therefore you should make sure you understand what you have agreed to before it becomes legally binding

BE COMPLIANT

By law, you're required to consider the needs of your employees - both now and in the future.

Is your fit out partner aware of what's needed to be compliant with, for starters, The Equality Act 2010⁸, The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, and The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974⁹?

An access audit will identify any issues with getting into the new space, which you can address as part of the fit out works

Compliance doesn't extend just to access - it includes levels of luminosity, placement of desks, what transparent doors are made of, etc - so be sure your fit out company is going to create designs that take everything into account

Have you thought ahead?

CONSIDER A PHASED OCCUPATION

Determining the layout of your new office isn't the only space planning required. You may also need to plan a phased occupation where people will be moving in at different times. You may plan to occupy some floors while moving staff in on others.

Clarify what facilities (i.e. teapoints, toilets, etc.) will be accessible and consider all the safety aspects.

Talk to your design and build partner about previous work they've done and how phased occupations were managed

You may be able to use the facilities of other occupants in your new building if yours won't be ready or out of action for any length of time

When planning to move in phases, bear in mind that certain individuals and departments will need to be moved together

A sure-fire way to foster bad feelings about the move amongst staff is to keep them out-of-the-loop. Make sure everyone knows who's moving where and when

FIT OUT TIP:

It's hard to ensure 'business as usual' during an office fit out, both for your own company and for the other tenants in your building. Talk to your fit out company, as they should have experience of minimising disruption in these circumstances. They may be able to do some work out-of-hours and at weekends, meaning you don't start off on the wrong foot with your new neighbours.

8 For more information on the new Equality Act 2010, replacement to the DDA, visit http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_bill.aspx

9 The Health And Safety Executive website can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/>

PLAN WELL TO BUY IN ADVANCE

If you can, order long lead-in items in advance. Make sure you've carried out the necessary surveys and are sure about your decisions to avoid costly mistakes

- Lighting, Mechanical & Electrical and HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning)
- Telephony and IT
- Furniture and storage
- Custom furnishings, fittings and joinery
- Sustainable elements

FIT OUT TIP:

If you're serious about going 'green', plan it well in advance. When given due consideration early on, a sustainable fit out doesn't have to cost more than its traditional equivalent. Leave it too late, and the costs tend to increase exponentially.

Is everything to your satisfaction?

SIGN THE LEASE

Once you've decided on your location, and all the terms are agreed, it's time to sign the lease

THE OFFICE DESIGN

Your new office is a blank canvas and you are the artist. Create a work of art, that works for your business.

Do you know what it is yet?

DESIGN FOR LIFE

First things first, ask your fit out partner to visit your new office and help you visualise the different ways it could be used

- Most fit out companies will be happy to draw up indicative designs for you
- Think outside of the existing boxes - if you don't like where a wall is, then move it

FIT OUT TIP:

If you're having a Cat A and Cat B fit out on your new space, your options are greater for moving the existing Mechanical & Electrical. But at the same time, be aware that working around what's already in place will probably save quite a bit of money.

Create a few different mood boards, a variety of themes and colours, to see which fit your company's style

- Remember to involve your Marketing department - they know your brand inside-out, so pick their brains about how to create an office that reflects your company's values
- Put your mood boards somewhere prominent in your workplace, so staff have a chance to voice their opinion early on. It'll create buy-in, and they'll probably have some really good ideas too

Make sure your design and fit out partner provides a full layout

- As well as the location of rooms, walls and partitions, this should also include desks, IT and Mechanical & Electrical
- Make sure the layouts are distributed to the Heads of Departments before any final decisions are made. Certain departments may need to be close together - and others further apart!

Bring your office to life with 3D walkthroughs

FIT OUT TIP:

Think about dilapidation costs when designing your new office. A flexible office with minimal structures will save you money when you've leaving at the end of your lease.

How important is being green?

To a certain extent, these days companies don't have much choice about including green elements and energy efficient technologies in their workplaces. Legislation, such as the CRC and The Building Regulations, is setting certain standards, and it's only going to get more restrictive.

Luckily, the majority of companies are on board with sustainability, and can see the benefits that going green brings to their business not only in a money-saving capacity but also in terms of improved reputation internally and externally.

Consider your options - how green do you want to be?

BE GREEN SAVVY¹⁰

Ensure sustainability and energy efficiency are the major considerations when designing your office and specifying Mechanical & Electrical systems, furniture, fittings - basically, everything!

The simple things make the biggest difference - plan for recycling areas in your designs, and remove individual waste bins

Look into the latest green technology

- Save on lighting by installing daylight-capture systems and motion-sensitive fittings
- A good way to reduce usage is to keep a close eye on it - plan to install a sub-metering system so you can identify and manage high energy consumption areas

Consider what's gone into what you're putting in

- What level of recycled material is in your fittings, fixtures, furniture and flooring?

¹⁰ For a step by step guide to producing a sustainable office interior, see our *Sustainable Office Design Checklist* at www.morganlovell.com/sustainability_checklist

- Are paints low in toxins, specifically VOCs?
- Can your fit out company guarantee that all timber is FSC certified?

An environmental rating gives a benchmark to aspire to, and can also be a great marketing tool for promoting your 'greenness' to partners, clients and also your employees. Your office fit out partner should advise you on the most appropriate rating to aim for

- BREEAM® - The Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method
<http://www.breeam.org/>
- LEED - The U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design
<http://www.usgbc.org/LEED>
- Ska Rating - Developed by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
<http://www.ska-rating.com/>

SAVE WITH SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Green and energy efficient technology is getting more affordable, and using less energy generally saves you money; so it's now easier to guarantee a return on your investment.

If you are able to make changes to the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems in your building, then consider the sustainable options. A small investment now may help you save later - save money, and save the planet.

Lighting

- The best way to save money on lighting is to not use any. Maximise natural light within your space, use light tubes to bring daylight into more secluded areas, but remember to consider the additional heat from solar gain and its impact on your HVAC
- A lighting control system is a great way to ensure that areas are not being lit unnecessarily
- Give users control. Task lighting allows staff to set their own lighting levels

FIT OUT TIP:

The website of the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers, <http://www.cibse.org/>, is a great place to find advice on how to make your systems more efficient whilst ensuring they are compliant with the latest legislation.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- A Building Management System (or Energy Management System if not building-wide) to control where and when your HVAC is activated (by linking to your meeting room schedule, for example) can make you more energy efficient with very little effort on your part
- Sub-metering allows you to monitor your systems and identify any inefficient areas
- Your HVAC installation must be compliant with Part L of the Building Regulations
- Generate your own electricity. The Feed-In Tariffs (FITs)¹¹ scheme went live in April 2010 to encourage small organisations to invest in small-scale low carbon electricity generation
- Comply with the CRC (Carbon Reduction Commitment) Energy Efficiency Scheme. It's a mandatory scheme designed to cut CO₂ emissions in large businesses and organisations

11 Find out more about FITs at http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/uk_supply/energy_mix/renewable/feedin_tariff/feedin_tariff.aspx

What are you going to put into your new office?

MAKE ROOM FOR STORAGE

Consider how your storage needs are being met in your current office, and work from there.

Do you have too little, too much or is it just about right?

What do you need to store on site?

- Filing, both in general and for paper-heavy departments such as Accounts
- Documents and marketing collateral
- Stationery and office supplies
- Sensitive or valuable items needing to be kept under lock and key

What can be stored off site?

- Depending on your industry, there's probably a lot you need to store or keep a record of that doesn't need a home in your office

What other 'receptacles' or storage areas are required?

- Personal storage - under desks or in lockers
- Recycling bins - how many, and where?
- Clothing - not just for coats. If people need to get changed at work, think about where they can do that and where they can leave their clothes. Part of The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 states that, if people change out of wet clothes in your office, you're responsible for providing somewhere dry to keep them)

What are you going to need in the future?

FIT IN THE RIGHT OFFICE FURNITURE

In the workplace, it should never be style over substance. But fortunately, with a bit of research, you can have both.

What can you reuse, what can you recycle, and what do you need to buy new?

Do you need to buy new furniture? Depending on your needs, you could rent instead

Are you getting good value for money? Is a warranty included? What about delivery and installation?

Will it be practical and more importantly comfortable for your staff? If you can, get some samples from suppliers so everybody can try out and feed back on the options

Is it sustainable? What is it made from? Can it be recycled at its end-of-life?

What does it say about your company? Traditional or funky, what impression is it giving to visitors?

FIT OUT TIP:

If you're buying new, ensure your fit out partner has sufficient clout with furniture suppliers so that everything turns up on time.

RATE YOUR TECH

It's the perfect time to upgrade your IT and telephony systems. Make sure the infrastructure is there to support them.

General

- Are there enough power points, floor boxes and data points? Is cabling already in situ?
- Who's going to manage the move of your IT and telephony, and make sure it all works?

IT

- Where will you put your printers and faxes? Can you reduce the number of peripherals in use?
- Is there a comms room? Where will your servers (which generate a lot of heat and noise) be kept?
- Do you have a Disaster Recovery Plan for your IT systems? Do you need a backup generator?
- Is service and support provided in-house? If external, how will they get remote access to your systems?
- Have you thought about going wireless?

Telephony

- Are you with the best (and best value) telephony supplier? Once you've found the best deal, put in your order for the connection to your new office as soon as possible
- How is your setup working for you now? Look at what you have, how it's working for you and how it's not working - now's the time for changes
- What do you need? To keep your number, to add more lines, to add hunt groups (to ensure no call goes unanswered), to have call answering? Talk to your provider
- Are you changing your number? Make sure you let people know

FIT OUT TIP:

Do you need all that technology? You can save energy and hence money by reducing the number of peripherals in your office. Review what you've got, and what you actually need.

THE GETTING IT RIGHT, FIRST TIME

Everything's been ordered, the dates are in the diary. How can you ensure you get it right, first time?

Are you putting safety first?

SAFEGUARD HEALTH & SAFETY

Under the CDM Regulations¹², you are responsible for Health & Safety during the fit out. Make sure you employ a design and fit out partner who can guarantee not to let you down.

- Make sure you've got, and are familiar with, the Health & Safety file for your new space
- If you've chosen the right fit out contractor they'll be able to provide you with all the Health & Safety advice and assistance you could need
- Designers have certain obligations under the CDM Regulations - talk to your office design and fit out partner to make sure they are aware of what's required and that their designs comply
- Ensure all contractors receive an induction before they commence work on site - be satisfied they are aware of their responsibilities in complying with regulations, including:
 - Welfare
 - Working at heights
 - Dealing with asbestos
 - Access and parking
 - Accident reporting under RIDDOR
- Appoint a CDM Coordinator and a Principal Contractor if the project is notifiable (a project is notifiable if the construction phase will be longer than 30 days or 500 person days)
- If you're undertaking a phased occupation, remember that your employees will effectively be working on a building site. Review all your plans to ensure that you are not putting them at risk
- Monitor Health & Safety on site regularly to ensure you and your contractors are complying at all times

KEEP TRACK ON SITE

- Environmental & waste management
- Separate waste, and recycle where possible (it's getting increasingly easier to achieve recycling rates of over 90% on office fit out projects)
 - Keep a record of all waste that leaves your site. You're required to by law. A competent fit out partner will make sure you have the necessary paper trail
 - Dispose of hazardous materials properly
 - Ensure environmental compliance (including noise levels) at all times

¹² The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007

Managing the fit out

- Have weekly site meetings with your office fit out company and ask for regular progress reports
- If you can't do it yourself, ask your contractor to take site photos on a regular basis and include these in any reports. It'll make it easier to catch defects
- De-snag as defects are found
- Agree a sign-off procedure for changes

Are you ready to move in?

KEEP EVERYONE INFORMED

You can have a lot of fun finding ways to keep people in-the-loop. Use all the tools at your disposal (especially the free ones).

Put your fit out online

- Many companies are joining the likes of Facebook. Update your page with news about your fit out works - you could even upload videos of progress on site
- Tweet about it. Set up a Twitter account for staff, stakeholders and clients to follow, so they can stay in-the-loop
- Update your Intranet with news about the move. Got a company forum? Host designs and plans there, so staff can review and get a chance to voice their opinions

Talk about it

- Hold workshops to discuss designs, furniture, and talk about what's happening when
- Take staff and stakeholders on site visits where practical (and safe)
- Having a team meeting? Perhaps you could hold it on site

Write about it

- Create a staff newsletter, making sure to list key dates
- Update your website and send an email to clients letting them know you're moving
- Remember to get your stationery updated with your new address

PREPARE TO MOVE

Probably the trickiest part of the fit out is managing the move - especially of people!

You have enough to worry about, so put someone else in charge of making sure all the packing gets done

Make arrangements

- With your IT and telephony specialists - do they need additional time for testing?
- With your removals company - are you moving in phases?
- For sufficient crates for packing - do you have enough labels?

- For temporary storage off-site
 - For the removal of waste and recycling from your old office
 - For additional security - do you need it at your old site, your new site, or both?
- Make sure the key people are available, and nobody's booked a last-minute holiday
- Send a final update to everybody affected, so they know what's happening and what they need to do by when

GET RID OF CLUTTER

- Ask staff to dispose of any unnecessary clutter (the contents of your combined desk drawers could probably fill a small skip)
- Put old files in storage off-site or dispose of them securely
- Scan old documents if you don't need them in hard-copy, then recycle the paper
- Arrange removal of old furniture or equipment - if you're donating to charity, they may come to collect it for free
- Stock up on bin and recycling bags

DE-SNAG AND MOVE-IN

- Schedule a walkthrough with your office fit out partner to look for snags
- Arrange a final clean-up of the site
- Building sites are dusty at the best of times, and new carpets create a lot of fluff, so make sure everything gets a thorough wipe down or vacuum
- Test everything
- Moving will be disruptive enough to your staff, so to ensure 'business as usual' test everything, including the plug sockets
- Once you're happy, it's time for the final handover
- Put in your order for the necessary supplies
- Tea, coffee, biscuits... Champagne?

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

- Arrange a completion party for your staff and clients
- Take that long deserved holiday