

# Bells and Whistles – You Betcha!

BY LYNN DRAKE

## TALK TO ANY CHILD AND YOU FIND THEY HAVE A PERFECT DREAM FOR THE BASEMENT TRAIN SET OR THE EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO HAVE THEIR WII SYSTEM ROCK OUT.

Talk to a grown-up whose business is on the edge of expansion and you see the bright, shining eyes of a child. Every individual has a new perspective. Our job is to give the dream a roof overhead.

The first thing new clients ask about is rent price. Remember – this represents a fraction of the lease equation. You want the right price on the right space with a dollop of something more – that intangible something. If your firm is small but it requires a visible address, you may need space in a converted shopping plaza instead of a large office building. Parking is often ample in these plazas.

Amenities vary by location and type of business. If you are in a thriving downtown building it may be easy for people to walk to lunch outlets in the time allocated. If you are in an office/industrial complex in a satellite suburb, you may need a building with a cafeteria/sandwich shop to help people adhere to set schedules. If parking is difficult you may need assigned spaces. If you are close to an entertainment district, you may need a security guard to watch those spaces for the afternoon shift.

Think about the amount of traffic and the type of traffic your firm generates. If customers flow in and out of the firm, such as a mortgage brokerage or credit union, you want a first-floor location. If you deal often with the disabled population, you want clear access to doors and

elevators. You may ask management for additional handicap parking designations. If your sales force often cycles in and out of the building, you want to have an abundance of parking spaces.

When I went looking with my team for the right space, I dreamed of a gym close by and a cafeteria with healthy options, but that seemed a little unrealistic. We know for certain that the rent had to be affordable, the building had to have easy in and out because our team spends a good portion of the day working with clients at their location. We couldn't be at the far end of a hall in a tall building with a tiny elevator, no matter how cheap the rent. We wanted an open work environment.

What did we discover? Troy had an abundance of options for us to consider. We explored a dozen buildings, some felt too large and others too cramped. We narrowed our focus to office buildings of 20,000 square feet or less. Six buildings looked good, then we winnowed down to three – one large complex with an abundance of amenities and two smaller buildings.

Then we ranked the amenities. The large complex had a cafeteria while one smaller building would put our name on its external signage. We ended up leasing a beautiful office just 40 feet from a Life Time Fitness facility.

Not only would the gym help keep the staff trim, the building offers a great restaurant with affordable, healthy dishes. Once back at the office, we can find a parking place because a number of them are assigned to Compass Commercial. We are eying the unfinished space next door for expansion. We won't add the square footage to the lease until it becomes affordable through increased revenue.

Did we get a deal? The rent we are paying is significantly lower than market value. Would you expect anything less?

Please come visit our new office and tell us about your dreams. All your dreams. Don't leave out the bells and whistles. Those desires – like a gym – might lead you to finding the

optimal space and a healthier lifestyle for you and your personnel.

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