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"Top tips on leasing office space"

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- 1) Where to start? Write down what kind of space your business needs and make a list of priorities. Things to consider: do you need flex-use space with a front office for clients and a back area that can handle light manufacturing? How much parking do you need for customers or patients, and employees?
- 2) You get what you pay for. The average price per foot varies widely in the Grass Valley/Nevada City area depending on location, quality of building, type of use and interior improvements. Check to see what services your landlord provides and make sure you are aware of other charges or expense that will be charged in addition to your monthly rent. Maintenance costs can add up. It may seem great to have a handy landlord, but more costly (in terms of money and time – interruption to business) in the long run if their ‘quick-fixes’ don’t work. Does your landlord provide professional property management service so you can focus on growing your business? Reputable commercial real estate firms generally provide both, office space to lease and service after leasing.
- 3) What to expect from a commercial real estate firm. Commercial firms in a better position to offer top-notch service like customization of your space and the ability to grow with your expanding business. If you are considering customization of commercial space, it’s best to call in the professionals. Jeff Johnson at local firm, Pacific Land Enterprises, offers a free “needs assessment” consultation to figure out exactly what you need in your new office space. They have offices available for lease now and can customize these spaces, or build new offices to specifications.
- 4) Location, location, location. Do you need to be close to other services or businesses? How long do you want your commute to be? An in-town location may be more convenient, but may lack other services you need, like parking. Consider a location that is easy for employees to get to no matter where they live and easy for your clients to find.
- 5) Your office reflects on your business. The type of office environment that suits your business depends on your company culture. Older Victorians offer more charm than modern buildings, but they can lack some updates that might be important to you, like insulation, good lighting and enough comfortable space for employees to be content in their work environment. If possible, find a space where you can adjust the temperature to your liking. Find out the average monthly energy costs over the past few years and be sure to factor this in to your overall budget. If you need Internet access, is the space wired for DSL? If not, how long will it take to get it wired? Is the building wired for your needs - or will you need to install more phone lines? If you’re not sure, go to the source and call your local phone vendor to get your answers.
- 6) You better shop around. Before you get into your car and drive around looking for signs, spend some time online to get an idea of available inventory and average price per square foot. Some good places to look are www.grassvalleychamber.com, the Nevada County Economic Resource Council’s website (www.ncerc.org) -- click on the ‘business re-locator’ tab, or go directly to a commercial real estate

developer like www.pacificlandenterprises.com. Some also advertise in the Union, either in the newspaper or in the classifieds.

7) Negotiation techniques. Now that you've found your perfect place, it's time to settle on a total package, including price, service and any interior improvements or modifications. If your landlord or commercial real estate firm won't budge on price per square foot, ask for a move-in bonus. They might even pick up the tab for your moving expenses, or accept slightly lower rent in return for longer lease terms. Remember, it never hurts to ask, and keep in mind that you are about to embark on a long-term relationship with your landlord, so keep your requests reasonable.