

## Communications infrastructure as a marketing strategy

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The present real estate market to say the least is challenging to the point of distraction. Every tool in the real estate marketing handbook needs to be applied. One tool that should be part of a total marketing strategy is the "Communications Infrastructure" of a given site.

Internet access, voice and data communications are an integral part of virtually every business strategy. A site that can show strength in this area may have an edge over its competition. How do we define this "edge", and how do you present it? Before we can understand how to identify our options the following will provide a basic understanding of how we connect to the world.

Communities are served by switching centers called Central Offices, the connectivity to your location from the central office is done by technologies as copper cables, coax, fiber optic cables and wireless services either dedicated or mixed. The central office, almost always is Verizon owned, other telecom vendors as One Communication will co locate in the Verizon most often closing the "last mile" with leased Verizon services. These co location sites are networked back to the vendors' sites and to switching equipment owned by the non Verizon vendor. Cable vendors as Com Cast and RCN are another source for telecommunications services.

Over the last few years a number of companies offering wireless internet connectivity have entered the market. They however cannot serve all locations. If a site is not presently served that a site survey needs to be done by the wireless provider. Interference can be a major problem prohibiting coverage this can result from any number of factors as trees, RF interference to name a few.

From the street to the building, other than wireless, the above services can either be aerial, as utility poles or underground as conduits or mix of both.

Once in the building the service is usually terminated in a central area that tenants access to bring service to their areas. An existing site may have fiber and copper as well cable in the building, in this situation, identifying what vendor it belongs to, is it available for all tenants or was it brought in and paid for by a tenant for their use only

With the above outline as a base, the next step is how to position telecommunications' as an asset for the site. Let's take a step by step approach using the above as our guideline.

Research into the capabilities of a Central Office (CO) is important. CO's technologically not all the same. The type of switching system it supports, distance from the site, as well other telecommunications vendors that are collocated in the C.O. will determine what services and features a tenant can access.

Alternative vendors 'are a major marketing feature for a site. Beside Verizon, what other network vendors as cable companies and wireless providers will the tenant have direct access to, this not only will allow them to have a competitive choice for services and price, but also for redundant service options. Research should include who the vendors are what they provide and other factors as do they presently have a termination point in the building etc.

How services are routed to the site is also important, if land line services what you want to know is, the portion of the cable run that is aerial what sections are buried. Another piece of good marketing information that can impact a tenants decision is, are their alternative routes to the building so a failure as cut or lost pole will not bring down an tenants entire network.

Over the years I have worked with developers who invested in alternative routing at their own expense as a marketing tool. Finance companies as banks are particularly sensitive to having backup means of internet access.

Once network services enter in the building routing, protection and termination points help a tenant understand their options. This is important given the trends. As more individuals find themselves out of work, many of the people will start their own business. Usually, these people start off at home but at some point looking for small office space. Over the past year I have been approached property owners looking to take a large space or a building previously leased by one tenant, or property originally designed for a single tenant and break into smaller spaces. This also is trend I see with tenants' looking to sublet because of cut backs in their business. A few years back I worked with Devans Business Center in Ayer to design telecommunications for multi tenant buildings called "incubators" the purpose was to get small businesses that had growth potential into space from which they would at some point grow out of. Hopefully expand either in that site or another on site. This is thinking out of the box.

In conclusion, any advantage that can be taken over a competitor in this environment needs to be taken and one is telecommunications.

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