

Data Center Decommissioning Series: Your Project Plan

Decommissioning your data center can become an unexpected and significant cost. Not having a detailed plan not only will increase costs but risks as well.

With migration projects, the IT team is most often focused on ensuring a successful transition to another physical or virtual (e.g., cloud) location. **Herein lies the problem: no one pays appropriate attention to what is being left behind.** Having a detailed plan is vital. Here are some aspects that should be addressed:

Staffing. Don't use the same IT staffing resources from your migration plan for decommissioning. They will be consumed with migration work and will not be able to allocate sufficient time or priority to decommissioning. Instead consider leveraging facilities staff as decommissioning primarily involves work **they often manage.**

Assess. Assess the scope of the work that needs to be undertaken. Document what will have to be removed so that the extent of the effort can be defined. Will there be any IT equipment and how will that be disposed of in a secure and environmentally responsible way? Will the server racks be moved or left behind? It is fairly straightforward to determine the systems that are located in the data center. But consider equipment that does not reside there such as generators, ATS, switchgear, UPS/batteries, condensers, etc. Will communications cabling and wire/conduit from electrical rooms need to be removed? Next consider what, if any, construction work may be required to leave the space code compliant. If a fire suppression system is being removed, will a sprinkler system have to be installed? At the very least audible/visual devices from the building fire alarm system may have to be installed. What are the budget ramifications of these actions and will you need to request funding?

Sequence. Start with developing a high-level sequence. Assume as a starting point that the migration of all needed assets from the data center have been removed. This becomes the line of demarcation between the migration plan and the decommissioning plan. The first step is removing all IT equipment.

Leverage. There are data center centric contractors who understand how to safely remove and compliantly dispose of equipment. It may make sense, particularly if there is much work involved, to have a single contractor run the project providing a single source of responsibility. This should reduce the cost of the overall project, provided your contractor is passing along the savings.

Act. Activities your team should undertake:

1. Consider on-boarding a consultant whose sole focus will be managing the decommission. Your migration vendor may have that capability but not prioritizing it sufficiently.
2. Define the assets and whether they have value. Document the data center's features and the level of investment made. We've created a document called Data Center Facility-at-a-Glance.
3. If you are in a leased building, offer to help the property manager market the data center. Leverage your staff or your consultant by providing tours and answering inquiries. The least cost decommission option is not having to do any work on the space e.g., transitioning the entire data center to another company.
4. Do you know IT peers that would be interested in your data center or its assets? If so, reach out. Maybe your consultant has relationships that can be tapped.

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5. If it is determined that the data center must be decommissioned, immediately develop an initial high-level plan and timeline. Compare against executive expectations. Again, if you are in leased space, determine when the lease ends.
6. Get early approval and official sign-off of your decommissioning plan from your executives and, if applicable, the property manager. You don't want any late surprises.

Additional Resources

1. [Data Center Decommissioning Checklist](#) under Tools in our Guidance section - Fodere website.



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