COLOCATIONQUOTES

Data Center Migration Checklist

83 tasks in eleven phases to move servers and network gear into a colocation data center, from the first plan to closing the old site.

How to use this. Work through the phases in order and give every task an owner and a date. The timing for each phase assumes a typical move of a few racks to a few dozen; start earlier for larger moves or when new carrier circuits are needed. A free Excel tracker with the same tasks calculates due dates from your move date and flags anything overdue. Download it at colocationquotes.com/resources/checklists/data-center-migration-checklist.

Timeline at a glance

Phase	When	Tasks
1. Scope and governance	12 to 16 weeks before	7
2. Contracts and risk	10 to 14 weeks before	7
3. Discovery and inventory	10 to 14 weeks before	7
4. Target site readiness	6 to 12 weeks before	9
5. Network and carriers	8 to 12 weeks before	8
6. Design and documentation	4 to 10 weeks before	7
7. Backups and recovery	2 to 6 weeks before	6
8. Rehearse and communicate	1 to 6 weeks before	7
9. Move logistics	1 to 4 weeks before	7
10. Move day and cutover	Move day	10
11. After the move	Up to 30 days after	8

Red flags that sink migrations

Red flag	Why it matters
No named owner	Nobody can make the go/no-go call, so nobody makes it.
Circuits ordered late	Carrier delivery is often the longest lead time in the whole project.
Expired LOAs	Cross connect orders get rejected and the queue starts over.
No restore test	A backup you have never restored is a hope, not a plan.
No rollback trigger	Without a deadline to decide, a failed cutover runs into Monday morning.
Unclear liability	If the mover's liability and your insurance were never compared, damage becomes an argument.

Overlapping contracts unpriced	Paying for both sites longer than planned is a common budget overrun.
Undocumented systems	The box nobody listed is the one that breaks payroll.

1. Scope and governance 12 to 16 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	1	Name a project manager who owns the plan, the timeline and the go/no-go call, with a named backup		
☐	2	Name the migration type: on premises to colocation, colocation to colocation, or consolidation		
☐	3	Choose the approach for each system: lift and shift, parallel build, or a mix		
☐	4	List stakeholders, approvers and who signs off on the plan and on move day		
☐	5	Set the budget for one-time costs, double-running costs and a contingency reserve		
☐	6	Define success: allowed downtime per system, data loss tolerance and completion date		
☐	7	Pick the move window around business peaks, quarter close and change freezes		

2. Contracts and risk 10 to 14 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	8	Check the current site's notice period, end date, early termination fees and restoration duties		
☐	9	Sign the new colocation contract with a ready-for-service date and billing start tied to acceptance		
☐	10	Check hardware warranties and support contracts for rules on moving equipment		
☐	11	Confirm what your insurance covers in transit and on the new site, and what the mover covers		
☐	12	Write a risk register covering data loss, downtime, staffing, vendors, compliance and cost		
☐	13	Confirm the new site's compliance reports cover your obligations, such as SOC 2 and ISO/IEC 27001:2022		
☐	14	Decide which licenses are tied to hardware, hosts or IP addresses and need reissuing		

3. Discovery and inventory 10 to 14 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	15	Inventory every device with make, model, serial, asset tag, owner and location		
☐	16	Inventory every application, database and service, including the undocumented ones		
☐	17	Map dependencies between applications, servers, storage and outside services		
☐	18	Group systems into move waves by dependency and business impact		
☐	19	Record every circuit, cross connect, IP block and DNS entry in use today		
☐	20	Flag equipment to retire, replace or refresh instead of moving		
☐	21	Note equipment near end of support or with aging drives that may not survive a power cycle		

4. Target site readiness 6 to 12 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	22	Confirm power per rack, circuit type and A and B feeds against measured load		
☐	23	Confirm cooling for your density, including any liquid cooling and containment requirements		
☐	24	Confirm rack count, height, width, depth and rail fit for your deepest equipment		
☐	25	Check floor load ratings for your heaviest racks		
☐	26	Measure the delivery path: dock height, doors, corridors, freight elevator size and weight limit		
☐	27	Confirm receiving hours, early shipment storage and packaging rules on the data floor		
☐	28	Ask for a staging or build room to unbox and configure gear off the data floor		
☐	29	Load the access list for your team, vendors and movers, and confirm escort rules		
☐	30	Confirm remote hands hours and rates for move week		

5. Network and carriers 8 to 12 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	31	Get the new site's carrier, exchange and cloud on-ramp list and confirm with the carriers		

☐	32	Order carrier circuits as soon as the contract is signed and get a committed delivery date		
☐	33	Collect LOA/CFAs and order cross connects before their LOAs expire		
☐	34	Plan IP addressing: keep, renumber or get new allocations, and update allow lists		
☐	35	Plan DNS changes and lower TTLs ahead of cutover		
☐	36	Plan routing changes, such as BGP announcements from the new site		
☐	37	Stand up and test connectivity early, for example a firewall and switch in the first rack		
☐	38	Confirm site-to-site and remote access for the move team		

6. Design and documentation 4 to 10 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	39	Draw rack elevations with U position, weight, power and airflow for every rack		
☐	40	Build a port map for every cable, with patch panel ports and carrier IDs		
☐	41	Check total power and weight per rack against circuits and ratings		
☐	42	Plan cable lengths and paths so the new racks do not need rework		
☐	43	Label every device, rail and cable with a unique ID before anything moves		
☐	44	Photograph the front and rear of every rack as it stands today		
☐	45	Write build instructions for each rack and each device type		

7. Backups and recovery 2 to 6 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	46	Back up every system and configuration, including switches, firewalls and storage		
☐	47	Verify backups and run restore tests for critical systems		
☐	48	Keep a copy of backups off site and away from the equipment being moved		
☐	49	Update disaster recovery and failover plans for the move period		
☐	50	Have media and license keys ready to rebuild backup and core servers if needed		
☐	51	Write a rollback plan for each wave with a clear trigger and owner		

8. Rehearse and communicate 1 to 6 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	52	Run a dry run or pilot move with noncritical systems and time every step		
☐	53	Test shutdown and startup procedures for each application		
☐	54	Set go/no-go criteria and the time the call is made		
☐	55	Publish the schedule, expected outages and contacts to every affected group		
☐	56	Set up a bridge line or chat channel and an escalation list for move day		
☐	57	Freeze changes on systems in the move from an agreed date		
☐	58	Prepare customer and staff messages, including a version for delays		

9. Move logistics 1 to 4 weeks before

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	59	Hire an IT mover and check its licensing and insurance; in the US, check its FMCSA registration		
☐	60	Agree declared value, liability limits and who pays for damage, in writing		
☐	61	Confirm packing method, anti-static materials, shock protection and crating for heavy gear		
☐	62	Plan chain of custody: who signs for equipment at each handoff		
☐	63	Separate and label production, staging and development equipment		
☐	64	Confirm the truck, lift gate, tools, carts and spare rails and screws		
☐	65	Confirm parking, dock booking and building access for move day at both sites		

10. Move day and cutover Move day

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	66	Hold the go/no-go call at the agreed time		
☐	67	Confirm current backups and announce the outage start		
☐	68	Shut down applications, then databases, then servers, then storage and network, in the agreed order		
☐	69	Unrack, pack and log each device against the inventory		
☐	70	Transport with chain of custody signed at each handoff		
☐	71	Rack, cable and label each device to the rack elevation and port map		

☐	72	Power up network, then storage, then servers, then applications		
☐	73	Validate connectivity, services and data with application owners		
☐	74	Decide to proceed or roll back by the agreed deadline		
☐	75	Announce the result and the next update time		

11. After the move Up to 30 days after

	#	Task	Owner	Date
☐	76	Monitor systems closely and watch for drive, power supply and fan failures after the power cycle		
☐	77	Close or fix every issue logged on move day		
☐	78	Update inventory, rack elevations, port maps, network diagrams and DR plans		
☐	79	Confirm billing at the new site matches what you ordered and accepted		
☐	80	Disconnect old circuits and cross connects so billing stops		
☐	81	Sanitize or destroy retired media to your policy and NIST SP 800-88 Rev. 2, and keep certificates		
☐	82	Remove equipment and restore the old space as the contract requires, and get written sign-off		
☐	83	Hold a retrospective and record lessons for the next move		

Move day contacts

Role	Name	Phone	Backup
Project manager			
Network lead			
Systems lead			
Application owners			
Data center provider			
Remote hands			
IT mover			
Carriers			
Executive approver			

Sign-off

Checkpoint	Approved by	Date
Plan and budget approved		
Target site accepted (power, cooling, space, access)		
Circuits and cross connects tested		
Restore test passed		
Go/no-go: proceed		
Validation complete, move closed		
Old site closed and media sanitized		

Plan the new racks with our free rack elevation template and port map template, and compare colocation quotes for the new site.