

Local developer offers own Internet, phones

By [Steve Wartenberg](#) *The Columbus Dispatch* • Saturday February 14, 2015 5:30 AM

One of the first — and most important — items on the to-do list of a new office-building tenant is the acquisition of Internet and phone service.

A local real-estate development company is attempting to make the process much easier.

“It can be a long and laborious process, especially when you’re dealing with the large network providers who move at a glacial pace,” said David Bishoff, president of Columbus-based E.V. Bishoff.

Bishoff has created an Internet and phone network in its three Columbus office buildings and in buildings in Pittsburgh and Cleveland that tenants can pay to join. The company has also wired its buildings with a closed-circuit television system monitored from a central location to enhance security, and the network includes heat sensors that can detect issues with the air conditioning or heating systems.

“When someone signs our lease, they just check a box and we’ll have their Internet and phone service up in a matter of 24 hours,” Bishoff said.

This is what happened when Voices for Ohio’s Children moved into Bishoff’s Central Telephone Building, at 33 N. 3rd St., in April.

“Our Cleveland office moved at the same time and it took six weeks for them to get settled in with phone and Internet,” said Brandi Slaughter, spokeswoman for the advocacy group. “Within a day, we were set and ready.”

Bishoff owns and manages two other historic office buildings downtown: the Finance Building, 85 E. Gay St., and the Commerce Building, 35 E. Gay.

The management and leasing of office space is a competitive business.

“I don’t see this as a game changer, but it does set Bishoff apart as someone paying attention to the needs of the small-office user,” said Mike Simpson, president of NAI Ohio Equities.

“When a prospective tenant gets down to their short list, this may help them decide to pick Bishoff over another landlord.”

Not many multi-tenant offices provide such services. In most cases, tenants must contract with a service provider on their own. These providers, such as Time Warner or AT&T, must already have fiber optics in the building, or spend additional time and money installing them.

Larger companies that build their own headquarters buildings or lease thousands of square feet “want to secure their own dedicated access,” said Matt Gregory, a senior vice president of NAI Ohio Equities who specializes in office brokerage.

But for smaller companies that have only a few employees and do not have a dedicated facilities or tech department, the Bishoff service is a plus, he said.

“While I wouldn’t necessarily say it will become a trend, I definitely think you’ll continue to see more landlords give it a try,” Gregory said.

Bishoff specializes in renovating and managing historic downtown office buildings. The majority of its tenants in Columbus are small companies, legal or accounting firms and lobbying groups.

“We asked ourselves, why not, why can’t we have our own network and deliver telephone and Internet and a closed-circuit television network and have a hub?” Bishoff said.

It required creating a “spine” of fiber optics inside each building and contracting with an Internet and phone-service provider.

“The cost was several hundred thousand for our three Columbus office buildings and some of our outlying properties,” Bishoff said. “We partnered with one of the largest network providers in the country.”

He declined to name the provider, citing competitive concerns.

The cost for tenants is \$50 to \$60 a month, plus \$29 a month for each telephone handset tenants get from Bishoff.

The initial cost was worth it for Bishoff, which tends to hold onto the buildings it purchases and manages.

“A lot of portfolio companies buy and sell these office buildings in three to five years,” Bishoff said. “They’re not as attuned or involved in the atmosphere they provide to their tenants. We’re in it for the long haul.”

swartenberg@dispatch.com

[@stevewartenberg](#)