

DIRECTORY

SMEs seek flexibility

Serviced offices one alternative for small firms

Discouraged by inflation and skyrocketing rents - as prime office buildings in Central are reaching the HK\$200 per sq ft mark - small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) wishing to build their business at a prestigious address are increasingly using serviced offices.

Compared with medium-term leases, that often entail a commitment of one or two years, SMEs that aren't sure how much space they will need as the business develops can secure a short-term lease from one month upwards in serviced offices. There is no need for upfront investment to equip the office or hire an extra person to man the reception area, as there are a variety of options.

"We take care of [everything] like the reception [and] pantry supplies that are essential for doing business," says Chapman Leung, director of Jumpstart Business Centre with seven offices in Causeway Bay, Central, Tsim Sha Tsui,



Meeting rooms with conference facilities are available from Jumpstart Business Centre at its various offices.

Mong Kok and Kwun Tong, and a second office that will soon open in Shanghai.

Leung says clients can use one of Jumpstart's offices as a registered

address of correspondence, employ the company's telephone answering and forwarding service, or move into one of its fully equipped offices.

For an upgrade, the company offers "neo suites" at three locations, providing secretarial service, a four-in-one printer that also serves as a photocopier,

scanner and fax, a general phone line, plus individual phone lines for every work station.

"There is a mini-fridge inside the room, which we fill up every day, just like in a hotel," Leung says. "The size of our office units is relatively spacious. The pricing structure is simple; there is no compulsory entry or exit charge, or compulsory signing up to the virtual office after the client [has] left."

Meeting rooms with video conferencing facilities are also available. "Some SMEs may not have nicely decorated meeting rooms, or the [rooms] aren't big enough. Sometimes they hire a meeting room if they need to meet a visitor from overseas or use video conferencing," Leung adds.

The virtual office address plan starts from HK\$118 per month, while the serviced office plan charges starts from HK\$4,000 per person per month, and meeting rooms can be hired from HK\$100 per hour.

Leung says SMEs looking for a serviced or virtual office should consider the price and location, and be mindful of the small print. Charges, he says, can be levelled on an extra service, for breaking the contract or moving in and out, but they may not be spelled out clearly.