



Putting the Green into IT

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This content was adapted from internet.com's ServerWatch, InternetNews and EnterpriseITPlanet Web sites, and EarthWeb's EnterpriseStorageForum Web site. Contributors: Drew Robb, Paul Rubens, Pedro Hernandez, Marty Foltyn, and Jennifer Zaino.



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Putting the Green into IT

Let's just say for the sake of argument that your business is running at or near peak efficiency, your current business model is on or above target, and the organization is running smoothly. Even in this perfect scenario, the need to continue to push for improvements will persist and when it comes to IT, regardless of how small or insignificant a possible enhancement may seem, the effects are going to be compounded many times over.

So let's take a look at a few easy ways for us IT professionals to push for a greener, more energy-efficient work place.

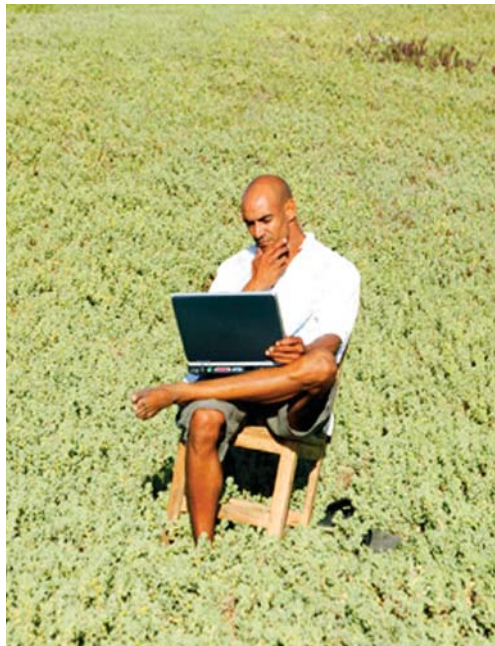
For most businesses there are many changes their IT department can easily make to move in a more efficient, or green, direction. Saving energy on electricity-guzzling items such as monitors, computers, office lighting, and server farms is easy and always a cost-effective method of reducing that dreaded carbon signature.

The savings on the energy costs alone stack up quickly, and can be supplemented by possible incentives, environmental conservation, and a positive image.

Studies show that environmentally friendly businesses also raise employee retention and productivity rates.

Office Space

Let's start with implementing an effective and easy-to-establish, company-wide policy. First, have all employees configure their monitors to turn off after 20 minutes of inactivity, configure the hard drives to turn off after 30 minutes of inactivity, and the desktop computers or laptops to go into standby or sleep mode after 70 minutes of inactivity (this gives you 10 whole minutes to get back from lunch or that hour-long meeting).



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Next, purchase Smart Plug Strips for devices such as printers, monitors, calculators, or typewriters that do not need to have power reach them unless they are being used. These plug-strips cost about \$10 to \$20 each and they can reduce the carbon output of your organization

by up to 290 pounds each per year. Multiply that by each office or cubicle and you can get an idea of how much pollution and energy your business will reduce by this simple investment.

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Finally, install motion-detecting light switches wherever possible. Replacing wall switches with automatic motion detectors is an extremely effective way to cut pollution and energy costs from indoor lighting.

This common sense approach to dealing with energy costs has other added benefits as well, such as sheer convenience and sleek appearance to employees, customers, and other visitors. Keeping the lights off when they're not in use can also extend the life of the bulb and reduce unwanted heat while keeping an average of 265 pounds of carbon per office out of the air each year.

The Data Center

Now that we took care of the low hanging fruit in our offices, let's see what we can do in the computer room.

While saving energy and reducing cost for the server farms, computer racks and other IT related apparatus may not be as effortless as clicking a button or even swapping out a light switch, it can be a enormous place to cut down on your overall carbon signature. And for anyone who didn't see the "Al Gore documentary," this is a good thing.

Since the top two issues for server farm efficiency are power management and cooling, let's start with the HVAC unit that you have keeping temperatures cool. Typically these are huge, redundant, energy-wasting beasts. The good news is these beasts can be tamed. So how do we improve cooling efficiency without compromising reliability?

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Most businesses cannot afford to go around upgrading their servers for the sake of preventing a few hundred pounds of carbon from escaping into the atmosphere each year.
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