Tips for Going Green
Posted by epearlman - 2010/04/21 10:23

The University of Wisconsin found a way to reduce printing costs and consumption of ink and toner. To do that they replaced the default font Arial with Century Gothic for their campus choice award since it uses 30% less ink. They say this is a "big deal" because ink accounts for about 60% of the cost of the printed page. They also decided, after consultation with their Technology council, to change the default font for Outlook across the campus, asking students and faculty to "think green." To find out how to do this, go to:

http://www.uwgb.edu/compserv/topics/CenturyGothicGreen.htm

Do you have any other "go green" or money saving tips to share?

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/04/22 20:05

Itâ€™s not easy being green. The idea of simply changing a font to be more green seems like a great idea. In fact, I was curious whether there was an even â€˜greenerâ€™ font than Century Gothic, so I did a little Googling and found out there is a fair amount of debate on the topic.

It seems Century Gothic is wider than some fonts, so depending on the amount of type being printed, the text could leak over to a second page â€“ wasting paper. Some argue that the type of font being used shouldnâ€™t be so much about how much ink is used, but about how clearly it can be read. The argument goes that if a document can be read clearly online, then the user is more likely not going to have a need to print it.

I think I might have to stick with tried-and-true Times New Roman.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/04/27 02:56

There are a number of different ideas out there that have yet to be found. When it comes down to it, a large number of little things can and should be used to "green" up each institutions operations being IT or otherwise.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by yoonsie - 2010/04/27 13:35

On a broader level, sustainability initiatives at companies are another, huge, opportunity for IT to demonstrate its value and exert some influence. If a company is to implement sustainability successfully, that's a whole enterprise-wide integration job, a major part of which includes systems to analyze possible outcomes and assess risk.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by caragarretson - 2010/05/03 13:59

Agreed that IT can have a huge impact on greening the company and come out looking like champs. From chosing hardware vendors that use environmentally responsible products in developing their wares to making sure old IT equipment doesn't end up in a junk heap, there are many ways for IT to have an impact. I'm not saying they're easy, or even cheap, but they're there.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/05/05 22:14

I know from my experience it would be nice for the IT department to have more of a relationship with the physical plant departments within companies. It is this relationship which can make the largest impact as the IT department can arrange the equipment installed and maintained by these other departments so that monitoring is able to sniff out problems before they occur and point out efficiency issues before a typical person would notice.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/05/14 13:27

I personally was amazed to find out that the so-called world's largest data center in Chicago was Con Ed's second-largest customer, after O'Hare Airport. In a city with a large number of huge commercial and industrial utility customers, that really brought home to me the impact that IT has on the environment.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/05/14 23:36

It is quite amazing to see how fast your can get the meter to go in such a small footprint.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/05/20 19:47

I have heard that manufacturing IT products generally requires more energy than they consume during their useful lifetimes. With that in mind, extending the life of IT products through upgrades, repurposing or some other approach might be the greenest move of all. You don't hear much about that, possibly because there's not as much money in it.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/05/30 00:48

I believe that as energy prices grow with limited resources (coal/oil) the emphasis on green computing will go up. These are all issues which we heard about 20 years ago and are still being shouted around. It is only recently that these technologies have come around to make a significant ROI shift. I look forward to seeing where this issue is in another 10 years.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/06/11 15:09

There's some low-hanging fruit to be picked when it comes to greening IT, for sure. It's not like automobiles, which have the benefit of decades of investment in improving energy efficiency, reducing emissions and improving recycling. However, IT is not a big overall contributor to pollution compared to lots of other industries. Data centers consume a little over 1 percent of energy in the U.S. So even if they all ran off site-generated solar power, it wouldn't amount to a big deal.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/06/12 16:21

Well the 1% number was a number which was estimated in 2005, I couldn't find a number which was more current then that, or a study that was done more recently. Considering even in that study (AMD), it was shown that the data center power requirements doubled between 2000 and 2005, one could only imagine what that number is here another five years later.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by izaman - 2010/06/13 08:56

I see four main pathways towards going Green:

1. Intelligent use of energy and information systems (â€œgreen useâ€•).

2. Reduction of waste, reuse and refurbishment of hardware, and recycling of out-of-use peripherals and other items (â€œgreen disposalâ€•).

3. Efficient design of data centres and workstations (â€œgreen designâ€•).

4. Informed purchasing of components, peripherals and equipment manufactured with the environment in mind (â€œgreen manufactureâ€•).

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/06/13 15:20

Great points, now if we could only get everyone on the same page. There are still people out there that consider their own financial condition of higher priority then the life of the planet overall. Such short sighted priorities must be overcome for these initiatives to be successful.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by epearlman - 2010/06/14 08:43

Great list. I would add that when disposing of hardware, make sure that the company you are sending it to is disposing of it responsibly and not dumping the equipment in 3rd world countries where men, women and children are dismantling the equipment and being exposed to life threatening diseases from the waste products.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by caragarretson - 2010/06/14 11:03

I agree that disposal is also an important consideration. Progressive companies today are taking the time to determine what of their old hardware can be refurbished, resold, or transformed into a commodity (ie some computer casings are being melted down and reused as Trex decking). Taking the time to do this can actually mean some profit, too, from the sale of the above. Perhaps not enough to offset the time and energy it takes to determine what to do with old hardware in

the beginning, but over time it might even out.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by epearlman - 2010/06/14 11:13

CioZone published a special report on Green IT that is worth looking at if you didn't read it when it was posted. Here's a link to it:

http://www.ciozone.com/index.php/Earth-Day-Special-Edition/Earth-Day-Special-Edition/View-magazine.html

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/06/14 16:53

I would think there has to be good money in the recycling of these products as there are s number of metals which are used in their manufacture. There will however always be those looking for an additional .02 on their transaction and willing to screw someone else for it.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by sediga - 2010/06/30 11:46

You also have to take into consideration the cost of â€œGoing Greenâ€•. If companies are trying to cut costs, and a â€œgreenâ
product costs more than a regular product, how do you justify the added cost?

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/06/30 11:59

With regard to the post that warned of companies that improperly dispose of e-waste, an increasing number of outright criminal organizations are taking such materials, exporting them and burning, burying or just piling them up and leaving them. It's very important to know who you're doing business with when you are disposing of e-waste or recyclables.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by epearlman - 2010/06/30 12:34

Yes, you raise an important concern that companies must know who they are dealing with when it comes to e-waste recycling. I recommend checking out the e-Stewards Initiative a project of the Basel Action Network (BAN). At their website you can a list of responsible recyclers.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/07/05 14:15

These are all good suggestions, we just need to be more and more forceful in order to get these ideas across to those who still need convincing. Remember, there are still people out there thinking the world getting hotter is no big deal.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by sediga - 2010/07/13 07:39

Do you really thing forcing a company to be green will work? There are always loopholes - most popular of which is moving offshore to a place that is less "forceful"
the incentive is $. At the end of the day, shareholders want to see stocks rising -
We need to make green products more cost effective than the alternatives. Take the lightbulb for example. The green version - florescent version, lasts longer than the alternative. For a large company that means less maintenance which means lower costs that directly affect the bottom line.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/07/19 15:45

Forcing IT enterprises to be green doesn't make a lot of sense, to me. If our societal concern is energy efficiency, there are far more powerful leverages to be gained by working on transportation, for instance, than by working on IT. If all IT were to be completely green, with zero carbon footprint, it wouldn't amount to much compared to the really big contributors to energy use and pollution.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by sediga - 2010/07/20 16:08

I agree --- my point is still the same. I was looking at buying a hybrid car a little while ago. The cost was too prohibitive. I had to ride my car about 100 miles a day for many years to make the dollars work in my favor. Considering that I drive less than 10 miles a day, I ended up just not buying one.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/07/22 11:33

Well the point is to both be innovative with these green ideas and make them not only cost effective but also easy to implement. While many investors do strictly look at profits many others (including myself) also look at long term stability and that can be part of greening a company and making it more efficient in terms of energy consumption. It just so happens that we are in IT so it is our responsibility to work on green issues within our control. Let the people doing construction design on transportation platforms work on their own green issues and we can work on ours.

I do however agree that forcing a green agenda or implementation without a real green benefit is a bit lacking. There does need to be some evidence of savings at some point for these implementations to be justifiable.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by yoonsie - 2010/07/27 19:57

Can IT play a role in educating people about the environmental impact of e-mail? I heard the most incredible thing on BBC the other day -- that a normal e-mail, around 5 MB with no attachments -- uses up as much greenhouse gas as boiling 17 kettles of water for tea. Every time people upload pics to Facebook -- that's data stored in data centers and taking up a ton of energy. All IT managers have to do is to encourage people to clean out their inboxes in order to get more green.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/07/28 14:16

I haven't found the BBC report, so I can't be sure what you're referring to. I have some questions. For one thing, does this account for energy *saved* by emailing rather than, say, sending snail mail, for instance, or hopping on a plane to deliver a message face-to-face? No doubt, we could save "a ton of energy" (whatever that means) if we all froze silently in the dark. I suspect that email is actually one of the more energy efficient ways to communicate. If not, what's best? How could we make email better?

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by yoonsie - 2010/07/28 15:40

You can listen here:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/news/2010/07/100726_data_wt_sl.shtml

I should have been more specific: By "a ton of energy," I refer to Matthew Yeager's statement in the story that the data-center industry is currently creating as much carbon dioxide as the airline industry. Yeager runs data storage at Europe's IT-infrastructure firm Computacenter.

I am not suggesting people stop using e-mail or that the post is more efficient communication. I simply suggested an opportunity to help people understand that paperless does not equal environmentally sound. "All IT managers have to do," I wrote, "is to encourage people to clean out their inboxes" to cut back on emissions from storing all that data that is idling in our accounts.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/07/28 16:08

I believe it's correct that IT uses only a few percent of the energy consumed in the U.S. Given that, it's hard to see how IT energy use can be a major emphasis. Unless I'm mistaken a 10 percent improvement transportation efficiency would be equal to giving IT a carbon footprint of zero. And I question whether actually storing emails uses up that much energy. I suspect that most email-related energy is consumed during the composition of the email, not its transmission, storage or display. During composition is the majority of time that most emails are open and being looked at. There's something about all this that doesn't add up, is what I'm saying.

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Re:outsourcing projects

Posted by erin96 - 2010/07/29 01:46

We at Sapience are one of the best and skilled at outbound BPO processes and web process/support. We have a dedicated and skilled team to do various projects and run both kinds of processes at a time. If in case you have a backend work, web process or voice based telemarketing or customer care process that you need to outsource, certainly we are equipped and highly skilled to run it!
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Partially used products have a way of collecting over time -- cluttering cabinets, countertops and drawers. Although it's always better to use what you have before buying new, if you're looking to switch to all-natural products or have had reactions to products in the past it can be hard. Rather than tossing old soaps in the garbage, you can donate them!
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outsourcing projects

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/07/29 23:28

OK, I listened to the BBC report and I heard the claim that sending a piece of email with a 4.7 mb attachment was the equivalent of boiling a teakettle 17 1/2 times. That doesn't sound right, obviously. And these two sources, admittedly probably not much if any more authoritative than the BBC interviewee, suggest that the claim is unfounded. Here, Symantec says sending a piece of spam email "emits 0.3 grams of carbon dioxide". http://www.maximumpc.com/article/news/whats_energy_cost_62_trillion_spam_emails. Next, another British news source says boiling a kettle produces 15 grams of CO2. Comparing a typical piece of spam, whatever that is, to a mail with a 4.7 mb attachment is dicey. But we're talking about a difference of 50 times here -- and that's only boiling the teakettle once. Boiling a teakettle 17 1/2 times would, according to this source, generate 875 times the amount of carbon as one piece of spam email. I could certainly be wrong, especially because I have compared data from different sources. But at this point I'm not willing to admit it. I call the 17 1/2 teakettle boils per piece of 4.7 mb email claim to be false.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by bugmenot - 2010/07/30 09:08

Going green is not dead! Itâ€™s the wave of the future. Please join us at

http://www.TheWorldFrenzy.com and share your thoughts and concerns today!

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/08/06 19:39

Well all of these numbers seem suspect. As well the amount of energy used to send a specific email with a specific size depends greatly on where the source and destination are and what time of day it is being sent. Trying to figure the average for this would be a fun one to calculate.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by sediga - 2010/08/09 07:38

This is a fun discussion to have, but keep in mind that power usage for electronic devices keep falling - and have bben for decades. The smaller the devices, the less power they consume. So, the amount of power used by sending an email is nothing but an exercise for EE majors as a weekend homework assignment.
The alternative is to turn off all the edge routers and see where that gets us. I believe that this would be an exercise in math: starting price - drop in stock price = what I have to retire on.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/08/09 17:24

My point is that these crazy-sounding estimates of energy consumed by sending email may be as crazy as they sound. What the real number is, I have no idea.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by sediga - 2010/08/10 11:22

Well, thatâ€™s my pointâ€¦ There are lots of these â€œreportsâ€• around with no ground or basis on facts and figures. No one bothers to check, because the numbers are â€œinterestingâ€•. I, for one, would love to see an unbiased report on some of these topics. But I guess the term â€œunbiased reportâ€• is an oxymoron to start with.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/08/10 11:46

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I looked in some of the obvious places -- Snopes, FactCheck, Politifact, etc. -- and didn't find any debunking info. But this seems like it's ripe for myth-busting, clarification or verification, as the case may be. IT should not unjustifiably be blamed for environmentally unsustainable practices.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/08/15 16:14

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Anyone have a bored EE siting around looking for something to do ;-) ?

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by sediga - 2010/08/16 12:41

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A bored EE is another oxymoron. :)

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/08/23 12:56

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I recently posted a blog on how one major company, GlaxoSmithKline, undertook an initiative to reduce the amount of energy consumed by PCs in its global operations, by taking a closer look at its PC power management settings. The ideal was pretty simple - it looked at the settings it was currently using to turn off unused PCs and monitors, and tweaked them a little so that the devices would be turned off sooner.

While the company should be applauded for the steps it has taken to save energy (and money in the process), I couldn't help but think, wasn't this something it should have been doing all along? It makes me wonder how many other major corporations out there haven't bothered to check to see whether their PC power management settings have been optimized.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/08/23 18:15

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Indeed. It's puzzling why more large companies haven't made similarly minimal efforts to go green. Not only does it give them bragging rights, but it also saves money, with a short payback period compared to many investments. I suppose it's a matter of mindshift more than anything. Once companies realize how much they can save (and gain) by doing things like modifying PC power management settings, they seem to do it and be glad they did.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by sediga - 2010/08/24 17:48

This is easier said than done. Consider the following scenarios: if the employees do not turn off the computer, then the IT must remotely. DO you think thatâ€™s a feasible? What if someone did not save their data? What if a batch process is running? Many PCâ€™s cannot go to hibernation â€“ what do you then? What are the security risks? (I actually donâ€™t know answer to this â€“ but I am sure someone can chime in). if you have a couple of hundred PCâ€™s, yes. If you have a couple of 100k PCs, then the name of the game changes. Or it will take a very long time to implement. Some companies have more foresight than others.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/08/29 14:02

It's not as difficult as it may at first seem. Most large enterprises do have systems in place that allow you to remotely manage the hibernation settings on networked PCs. When the PC is sent into hibernation, you don't lose the data or work that was in process - it will still be there when the user resumes their work. The simple strategy that was undertaken by GlaxoSmithKline was to look at the settings (in their case, computers and monitors were set to go into hibernation after 20 minutes of inactivity), and see if they could be lowered without impacting users. GSK found that they could indeed be lowered. It's a very simple strategy, that I'm betting a lot of organizations haven't looked at.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/08/30 00:43

That is an interesting idea, I would consider lowering hibernation timers if I thought the user base was smart enough to understand what was happening. Do we know if this was a problem when this setting was changed?

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/09/07 17:58

IBM has launched an initiative called the World Computing Grid. It's a volunteer initiative, where computer users provide access to their PCs' under utilized computing capacity to help solve humanitarian problems. Initially, IBM says it will offer up the resource to research efforts to develop new technologies for cleaner and safer water.

It seems to me this is a great way of making more efficient use of the energy being wasted on under utilized PCs. If we're going to allow our computers to run all day long - as, admit it, many of us do - it would be nice to know they're busy at work helping solve some of the world's most pressing humanitarian challenges.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/09/08 15:46

One question that occurs to me is whether donating unused computing time to the World Community Grid generates a tax deduction. A quick scan of the WCG website turned up no information on this topic. I'm wondering because it seems to me that going green is likely to happen a lot faster if there is a cost benefit to the corporation.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/09/11 03:27

Well this is certainly not a new concept, BOINC has been doing this for years.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/11/04 22:43

A study came out this week saying cloud computing will be good for the environment. The premise is that it is a lot more efficient to run and deliver applications from one large data center than for thousands of businesses - particularly small businesses - to be running their own servers.

The study was sponsored by Microsoft, which of course, is making a major cloud push. But the basic arguments seem to make sense.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/11/05 10:56

Any improvement in energy efficiency makes some sense. But the amount of energy consumed by IT, compared to other users such as transportation, is almost insignificant. An improvement of just a few percent in major use categories would make more difference than eliminating IT energy usage entirely. We have issues with energy efficiency, but IT is probably not a big one.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by srw134 - 2010/11/06 19:46

While it may not be a large factor now it will be as the we move into the future especially if we continue on the path into a true information economy (better or worse). It makes sense to start as efficiently as possible so it will not become a larger issue in the future.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by mhenricks - 2010/11/08 12:34

Sure, any improvement is good. But it's extremely hard to see how IT could ever come close to rivaling transportation and manufacturing as an energy consumer. In fact, it's hard to see how it could ever represent a whole lot more than a rounding error. So I think it's a good idea, as a society, to focus on the areas where there is the most realistic potential for gain, as opposed to those where even perfection wouldn't make a big difference. Does that make sense? Of course, for IT shops, IT is their only energy user, so it's different for them. They don't have fleets of trucks or factories to make more efficient.

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Re:Tips for Going Green

Posted by sediga - 2010/11/08 15:41

I agree; IT is not huge user of power and energy even with very large datacenters, etc. I donâ€™t think we come close to manufacturing. I do like the energy saving train we are on though, but mostly because of the fact that devices are becoming more efficient and more and more electronic gadgets are not wireless because of it; and thatâ€™s cool.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/11/24 12:04

Agreed. It's cool to have energy-independent or carbon-neutral data centers. My point is, as far as society as a whole goes, cool is about all it is: Energy-efficient IT is neither here nor there when it comes to our environmental issues. To reiterate, however, for the owners and operators of data centers, it's a much bigger deal. For them, energy costs are a significant percentage of operating costs, and any reduction flows to the bottom line. So it certainly makes sense for data center designers and operators to reduce energy consumption when it is cost effective to do so.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/11/25 20:25

I guess my point here is not to contend that IT is competing with these other sectors in terms of power usage but that this is because energy efficiency has been a focus with IT for some time. As IT personnel it is our job to make sure to do our part in terms of energy consumption, up to this point we have done rather well. My concern is that we not become complacent in this idea as time goes on, we must strive to continue to make our system even more efficient and as off the grid as possible (or at least off power which pollutes.)

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by sediga - 2010/11/27 19:22

I am not saying that datacenters couldnâ€™t be greener, but as far as I am concerned, IT is on the frontier of the green movement relative to other industries. There are many other low hanging fruits (automotive, apparel, chemical) that we can tackle to save energy.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by Mel Duvall - 2010/12/07 21:06

I see Greenpeace came out with a survey this week that ranked Cisco, Ericsson and Fujitsu as the greenest IT companies. Not surprisingly though, it said the IT industry still has a long way to go, citing "significant delay across the sector in turning potential into action."

Google won top marks for advocacy, but then had its hands slapped for its own energy impact. Greenpeace said Google did not disclose its carbon footprint and has not announced a greenhouse gas reduction target.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/12/08 17:17

That's an interesting survey, Mel. I have to wonder why, considering the insignificant overall contribution to global energy consumption represented by IT, Greenpeace makes such an effort to rank companies. One possible reason is the cool factor. Is IT cool and considered an opinion leader? Maybe. It may also be that, since energy is a relatively modest portion of IT's overall costs, especially compared to really significant energy users like manufacturing and transportation, IT companies aren't as sensitive to criticism of their energy use. They may also have more money to work with. Hard to say, but it is a puzzle why Greenpeace makes such a big deal out of Cool IT.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/12/08 20:25

As far as I am concerned I think companies in all sectors should be held to task when it comes to their energy usage, regardless of what their percentage of overall impact. Remember guys that a whole lot of small companies not paying attention to their energy usage can lead to a large problem overall. Yes, their are other sectors which significantly higher usage but we are not in them, and thus have little control on them other then advocacy.

-sean

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by mhenricks - 2010/12/09 10:28

Of course, we're all doing what we can. However, that doesn't explain why Greenpeace has a "Cool IT Leaderboard" but not a, say, "Cool Construction Leaderboard." Construction uses far more energy than IT, as do most other industries. Why highlight IT over other industries when, as we've established, IT's energy consumption is barely more than a rounding error in the scheme of things? It seems an odd allocation of resources.

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Re:Tips for Going Green
Posted by srw134 - 2010/12/09 20:23

Now that I would agree with, it would seem it would make more sense to make every vertical have their own list of winners and losers.

-sean

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