What is green IT, and how can it benefit your organisation?

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Did you know that the average PC uses 746 kWh of power every year? To put that into perspective, your refrigerator uses only about 500 kWh a year. On top of this, the more powerful the PC, the more energy it requires; a gaming computer, for instance, can consume three times the power a refrigerator uses.

What is green IT?

Green IT, commonly known as green computing, is the practice of recycling hardware and equipment, reducing waste, and lowering energy consumption in an enterprise.

Why green IT is important for every enterprise

It's simple! Cutting down on the energy your company uses reduces your energy bill. Not only is this great for your business, but for the environment as well. That said practicing green IT is a collaborative act; green IT needs to be framed within corporate policies and should be a part of the business norm to effectively work.

For example: On average, an idle PC using a screensaver consumes 0.082 kWh, which means this PC will consume 524.472 kWh over the course of one year if you factor in nights and weekends. Now, assuming the average cost per kWh is 10 cents, this one PC will accumulate $52.44 in energy costs over the course of the year. Multiply that by the number of PCs in your network—let's say 100—and that cost skyrockets to $5,244, which seems like a lot to spend on what will essentially be a nightlight for your empty office.

How to practice green IT

There are a few things you can do to achieve green IT in your business, starting with some IT policies and strategies that you can read more about below.

- **Green computing policies**

One of the first things you need to do is formulate and implement policies that help IT managers enforce green IT controls in the corporate network. Users should be educated on what green IT is and why it's so important. The green IT policies you create should be in line with government norms and should not interrupt productivity.

A more long-term solution includes checking new devices for the ENERGY STAR symbol before purchasing, and properly recycling old IT hardware and equipment that is not energy efficient.

- **Reduce paper consumption**

This is an old practice many of us probably learned in school. Employees can save paper by using smaller fonts, increasing their margin size, and printing on both sides of the paper. Of course, any time you can cut out the use of paper altogether, you should. For example, emails, online chats, and phone calls can replace many instances of traditional mail, which helps reduce paper consumption.

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- **Conserving energy**

Did you know that screensavers consume 25 percent more power than a monitor that's not using a screensaver? One of the best ways to conserve energy is by giving IT administrator's power to automatically shut down idle devices using a centralised PC management solution. Defining power schemes, turning off screensavers, and shutting down idle computers will go a long way in reducing your company's overall energy costs.

- **Server virtualisation**

Server virtualisation is another great way to reduce power consumption. Many organisations are already following this practice to reduce the number of physical servers in their networks. Server virtualisation can reduce both physical hardware costs and energy consumption. According to a study by VMware, "Every server that is virtualised saves 7,000 kWh of electricity and four tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year."

- **Desktop virtualisation**

Using a thin client to virtualise your desktop is another big energy saver. Since processing is done at the server end, these machines consume very little energy. On top of that, since there aren't any physical components involved, these machines consume much less memory space.

- **Using efficient displays**

Replacing old CRT monitors, if your company still uses any, is a more long-term solution to achieving better energy consumption. Replacing CRT monitors with LCD monitors can reduce your energy consumption by 70 percent. However, make sure you're replacing them with LCD monitors that use LED backlights, as these monitors are the most energy efficient. Another thing to consider is that not all vendors offer energy-efficient LCD monitors, so be sure to perform proper research on the products you wish to buy.

- **Telecommuting**

Many organisations are moving towards flexible work schedules and telecommuting for better productivity and reduced expenditure. For example, with fewer employees commuting to the office, there will be fewer employees adding to the daily air pollution, and you'll save a bit on heating and cooling costs, too. The more employees that are working from home, the more you save on general energy costs as well.

Start practicing green IT in your business and see how it can help you keep energy consumption low and cut costs for your organisation. BIG

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