

Energy Saving

Go green, save cash and boost your PR profile

INTEREST continues to grow in green computing and research shows that if the top 200 companies in the UK adopted greener, energy-saving IT systems they could save at least £305,000 a year in electricity costs for desktops alone.

Kate Craig-Wood of Memset **argues that ignoring climate change could not only cost you money but harm your credibility as well.**



Kate Craig-Wood

There are now over 1.1 billion computers in operation world-wide, collectively producing about one billion tonnes of CO2 through their electricity requirements. E-waste is a serious headache too with computers, mobile phones and electronic gadgets now accounting for five per cent of the world's rubbish.

So, there are solid reasons why all businesses should be going greener. Over 70 per cent of PCs will not be recycled when disposed of over the next five years and globally we will dispose of 512 million. We are now legally obliged to dispose of PC equipment properly, thanks to the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive, but this normally incurs a charge. Thankfully, there is a free and simple, if underused, alternative. Lots of people in the world are in dire need of our outdated computers, so donate them to the likes of www.computeraid.org. For safety, I would suggest you scrub your hard drives first (try dban.sourceforge.net). You can find more regulation information at www.netregs.gov.uk.

Respiratory disease

Each year more and more computers are purchased and put to use, but it's not just the number of computers that is driving energy consumption upward. The way we use computers also adds to the increasing energy burden. A recent study by Fujitsu estimated that the UK alone wastes £123m on electricity powering PCs left on out-of-hours. Burning fossil fuels generates most of our electricity and it also emits pollutants, sulphur, and carbon dioxide. These emissions can cause respiratory

disease, smog, acid rain and global climate change.

Travel, electricity usage and product manufacture all have a carbon footprint which is the quantity of greenhouse gases directly or indirectly produced as a result of those activities. Organisations like the CarbonNeutral Company (www.carbonneutral.com) and the Carbon Trust (www.carbontrust.co.uk) can guide you through offsetting and it is neither expensive nor difficult. Memset (www.memset.com) became the UK's first carbon neutral web host last summer, a move which has helped us win more business. An average small office with ten staff, for example, might have equivalent emissions of 20 tonnes CO2/year, which would probably only cost around £200/year to offset.

Cost Savings

A recent Guardian/ICM poll found that over half of those surveyed said they had boycotted a company because its products were damaging to the environment. Surely this is incentive enough to consider taking a few hours to review your carbon footprint which can also lead to some worthwhile cost savings.

There are many reasons for applying green standards to your business, new revenue opportunities, regulations, fear of a customer backlash, or the desire to act in the best interests of the environment. It is also good public relations giving you a way to distinguish your business from your less-environmentally friendly competitors.

There are some simple changes you can make in your business to reduce

your computer energy consumption by 80 per cent or more whilst still retaining most or all productivity and other benefits of your computer system and they are:

- don't use screen savers. If a screen saver image appears on your monitor for more than five minutes, you are wasting energy. A screen saver that displays moving images causes your monitor to consume as much electricity as it does when in active use.
- turn off your computer and/or peripherals when they are not in use. Turning on and off will not harm the equipment.
- turn off your computer at night and over the weekend or hibernate your PC at night if, like me, you hate rebooting and getting back to where you were each morning.
- unless you require immediate access to email or other internet services, break the habit of turning on all your computer equipment as soon as you enter the office each day.

As customers and investors push organisations to consider environmental issues, 2007 will become a pivotal year, with many more carbon-neutral initiatives being announced. Being more climate-friendly is not difficult for most SMEs and almost certainly helps. So, can you really afford to ignore the risks or miss out on the benefits of going greener?

MEMSET
DEDICATED HOSTING

For more information about Memset's range of award-winning web hosting solutions please visit: <http://www.memset.net>