



Saving on sins of emission

The greening of information and communications technology may seem overwhelming, but there are many ways to get started.

There are more than one billion personal computers on the planet and information technology generates as much greenhouse gas as the airline industry or about 2 per cent of the world's annual emissions, a United Kingdom emissions reduction consulting group, Global Action Plan, says.

Cutting greenhouse-gas emissions from information and communications technology can save companies a lot of money, and using ICT to deduce other emissions-intensive activities such as travel can save even more.

Better still, companies that take immediate action still have time to get the drop on rivals – most companies are lagging behind on greening their ICT, a survey shows.

The problem is that ICT is baffling enough without the added complexity of making it greener. While chief information officers are keen to make their operations more efficient and to use ICT to cut emissions, fewer than 10 per cent of them are responsible for any project to green their ICT divisions, a report released in March by Sydney consultants Connection Research shows.

The survey, entitled Green IT and Sustainability in Australia 2009, found that fewer than 10 per cent of organisations have set emissions-reduction targets.

It is not surprising – green ICT (like all other ICT) is riddled with off-putting jargon such as virtualisation (yawning), Enablement (nodding off) and CRT monitor replacement (fast asleep).

Put simply, the problem with ICT system is that companies are storing an explosion of data on servers that have to be kept cool, all software and hardware becomes slow and inefficient over time, ICT systems consume a lot of electricity and paper and, finally, ICT equipment goes out of date fast, is full of nasty toxins and is hard to discard safely.

Among the quickest and easiest solutions is to outsource as much ICT as possible. Macquarie Telecom sells its hosting service as a green alternative. Usage has grown fastest in the past three years as the environmental case gathers momentum, Macquarie Hosting managing director Adrian Tudehope need to stay efficient for the sake of their own bottom line and pass on the cost savings and green advantages to their clients. Macquarie's scale – it has thousands of servers – means it can pressure ICT suppliers for answers. 'When we embarked on greening our IT, we asked vendors what to do' Tudehope says. 'Within 90 days, we had saved 10 per cent of our power bill.'.....

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