

Green IT goes on hold for now

The recession has shifted power for IT spending away from IT managers and chief information officers to the chief executive or finance officer

That cyclical shift was identified in a survey of 1355 New Zealand and Australian IT decision makers by market research company **Connection Research** on behalf of CBS Interactive subsidiary ZDNet Australia.

Saving money and operating in constrained budgets were the main priorities, with IT budgets slashed and many short-term projects deferred.

There was still investment in some areas, such as moving staff onto laptop computers, and people said they were willing to spend on making their applications better fit their business processes.

It's not a complete lock-down. Money will be spent over the next six to 12 months on data centre and end-user hardware, web applications, network security, enterprise-wide information access, mobile computing and unified communications. Virtualisation, the process of abstracting computer resources, is also a priority as the technology to do it becomes more available and affordable. That could mean consolidation of servers or other ways to ensure organisations aren't tied to their existing machines.

Despite some hype around the idea, organisations aren't giving much thought to Green IT and carbon footprint reduction just yet. Reducing power consumption is seen as part of a long-term strategy, and will probably be built into the technology refresh cycle rather than being something people will go out and spend money on immediately.

The lead there will come from larger organisations, which typically have the resources to focus on such matters.

They're now looking at internal cost savings and IT logistics, and taking a more formalised approach to getting efficiency in their IT infrastructure.

The survey found small firms are focusing their IT priorities on customer and partner expectations, service responsiveness and increased productivity.

Issues like ease of management have dropped down the scale, perhaps because the technology is improving on that front with time, and gaining a competitive edge has also dropped down the scale, with only 55 per cent saying that was a priority for their IT spend.

With the decrease in budgets comes the need for a more thorough business case or justification for new projects. Small organisations have tended to defer projects, whereas larger organisations responded to the slow down by moving decision-making and approval to higher levels.

Survey respondents said the most likely projects they would be doing over the next few months would be laptop notebooks, new back-up and recovery systems and archiving projects, refreshing desktops, and increasing data storage capacity and virtualisation.

Server, storage and data centre hardware would also get a look in.

That could reflect the inevitability of hardware decline - there's only so much extra life you can get from a desktop before the lags start adding up and affecting productivity, not to mention worker morale.