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What is Green Computing?

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The Business, Technology, Innovation and Digital Media Blog.



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It is widely known and accepted that computers - and IT in general - greatly contribute to global warming. Through energy consumption, irresponsible disposal of hardware lacking biodegradability, and use of hazardous materials, corporate Information Technology departments are definite sources of environmental destruction.

The call is out for organisations worldwide to focus upon greening of their operations. While doing so positively affects the entire planet, your company must ensure a structured and goal-oriented pathway to this greening, in order to ensure seamless long term transition which will result in reduced energy consumption, intelligent disposal, efficient data centre design, and wise implementation of products manufactured with the environment in mind. Becoming green is both "politically correct" and an environmental obligation, but corporations must also ensure that the outcome produces a positive return on investment (ROI).

There are four main pathways toward greening of an entire organisation:

- Intelligent use of energy and information systems ("green use")
- Reduction of waste, reuse and refurbishment of hardware, and recycling of out-of-use peripherals and other items ("green disposal")
- Efficient design of data centres and workstations ("green design")
- Informed purchasing of components, peripherals and equipment manufactured with the environment in mind ("green manufacture")

Toward greening, ensure implemented changes and processes do not sacrifice five important areas of organisational obligation:

- Positivity of user experience
- Workflow efficiency
- Regulatory compliance and safety
- Customer or client satisfaction
- Return upon investment

In order to reach sustainability goals by travelling the aforementioned pathways and without sacrificing the five areas of obligation, management should initiate transition through a well-organised and interdepartmental strategy. Below are several steps to include within your plan:

1. Develop a comprehensive plan consisting of both immediate objectives and long-term vision. To do this, develop a three to five-year roadmap including current needs or advancements (such as telecommuting, energy efficiency and reduction of paper consumption), items for competitive advancement, and even a "wish list" of desirable, yet not immediately justifiable options. Don't focus merely upon things that will bring instant gratification. Remember to include strategies toward results that may require three to five years or more to attain, for future benefit. Leave room for technological advancement, flexibility, and scalability.

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2. Don't forget to include all of your assets within your plan. For example, when thinking of IT changes, consider the end user. How will the plan affect the human element within your business? While financial viability and sustainability are the desired outcome, without user satisfaction results will suffer. Employee buy-in is a definite requirement. Also, will the changes affect human resource needs in the arena of jobs, work hours and departmental structure?
3. Commit to gradual implementation. Make changes that will be enacted in phases, in order to ensure seamless transition and minimal affect upon clients, customers, general operations, and profitability.
4. Develop and utilise relationships. Network - in the business social sense - with peers in the sustainability movement, other organisations toward key and mutually beneficial relationships, and potential partners in advantageous relationships. Get to know the manufacturers of items your organisation requires toward development of a true green approach, then use those relationships to partner in pilot programs or other strategies that can cut your costs.

In the greening of your company, you will note many of the same obstacles as seen within any corporate strategy changes or implementations processes. There will likely be budgetary, structural, and human resource issues. To avert negative impact upon your organisation, develop the stance of engaging employees in the Green Computing future of your company. Allow them to voice concerns and feedback, as these changes will initially be uncomfortable for many (as are any major changes within a business environment). Enlist marketing personnel to aid in both internal and external corporate communications relative to what will prove to be beneficial changes and responsible advancements within your company.

Regardless of the size of your business, you are able to positively affect the future of the planet through simple changes in computing and structure of your IT environments. Whether starting small with cloud computing, reduction of printing and paper consumption, adoption of energy efficiencies, or implementation of telecommuting options, reduction of your carbon footprint can start immediately. Without question, Green Computing is the future - and perhaps even an obligation of the human race - to ensure the longevity of both our businesses and the environment in which we exist.

About the DAYWATCHER.COM blog

The daywatcher.com blog by Imran Zaman aims to make available free unique articles covering Business, Technology, Innovation and Digital Media.