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How Green is Your Office?

Business in the 21st Century is being pushed (sometimes kicking and screaming) towards environmental awareness and responsibility. This month we take a look at some of the green issues in running your office.

Since the start of 2008 five of the six big energy suppliers have announced double digit rises in gas and electricity. For most small businesses this has a direct impact on profits. There's no way you can pass this increase directly onto clients, at least not in the short term. So it certainly focuses the mind on the merits of operating a 'green office'.

What's in your office?

Before you dismiss this topic just have a think about the equipment that you use and add up how many of each item your business uses daily:

- Computer units ('Desktop' computers)
- Monitors
- Laptop computers
- Servers
- Printers
- Photocopiers
- Fax machines
- Telephone equipment
- Mobile telephones (and their charging units)

When you realise how much energy is used by the equipment in your office you might reconsider some of your office practices. The table below provides some recent estimates.

Device		Watts (approx)	Kwh per year (approx)	
			on 8 hours/day	on 24 hours/day
Laptop	on	80 watts (average)	234	700
	standby	45 watts	131	394
20watt energy saver bulb		20 watts	58	175
100watt light bulb		100 watts	292	876
20" LCD monitor	on	49 watts	143	429
	standby	5 watts	15	44
14" LCD monitor	on	18 watts	53	158
	standby	1 watt	3	9

Computer Equipment Disposal

Make sure you:

- Dispose legally
- Completely wipe the hard drive
- Dispose of only the parts you no longer need
- Consider resale or charitable donation
- Consider refurbishment before disposal

Links to help you become green

Computer Aid International

A charitable body that supplies refurbished computers to schools and other end users overseas.
<http://www.computeraid.org/>

Data Erasure

Data cleaning software which ensures all data, including commercially sensitive information is permanently removed from the hardware you recycle. An example is shown here -
<http://www.blannco.com/>

Legal Responsibilities

All businesses that use electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) must comply with the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations.
[Environment Agency - WEEE Directive](#)

Laser Printer	Printing	800 watts	2336	7008
	standby	46 watts	134	403

The first thing to note is the significant difference in energy usage between on and standby mode. So switching equipment off, when not in use, but certainly overnight is clearly a no brainer. But look at the figures for things like a laser printer – where even in standby mode it's using almost as much electricity as a 20" monitor in 'on' mode.

Does your office operate a strict policy of turning off all PCs, printers, scanners, mobile phone charging units and so on overnight? If not you can see you are wasting significant amounts of energy.

There are products on the market (such as the Intelliplug and Intellipanel devices) which automatically switch off your computer peripherals (printer, scanner etc) when you PC is turned off.

Using newer, energy efficient equipment may also form part of a 'green office' policy. Of course you need to think carefully about this to consider the full implications of your decisions.

The latest developments in PC technology are towards 'thin client' solutions. Thin client refers to a stripped-down computing device with much lower processing power than a full-blown smart PC. It is designed to work with a host server computer in a client/server computing model. Implemented correctly, it can significantly lower your operating costs, increase the quality of your support and reduce your risk. The key is assessing and planning your deployment correctly.

Green Disposal

For most businesses a 'thin client' solution would mean disposing of much of their existing hardware, which itself presents challenges from an environmental perspective. You must do so legally (following the WEEE Directive) – but you also need to make sure all equipment is thoroughly stripped of all data before it is disposed of. A quick emptying of the recycle bin is certainly not what is required. In fact it's a task that needs to be undertaken by someone who really knows what they are doing. All hard drives need to be fully formatted in order to destroy all sensitive data. In some companies formatting a disk is not enough, specialist cleaning functions need to be used. [Contact Bronte Business Networks](#) for more information.

Green IT – The Top 10 Issues

1. [Energy usage](#) – older equipment may be less efficient than the latest model.
2. [Production](#) – it is estimated that a PC generates 10 times its weight in raw materials at the manufacturing stage.
3. [Monitors](#) – LCD flat screens are much more efficient than old style cathode ray screens but there is a green argument that all equipment should be used to the end of it's natural life and not just replaced with the latest model.
4. [Packaging](#) – all has to be disposed of, including polystyrene, which you may have to pay separately to be collected.
5. [Printing unnecessarily](#) – we still seem to be a million miles away from a paperless office and things like double sided printing and central print management are not practiced by many companies.
6. [Heat](#) – servers and large banks of IT equipment in individual offices create significant temperature rises, in some instances requiring an air conditioning solution
7. [The stand-by culture](#) – screens, printers, fax machines and even mobile phone charging units are left on stand-by the world over.

8. [Buying green but not being green](#) – there’s no point buying the most energy efficient equipment only to fail to practice some basic green housekeeping practices
9. [Throw-away](#) - PCs have become consumables in the developed world with most businesses replacing equipment every three years.
10. [Legal disposal](#) – the WEEE regulations mean businesses must dispose of old ICT equipment legally.

About Bronte

Bronte Business Networks offer a full range of outsourced IT services, tailored to your business. Whether you are looking to install a new network, update your software, add to your hardware, need help maintaining an existing system or require an emergency response, you can be sure of a personal, professional and prompt service. To find out more how you can make the most of your IT visit <http://www.brontebusinessnetworks.co.uk/>.

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