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Delivering greener IT solutions

As demand for Green technology increases, Mathew Dickerson discusses several ways to help your customers make the switch

How Green Was My Cactus? You may remember that as the title of Australia's most popular radio comedy. The question often asked in today's environment is 'How Green is Your IT?' I am finding that more and more clients are asking about the Green credentials of the products we sell and asking about solutions that ensure they are making their contribution to the environment.

And client sentiment is not surprising – with our clients obviously a subset of society. A recent survey conducted across Australia revealed some staggering sentiments in relation to the environment. When asked what would be the first thing you would do if you were PM, the top response was 'address environmental issues'. Almost half of the population (46 percent) said they were prepared to pay more for their energy and products if it could be shown they were addressing environmental concerns.

Of all the concerns that residents of Australia have in their daily lives, the first was the economic crisis (understandable at the moment), second was the price of petrol, third was the drought and fourth was the environment. When the survey drilled down further and asked what was their top environmental concern, climate change topped the list.

Writing on the *Harvard Business Review* blog, Andrew Wilson commented, "People may not pay more for Green products, but they may punish products and companies perceived as not socially or environmentally responsible. Consumers still want quality, but they want it all. If you can provide a Green product at the same quality, you will win these customers. If you don't, they will pay a lot less for your product."

So where does that leave us in reseller land? How can we deliver what it is that clients obviously want? There are two ways to look at this issue in relation to delivering greener solutions to our

clients. The first way of viewing IT from a Green perspective is not to look at what damage IT products are doing to the environment, but look at how much IT is saving the environment. It might seem like a strange perspective to come from, but if you think about how you can use IT cleverly, you will see what I mean.

The most common method of commuting to and from work in Australia is the humble motor car. Approximately 75 percent of our residents use the car to travel to work, with seven percent travelling as a passenger in a car and nine percent using public transport. That is more than 90 percent of people burning fuel of one description or another every day just to travel to work. In terms of greenhouse gases alone, 27 percent of the average consumer's annual emissions (of more than 12 tonnes) is linked to the car.

So if we take the approach that we can reduce the use of the motor car by utilising IT in better ways, we have a strong argument for replacing the motor car with the much more environmentally friendly computer.

Take as a couple of simple examples the idea of encouraging your clients to set up telecommuting in such a way that all employees work from home just one day per fortnight. That would immediately reduce commuter traffic by nine percent. That would be nine percent less fuel burnt to arrive at the same outcomes for businesses. Not only would that be an environmental boon, but it would reduce pressure on road infrastructure and businesses could even rent smaller premises.

Then you could start to view other methods to reduce the use of vehicles. There is a meeting across town. Could we do that with a phone conference or a video conference? We need to perform some work on a client's computer system. Could we use remote access tools instead of having a technician travel on site? So

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instead of seeing IT as detrimental in the environmental sense, by looking at it from a different perspective, you can actually see ways of showing IT as an environmental saviour.

The second way to look at Green computing is then to drill down to see what specific products and technologies can be used that are friendlier to the environment.

We have just participated in a case study with Intel to demonstrate the power of something as simple as using Intel vPro technology. We set up a simple test environment at a client's site to compare the usage of vPro using all the associated benefits with that technology against a standard PC. The results from one computer were amazing. Power usage was cut by 68 percent (a reduction of 554kWh per year), power bills were cut by \$120.87 per year and the replacement of one computer alone was the equivalent of taking one car off the road for 37 days. Translated to all 50 computers across this client's network, the results were even more amazing. Making one technology change resulted in \$6000 of power savings which would reduce carbon emissions by 27.7 tonnes – the equivalent of taking 5.07 cars off the road permanently. This is all achieved just by replacing the computer.

You might still have a client with some CRT monitors left on 24 hours a day. If you sell them a new LCD screen and change settings to power it down after a certain period of inactivity, one monitor alone could save \$76 a year in power, helping reduce carbon emissions by 272kg a year – the equivalent of taking one car off the road for 23 days. After three years they have almost paid for the outright cost of the new monitor in power savings.

With tough economic times ahead, our clients want to make sure they are gaining value from every dollar. Let me hear more of your ideas at mathew.dickerson@smallbusinessrules.com

