

HOW TO CONDUCT AN OFFICE ENERGY REVIEW

BY ROBERT MAY

IT IS official, 2007 is the year of Green IT. The government WEEE directive (The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive) will become law in January 2007 and rolled out in stages until July 2007. The aim is to minimise the impact of electrical and electronic goods on the environment, by increasing re-use and recycling and reducing the amount of WEEE going to landfill.

The WEEE directive will affect all businesses when they need to dispose of EEE assets, but there are many other practical steps that companies large and small can and should start looking at in order to reduce their company's burden on environment, as well as the bank balance, especially as the cost of energy looks set to continue climbing next year.

In any business, a number of audits, reviews and stock takes will take place to ensure its affairs are in order and the same should be true of its energy usage and requirement. Here is an Energy Review checklist, many items of which can be done immediately whilst others will need to be implemented over time, as part of the overall business culture. All will have a direct impact on reducing energy use and costs without impacting performance.

CONDUCTING AN ENERGY REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTING AN ENERGY POLICY

1. Ensure all employees are energy aware. In the home most people will turn off lights and switch the television off when it is not being watched, similar practices should be introduced in the workplace. Ensure that all non-essential PCs, monitors, television screens, scanners and printers are shut down over night, or during periods of premises closure.
2. Only switch on the PCs and equipment that are being used regularly.
3. Review printing and photocopying requirements. Are employees unnecessarily printing out emails or documents? Recent figures suggest that a typical office document is printed 19 times. Do you require hardcopies of documents for filing archives or could you implement or improve your electronic archiving? Ensure that any printing that is required is done using recycled paper and have a recycling scheme in place to dispose of paper waste.
4. When you are considering replacing or investing in new technology from mobile

phone to new server, firstly ask the question 'Is it necessary?' If it is required, look for the increasing number of energy efficient products, such as the range produced by Dell (www.dell.co.uk). These are not necessarily more expensive and you will recoup the costs in reduced energy usage. Of course you will need to ensure that the disposal of EEE is compliant with the WEEE directive. Full details concerning WEEE can be found at: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk>.

5. Review software and Internet capabilities. The popularity of broadband, online applications, VoIP and MSN has skyrocketed making it easier for employees to work from home, reducing fuel consumption and CO₂ emissions on the daily commute. Similarly, consider whether long distance or overseas business meetings are always necessary, can they be conducted via webinar or conference call?
6. Look at recent energy bills, can the supplier be switched to a lower cost or more environmentally friendly source?

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