

## GREEN IT

Paul Briggs looks at the dangers of climate change and IT's role in saving the planet

# The digital revolution needs an energy revolution

**T**he IT industry is contributing to a rise in greenhouse gasses that if unchecked, will displace millions of people by 2100 as sea levels rise. New York could disappear with a 0.4m rise in sea levels, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

These stark, inconvenient truths were part of the message from Schneider Electric, which used the UN World Environment Day on 5 June to declare a "war on waste" against inefficient IT. The energy management company is promoting a concept it calls Ecostructure, which aims to help the IT, construction and utility industries promote efficiency and reduce carbon emissions and power consumption.

Chief marketing officer Aaron Davis says the digital revolution requires an energy revolution. "Last year, humans produced more transistors than rice (and at a lower cost)." This is causing unprecedented power demands. Always-connected devices, such as Blackberries, each place a power load on the server equivalent to 60 light bulbs, he says.

But with changes in behaviour and good system design, Davis argues that IT leaders can use energy intelligently to reduce the 30% of power typically wasted in datacentres.

Neil Rasmussen, chief innovation officer for IT business at Schneider Electric, says, "Every person and every business is going to be affected by the energy challenge."

"The good news is that we have a lot of energy sources that will last for many generations. The bad news is that if we use them, there is some argument that we might destroy the planet in a few generations."

Calculations show that 28 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> is injected into the atmosphere every year. This is based on a population of 6.8 billion people with a GDP of \$8,000 generating half



Melting ice caps: New York could be flooded by a 0.4m rise in sea levels

a tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> for every \$1,000 of GDP.

"We see that in 2050, if we don't change our technology 54 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> will be released into the atmosphere every year, simply because of the increase in population and the increase in GDP around the world," Rasmussen warns.

The best analysis suggests that we have to "hold the line at 450ppm" of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere to guarantee that we do not have massive climate change and melting of the polar caps and ice sheets in Greenland. Rasmussen claims technology has to decarbonise and reduce emissions per GDP by a factor of 10 to hold the line.

US energy secretary Steven Chu agrees. "The most dramatic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will come from energy efficiency and conservation," he says.

But one of the problems facing IT managers, CIOs and CEOs is that they do not have a good handle on their consumption of power, what they need to do to reduce it, or how they can save costs. Added to the lack of information there is also the general feeling that inefficient IT is not broken so therefore not at the top of many fix lists.

For example, APC, the power supply arm of Schneider Electric, has developed a suite of online tools such as power consumption calculators and carbon calculators, to give IT managers, CEOs and end-users some metrics and parameters to understand what their energy consumption is and where savings can be made.

Andy Lawrence, research director for eco efficient IT at analyst 451, says, "When you go inside companies, the awareness of the decisions companies make about carbon emissions is low."

"There needs to be better awareness in the IT, construction and energy industries of energy costs that feeds its way back up to the CEO. This awareness of the energy implications does not have to be perfect; it just has to be there."

Greenpeace international climate campaigner Melanie Francis says, "The majority of IT companies talk big about 'going green', rather than giving any real evidence of how their software and hardware is actually reducing emissions. It is high time they put their money where their mouths are and deliver real evidence of their solutions in action." ●

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## IT SERVICES

## Gartner: how to slash cost of IT support

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**B**usinesses are paying more than they need to for support, particularly for virtualised datacentres, research director Rob Addy told last week's Gartner Outsourcing & IT Services Summit.

Virtual datacentres have been engineered for high availability, he says. "If you have spent millions on high availability, you don't need high levels of support."

IT departments use clustered and virtualised environments to run critical systems, and CIOs often buy support contracts offering a response time of under two hours. But Gartner has found that those with a four-hour contract benefit from an average response time of just over two hours.

It makes little sense buying a two-hour contract when the cheaper four-hour contract offers similar results, says Addy. He also urges users to consider next-day response, which would cut support costs by 25%.

IT departments can make bigger savings by using open source software. "You don't need a brand new copy of AutoCAD to make an office plan," says Addy. Instead, use free software and open source alternatives for tasks like PDF printing, compression, database tools and discovery tools.

CIOs should consider using approved channel partners rather than buying support contracts directly. Gartner says this can save between 30% and 60% on buying direct.

In ERP, there are no viable channel partners, says Addy. But even though Oracle and SAP charge 22% for support, Addy says CIOs can still make savings. Users can opt for "pseudo partner" status if they are negotiating a major ERP contract.

"It is the best kept secret in the industry that by demanding pseudo partner status, you can reduce your support fees by as much as 60%." ●

Seven ways to make datacentre savings  
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