



BUSINESS TECH

VENDORS RACING TO GO GREEN

A group of firms has launched an initiative to improve the power efficiency of computers by 50pc by 2010, Ian Grayson reports

RESPONDING to the growing desire of businesses to go green, technology vendors are racing to launch products aimed at helping lower corporate carbon footprints.

Makers of everything from computers and printers to monitors and networking gear are all out to convince would-be customers of their environmental credentials.

However, anyone selecting office equipment based on this criterion needs to dig beyond marketing

The PC wastes half the power it uses

messages and check the true benefits on offer. Just slapping a label on a box and calling it green doesn't necessarily make it so.

Earlier this month, a group of major IT companies launched the Climate Savers Computing initiative in Australia. Climate savers president Lorie Wigle says the group's objective is to improve the power efficiency of computers by 50 per cent by 2010.

"The average desktop PC wastes nearly half the power it pulls from the wall as heat," she says. "As vendors we are focusing on finding ways to change this."

Wigle says business IT users need to take into account metrics such as power usage, expected lifespan and the ability to recycle or reuse equipment at the end of its working life. "This helps you do good things for the planet, but at the same time good things for your bottom line," she says.

Some of the current crop of office IT equipment with environment-friendly aspects are featured here.

Dell Vostro 410 Desktop PC [RRP: From \$1399]

FOR anyone keen to reduce resource consumption, desktop personal computers are a good place to start. Usually turned on for long periods, they tend to be some of the biggest users of electricity in the office.

Until recently manufacturers have focused on features and performance rather than power usage when marketing their offerings. However, this is changing and many are keen to explain how new designs can make big differences to electricity consumption.

One example is Dell's new Vostro 410 desktop PC. Designed specifically for small offices, the unit has a number of features that can reduce the power it uses.

The computer is built around an Intel Core 2 Quad processor chip that provides sufficient grunt to undertake heavy office computing.

Dell says the chip reduces power consumption because it gives more computing performance per watt of power used.

However, even if this is the case, the actual consumption of the processor will be determined by what the computer is being used to do.

If you're editing video or crunching large spreadsheets, you're going to draw more power than if you're simply reading emails.

The PC also has in-built power management features that turn parts off when not required and put the machine into a suspended mode when it hasn't been used for a pre-determined period of time.

Dell claims its internal tests have shown the machine's power consumption can be reduced by up to 47 per cent by making use of these features.



D-Link Green Ethernet 8-port network switch
[RRP: \$130]

Networking equipment tends to be a “set and forget” item in most offices. Once installed, it sits quietly in a corner transporting data between computers, printers and other devices.

But despite its low profile, routers, switches and modems consume power. And, because it’s rarely turned off, this consumption adds up over time.

With this in mind, networking company D-Link has released a range of so-called Green Ethernet

network switches it claims can save significant amounts of power compared with traditional units.

The eight-port model is easy to install and suits a small or home office. The Green Ethernet features allow the unit to intelligently sense whether a computer or peripheral is connected to each of its ports. If nothing is connected, the port is automatically put into a sleep mode, saving more than 40 per of the power that port usually consumes.

The switch also detects the length of any network cables connected to it and adjusts its power settings to suit. Shorter cables require less power to transmit data and so full power is reserved for longer cable runs.

The unit runs efficiently with no difference noticed in performance compared with a non-green alternative.

The only place you’ll see a difference is on your power bill.





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Fuji Xerox Phaser 8560MFP multi-function printer (RRP: \$4178)

PRINTERS are a notorious source of waste in many offices, churning through reams of paper and swallowing expensive cartridge and ink sets.

But with the promise of the paperless office still eluding the business world, they remain a necessary piece of equipment.

The Fuji Xerox Phaser 8560MFP multi-function printer is based on solid-ink technology, something not commonly seen in the printer world.

Rather than using liquid inks or toner cartridges, the device uses

blocks of ink that allow it to print either black and white or full colour materials. New ink blocks can be added at any time, allowing levels to be recharged before a big print job.

The blocks are melted by the printer and sprayed onto a drum which in turn prints the image on to the paper.

The operation is similar to that of an offset printing press. The company promotes the machine as a “green” printer because this process dramatically reduces the wastage caused by consumables.

Fuji Xerox estimates that to create 100,000 prints, a traditional colour laser printer would produce 70kg of waste, while a solid-ink printer would produce just over 2kg of waste.

The 8560MFP can print both black-and-white and full colour at speeds of up to 30 pages per minute. It can also handle scanning and faxing as well as connecting to your office computer network. It would be a good choice for a small office that needs to cost-effectively produce quantities of colour brochures or documents. But its price means it probably won't suit those with smaller printing demands.

