

Every little helps

Climate change is clearly a big concern these days as scientists and experts are flying all over the world to present papers on why we should refrain from using aeroplanes. Is the security industry joining the green revolution?

Since the film "The Day After Tomorrow" the mainstream public has been aware of the threats associated with climate change. Yet while predictions of rising oceans and adverse weather conditions make great subject matter for blockbuster movies, the scheme to make everyone greener has appeared to have taken the western world by storm.

You can now assess your carbon footprint online and, like me, you'll probably find out that you are solely responsible for the hole in the ozone layer over Australia because you have a 100W light bulb in your lounge (as the website you chose to assess your footprint on sells energy efficient light bulbs!). Of course there are many companies cashing in on the green agenda but the world is a changing place in regard to climate awareness, particularly as governments have realised that this issue raises the possibility of some cunning new taxes.

In our everyday life we can make a few subtle changes to lessen our usage of electricity and lessen our carbon impact, but is the security industry ready to embrace the issue or are we still at the stage where mixed messages are the order of the day?

I suppose the first port of call for going green in the security sector involves those areas where we use the most electricity such as data centres and IT in general. There's not a lot your average security guard can do during his day to reduce carbon emissions (unless we're talking greenhouse gas: and he's on a vegetarian diet). And as a result of the growing awareness of the impact of banks of PCs and servers we are indeed seeing a rise of the inclusion of the green angle into sales literature from data centres and data equipment manufacturers/suppliers.

Last month in Risk UK we met up with a data storage company that uses electricity from a wind farm in order to be able to claim that it is running on zero carbon energy. More and more of the announcements from the IT sector include the green message as they hope to appeal to the carbon aware members of the industry. Since the 80s, being green and being seen to be green has been considered as good publicity.

Recently we had the Data Storage Expo event in London and again the green issue was at the forefront of some people's presentations. One announcement from the exhibition showed that European businesses are overtaking taking the US in the drive for greener data centres. In a survey by ONStor, it was shown that 72% of European businesses have either already implemented a green initiative, or would adopt one in 6 months to 2 years. Although this is a good start for Europe, for the US it is not so rosy. 60% of US businesses have implemented a green initiative, but a massive 40% said this issue had not even been discussed, despite the serious environmental and business issues involved.

Many companies are still reliant on expensive and power-hungry data storage systems, which they are likely to struggle with as their data grows. Some are still not even thinking about changing their current systems, for example 29% of European businesses have not even begun to discuss greening the data centre, and neither have a whopping 40% of US respondents.

The survey showed that one of the best incentives to go green is the prospect of saving money. Nearly 40% of US respondents reported that a 20%-50% saving in cost would encourage them to go green. However, European companies are less likely than their US counterparts to make green policies contingent on cost savings, with over a third agreeing that a saving of up to 20% would be enough of an incentive.

I'm certainly glad to know then that while I do my bit and replace all my light bulbs with (expensive) energy saving models that some businesses are still only prepared to save the planet if they can save some money. Of course companies need to remain productive and have enough problems as it is, and you could argue that it's not the role of the security industry to secure the environment for our future generations, but every little helps.

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