

What CISCO'S Energywise Technology Means To Green IT



To date, IT pros have given very little attention to the “greening” of the network. Why? Three words: follow the money. According to recent Forrester research, the top motivation for pursuing Green IT is to “reduce the energy-related costs of operating IT.”

And when compared to other IT energy-drawing assets – like servers, data center cooling or PCs – the energy consumption of the network falls at the bottom of the list, meaning that the ROI to reduce energy use is less compelling.

But the launch of Cisco's EnergyWise technology is likely to raise the “greening” status of the network. EnergyWise is a free software upgrade to Cisco's entire line of Catalyst switching gear. The technology allows customers to monitor, manage and ultimately reduce energy consumption of anything “connected” to the network. As Cisco describes, EnergyWise will evolve over three phases, adding new functionality with each iteration:

In the first phase (February 2009), Network Control, Cisco EnergyWise will be supported on Catalyst switches and manage the energy consumption of IP devices such as phones, video surveillance cameras and wireless access points.

In the next phase (Summer 2009), IT Control, there will be expanded industry support of EnergyWise on devices such as personal computers (PCs), laptops and printers.

In the final phase (Early 2010), Building Control, Cisco EnergyWise will be extended to the management of building system assets such as heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), elevators, lights, employee badge access systems, fire alarm systems and security systems.

So what does Cisco's EnergyWise technology mean to the network's role in Green IT?

- Position the network as foundational to Green IT
- Encourage IT's role as the Energy Czar
- Foster the Green IT 1.0 to 2.0 transition

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While this is all well and good, culture and budgetary ownership still stand in the way of a more energy efficient, network-enabled world. As Kenneth Brill, founder and executive director of the Uptime Institute explains in a recent Computerworld article on the topic of IT's role in energy efficiency, "It's been a lot of talk but little action." And because most IT shops today are not responsible for paying their energy-related operating expenses, there has been little incentive to make the investment in time or capital to minimize energy consumption within or outside of IT.

But there is a bright spot. First, recent Forrester data reveals that, while less than 10% of IT organizations pay for their electricity costs, 63% have responsibility for managing and reducing energy costs. And second, IT budgets are aligning to this. Recent data from Forrester's "Making I&O Investments To Save The Business" shows that “reducing facilities costs” is the top category where IT pros are revising spending as a result of the current recessionary climate.

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