

Singing a Green Song

By Bob Brown

Most IT vendors have been talking about being green for a long while and some have actually been doing something about it – albeit rather quietly. The time for hiding one's light under a bushel is definitely over and vendors are now beginning to spend real marketing money on establishing their green credentials.

The most recent surge in energy prices has certainly focused the minds of vendors on environmental issues, such as driving down the energy consumption of IT products. What started a long time ago, primarily as the means to extend battery life, has now become a key metric of competitive advantage when so much of the data centre cost is dictated by the energy bill. This has two components of course – the cost of running the systems and the cost of all the cooling plant that is required to dispose of all the unwanted heat, which is the unavoidable by-product.

It is perfectly reasonable that the IT industry adopts those aspects of the green agenda that have the greatest resonance and also payback for the customer and will thus hopefully lead to competitive advantage for the vendor. It is simply a return on investment calculation. This does mean that when you consider an IT or an electronics company holistically, there is usually a great deal that still needs to be done before they truly represent a sustainable business model. Initiatives like eliminating excessive packaging and more genuine efforts to recycle and re-use materials spring to mind immediately.

And the stakes are getting higher all the time. More aggressive lobbyists and governments are asking for much higher duty or taxes to be levied on disposable products like cameras. It is only a matter of time before this becomes the norm rather than a fringe activity.

Most large businesses now have a top level executive dedicated to Corporate Responsibility, whose span of control and influence in such matters as procurement policy is only going to grow. The time to make sure the sales force can sing this song has definitely arrived.