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During a recent visit to our Burlington, Vermont facility, I had a chance to review how we are using our plant operations experience there to help clients operate more efficiently. The Burlington site collects data from thousands of sensors throughout the facility and runs diagnostics to maximize the efficiency of the water, power and air systems feeding the Burlington fab operations.

As a result, the site’s water usage has been cut by 27 percent since 2000, water treatment costs are down $900,000 a year, and water related energy costs are down $1.8 million a year, while plant output has increased more than 30 percent in the past nine years. Similarly, fuel usage has been cut 21 percent since 2001 and electricity usage is down 14 percent. In this way, the site is helping lead the STG transformation for growth as an example of IBM's smarter planet initiative.

This week the National Pollution Prevention Roundtable (NPPR) announced that IBM Burlington has won a Most Valuable Pollution Prevention (MVP2) award for Best Pollution Prevention Project/Program as a result of performance optimization and increased treament at the site's waste water treatment facility. The award will be presented September 22 at NPPR headquarters in Washington DC. This is the second time in three years that the site has won this prestigious award.

Our Burlington site is IBM’s Center of Excellence for Enterprise Operations, and supports our company’s Big Green Innovations team with real world examples and results in smarter water, grid and energy management. The Burlington team's expertise is being shared with our growing list of clients such as Coca Cola, Singapore Public Utility Board, Dow Chemical, Nestle and more.

You can learn more about our company’s groundbreaking work in this story on w3 or contact John Cohn, IBM Fellow, or Perry Hartswick, Distinguished Engineer and Chief Engineer, IBM 300mm, if you have questions about the project.

The work in Burlington is just one example of the innovative contributions STG is making to IBM and our clients. To extend our focus on innovation, we have announced a number of changes to our Intellectual Property (IP) program, including an increase in defensive publications and focus on further improving patent quality. Patents protect our IP and drive income from licensing our IP to other companies. In turn, the income we earn from patents enables us to continue investment in research and development, IBM's lifeblood.

We are counting on you to continue your highly effective innovative work, submitting disclosures on all IP that is important to our company. Make no mistake: the competition has not let up, and IBM needs to continue to file several thousand new patent applications every year. We know from public records that Samsung, the company that came in No. 2 in U.S. patents filed a year ago, is on track to better their total this year.

Our continuing innovation is led by colleagues such as the 40 STG employees recently named to three important technical leadership positions – Senior Technical Staff Member, Certified IT Professional and Certified Executive Project Managers. You will find their names and a description of the critical work they do in this story on w3. Please join me in congratulating them on this important career milestone.

Finally, please take the time to listen to the recent 3Q09 Technical Community Webcast where our leadership team reviewed highlights from last quarter and described our priorities for this quarter.