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Case study: Coca-Cola embarks on green IT strategy

Coca-Cola is aiming to reduce the carbon footprint of its IT. Kevin Sirjuesingh, director of IT strategic initiatives, discusses the plan



Cliff Saran, Managing Editor

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Coca-Cola Enterprises is aiming to reduce the carbon footprint of its IT. Kevin Sirjuesingh, the company's director of IT strategic initiatives, speaks to Computer Weekly about the company's energy reduction strategy.

In September, Coca Cola Enterprises released a report, co-authored by the Economist Intelligence Unit, discussing the benefits of sustainability.

At the time, John Brock, chairman and CEO of Coca-Cola Enterprises, said: "We are proud of the progress we have made on our own sustainability journey, but the next era of sustainable business will be led by more meaningful collaboration."

Kevin Sirjuesingh, director of IT strategic initiatives at Coca-Cola Enterprises (CCE), is looking at IT's role in the company's sustainability strategy.

He says CCE already works across its supply chain to focus on [energy efficiency and sustainability](#), but believes IT needs to step up and focus on how it can contribute to the overall sustainability agenda.

Targeting technology's energy consumption

With 15% of the UK's total energy bill related to office equipment such as PCs, photocopiers, multifunction devices, servers and racks, IT equipment is a major contributor to [CCE's carbon footprint](#).

"We need to monitor and understand our current energy consumption and figure out the top initiatives to reduce that," says Sirjuesingh.

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From an IT perspective, he says energy efficiency involves everything from the front office to the back office.

And the small things matter, he says: "People are now turning off their computer monitors when they take the laptop out of the docking station."

Given the strong focus to make [datacentres](#) more efficient, in Sirjuesingh's experience finding out actual power consumption data can be extremely difficult in a hosted environment.

"[Datacentres are somewhat streamlined in terms of their consumption](#)," he says. "But when I look at the figures for datacentre hosting with our supplier, CCE's energy footprint is based on square footage in the datacentre, which is a nonsense figure."

Sirjuesingh says some of CCE's suppliers have a floor space charge and do not measure the energy consumption by device. "They look at the equipment in the square footage and build that into the hosting cost, which does not seem accurate in terms of the power usage."

CCE plans to work out the energy consumption of its in-house systems, and will also work with its hosting providers to drill down to get energy data, which is important for the company to meet its [Carbon Reduction Commitment](#).

Energy metering and management

Once CCE's IT department understands the energy required to provide IT services, Sirjuesingh says the company will focus on targeting energy reduction.

"We will also look at further staff training and awareness, server consolidation/virtualisation and retirement of legacy applications," he says.

But CCE plans to go further, according to Sirjuesingh.

"For our workstation strategy we will look at the people in our salesforce and ask whether they need a laptop or a low-powered device like an iPad," he says. Trials are already underway.

Some of the basics to manage power on the desktop include configuring power management to turn off laptops and desktops after a period of inactivity and using "wake on LAN" to switch on the PC if software needs updating.

We need to monitor and understand our current energy consumption and figure out initiatives to reduce it

Kevin Sirjuesingh, Coca Cola Enterprises

Reducing technology's carbon footprint

Coca-Cola Enterprises is taking a two-pronged approach to improving IT's carbon footprint.

"We will put [energy] metering in our IT environment to start pulling energy consumption data from devices," says Sirjuesingh. "The software works a bit like a network sniffer. It will be able to look for and identify devices connected to the company's IP network by interrogating the device's

firmware. He says the tool will work both on endpoint devices and within CCE's datacentres where required.

At the back end, he says CCE will use a hardware asset database that will contain data such as manufacturer specifications for the device, which will include the manufacturer's stated energy data. "We could identify that a particular iPad 3, which is connected to the company's network, has been powered on for X number of hours and it will have a [known] energy consumption rate."

The Energy Manager Association (EMA) will also provide data to CCE to help it determine the energy consumption of devices that are not on the network.

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Raising energy efficiency awareness among staff

CCE is starting a programme this quarter to train its IT staff in energy efficiency. It is the first IT department to sign up to the [Low Energy Company initiative, which was launched at the start of October](#).

"Broadly speaking we want to achieve an awareness of energy consumption," says Sirjuesingh. "In the first quarter of 2014 we will expand training further. We at least want to be in a position where we can train the trainer and get it right throughout the IT organisation."

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