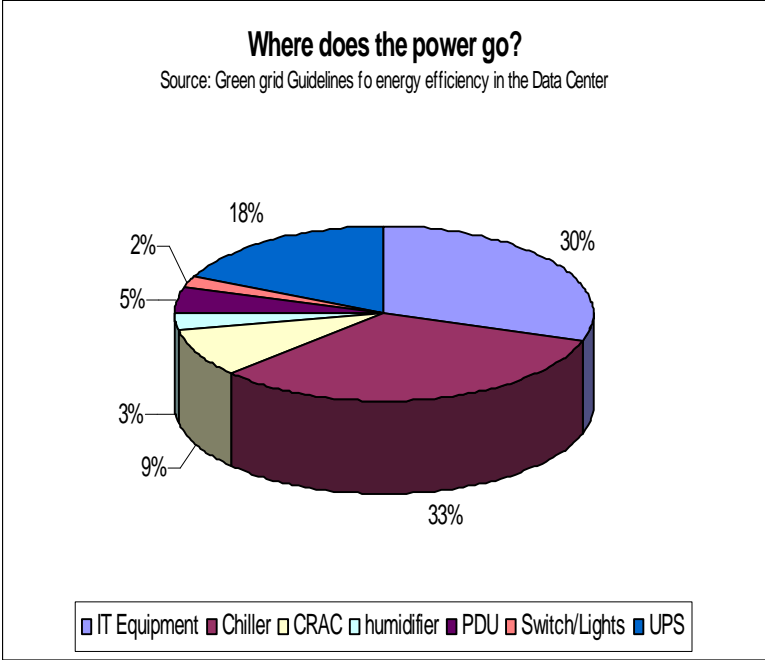


Title: Should IT Managers be held accountable for energy costs?
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Reading a recent article from Computer Economics on holding IT accountable for energy costs I was reminded of a presentation I gave at an Uptime Institute meeting where I spoke about energy conservation and data storage. Those who are familiar with the Uptime Institute will be aware of the excellent work they do focused on what I call the silent crises in the data center, namely power consumption and power availability

I hope you will excuse the pun but data center power consumption has become a very hot subject. Google, the data center poster child, invested significant amounts of money to be close to cheap power by establishing a very large data center in Oregon followed by Yahoo, Ask.com and Microsoft. I smiled when I read that

Google was not the first to have this bright idea as the NSA had stealthily predated them in Oregon by several years, driven by the same desire to secure cheap energy. I use this example simply to underline that power availability and consumption in the data center is a very real issue, one that needs to be resolved.



While there was over 400 people in attendance at the conference the vast majority were facilities folks. There were very few IT professionals and I was able to count the storage folks on one hand. Herein lies the dichotomy.

“Much of the talk about greening storage emanating from the vendor community is contributing more to the global greenhouse gases than addressing the root causes of storage-related power consumption and how to check it”
eWEEK.com

Why are the people responsible for using the energy piped to the data center not leading the energy debate? Why are they not loud and vocal with their vendors, particularly data storage suppliers? Why are end users not forcibly demanding storage vendors (with a few exceptions) to deliver meaningful solution rather than erecting shallow, marketecture, green shaded facades?

My answer, accountability. The majority of IT professionals are not held accountable for energy usage and while some may have an altruistic desire to promote green technology in the data center it is not and will not be a sustainable motivation. The IT managers focus, interest and attention will, quite rightly, be on those area where they are answerable such as delivering the corporate SLA's within budget and with current resources. Energy costs do not rank high in there planning processes.

In a recent Computer Economics survey it was noted that only 56% of those surveyed had utilities included within their IT budget but I would suggest that in even in these situations the data center operating management did not have energy usage as a budget line item and hence discounted utility costs when planning equipment or technology purchases. However, that being said, data center managers are being forced to consider the availability of power and heat constraints that energy consumption places on a data centers ability to expand. I would suggest that if utility costs were also added to the data center management mix then the incentive to promote energy efficient, green, decisions would increase exponentially.

As already noted decisions driven by altruistic tendencies can be admired but are not a good, sustainable motivation in a commercial environment. Fortunately there are many pragmatic reasons why IT managers should get involved and whether decisions are driven to satisfy the greater good or simply self serving the end result will be more efficient data centers, increased power conservation and lower carbon emissions which will serve us all well.

“Certainly, there are environmental reasons for going green, but a green focus can also result in significant savings”
eWEEK.co

Bottom line:

1. With the reality of data center energy usage doubling between the years 2000 to 2006 to a level equal to 1.5% of all the electricity used in the US and at a cost to industry of \$4.5B, IT managers must start taking an active role in energy planning and conservation. Incidentally energy usage growth is projected to double again by 2011 (EPA).
2. IT management should manage their utility budget. They make the decisions that drive power usage they should manage the budget.
3. Energy cost is a significant part of the operational spend. By driving decisions that improve power efficiency operational dollars will be freed up that can be reallocated or used to justify equipment refresh.
4. By making energy efficiency a key factor in the buying decision vendors (storage) will respond with meaningful innovation that deliver end user benefit.
5. IT and Facilities should integrate their activities to increase efficiencies which impact costs.

Bill Mottram compliments his role as the managing partner of Veridictus Associates Inc, a high technology marketing consultancy, as a Principal Contributor for the Wikibon Project and as an analyst practitioner in the data storage industry with Data Mobility Group. He has over 25 years product development, marketing and sales experience in the data storage, information technology and medical device industries. Experienced with Fortune 500 companies such as StorageTek, Compaq and HP and smaller, entrepreneurial enterprises including Pillar Data Systems and COPAN Systems, he was the marketing leader responsible for the development, introduction and “go-to-market” activities for a number of innovative and highly successful data storage solutions. Although primarily a marketing professional Mottram has considerable expertise in technology management, corporate acquisition and public company funding.

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Page 3 of 3