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## We've all gone green: Symantec

By Jennifer Kavur , Computerworld Canada , 06/02/2009

*100 per cent of Canadian enterprises surveyed are planning green initiatives, according to Symantec's annual Green IT report. But some analyst argue it's more about another kind of green.*

Green IT initiatives have reached critical mass in the enterprise, according to Symantec Corp.'s annual green IT survey on worldwide perceptions and practices.

According to the 2009 Worldwide Green IT Report, 100 per cent of Canadian enterprises and 97 per cent of enterprises worldwide are discussing green IT strategies. Fifty-nine percent in Canada and 45 per cent worldwide have implemented them.

Reducing electricity consumption is a driver for 90 per cent of green efforts worldwide and 94 per cent in Canada, while reducing cooling costs is driver at 87 per cent of enterprises surveyed and 97 per cent in Canada.

The whole agenda of doing the right thing from an ecological point of view did not get lost in the shuffle, said Jose Iglesias, vice-president of global solutions for Symantec. "Ninety-two per cent of Canadian respondents said that corporate still wants them to be green ... despite the economic mess," he said.

[Canada isn't exactly a leader in green IT, according to Jessica Vreeswijk, founder and director of Terrabytes Consulting, a green IT consulting firm based in Victoria, BC. "I've seen more come out of San Francisco than I see or hear in Canada," she said.](#)

But green IT means different things to different people, according to Iglesias. "We were very careful to define what we mean by green IT," he said. The three main drivers, according to the survey, are reducing electricity consumption, reducing cooling costs and corporate intention to be "green."

Eighty-nine per cent of Canadian IT departments are now responsible or cross-charged for electricity costs, which marks a major shift in budgeting practices. "When we talked to CIOs a couple years ago, this was not the case," said James Brehm, senior consultant and director of the information and communication technology practice at Frost & Sullivan Ltd.

"People started taking a look at what's the big power consumer and oftentimes, it's the things that IT is responsible for. The big power cost isn't the fluorescent light above me, it's the PC in front of me that's plugged in," he said.

The typical respondent in Symantec's survey spends C\$21 million (US\$19.3 million) to \$27 million annually on data centre electricity, with Canadian business costs averaging \$28 million each year. Realizing the significance of these costs and becoming responsible for them is likely one reason why IT is so focused on going green, according to Iglesias.

"All of a sudden, they've realized they have to pay for this electric bill, which many industry analysts say is the second largest operational expense for the IT budget, and they are having to look at ways of reducing charges," he said.

Green IT budgets are also on the rise, according to the survey, with 56 per cent of Canadian businesses and 73 per cent worldwide reporting an increase in green IT budgets over the next 12 months.

The fact that budgets for green IT are rising as part of the overall IT budget, when overall IT budgets are either staying flat or declining, is an indicator that not only is the whole topic of green IT important, but a way to lower other parts of enterprise cost structure, said Iglesias.

Brehm isn't surprised by the budget increase, due to rising interest in cloud computing and virtualization. "But truly, these people doing cloud computing and virtualization may not be going at it with the ecosystem in mind. They may be doing it with efficiencies in mind ... I think green is oftentimes a benefit of doing things smarter," he said.

Enterprises are also willing to pay a premium for green IT products. Seventy six per cent of Canadian respondents are willing to pay at least 10 per cent more for an energy efficient product of equivalent functionality and 33 per cent would accept increases of at least 20 per cent. Two thirds of businesses worldwide are willing to accept the 10 per cent increase and 41 per cent would reportedly pay 20 per cent more.

But this doesn't mean enterprises are willing to buy an inferior product just because it has greener credentials, Iglesias pointed out. "If you pay 10 per cent premium on this product that allows you to save 15 per cent on the electric cost, then you are paying a premium for the product. Nevertheless, you are actually getting a return on that premium that you just paid. Also, if you are going in and part of your company's agenda is to be perceived as a green company, you are fulfilling that aspect of your company's agenda," he said.

"Rarely do you see a win-win situation where customers get a chance to save money and do the right thing," he added.

While studies like Symantec's are important to show attitudes and perceptions, being green is more than purchasing the right technology solutions, Vreeswijk pointed out. "I think all of those technical solutions they talk about, like power management and virtualization, all those things are really important in terms of business efficiency, but it's not quite enough to call yourself green," she said.

"We really need to look at management practices and how we approach IT in terms of what we purchase, how often we upgrade and extending the lifecycle of our assets ... my only worry is that this will encourage buying more equipment or more technical solutions," she added.

Vreeswijk believes corporations will eventually implement green IT efforts for the sake of the environment, but that we're not there yet. IT is just learning what environmental responsibility means, she said.

"They don't know how to apply sustainability to IT yet. The things happening in IT are about cost savings. It's about reducing energy consumption to save money. It's not about being responsible in terms of making sure you're purchased in the way that's responsible," she said.

Seeing North America catch up with the rest of the world in green efforts is positive, according to Vreeswijk. "I've certainly seen an attitude change in the past year towards green IT, specifically in both Canada and the U.S.," she said.

Brehm is surprised to see enterprises reporting green as an essential. Vendors see green as an item on a checklist, he said. "But when it gets right down to it and they have to write a cheque, green is not something they are willing to pay extra for."

"It's all good and nice to do a survey and let people vote with their heart, but do those results ring true when you are voting with your pocketbook?" asked Brehm.

Enterprises are having a tough time right now with the economy and a lot of pressure has been put on the CIO and his staff, Brehm pointed out. "That's where the war is being fought right now. It's how do we get more efficient, how do we get more streamlined, how do we save power, how do we save cost, how do we re-utilize our machines ... let's see how they are voting with their pocketbooks throughout the remainder of the year," he said.

There are two ways to get green, said Brehm. "One way is to keep everything you have and not go out and purchase it and hold onto it longer. The other way is to purchase new products and services that are green and more efficient."

The Symantec report is based on 1,052 responses from enterprise IT vice presidents, senior vice-presidents, directors, CIOs and CTOs worldwide. Applied Research conducted the survey in March 2009.

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