

## Fairmont Hotels check in a green IT strategy

The chain's new IT strategy proves green IT isn't all about the data centre, says a green IT consultant

By: Jennifer Kavur  
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Fairmont Hotels & Resorts recently announced a comprehensive green IT strategy that addresses technology infrastructure and IT operations for all 56 of its hotel properties worldwide.

A key part of the initiative, which is scheduled to roll out this year and be fully implemented across all properties by the end of 2009, is a centrally managed power-down schedule that automatically shuts down all internal desktops and laptops after one hour of activity.

Fairmont estimates the power management will reduce energy consumption by 2,692,683 Kwh and save 1,356 tonnes of CO2 annually.

Fairmont's strategy is a "great example" of where businesses can hit next, said Jessica Vreeswijk, founder and director of Vancouver-based green IT consulting firm TerraBytes Consulting. As a hotel group, Fairmont is not traditionally office-based and has a more distributed model with a different look and feel than most businesses looking at green IT, she explained.

"Most companies have been focusing their green IT on data centres and this is really proving that green IT can play a big part in a CSR (corporate social responsibility) strategy in an organization that doesn't traditionally have a data centre," said Vreeswijk.

Ensuring the power down by essentially "forcing" it to happen is an important part of the strategy, according to Vineet Gupta, senior VP of Technology for Fairmont Hotels & Resorts.

"Usually, it is left to the local hotels or systems people, and especially at international properties, it sometimes doesn't happen," he said.

Managing the workstations from one central location "requires a lot of effort," said Gupta, but another major challenge in rolling out a global green IT strategy is getting everyone to understand its value. "In North American and Europe, green is very big. In Asia, it takes a bit of time to make sure everybody understands," he said.

The development of donation standards is another component of the plan. Fairmont typically tries to ensure that equipment is donated to schools or there is some sort of recycling, said Gupta.

The initiative also addresses electronic waste with an electronic waste diversion program, but it is limited to certain markets. "We are dependent on the local environment," said Gupta. Recycling may not be possible in certain countries in Africa, for example, or markets in Vietnam, because recycling programs might not exist, he said.

A new procurement policy will require all technology products and services to be rated by either EPA Energy Star or the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) and address Extended Product Responsibility (EPR) programs.

Fairmont's IT strategy "makes 100 per cent sense," said Tony Pollard, president of the Hotel Association of Canada (HAC). "By going ahead and implementing this system-wide ... not only in Canada and the States, but all around the world, they really are leaders in this and it's a good case study for other hotels to follow suit."

But setting an example for green practices isn't new for the hotel group. Fairmont has always been a leading hotel company in terms of green environmental policies, according to Pollard. "Right since day one, they played a role in helping us set up our Green Key program," he said.

Over 1,200 hotels across Canada participate in the Green Key Eco-Rating Program, which HAC started in 1997. The online audit determines a hotel's environment footprint based on 150 questions in nine areas of sustainable hotel operation. The ratings are included in Canadian Automobile Association and American Automobile Association materials, and used by the Association of Corporate Travel Executives.

Six properties in Canada currently have "five out of five" keys, noted Pollard. Hoteliers recognize the promotional value of participating in the program, but it also helps reduce their operational costs by providing a report outlining where they can do more, he pointed out.

Fairmont's Green IT strategy is part of the larger Fairmont Green Partnership Program, which began in 1990. The hotel group pledged to cut overall carbon emissions in March 2009, when it became a member of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Climate Savers Program.

"This is a company that's been environmentally responsible since 1990, so they're reaching that next level of maturity where they are ready to look at the different business lines," said Vreeswijk.

But the hotel industry in general still has a ways to go, according to Vreeswijk. There is a lot of activity in terms of ecotourism and green hotels, but they are still trying to figure out how to balance encouraging air travel, which has a high carbon footprint, with sustainable travel, she pointed out.

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