
Macquarie Hosting Goes Green

In the IT industry, data centres are known to be extremely energy intensive. Because of today's awareness of the need to preserve our natural resources, making the centres more eco-friendly has become a high priority for some companies. One such company is Macquarie Hosting , a division of publicly listed Macquarie Telecom.

Macquarie Hosting with one of the largest data centres in Australia is taking major strides towards becoming environmentally responsible. Although they are aware they still have more work to do, they have managed to cut their energy use by an impressive 6% in just two months. The question being asked by other curious businesses is how Macquarie managed these savings. How did they know which green methods would work for them?

In The Beginning

As in any journey, you must have a starting point. Although they have been reaping the benefits of their new energy efficiency for only two months, preparations for beginning their green journey have been under way for some time. For more than a year, Macquarie has scrutinized their use of energy. They kept careful measurements and monitored power usage throughout the data centre so they would have tangible comparables. They knew they needed to understand how much power they were using and exactly what it was being used for before they could begin effective conservation.

By fitting their Sydney data center, known as the Intellicentre, with measuring tools throughout the entire area, they were able to see exactly where their energy was going. More importantly, they were beginning to discover methods to use that energy more efficiently.

Macquarie scrutinized every measurement carefully. They began making a list of places where they felt they could improve. Now they are implementing changes to make those planned improvements become reality. Each change is monitored closely to evaluate its impact. After careful analysis, the company has adopted the ones deemed effective in reducing energy consumption. Green is now a conscious part of the company's operating plan.

Taking the First Steps of the Journey

Through their studies, Macquarie discovered that storage alone could account for up to 30-40% of the consumption of power within the data centre. Combined with the impact of firewalls, switches, servers and air conditioning, which is necessary to keep the equipment at optimal temperatures, it adds up to over 85% of their energy usage.

When the company first began to take a green approach to these functions, it was surprising just how much impact they could have on their consumption levels. They started with the way they cooled the data centre, an important function in the maintenance of their equipment. Simple steps, like making sure there were no gaps in the floor tiles or other places where the cooled air could escape to areas that did not need to be cooled, made an immediate difference. After seeing the amazing results of these first steps, Macquarie feels confident they will continue forward with their plan to become as energy efficient as possible.

How Much Does Going Green Cost?

There was definitely a cost involved in the greening of Macquarie Telecom. There were expenses for both labor and equipment. Setting up monitors and measuring points throughout the Intellicentre was an initial cost. Fortunately, though, many of the steps involved in their energy reduction have been free. Their biggest savings have been created by making smart decisions about how to approach the findings from their measurements and investigations.

Macquarie Telecom knows that data centres will never be completely eco-friendly. It just isn't in the nature of the beast. They are confident, however, that they can significantly reduce the size of their environmental footprint by adopting as many green practices as are feasible. They are committed to running their data centre in the most energy efficient manner achievable.

Does Going Green Give Macquarie's a Competitive Advantage?

Although Macquarie did not join the green movement for that purpose, it actually is turning out to be a competitive advantage in the marketplace. A significant segment of customers is actively searching for technology partners that share their environmental concerns. The government and large corporations are certainly beginning to endorse green credentials in Australia, though many mainstream businesses have not yet taken that step. This sector will grow in the future, however, and being as energy efficient as possible could certainly become a strong competitive advantage.

The benefit to Macquarie customers is that they are contributing to an environmentally responsible society, yet it is costing them no more than it would to use a host that was not energy efficient. They can feel good about the choices they are making. Many of Macquarie's customers have also expressed a desire to learn from them. They want to know how they can choose green vendors for their own workplaces. How should they approach their quest to become more energy efficient? Macquarie would like to guide other businesses down the green road and help them reach their own environmental goals.

Their desire is to help other companies learn how to measure its energy use and discover ways to use that information to begin implementing energy saving campaigns.

Choosing the Right Green Methods for Your IT Business

Many vendors have jumped on the green bandwagon and are busily spreading a lot of green hype, but not every technique is right for every company. Sorting out the methods that actually work for your company is essential. Because Macquarie Telecom has been so successful and they hope others can benefit from their experience, they have provided a list of three steps to aid in pinpointing which processes will work best for an individual company. These steps include:

- Make sure you understand what affects your power consumption the most. Where, when and how is your energy being used? Are there slow periods, like in the middle of the night, when inefficiency is causing more power consumption than is truly necessary? By knowing exactly where your energy is going and why, you will be better able to target the best green solutions for your company.
- Work with your vendors to discover ways to optimize your selections. Ask the right questions and discover what you must do to receive maximum energy efficiency from their products. Find out if your current setup will be the smartest way to apply their services or if they have "greener" methods they can suggest. Once you have implemented the smartest way to operate the technology, keep accurate measurements so you can be sure they are meeting the promised specs.
- Continuously monitor and measure energy usage. In step one you established a yardstick. With that critical information, you can test and adjust the technologies your centre is using to attain the greatest efficiency. You have a way to judge which methods are the most effective. You can talk knowledgeably to vendors in regards to results. Do their products live up to promised standards? If not, is there something you can do to fix the problem or is it time to move on to a better solution? Don't stop seeking out the newest green information that affects your business. Continuously educate yourself to the latest environmentally friendly methods, suppliers and equipment that are available.

Power consumption costs outrank even the cost of the hardware used in data centres. The price for that power has multiplied 8 times in the last decade. Energy costs and ways to improve efficiency should always be at the forefront of a data centre operator's mind. If that is not the case, it borders on negligent.

By using smarter technology implementation, improving the efficiency of operations, and vigilantly measuring and monitoring the amount of energy used, data centres and other businesses can begin to forge ways for industry, technology and nature to live together more harmoniously. By following the lead of socially responsible companies such as Macquarie Telecom, the small steps taken by many will make a giant difference in the future of our planet.

Macquarie Telecom

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