

Going GREEN & Staying Black

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There's seems to be many misconceptions about going green and applying the right solution to conserve energy, preserve resources and soften the impact on the environment.



It's somewhat a **quagmire** when you **map out the resources required** to go green and then stay green. Very similar to what we face when implementing VoIP solutions. This isn't to say that it can't be done or shouldn't be done- but the emphasis is how to get it done.

First, establish a goal. Define your target. Are you trying to conserve energy, preserve resources or soften the impact on the environment? These are three distinct goals and yet they intertwine with one another. You may save energy but in so doing what is your impact on the environment? While this may seem extreme- the caution is clear. Don't rush to tear down your existing building and then resurrect it with a new highly energy efficient one. In establishing your corporate goal, remain simplistic and avoid the lofty statements found in mission statements about being environmentally friendly. Instead focus first on conservation.

What We've Done

Our energy usage focuses on three areas: Our office facilities, operations and customer deployments. In each area we have defined goals and have found ways to benefit.

OFFICE Facilities

- In 1996 we acquired a historic property then renovated and developed the property. The impact on renovating an existing property vs. building a new building was much less. We retained 60% of the structure.
- High efficiency HVAC installed (13 **SEER**) at the time- 2001
- Use of cupolas for natural venting of heat in roof supplemented by a gable fan
- Gas filled double pane windows and doors
- Insulation of interior walls (non-load bearing) and exterior walls and ceilings
- Fluorescent lighting for entryways, parking, storage building and 70% of office space
- Flow restrictors on water fixtures
- Programmable thermostat and separate thermostat and cooling for network closet
- Planting of trees (evergreens) on south side corner of building to shade (summer) afternoon heat and block (winter) wind
- Recycle or reuse of cardboard, office paper and packing materials
- Installed on demand water heater to replace tank water heater
- Installed outdoor sensors for all outdoor lighting

OPERATIONS

- Make it easy for customers to contact/submit service requests: email, web forms, fax, or voice contact
- Right sizing of vehicles- combination of hybrids and trucks
- Deploy VPN or other remote access when possible to each customer site
- **Converge the network closet**

CUSTOMER DEPLOYMENTS

- Ship systems and large material direct to customer site to avoid extra handling
- Install network jacks (**3Com PoE product**) when possible to avoid re-cabling or adding LAN drops

We consulted with our site engineer, architect and space planner and of course various trades. These were very simple and while we initially spent more upfront for "energy efficient" methods the long term payoff kicked in during 2005 Maryland energy crisis. Marylanders – businesses faced an almost doubling of costs for electricity. During our renovation period (1996-2002)- there were too few trades doing alternative heating such as radiant heat and even more were less willing to support the systems. Today, that trend is slowly changing.

Think of the conservation effort as maximization of resources. Operating effectively but efficiently is important. Before you deploy alternative energy or decide to build your own power plant- you must first optimize what you use. The effort requires careful consideration with the payoff

being usually long term. In our case- we are realizing a payback a bit more immediately because of the huge rise in electrical generation costs in Maryland.

On the home front, I can attest that going green is expensive but given any situation, the best first approach is to conserve first. Optimize how you use energy and then begin to look at alternatives. Alternative energy is not inexpensive and before I install a solar panel, wind mill or some other form of energy device you can bet it will be with good reason. Years ago, I met a president of a large printing concern building a spec home in the area. He told me "Matt, when I retire - I'm not going to spend retirement worrying about the rising costs of energy and paying the utilities." He built a geothermal system and his monthly operating costs to heat and cool this killer home were about 40 bucks a month. Managing energy costs will be challenging, especially for those venturing into IP telephony.

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