

GREEN IT

HD Supply achieves ecdreams through array of green-tech initiatives

Company boosts environmental standing through virtualization, videoconferencing, PC power management, and more

LIKE AN INCREASING NUMBER of companies, wholesale distributor HD Supply has found green religion. The company last year launched its Ideally Green initiative, which entails delivering greener products to customers while demonstrating greater corporate responsibility for the environment.

Not surprisingly, the company has turned to the power of IT to help achieve environmental objectives such as reducing its carbon footprint and cutting waste — with the pleasant benefit of reducing costs along the way. From the datacenter to the desktop to the conference room and beyond, HD Supply rolled out a host of green-tech projects in 2008.

Plenty of work took place in the datacenter. Overall, the company reduced the size of its datacenter space from 15,000 square feet to 7,000. On the server front, the company retired outdated, end-of-life boxes with 150 energy-efficient blades from Hewlett-Packard that used dynamic power allocation.

The company also embraced server virtualization and consolidation, resulting in a virtual-to-physical server ratio of 3 to 1. The company reports that it virtualized 83 servers over 14 months, reducing

power consumption by 10.5 kWh and generating more than \$200,000 in savings.

Further, the company has taken steps to reduce future server sprawl. “We now have strict guidelines about when we purchase a physical server versus implementing the application on a virtualized server,” says Nigel Saldanha, CTO at HD Supply.

Additionally, the company reduced the number of its storage arrays from 11 to five, using units with higher-density drives and tiered storage. Power needed for storage dropped by 50 percent, and annual storage expenses dropped by nearly \$500,000.

Work in the datacenter didn't end there. The company also boosted cooling efficiency by redesigning the datacenter aisles — adding targeted, floor-based cooling and alternating hot/cold aisles — to ensure cold air goes only where it's needed. Finally, the datacenter temperature was raised three degrees. Thanks to these steps, the datacenter now requires 30 tons less air for equipment cooling purposes, reducing the facility's carbon footprint while generating more than \$83,000 in annual savings.

HD Supply rolled out green-tech projects in other parts of the organization as well. For example, the company invested in videoconferencing systems from Polycom and set up equipment in four of its major locations: Orlando, Fla., Atlanta, San Diego, and Costa Mesa, Calif. “In 2008, [we] spent nearly \$1 million on travel among these primary sites. We are now able to advise employees who have necessary travel in these locations to consider the videoconferencing option,” says Saldanha. “This action has already sharply reduced travel and generated significant savings. In addition, productivity has received a positive bump by eliminating costly travel time and enabling faster decision making and corresponding action.”

The company estimates that the videoconferencing solution will reduce travel by more than 25 percent, saving the company nearly \$225,000 per year while eliminating more than 196,000 pounds of CO2 that the travel would have produced.

Meanwhile, HD Supply also launched an awareness campaign for employees to conserve. “Green reminder” signs hang about the facilities, prompting people to shut

down their computers, turn off lights, and power down other business equipment, such as projectors, when not in use. This campaign has proven effective as well, saving the company more than 300,000 kilowatt hours, producing savings of at least \$18,000.

Saldanha says the company has gleaned some important lessons from the successes of its green-tech initiatives. Among them:

“We’ve eliminated the outdated notions that corporate environmental responsibility translates to expense and low-impact results,” he says. “Our IT team’s initiative demonstrates that we can take responsibility for our environmental impact while driving cost savings, greater efficiencies, and significant positive impact to productivity and other operational needs.”

Moreover, Saldanha has discov-

ered just how excited employees can be about embracing green initiatives. “What started out as an assignment for some of our IT team members is now a passion to raise the bar and produce even greater results,” he says. “Now that we’ve seen what green projects can accomplish, there is a sense of anticipation and excitement about what we will tackle next.”

— *Ted Samson*