

Greening I.T. Up  
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Up until recently, the term “green” was most often used in the context of color. Today, the “green” terminology refers to being environmentally conscious. For the past couple years, this has certainly been the case for Allegan County’s Information Services department. This past year, we have taken a very aggressive approach to limiting our environmental impact. Beyond just recycling and donating our used technology equipment, which we had been doing for years, we began taking steps to reduce the costly electrical footprint created by the technological devices used throughout the County buildings. One of the ways that we have accomplished this is through the use of virtual server technology. Virtual servers allow us to operate multiple separately defined servers on a single physical piece of equipment. What once would have taken 30 physical servers to accomplish, now takes only 4. This substantially reduces our equipment acquisition costs, our electricity costs and the cooling costs that always accompany server hardware. Since servers typically run 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, these savings add up quickly.

In addition to our virtualization technologies, we have begun a new strategy on an old idea to help reduce our environmental impact even further. Basically, we are strategically replacing desktop PCs with laptops. A typical laptop utilizes 3-5 times less power than a standard desktop PC. This cost savings is further amplified by the mobility factor when the user unplugs from the wall and utilizes the internal battery. Between server virtualization, laptop deployments, energyStar rated printers and copiers, and other “green” measures, I anticipate a 30-40% reduction in the electricity costs generated by technology equipment. These savings may only be a small percentage of the total electrical costs for the County, but, in today’s economy, it certainly adds up.

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