

## Green: The Color of Data

**“GOING GREEN” IS A TOP-OF-MIND CONCERN** for many IT professionals—especially those responsible for overseeing energy usage in their organizations’ data centers. This is largely due to the combined pressure from the Environmental Protection Agency and Congress, as well as initiatives from the U.S. Green Building Council, which advocates sustainable building design, and The Green Grid, a global consortium of technology companies dedicated to advancing energy efficiency in the data center.

One equipment category that is singled out as a potential source of lost energy is uninterruptible power supply (UPS) systems. “If a UPS sys-

tem is only 88 percent efficient, that’s a 12 percent energy loss for everything that is running,” notes Chris Loeffler, a global applications manager for Raleigh, N.C.-based Eaton Corp., specializing in data center power solutions and services. “It is compounded by the efficiency losses of the servers, and the server power supplies.”

Both the National Electrical Manufacturers Association’s TP1 standard and the government-sponsored Energy Star program have promoted the production of more energy-efficient transformers for power distribution, Loeffler says. He points out that by moving to higher-voltage connectors—208 or 240 volts—a significant amount of energy

is conserved. “If you use that type of connector with today’s power supply designs, you can usually gain two to three percentage points of efficiency in the server power supply itself,” says Loeffler. “Then, every server becomes two or three percentage points higher in efficiency just because you selected a different voltage for the power supply.”

Implementing a green strategy in a data center can cover everything from processors to servers, storage, and cooling. To address the power segment of the strategy, you should discuss the following with your clients: Is the highest AC voltage available being used to run the servers? Have energy-efficient transformer and distribution products been incorporated into the power distribution scheme? Have more energy-efficient UPS systems been installed? Each of these areas provides an opportunity to develop better systems for your clients—solutions that will save them money in the long run.

For companies with multiple locations, the potential for remote metering, monitoring, and reporting offers the ability to trim electricity costs. Using software, data center managers can monitor cooling and powering systems, and based on the information they gather, shift the power load from one location to another as needed. If a power load is high during peak times in California, for example, it can be shifted to a lower-cost location via wide area networks within the country or even around the world.

Companies are also looking to their channel partners for solutions involving consolidation and virtualization. “Let’s get rid of three old servers and replace them with one new one, and now we have one box doing the work of three by consolidating,” explains Michael Klein, president of Computer Directions Inc. in Searingtown, N.Y. “Or, with virtualization, if there is a box that [is not] used all that often, we’ll [make] it a virtual machine running on another box. It doesn’t physically exist.”

Whether or not an SMB is a prime candidate for these systems depends on the scope of the SMB, Klein notes. Those at the smaller end of the scale, in which the data center comprises one or possibly two servers, have little need—or ability—to further streamline their systems. According to Klein, “That is still working its way down from the Fortune 500 to the SMB market.”

—Carolyn Heinze

## GalacticGuru

Divining the year ahead for  
**GEMINI**  
(May 21 – June 21)



### GALACTIC GURU GUIDANCE

**Don’t let the “twins” thing get out of hand. Pick one personality and stick with it.**

—James Gaskin

With Gemini, it’s always “on the one hand this, but on the other hand that.” The “twin” sign needs to keep both sides of the brain active, so remain intellectually curious and get plenty of mental stimulation. Hmm, upper management positions may not be in your future. Best stay in the thick of things, handle crises, and be willing to take those risks you love. In other words, stay in a technical field.

### BUSINESS MATTERS

Keep communicating. Maybe the twin sign means you can talk and listen, a rare trait in business today. Customers will love that—especially the listening part.

### PERSONAL LIFE

You’re curious, you’re quick-witted, and you’re changeable, but don’t let that turn into a giant disruption in your home life. Try to focus now and then.

### PREPARE

For the best of times and the worst of times. Think your way to making the bad times good and the good times better.

### BEWARE

It’s not all about razor wit and verbal sparring. During tough times, close your mouth and open your toolkit—and get to work.

KEN SAUNDERS

# QUICKHITS

## The Upside of the Economic Downturn

**THE RECENT FINANCIAL NEWS** has left many business owners panicked, anxious, and perhaps mentally writing their company's obituary. Chin up, says David Giannetto: You can actually use the economic downturn to create a better organization. Giannetto, director of Cohn Consulting Group's Enterprise Performance Management Practice and co-author of *The Performance Power Grid: The Proven Method to Create*

*and Sustain Superior Organizational Performance*, offers six rules for strengthening your business in tough times.

### 1. ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE

During an economic downturn, many business owners overlook the fact that their competitors are suffering too—and the result is an even playing field. Therefore, your business strategy shouldn't change. And

that means having a strong value proposition, managing in a fiscally responsible manner, and providing great service.

### 2. USE THE HYPE TO FOCUS YOUR EMPLOYEES

The slowdown creates a “momentary unifying factor”—something that enables each employee to set aside individual concerns and rally around a greater common cause.

## AT-A-GLANCE The IT Skills Gap

**IF YOU'VE EVER FELT** that your employees could be more proficient at certain IT skills, you're not alone. A recent CompTIA survey polled more than 3,500 IT managers in 14 countries to find out their perceptions of their employees' proficiency in 10 different skills, listed here in order of importance. The result: A skills gap, assessed by subtracting the percentage of respondents saying employees are proficient in a skill from the percentage saying that skill is important. Essentially, the gap indicates that the supply of these skills is not meeting demand, with the largest gaps in security and so-called “soft” skills (sales, customer service, and so on).

SOURCE: A FEBRUARY 2008 COMPTIA WHITE PAPER DEVELOPED BY THE CENTER FOR STRATEGY RESEARCH INC. OF AN ONLINE SURVEY OF 3,578 “IT MANAGERS” IN 14 COUNTRIES (250 MINIMUM PER COUNTRY) WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR HIRING AND/OR MANAGING AT LEAST THREE IT EMPLOYEES AT COMPANIES WITH 10 OR MORE EMPLOYEES.

Overall: IT Skills in Respondent's Organization	% Important	% Proficient	Gap
Security/firewalls/data privacy	74%	57%	17%
General networking, network infrastructure	66%	59%	7%
Operating systems	66%	65%	1%
Hardware skills/knowledge	57%	60%	-3%
Nonspecific server technology	57%	49%	8%
“Soft” skills (customer service, sales, project management, etc.)	56%	45%	11%
Application-level (architecture, design, development, programming, etc.)	54%	47%	7%
Specific programming languages (non-MSFT, Java, etc.)	40%	40%	0%
Web-based technologies (Web 2.0, SOA, SaaS, RIAs, Ajax, etc.)	40%	34%	6%
RF mobile/wireless technology	27%	26%	1%

Use the economy to drive home the fact that providing quality service and creating efficiencies are the absolute best ways for employees to help the business through any kind of recession. The challenge is for you to present a vision and path toward greater prosperity that everyone in your organization will rally around.



DAVID GIANNETTO

### 3. EXPAND; DON'T CONTRACT

All competitors in an industry are dealing with the same challenges. As a result, the weakest of these organizations may go out of business, cut operations, and/or let go of assets and people. All of these things open up holes in the market that a clear-thinking organization can fill. Be prepared to increase your sales and marketing efforts to make sure that newly "available" customers reach out to you first.

### 4. FIGURE OUT WHAT THE DOWNTURN MEANS FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS

Your customers are making tough decisions about what to spend their limited

funds on, and what they can afford to give up. Reach out to your best customers and keep lines of communication open. That way if you find out they're planning to break off relations, you can do something about it before it's too late.

### 5. KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROFIT AND REVENUE

In many organizations, financial statements of gain and loss do nothing to help you make hard decisions about where to cut unprofitable customers or segments, and where you shouldn't. During a slowdown, apply greater scrutiny in these areas. Then, if you need to cut costs, do so where you are already losing money.

### 6. STAY CURRENT AND CREATIVE

Don't cut back on the new products or services that represent the future of your business. Otherwise, once the slowdown turns around—as it inevitably will—you'll find that you can't catch up to market demands and expectations. Avoid falling into this trap. Keep your creative juices flowing—especially during a down period. Always be thinking about new ways to satisfy your customers and which new products will enable you to better meet their companies' needs.

## AT-A-GLANCE

### SMBs Don't Yet See the Value of Web 2.0

When it comes to taking advantage of Web 2.0 tools to obtain business management information, SMBs, perhaps not surprisingly, are opting for the tried-and-true. Email newsletters and interactive tools are their preferred choices over blogs, social networks, and wikis. Here's how the various formats stack up.

#### Which of the following online resources do you use frequently or occasionally as a tool or resource to manage or grow your business?

EMAIL NEWSLETTERS	49%
INTERACTIVE TOOLS (quizzes, calculators)	46%
WEBCASTS	31%
SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	22%
WIKIS	21%
BLOGS	14%

SOURCE: ONLINE SURVEY OF 338 SMBs THAT USE AT LEAST ONE OF NINE ONLINE RESOURCES OCCASIONALLY OR FREQUENTLY, CONDUCTED AUGUST 2007 BY BREDIN BUSINESS INFORMATION INC.

## Print: The New Managed Services

**JUST WHEN YOU STARTED** to get your head around the concept of managed services comes another variation on the theme—managed print services.

In fact, a managed print services agreement can save your customers a lot of money—and make some for you too.

A basic agreement might include your preliminary assessment of the client's printing environment, recommended changes, implementation of the new configuration, and provision of consumables—ink, toner, paper, and so forth—as well as ongoing service.

According to Angele Boyd, group vice president of Imaging/Output and SMB Practices for



ANGELE BOYD

IDC, clients can reduce costs by as much 10 to 30 percent by revamping their print infrastructure. "Ink and toner, for example—those alone can be prohibitively expensive," she says.

Ken Weilerstein, a vice president of research at Gartner Inc., cites similar savings opportunities. "Many smaller companies have a penny-wise, pound-foolish attitude toward these kinds of expenses," he says. "So they hang on to aging equipment." Such equipment may be consuming toner at a faster rate than would a newer machine, or the cost of its toner may be higher. Old machines can also be energy hogs. Newer "smart machines" can be programmed to power down during lunch hours and on weekends, and printers can be programmed to output two-sided by default.

The sheer number of printers is often a problem: "If you don't right-size the environment, you can end up with a lot more devices than you think," says Boyd. High-level executives

who believe they need their own printers, for example, may be able to function with security-wise devices that output only when someone wearing the proper proximity badge approaches.

Channel pros looking to get into this business might start by seeing what the large printer manufacturers have to offer. For example, Xerox is one that has been actively recruiting resellers, according to Weilerstein. Working through a distributor such as Ingram Micro is also a good choice, suggests Boyd.

However you work it, managed print services is a great fit for IT professionals who shine at providing personal, one-on-one service. When it comes to configuring a print infrastructure and working with the machines themselves, says Weilerstein, "there's some hand-holding involved. Clients need the IT professional's expertise and know-how."

—Jenny Donelan

## Hot Links

Green resources you can find online

### MY GREEN ELECTRONICS

[www.mygreenelectronics.org](http://www.mygreenelectronics.org)

New from the Consumer Electronics Association and Channel Intelligence Inc., the My Green Electronics Web site not only showcases a "find recycling" locator, but a "find green electronics" locator as well. What's cool about the electronics finder is that it includes more than 70 types of products, from laptops, cell phones, and audio equipment to baby monitors and electric motor bikes. Products are then listed by manufacturer, product type, model number, and "green properties"—why the product is considered green. For people who truly practice what they preach, green-wise, this is a great resource.

### EARTH 911

[www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org)

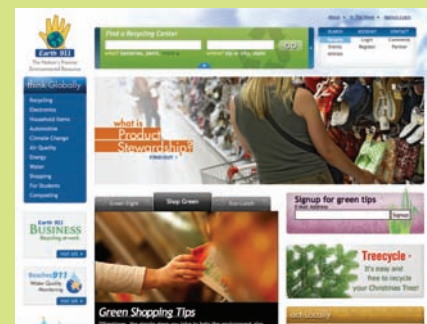
Green is not just the color of money—it's the latest initiative to catch on in the world of IT. This site, however, has been green since 1996, long before it was fashionable. And it's comprehensive,

with a handy "find a recycling center" box at the top of the home page, articles, links, and other resources to help us reduce, reuse, and recycle. Of particular interest is the information about recycling electronics, known as e-waste. For example, the article "How Electronics Are Recycled" contains this quote: "From an environmental standpoint, the fact that these items are being reused is far more important than the fact that recyclers are making money off of it." Hmm. Tell that to the recycler. And another quote: "While e-waste only accounts for 2 percent of America's garbage in landfills, it accounts for 70 percent of the toxic garbage." OK, now that's sobering information, and worth noting.

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—Cecilia Galvin