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Top five green solution providers

Eighty per cent of business owners now consider the environment when making purchasing decisions

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by *Michelle MacLeod*

The importance of having green IT solutions in both SMBs and the enterprise is on the rise as energy-efficiency, waste-reduction and sustainability become top factors when choosing new products.

A study released by [IDC Canada](#) revealed that 80 per cent of business owners consider the environment when making business decisions. Businesses are realizing the economic gains that energy-efficient technology can bring to their company and are becoming increasingly concerned about the IT wastage in their offices.

The top five solution providers -- [xwave](#), [BlueCurl](#), [Softchoice](#), [LaserNetworks](#) and [WBM Office Services](#), have met the green demand by creating more energy-efficient solutions, using more recycled material, improving productivity and bringing cost-saving advantages to the business world.

[Xwave](#), a subsidiary of Bell Alliant, encourages clients to invest in new power-efficient technology and leveraging existing resources across the entire organization. The company uses a core technology review to show enterprise the cost-saving benefits of going green through virtualization and consolidation. Virtualization allows for less power consumption at each individual client, and desktop management and shared software saves power at each workstation.

[BlueCurl](#), a Vancouver-based solution provider, is also using desktop virtualization to reduce energy consumption - but is choosing to direct its efforts at the education sector. The company [built Canada's first carbon neutral computer lab](#) in Kimberly, B.C.

CEO Chris Slattery said [BlueCurl](#) became interested in green solutions after meeting with [NComputing](#), a company building a desktop virtualization solution that allows multiple users to receive power from one low-cost PC. The technology allows seven users to share one PC; meaning a 35-seat lab need only purchase five PCs.

As a result, schools can reduce electrical consumption by 80 per cent and save 94 per cent on their energy bill, Slattery said. The labs were built in 19 school districts throughout North Carolina, saving \$4 million and eliminating 900 tons of carbon dioxide per year. By continuing with their strategy, [BlueCurl](#) hopes to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 1,000 tons over the next year.

[Softchoice](#) wants to make all computer labs and office technology green by helping customers find the greenest products and providing a list of the most energy-efficient hardware on their website.

[Melissa Alvares](#), sustainability programs manager at [Softchoice](#) said their goal is to eventually become the leading reseller of green technologies and leading reseller in the elimination of e-waste.

Through an alliance with [EPEAT](#) (Electronic Product Environment Assessment Tool), [Softchoice](#) began listing 1,500 environmentally-friendly skus on their website from companies such as [Lenovo](#), [HP](#) and [Toshiba](#).

The United States Environmental Protection Agency estimates the purchase of [EPEAT](#) products will deflect 13 million pounds of hazardous waste and conserve 600,000 megawatts of energy over the next five years.

[WBM Office Services](#) has the goal of reducing the amount of printers being purchased. [Brett Bailey](#), manager of marketing and business operations refers to print as the "final frontier" for IT. Companies literally have thousands

of printers across their office and do little to manage their usage, she said.

WBM encourages business owners to replace older models with newer devices that are more energy-efficient and cost-effective. Newer models with inexpensive toner and energy-saving features allow cost savings of 30 per cent and energy-savings of 96 per cent.

Also fighting the printer-wastage battle and reducing the amount of toner cartridges that hit the country's landfills is Oakville-based VAR, [LaserNetworks Inc.](#)

The company diverts 240 tons of waste from landfills each year through its toner reuse program and conserves 90,000 liters of oil through avoiding manufacturing. Laser Networks is the exclusive provider of Reflexion brand toner - a re manufactured toner cartridge.

When the toner cartridge eventually breaks down, 97 per cent of its elements will be recycled. Typical cartridges contain engineering-grade polymers, which take at least 1,000 years to decompose. Clients reduce their carbon footprint by 74 per cent through choosing re manufactured toner.

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