

Technology

Technology and business are so entwined, it's hard to imagine a time when computers and the internet didn't exist. Technology remains a potent tool for realizing economic efficiencies and advancing a sustainability agenda across your enterprise. Videoconferencing and electronic payments can save time and money through reduced travel, paper and postage. Energy costs associated with your digital office can be mitigated by settings that automatically sleep idle computers. And while hardware upgrades can turn desktops into doorstops, there are growing options to responsibly dispose of your still useful, but outdated, computers via charitable donations or e-waste recycling programs

Quick Start



In 30 seconds, you could save \$100 on your yearly electricity bill. Configure your firm's computers to put themselves to "sleep" after a given period of inactivity. Savings can range from between \$25-\$75 per computer per year.

Connect and Learn

Use your organization's website to connect your consumers directly with your community-increasing the profile of your region's merchants, suppliers and other businesses. Help your customers plan their vacations via links to local community sites. You might also use interactive kiosks in public spaces to convey the history of the local area through video, or perhaps a looping PowerPoint presentation. Another idea: headsets might provide narration while people walk through the community, allowing your customers to learn more about the sites that are directly in front of them and their importance to the local community.

Message boards can also help you build relationships with your customers and your own community. Message boards on your website can give people who met while on vacation a chance to come back and chat with the friends they made-both fellow travellers and locals who may have led them on tours or who may have helped them with directions.

How to Be Sustainable & Tech-Savvy

Here are a few suggestions to help you save time, money and the environment.

- ◆ Be Efficient. Ensure that all the equipment you use is as energy efficient as possible.

Try This!

Got junk? Maybe not. The Freecycle Network is a grassroots and entirely non-profit movement of people who are giving-and getting-stuff for free in their own cities. It's all about reuse and keeping usable stuff out of landfills. Membership is free and so is pickup. No hauling fees. Check the [Freecycle Network](#) to find a local network in your city or province.



Energy Star Products

The international Energy Star symbol is an easy way for consumers to recognize products that have been certified as the most energy-efficient available. The links below lead to listings of all Energy Star products. Consider this a sustainable buying guide.

[Computers](#)

[Monitors](#)

[Imaging Equipment](#)

For more information on Energy Star ratings as well as lists of other rated products, check out [Energy Star Canada](#).

Green Conferencing

You can now have a face-to-face conversation without leaving your desk.

- ◆ Money matters, and so does time! Audio, video and/or Web conferencing are great ways to save both. [Intercall](#) offers a cost-savings calculator as part of its Web-based conferencing services.
- ◆ Out with the outbox. Trying to get a 10-MB PowerPoint presentation through your outbox to a client for an important conference call? Try [Slideshare](#).
- ◆ Reach out and call someone, for free. Download [Skype](#) and talk, chat or make overseas video calls for as little as nothing.

Try This!

Get more done by saving time otherwise spent travelling to and from meetings. Check out the following meeting and conferencing technologies.

[Intercall](#)

[Live Meeting](#)

[MShow](#)

[Web Ex](#)

- ◆ Just the fax. No machine. Save trees, energy and money with electronic faxing. Check out: [efax.ca](#), [FAXAGE](#) or [TrustFax](#).

Electronics Recycling Across Canada

The [Electronics Recycling Association of Canada](#) has plenty of good information on the kinds of electronics that can be reclaimed or recycled. It also coordinates pickups that you can schedule using its online form or drop-off locations in major cities including Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver.

Home Depot, Canadian Tire, Future Shop and Best Buy have jumped on board and are now offering bins in their stores for unwanted or used batteries and other electronics.

[Mountain Equipment Co-op](#) has taken a step forward to limit its impact on the natural environment by initiating a battery recycling program within each of its stores across Canada.

[reBoot Canada](#) is a non-profit organization that offers refurbished computers and technical training to charities. It now has locations in Toronto, Vancouver, Peterborough, Montreal, Fredericton and Dartmouth.

- ◆ When in doubt, PDF it! A handy technology, Portable Document Format (PDF) files can help you send everything from your personal grocery list to secure documents.

Try This!

PDF software is available for free! You can download and install PDF writers to any computer. They will appear as a printer that you can select in the printer options box. So instead of printing another paper copy of that invoice you can print it to PDF and e-mail it to the customer. [PDF-creating software](#) is free.

Scenario: The Digital Co-Op

Northwest Passage Travel Co-operative (NPTC) is a nationwide, employee-owned co-operative of travel agents operating out of Victoria, Vancouver and Whistler, British Columbia. The group relies heavily on technology to manage its day-to-day affairs. As part of its commitment to eco-friendly and responsible practices, NPTC is working to become sustainable and tech savvy at the same time. Kara, the group's in-house environmental champion, is leading the change.

Since the co-op runs three different offices, NPTC wants to ensure that all of the group's equipment—everything from the photocopier to the lunchroom fridge—is as efficient as possible. Kara is tasked with buying new equipment; her first stop is the Energy Star website, which ranks the various products that she would like to buy.

Before the group cuts the first cheque, though, Kara calls a meeting that allows all members to chat about what they absolutely need, what they can do without, and how they might make more cost-effective purchases. With members spread across three different locations, NPTC needs a way to maximize its communication while minimizing commuting times and transportation costs.

Kara helps the co-operative members compile a list of "must-haves" and a list of "do-withouts." Into the latter category she relegates the fax machine; she instead sets the co-op up with a Web-based fax system.

Kara is keen to look for deals and savings wherever possible. When the co-operative decides to purchase a new refrigerator, Kara sources an energy-efficient fridge that's eligible for a rebate through BC Hydro's Energy Star Appliance Rebate Program.

Kara helps find new homes for the group's outdated equipment through FreeCycle. She also places some of the company's older computers at local schools, as well as community and seniors' centres. Now NPTC can feel good that its older technology is still being put to good use in the community. Only two obsolete desktop computers remain, and Kara comes up with a list of electronics recycling options in BC's Lower Mainland.

NPTC distributes a fair number of travel itineraries and brochures. Kelly, the co-op's champion of client services, suggests that PDF technology would allow them to share brochures with clients in a very professional and eco-friendly way. Kara in turn notes that e-mail and PDFs would prove a great way to send paystubs and T4s to staff as well. Before long, the whole organization is sharing information and documents seamlessly and instantly among staff and consumers, saving time, paper, postage and emissions.