

# Buying green doesn't make you green, according to study

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Company bosses need to walk the walk when it comes to greening their business with technology, with new QUT research finding that just buying green IT, doesn't make you green.

Professor Jan Recker, from the QUT Business School, said investment in Green IT paid off in terms of reducing costs but to generate [green](#) reputational and innovation benefits a more substantial change of strategy and practice was required from top-down and beyond the IT department.

The research published in *Information Systems Journal* titled How IT executives create organizational benefits by translating environmental strategies into Green IS initiatives looked at how Green IT solutions needed to be backed up by green information systems practices such as process re-engineering or environmental management systems.

"In a nutshell, Green IT refers to reducing the [environmental effects](#) of the manufacturing, operation and disposal of IT equipment and infrastructure," Professor Recker said.

"For example, buying eco-friendly computers which automatically switch off, or consolidating servers and storage devices to save energy, or refurbishing old computers to extend their lifecycle.

"All these practices are aimed at reducing the resources, energy use and electronic waste generated from IT equipment.

"The conundrum is that businesses might be greener than they were before but they are still not really green in the sense of being truly sustainable."

Professor Recker said companies could only claim the "green tag" if they adopted company-wide practices that decreased the negative environmental effects of business operations and advance corporate sustainability.

"Employing smart green information systems practices allows you to change your processes to reduce your energy footprint, or to innovate new products and services; and this is what offers reputational benefits and innovative opportunities," he said.

"Environmental management systems can quantify emissions and track resource flows, which can unleash opportunities to reduce resource consumption.

"For example, using software that defaults to printing black and white rather than colour, or double-sided instead of single-sided. These changes across an organisation can make a significant difference to its carbon footprint.

"Or, digital innovations can lead to green end products and infrastructure solutions, such as smart-grid technologies, engine-control units, intelligent traffic management systems and de-materialisation initiatives that substitute physical products such as books or music with digital services."

As part of the study, 118 chief information officers were surveyed about their strategies and their use of green technologies and [green practices](#).

"The findings demonstrate to executives who may be suspicious about the benefit of taking on company-wide green [information systems](#) that it not only contributes to environmental goals but it also benefits a business' bottomline and reputation," he said.

**More information:** Fabian Loeser et al. How IT executives create organizational benefits by translating environmental strategies into Green IS initiatives, *Information Systems Journal* (2017).  
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