

Computer power management choices for your business

Are you ready to reduce your business' computing costs significantly with very little expense and effort? With an average of 60 percent of office computers being left on overnight, an effective computer power management strategy can substantially reduce wasted electricity and save money without compromising computer performance or security. We highlight three effective approaches to help you select the strategy that best fits your business needs.

Enable built-in power management settings. You can gain significant energy savings by verifying that power management settings are enabled on individual computers and monitors so that they will enter sleep mode after a specified period of inactivity. Most recent desktop computers—those purchased since 2008—should have been shipped with these settings enabled. This is a simple, no-cost approach to reducing computing energy and can cut each computer's electricity use roughly in half, saving from \$25 to \$75 annually. If you need help activating power management features on individual computers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers detailed instructions on its web site for each computer operating system (just type "computer power management" into the search bar on the EnergyStar.gov web site). Some users may be concerned that automatic software updates will be inhibited if power management settings are enabled, but that is not the case. Updates will automatically begin to download when the computer awakens from sleep mode. This savings approach is only effective if individual users do not change the settings.

Deploy log-on scripts. If your business uses a Windows domain-based network, you can ask your network administrator or IT staff to develop and deploy group policy objects or log-on scripts that control power management settings from the server level. This approach has the advantage of being an enforceable savings standard that computer users

are not able to tamper with, and it offers IT staff the flexibility to create groups of users with similar computing habits to accommodate different operating needs. If implemented with care, group policy objects and log-on scripts can be a cost-effective strategy because they ensure that power management settings will be enabled and maintained at the appropriate level for each user without the need to purchase additional software. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offers EZ GPO, a free tool to assist network administrators in creating group policy objects (just type "EZ GPO" into the search bar of the EnergyStar.gov web site).

Use computer power management software. If your business has multiple types of hardware and operating systems on the same network, consider purchasing a computer power management software solution. The software is installed on individual machines and is centrally controlled by the IT staff via the Internet or the company network. Depending on the program used, IT staff can manually wake up computers for maintenance, monitor energy consumption and savings, and apply different settings to different groups of computers. These programs generally run from \$10 to \$20 per computer and are often available at discounted rates for bulk purchases. With average annual savings ranging from \$25 to \$75 per machine, the payback period is typically less than a year for a desktop computer. Because the software is sold on a per-computer licensing basis, it is roughly as cost-effective in a small business as in a large corporation. And although maintaining this software does require some time commitments on the part of a network administrator, it's well within the means of even modestly sized organizations. As a rule, if a company is large enough to have at least one designated IT staffer, it's probably large enough to consider computer power management software as a means of cutting costs.

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Financial incentives for selected energy efficiency improvements are available from Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's statewide program for energy efficiency and renewable energy. See focusonenergy.com/incentives for more details.

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