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Computers Killing the Environment and Your Bank Account

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Okay, I have to admit that I have never had a green thumb, nor have I been in any way, shape or form an environmental activist, maybe the son of one¹, but never on my own. But when I read about how environmentally “antagonistic” overnight computing can be to the environment and to your wallets, my eyes were forever opened.

As I walk through the hallways of any major company in the US, Europe, Asia or Australia I am witness to one of the most common denominators: wall-to-wall computers. Computers here, computers there - even computers at the receptionist desks before I even make it into the office.

I have never been a computer freak, nor have I ever had anything against advanced computing or technology. Quite the opposite as a matter of fact... Computers save time, physical and mental energy, and make life easier and more convenient for all of us (or most of us).

But according to the US PC Energy Report², some findings may surprise you about computer consumption:

- Out of 104 million office PCs in the US, at least 31.2 million are left on all night.
- Turning off every work computer in the United States every night would save as much CO₂ emissions as taking every car in the state of Maryland off the road.

- The simple step of shutting computers down each night can save a 10,000 PC enterprise more than \$165,000 a year in energy costs. Across the US, this adds up to more than \$1.72 billion and almost 15 million tons of CO₂ emissions.

So even though you may not live in the US, the facts speak for themselves. A business with 10,000 computers can save up to \$165,000 a year (that's about €124,000), just by making sure all of their computers are shut off before the office is closed for the day. Collectively, leaving computers on in the office costs American businesses \$1.72 billion (€1.3 billion) a year. What a waste of money!

Even more worrisome is the impact on the environment (as if we needed more) - 15 million tons of CO₂ emissions in the US alone - just because people are too lazy to shut off their computers.

Now you may be saying to yourself, well, so what... I shut off my computer, so what? Plus, I LIVE IN EUROPE! But how many of you stop to see if your colleagues' computers are turned off before you leave? I bet none!

Let's compare with the UK (which is 1/5 size of the US), the numbers are not very promising either: 1/6 workers leave their computers on all night, 1/7 all week long. The result: a net waste of £115 million (no joke) - that's roughly €161 million - and a hefty 700,000 tons of CO₂. Got your attention now?

Well technically I guess, that's not Europe but it does say a lot about human nature!

And one final note, switching your computer off at night saves your company \$75 per computer every year (that's €57.70 per computer). Just multiply that by the number of computers in your department and begin calculating the savings, starting with your own home!

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² 1E Energy Awareness Campaign
<http://www.1e.com/energycampaign/index.aspx>