



Green IT: The Eco-Conscious Trend in Electronics

By Michelle Miranda

According to a recent Greenpeace report, the information and communication technology (ICT) sector is responsible for a full 2% of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions on the planet.



In the quarterly report entitled “The Greener Electronics Guide,” Greenpeace ranks 18 electronics industry market leaders on their greenness in an attempt to expose environmentally harmful practices and processes in the IT industry.

Greenpeace says that an electronics company can only be “truly green” if they “are designing products [that are] free of toxic chemicals [and are] energy efficient, durable, and recyclable.”

Since the first report was released in August 2006, there have been considerable improvements in both the energy efficiency and environmental safety of various electronic products.

The report undoubtedly affects public reaction to the companies listed, especially considering the popular concern that has arisen over climate change. Many companies have accepted the challenge set forth by Greenpeace, which is to ultimately eliminate the use of toxic chemicals in their products and reduce the amount of electronic waste (e-waste) their products generate. One way to do this is to establish recycling programs for electronics, such as the free recycling service Dell offers its customers. “Takeback” programs like the ones Dell and Apple have established allow consumers to dispose of their electronics in an environmentally sound manner, with the added incentive of free shipping.

Consumer approval, environmental regulations, and electronics industry competition are most likely the driving factors behind high-ranking companies’ desire to improve their

positions on “The Greener Electronics Guide” list.

Over the past couple of years, Nokia, Dell, Samsung, and Toshiba have all been at the top of the list, but the most recent 8th edition was topped by Sony and Sony Ericsson. Sony Ericsson not only meets Energy Star energy efficiency standards but also has done exceedingly well by reducing its use of toxic chemicals. None of their new products contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), or what is sometimes called “the poison plastic.” They also do not use antimony, beryllium, or phthalates.

Apple did not do as well. While the company scores high in the area of energy efficiency, it falls short elsewhere. Apple’s iPhone has been singled out in the past for containing toxic materials. In one of last year’s reports, Greenpeace rated Apple the least green company. The iPhone was said to contain brominated fire retardants (BFRs), phthalate plasticisers, and chloride. Since then, Apple CEO Steve Jobs has promised to make the company’s products more environmentally safe but has failed to meet the standards. The most recent edition to the line, the iPhone 3G, comes complete with environmentally friendly potato packaging but could still contain hazardous BFRs.

There has yet to be a company in the ICT sector green enough to earn a full 10 out of 10 points on Greenpeace’s green electronics meter, but with the direction the information technology industry is headed in, it looks like the green IT trend isn’t going to take long to force the leading electronics companies into compliance.

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