Minimising your organisation's digital footprint

We've pulled together practical steps that you can take to minimise your digital footprint from our Climate Action Lunch with Gerry McGovern, Author of World Wide Waste.

With thanks to: Gerry McGovern

WHY DIGITAL MATTERS

With the pandemic bringing a move to more remote working, many hailed this as fantastic for the reduction of carbon emissions. Whilst it is true that business travel emissions have decreased, we mustn't forget about the impact of digital products and services on the environment.

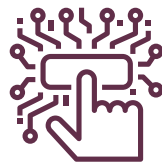Digital emissions are often misunderstood and overlooked. However...

Every year we create a great wall of China of electronic waste and in another 15-20 years that will
double

There is huge impact on communities where electronic waste is sent for raw materials to be extracted. The people who process it are being poisoned along with the land and the water

Every time we go online carbon dioxide is being emitted. Plus energy is used 24/7 to power data centres all over the world

There is an unimaginable amount of data being created and with a 28% annual growth rate, we are set to hit over 2000 zettabytes of data by 2035.
90% of data is not used 3 months after it's stored

390 billion
emails are sent every day. Only 6% of email attachments are opened

Digital technology accounts for
3%
of global greenhouse emissions. That's more than the global aviation industry

The way to deal with the climate crisis is with less technology and more human energy but we're all using digital in our workplaces so to get the best out of it from an environmental point of view:

1.Understand worth and value in the digital world

2.Eliminate digital waste as much as possible

You cannot address climate change without addressing social justice. Those who exploit the earth, also exploit other people.

Multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural collaboration create the best results. Sometimes that collaboration needs to happen online but through that we may create a product or service that results in a more positive impact, or a reduction in energy.

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WHAT YOU CAN DO...laptops

- **Hold onto. Fix it. Repair it. In order for laptops to be anywhere near sustainable you need to keep them for 20 years. The pollution is in the device – care for your devices and spread the pollution impact out as much as possible**
- **Buy refurbished, remanufactured**
- **Buy designed to last, repairable. Some manufacturers such as Framework and Dell are now coming out with devices that are repairable rather than having planned obsolescence**

- **Get lowest spec that you need**
- **For the best energy ratings use a laptop not desktop**
- **Don't use large screens, they can use as much energy as the entire computer**
- **Reduce monitor brightness**
- **Don't use screen savers**

- **Turn the monitor off after 5 minutes max**
- **Set sleep mode after 10 minutes max**
- **Shut down when not using**
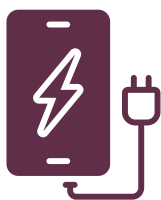- **Switch everything off at night including your network and all devices**

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WHAT YOU CAN DO...phones

- Hold onto. Fix it. Repair it. In order for phones to be anywhere near sustainable you need to keep them for 10 years
- Buy refurbished, remanufactured
- Buy designed to last, repairable such as Fairphone

- Become obsessive about using the minimum amount of data
- Minimise notifications
- Disable location services
- Remove unused apps
- Think hard before downloading apps – it's not just the download that uses data, they are constantly calling energy
- Watch out for greedy energy intensive apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp

- Keep battery level at 50-80% - the sweet spot for batteries lasting long term
- Short charges are better
- Don't leave it plugged in at full charge
- Don't drain your battery completely
- Use a wire to charge. Wireless chargers are 50% more energy intensive than wires
- Unplug charger when not in use

- Dim the screen
- Use dark mode if you can
- Stream in standard not high definition
- Don't expose your phone to a lot of heat

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WHAT YOU CAN DO...emails

- Calculate cost of sending and receiving e.g. with <u>Carbon Literacy</u> guidance
- Read less: unsubscribe, get rid of notifications, don't check so often
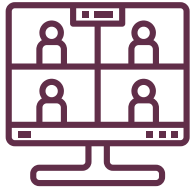- Create less emails: less text, avoid HTML, don't use large signatures with images, reduce attachments/links

- Delete 90%: every year delete all emails more than 2 years old, archive emails
- Delete emails with large attachment/file sizes immediately
- Delete old accounts
- Set limits. It's not a limitless world. Create an analogy to connect digital emissions to the physical world to help colleagues understand and change their behaviour

- Organise the intranet so people can find what they're looking for and send less emails/attachments
- Maintain more: allocate time to organise your emails and information

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- Use video to greet then go to audio which creates 90% less pollution
- Use lowest resolution possible
- Use smallest screen possible
- Avoid virtual backgrounds – they are energy intensive
- Consider the platform - Zoom is 2-3 times more energy efficient than Teams

- Don't save the meeting unless you have to
- Delete saved videos after 3 months

- Text and phone instead – go for the lightest option where possible

Getting together in physical collaborative spaces as we come out of the pandemic could help generate some of the solutions to the climate crisis which are likely to be more social than technological

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WHAT YOU CAN DO...documents

- Reduce the weight of your documents. Weight equals pollution. Use text file or optimized HTML. Avoid pdf where possible. Optimise your images, audio and video and use consciously – they are all more heavy than text

- Delete your details from the Web
- Delete emails more than 2 years old
- Delete all data more than 2 years old
- Delete unused accounts
- Delete unused software and apps
- Delete subscriptions
- Delete files in Downloads folder
- Empty the trash

WHAT YOU CAN DO...data and storage

- Store the least amount of data possible in the most energy efficient manner possible. Archive data you don't need access to, it's less energy intensive
- Only keep what you're currently working on in the cloud
- A hard drive is less intensive than the cloud. Use it for documents you need to keep but don't need regular access to
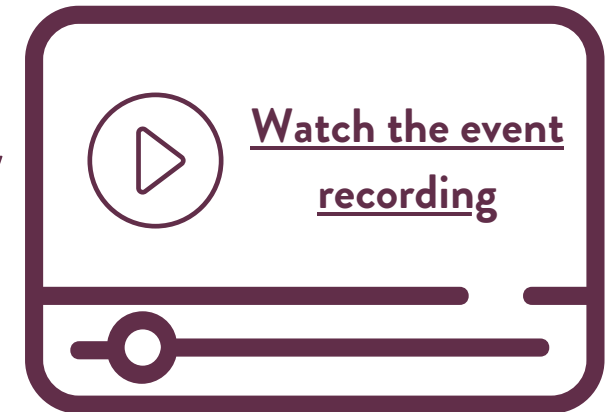
- Question whether you need to create the content. Create less content, code, communication
- Collect least amount of data possible
- Send least amount of data possible

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FIND OUT MORE...resources and further reading

General

- Find out more about Gerry McGovern's work and purchase his books
- A toolkit from Wholegrain Digital to help measure and reduce business digital carbon emissions
- Green Tech South West: a community sharing insights on how technology can heal or harm our planet
- Track your businesses' digital emissions impact over time with Ecoping

Watch the event recording

Cloud

- Cloud Carbon Footprint: an emissions measurement and analysis tool
- Tools for reducing your cloud carbon footprint from Green Tech South West

Websites

- Get an overview of the potential footprint of your website from Website Carbon or Digital Beacon
- A starting point for reducing the carbon emissions of websites from Climate Action Tech
- Google page speed insights tells you which of your web pages are the slowest
- The Green Web Foundation green hosting directory and app to check how green your website host is
- A project for the tech-savvy or developers for ways to reduce the impact of the digital tools and websites you create
- A book on sustainable web design
- A calculator from the International Energy Agency for looking at streaming

Hardware

- A campaign around creating a 10 year smartphone
- The restart project: an organisation that promotes fixing electronics on a local scale
- Digilocal: places to donate your working laptops in Bristol
- Donate IT: donate your old devices for learners in Somerset

For more information about the Climate Action Programme visit bit.ly/CAP_home