Just How Much Power Does Your Office Use When You Are Not There? By Jack Jenkins

The New York Times recently (May 7, 2016) reported that around a quarter of all residential energy consumption is used on devices in idle mode: costing American households over $19 billion each year.

This is also an issue for commercial tenants. In a new office, equipment energy use can account for over 70% of a tenant's electricity use. We would not be surprised to find office tenants who match the New York Times' findings; using a quarter of their energy while no one is there.

RDA's Energy and Sustainability Group have been looking at this issue for some of our office fit-out clients.

So far we have found that by using the following three ideas, our clients in NYC can cut their energy costs by between 5% and 15%. With much of this achievable at little or no cost.

1) Have IT set up computers with power management control as the default setting.

   Computers will either shut-off or go into a low energy mode when not being used. Even if people are free to override these settings, research by Columbia University suggests that around 80% will never change from the default.

2) Enable the low energy sleep mode on shared equipment such as printers, projectors, TV screens, and as many other devices as possible.

For IP addressable devices you can go further: specialized software can search for all devices on your network, monitor how they are used, and intelligently reduce any unnecessary power consumption.

3) Install automatic receptacle controls for 50% of plugs at each workstation and meeting room.

   These controls use presence sensors or time clocks to shut off controlled plugs when people are not there: great for monitors and general devices. The other 50% of plugs remain on and are used for devices that need to maintain power (such as computers).

Starting with these three ideas, most tenants should be able to achieve a good saving.

Our Energy and Sustainability Group are here to help if you want to go further. By implementing additional ideas many tenants could cut their energy costs by as much as 30 – 50%.

Jack Jenkins, CEA, LEED AP BD+C

Jack leads the Energy and Sustainability group at RDA. He is a keen advocate for a greener economy, and has spent over 10 years providing independent analysis to help organizations both become more sustainable and cut their energy costs.

:: E-mail Jack

Want more Energy Saving Ideas from RDA?

Sign-up to receive future editions of energy saving ideas:

SEND ME MORE ENERGY SAVING IDEAS