

# STORAGE

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## Shining the green spotlight on storage

There's a green movement marching through the data center and the focus is shifting to storage.

**T**HERE'S BEEN a lot of hubbub lately about the greening of IT, and it's going to get worse. Unlike most buzz/noise fronts that come and go, this one didn't start in the marketing department. It began with someone finding out that they had reached the end of the line when it came to adding another "wafer-thin" piece of IT gear. They were either out of room, out of air conditioning or out of power—problems that can't be instantly solved with a big check.

Most of the noise around green IT is centered on servers. From an infrastructure perspective, servers sit atop the food chain. They're also the presumed culprit when it comes to IT power and footprint problems, which is wrong, but it's about to be a moot point. Let's say I agree that your dual-core mega machines suck more juice and blow more heat than the participants of a tequila swilling, buffalo wing eating contest. Let's also agree that it will only get worse for a while, as we've conditioned our industry to make sure it comes out with chips that pump out twice as much for half the dough year after year ... until they approach the temperature of magma and your PC needs its own power grid. Do we need another 8 billion instructions per second capability to launch Word? No.

VMware will end the entire debate. People will get huge efficiency gains by consolidating servers onto fewer platforms, which will take up less space and require less power and cooling. Then we'll find out that it was the infrastructure in the data layer that was the real culprit, not servers. Sure, racks and racks of servers suck power and blow heat at an astounding rate, but

that's nothing compared to the 57 giant disk arrays and 986 smaller ones sitting idle; those huge tape libraries on the back wall consume more power than some small countries.

When that light shines, you can expect the marketing machine to churn out tales of more efficient, denser storage products. As always, the vendor's response will be to "throw out the stuff you have and replace it with our better stuff," which is good if you can afford it. If you can't, you need another tactic. You need to do what no one in our world has wanted to do for a long, long time. You'll have to *manage*. Ugh!

The guys at GlassHouse Technologies, a professional services company, have been talking about this for years. They know that growth, complexity and confusion have meant that people have had to "just buy more" instead of ensuring that storage assets are used properly. When the light shines and exposes faulty processes, guys like GlassHouse swoop in, do their thing and, lo and behold, your power consumption plummets, utilization skyrockets, poli-



Illustration by Travis Foster

cies are implemented and enforced and, at least for a brief period of time, your shop runs like it's supposed to.

Nobody gave these guys a shot seven years ago. A storage services company? No way. (Though I knew, I swear). Who would have thought we'd be having conversations about power, packaging and cooling? What's next, a debate on cardboard packaging? Companies like Verari Systems in San Diego have the smartest server/storage packaging I've ever seen and should have a real shot at altering the status quo in a dramatic way, but how unsexy is that? Will all of the Silicon Valley guys driving their new BMWs and yapping on an Apple iPhone Bluetooth be talking about air flow and exhaust instead of Java/Web 2.0/Google/Web Services? Will we go back to Pabst Blue Ribbon beer instead of Harlan, hot dogs instead of sushi? Fine with me. ☺

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