

REDUCING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT



What does that mean?

This is a discussion document on how to reduce your Corporation's carbon footprint using real time collaboration technologies.

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WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

Here's a definition I plucked off the web:

The total amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂).

What does that really mean? Ultimately, in everything you do, consume or interact with, some form of fossil fuel was consumed to make it and therefore some carbon dioxide was emitted in the process. So given clever little ready reckoners like below, you can approximate the amount of CO₂ you are personally responsible for emitting in a given timeframe.

fuel type	unit	CO₂ emitted per unit
Petrol	1 gallon	10.4 kg
Petrol	1 litre	2.3 kg
Diesel	1 gallon	12.2 kg
Diesel	1 litre	2.7 kg
Oil (heating)	1 gallon	13.6 kg
Oil (heating)	1 litre	3 kg

So by making informed choices on products, transport methods or companies, you can make real change to your personal carbon footprint. This assumes that the companies you are making conscious choices about actually tell you what they are doing about the issue themselves.

A CORPORATE PERSPECTIVE

I noted recently an old Employer of mine, *Genesys Conferencing*, appointed a 'Green Officer'. Assuming that wasn't a person wearing green old day, it was not just lip-service to the issue of carbon emissions, this was a Company that actually was dedicating a full time salaried manager to devising and implementing a corporate plan to reduce carbon emissions. It is a growing trend within Corporations to try to get their heads around the issue of the environment in which they exist and how they affect it.

For manufacturing Companies, the problem can very obvious. It gets down to how much fossil fuel do they use to produce their goods and therefore how much CO₂ is produced in doing so – by simply finding more efficient methods of production or more carbon efficient fuels, they can have immediate effects.

But what of the service Companies like banks, lawyers, estate agents or retailers where things are not so obvious. We can all switch off lights in the evening or turn off the computers rather than leave them displaying natty screen savers, and that helps consume less energy. It also saves cost.

COST AND CARBON FOOTPRINT REDUCTION

Very often conformity to standards or business practices or bureaucracy involves extra cost – and carbon footprint focus has the whiff of something similar. To get certifications or verification of reductions there will inevitably be some standards body or authorisation scheme to get stamps of approval etc. It's inevitable. As we speak, in the madness of emissions trading, there are middle men actually making vast commissions in buying and selling the rights to pollute. It sounds crazy but then again we live in a world which thinks Big Brother is entertainment, despite George Orwell's chilling predictions.

The fact is that reducing carbon footprints can save cost and so the appointment of Green Officers is not dumb. **Consuming less energy means less cost.**

Be proactive – it makes sense.

TRAVEL EXPENSE, PRODUCTIVITY AND TIME MANAGEMENT

The timing conundrum is a two question issue:

1. When should a Company start planning to expand internationally?

I have worked in the Collaboration business for the last 10 years. There are still black boxes in the Board Rooms which use separate phone lines for high quality video calls but they are not practical for actually getting real cost reductions.

I was recently involved in a management meeting where we discussed the rise travel and subsistence expenses year on year. It transpired the costs associated were nothing to do with seeing customers but visiting other offices of the company. The suggestion was to use the videoconferencing equipment, but there was one machine in the Board Room of each office and this room was booked regularly for other meetings.

I boldly suggested webconferencing, indicating it could be done from every desktop on the current infrastructure and by using SIP phones on the PCs, Voice over IP could negate phone line costs.

'But how much does it really save – that's the issue', piped up one of the well paid managers. A straw poll around the room revealed the following:

- **I had driven up the night before - a distance of 230 miles in a 2 litre car averaging 32 miles to the gallon. The Company paid 30p per mile for this. I had stayed overnight in hotel and paid £110 for the bill. I would drive back down south that evening, a further 230 miles at 30p per mile. A total cost of £69 miles each way plus the hotel meant £248 was spent getting to and from the meeting.**
- **The Director had flown up that morning and had a taxi to and from Manchester airport plus the trip to and from his local airport.**

We stopped right there. Not because there were eight other people in the room to add in the cost but we suddenly realised that two senior people had spent at least 10 man hours in the last working day travelling. Factor in the associated employee costs like salary etc and then start thinking about what either of us could have been doing while in the car or plane and suddenly the situation looked far worse.

A cursory glance at the offending company travel expenses that were so worrying revealed people travelling north to south and vice versa 3 or 4 times a month each.

THE ALTERNATIVES

Most travel expenses can be reduced – that's just a plain fact. In the meeting I refer to above alone, if I had joined by web and audioconference the travel cost could have been saved and good deal of carbon dioxide not emitted.

Web and Audioconferencing costs around 15p per minute combined. The meeting lasted 5 hours – so it would have cost only £45 for me to attend had I used VoiP, a cost reduction of £203 plus saving the associated carbon emitted.

It would have also saved me 7 hours of travel time in the car. It would have saved me spending a night away from home. It would have meant I could have been home normal time on both days. I could have put the 7 hours into more productive things or the company and increased my productivity. It would have meant less stress.

IT'S A CULTURAL THING

When the Royal Bank of Scotland bought NatWest bank, two goliaths collided. Before the merger the two banks did little collaboration – total conversations on Audioconferencing lasted no more than 3 million minutes amongst all the employees. But two huge organisations with duplicate processes, multiple branches and offices, and two different cultures had to merge fast in order to gain the anticipated profit benefits of the deal. Within two years, due to a top down culture of real time collaboration, the bank consumed 60 million per year of audioconference minutes with less total staff. And that was just in the UK – subsidiaries in the US clocked up 30 million minutes again.

Senior people at the bank would tell you it wasn't just about saving money on travel or about reducing carbon emissions or about being green – **it was an absolute necessity as there was simply no other way to get the job done.**

THE BOTTOM LINE

And that's what it is all about. There is no other way. The business tools and services are already there – the PCs are on the desks – the technology is around us. Travel costs and carbon emissions can be reduced – **not in 5 years time but tomorrow. It's a cultural thing.**

You can reduce cost by not travelling business class but the plane still emits the same amount of carbon. By using collaboration technology, you can reduce the cost and the carbon – and be home in time to help your children do their homework.

Real time collaboration and all the associated technologies are about the biggest no-brainer since the first guy who invented the wheel.

If you want to know more about saving the planet and shrinking expenses, email Info@calxeurope.com or call +44 (0)207 193 2356.

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