

Carbon Neutral Minutes helps meet Public Sector targets

The government aims to make energy consumption of their ICT systems carbon neutral by 2012 giving the channel opportunities to deliver innovative and green telephony solutions.

Since Gamma launched its Carbon Neutral Minutes initiative at the start of 2009, channel partners have been benefiting from Gamma's minutes being CarbonNeutral® in helping them to close deals. Through Gamma, resellers can show that they are helping customers reduce their carbon footprint and the initiative has been particularly successful within the public sector as it faces increasing pressure to meet government targets.

At the end of 2008, the Government launched its Greening Government ICT: Efficient, Sustainable, Responsible strategy, aimed at reducing the environmental impact of their ICT. The strategy has two objectives: to make energy consumption of their ICT systems carbon neutral by 2012, and to make them carbon neutral across their lifetime (including manufacture and disposal) by 2020. Gamma's Carbon Neutral Minutes gives the public sector immediate action to this strategy by providing carbon neutral energy consumption on all telephony traffic.

The Cabinet Office publishes a number of supporting documents aimed at its ICT procurement departments and included in these are recommendations to consider "VoIP as a replacement for desk-top phones" and "to review and reduce energy consumption of PBX equipment" as areas for potential carbon reduction. These present new opportunities for resellers to upgrade or swap out existing telephony systems and by partnering with Gamma who are market leaders in SIP Trunking and Hosted IP Telephony solutions, as well as being the only network carrier in the UK to provide a net zero carbon footprint for all calls carried across our network, they will be best placed to meet those recommendations set out by the government.

Christian Beaumont, programme manager at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), looks after CLG's replacement telephony service programme. "The green agenda is sponsored and supported from the very top of central government," comments Beaumont. "When departments go out to tender for replacement ICT, their procurement strategy will have carbon reduction soaked into it. It's not just value for money it's also what you do with the green agenda itself. In other words, how much power does it save, what

is the reduction in carbon footprint - things like that figure very highly in our thinking. We publish to our suppliers how they will be assessed so that they understand our relative importance of things like value for money, completeness of tender response, green agenda and sustainability, etc. We have about 9 criteria - our first and highest being value for money. Today our second highest criterion is the green agenda. It's come right to the top and to my knowledge Gamma is the only carrier that directly addresses carbon reduction."

To help resellers demonstrate how many kilograms of CO₂ their customers can offset by running their calls over Gamma's network, the carrier has developed the Green-o-meter, a simple web-based tool that is available on Gamma's website or can be embedded into a resellers own website. "When it comes to selling voice minutes it can be hard to set yourself apart from similar competitors," comments Jon Loftin, sales director at Modern Communications. "The Green-o-meter allows us to offer something extra and saying the network is the greenest in the UK is very powerful, especially with public sector customers."

Gamma's carbon footprint is independently assessed by a company called Greenstone Carbon Management who looks at electricity bills and volumes for the amount of energy used in transporting minutes across the network. Gamma works with The CarbonNeutral Company to offset this carbon footprint and purchases carbon credits, which means that each tonne of CO₂ emitted is counter balanced with a tonne of CO₂ saved by a validated emission reduction project that has met international standards. This could be, for example, a project to swap coal-fired power stations with solar or hydro.

"Carbon Neutral Minutes is a significant proposition for many of our partners selling into the public sector," commented Justin Coombes, marketing manager, Gamma Telecom. "For example, one of our partners was able to demonstrate to a university that by putting their telephony across the Gamma network, they would be offsetting almost 2 tonnes of CO₂ every year and this proved to be compelling for them as they had specific carbon reduction objectives to meet. Many business are keen to be as green as possible as their customers are demanding it; Gamma was the first and is still the only network carrier in the UK to provide a net zero carbon footprint for all calls carried across our network – there is no greener way of making calls in the UK and it doesn't cost our partners or their customers a thing."