

SearchITChannel.com

Ingram Micro signs up with EPA to promote green IT for VARs

Technology distributors are stepping up green IT services and business policies, a trend exemplified by Ingram Micro's move this week to become the first technology distributor to sign onto the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Leaders program.

The [EPA Climate Leaders program](#) aims to help businesses set specific corporate sustainability goals with the intent of aggressively reducing their greenhouse gas emissions through measurements and ongoing reporting.

Among the steps Ingram Micro has already taken toward this end:

- Increased recycled content in its shipping cartons to up to 39% of the materials; in 2009, it recycled more than 4,500 tons in the United States alone.
- Adopted a lighting retrofit program for the next 10 years: In just one of its advanced logistics centers, the anticipated savings are \$3.25 million.
- Moved to ensure that 95% of the fleet it uses (Ingram Micro doesn't have its own fleet) is part of the [EPA SmartWay](#) program, which means the carriers are focused on high fuel efficiency and transportation options.

Ria Carlson, senior vice president and head of Ingram Micro Inc.'s Corporate Social Responsibility program, said that the Santa Ana, Calif.-based distributor began studying the impact of its operations on the environment two years ago. By the end of 2010, Carlson said, Ingram Micro will have a strong baseline of measurements from which to really start driving change.

The distributor is also experimenting with green IT services that could potentially give it an edge with its customers -- its efforts related to toner cartridge recycling, for example. It actively publicizes products in its line card that carry a rating from the Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) and other green technology certifications.

"We do see this as a potential competitive advantage, and we are moving forward relatively quickly," said Carlson.

But so are other distributors -- both internally as a way to cut costs and improve their corporate sustainability message and externally as a means of creating new services for their solution provider customers.

Tech Data Corp. also put a big emphasis on the efficiency of its packaging, according to a spokesman for the Clearwater, Fla.--based distributor. Approximately 27% of its shipping boxes are made from recycled materials, and the distributor's warehouse management software has been configured to analyze all outbound orders and choose the most efficient box size. Tech Data is also working on a number of internal initiatives, including installing energy-efficient lighting and sourcing local food for its onsite food service operations.

In Tempe, Ariz., [Avnet Inc. is likewise focused intently on sustainability](#) and package recycling. The distributor just moved into a building in Alabama that was certified for green design under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program, and its integration center in Chandler, Ariz., was built with solar-reflective roofing, energy-efficient heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) equipment and motion-sensor lighting. Internally, the company uses power management software to put its computers to sleep at night, paring at least \$180,000 off its annual electricity bill, according to a spokeswoman.

As a service to its customers, Avnet has been aggressive in electronics recycling and reuse through its

refurbishment program. In the past six years, the initiative has diverted approximately 105 tons of technology from landfills while creating new value for the components, said Michelle Gorel, Avnet's vice president of public relations, and the company will introduce similar efforts. "There is really no one silver bullet of things you can or should do," Gorel said.

Synnex's formal green IT program, [called Eco-Smart](#), seeks to help customers develop their own services around green IT. Kevin Murai, president and CEO of Synnex Corp., said Eco-Smart helps solution providers research which products might be greenest in a given category, based on certifications and ratings, and learn how to use vendor and utility energy-efficiency rebate programs to their advantage. In a number of states, for example, businesses can earn utility rebates by installing and using certain energy-efficient technologies, including virtualization. This can help close deals. Those rebates often cover services such as energy audits, Murai said.

How much does a distributor's green bent matter? To the extent that its actions can help a solution provider's own green initiatives, it could be a subtle advantage.

"Every time we receive a box, we have to find a way to dispose of it and the packing materials inside," said Jane Cage, COO/CFO of [Heartland Technology Solutions](#) in Joplin, Mo. "The packaging dilemma travels down the food chain, I suppose. If Ingram can reduce the amount of waste we have to deal with, it would make us even happier with Ingram than we already are. We would also be happy to tell clients that it could finally be cheaper to repair a printer, for example, than replace it."

Guy Baroan, president of [Baroan Technologies](#) in Elmwood, N.J., said all other things being equally, he would choose a distributor with an interest in green business issues.

"Having more recycled materials in use, recycling more equipment, making things more electronic and reducing waste is great," Baroan said. "It shows their commitment to the environment, to technology and that they are doing what they can to lower the waste. This is definitely a differentiator. If it came down to just that as a choice between one distributor or the other, I would definitely lean towards the company that is doing what they can for the environment."

Let us know what you think about the story; email Barbara Darrow, Senior News Director at bdarrow@techtarget.com, or [follow us on twitter](#).

All Rights Reserved, [Copyright 2006 - 2011](#), TechTarget | [Read our Privacy Statement](#)