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PC power management solutions remain a hard sell

Pretty much every company sees the sense of managing power usage on desktops and notebooks. In fact, power management and the ability to extend battery life are widely touted improvements in Windows 7.

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But IT solution providers say many businesses are still reluctant to commit because of user concerns that powering down PCs according to predefined parameters will get in the way of their work.

"We are always asked about the value of keeping computers on or off," said Guy Baroan, founder and CEO of [Baroan Technologies](#) in Elmwood Park, N.J. "If our clients see that they can save money and it works well, they are interested. If it's going to be an inhibitor of their time, then they're not going to go for it."

In a 2009 update on PC power management trends, Forrester Research Inc. reported that approximately 49% of businesses were thinking about implementing PC power management policies. Only 13% have adopted it on a wide scale, with another 30% in some sort of pilot stage.

Of those that have adopted some sort of PC power management strategy, close to 30% relied on users or employees to proactively shut down their notebooks or desktops when they were not in use. Only 23% of businesses were pre-activating a policy.

The top three barriers to implementing PC power management, Forrester found, were the following:

- Lack of ownership for policies
- Users will not tolerate any lack of productivity
- Uncertainty over tactics and approach

Rex Frank, director of operations for [JWCS](#), an IT services firm in Seattle, said his company is crafting a PC power management service around PowerPro Manager from Excelerate Software. JWCS is able to help customers save about \$35 per desktop per year on their power bill, he estimates.

There are a number of relatively well-known players emerging in the PC power management marketplace. Two of the biggest names when it comes to business environments are 1E, which has high-level partnerships with Dell, McAfee and Microsoft; and Verdiem, which has an OEM relationship with Hewlett-Packard and partners with Microsoft on Edison, a free PC power manager.

To cover the cost of the software licenses, JWCS helps customers apply for technology rebate funds offered by some utility companies. School districts and government agencies, in particular, are beginning to invest in this sort of software, Frank said.

One potential obstacle for anyone selling PC power management solutions is that some smaller businesses may not be responsible for paying their power bills directly. "One of the gotchas that I have come across is that companies that lease their space don't pay their power bills directly," said Frank. It's hard to calculate energy savings when true energy costs are obscured from the payer.

Likewise, Terrell Jones, director of the infrastructure practice for [EcomNets](#), a systems integrator in Herndon,

Va., that offers a number of green IT services, said the return on investment for PC power management is relatively quick, between three months and six months. As a standalone practice, however, there isn't a lot of margin in selling PC power management software. Better to consider it as a value-added extension of existing management services, Jones said.

Lee Hansen, CEO of [Dialectic Networks](#), an enterprise reseller and services company in Osprey, Fla., said it's relatively straightforward to fine-tune power management performance and settings as part of a broader managed services that is virtually invisible to end users but highly visible to network administrators.

"I don't see a reason that we need to continue to be inefficient," he said.

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