What can businesses do to manage their energy consumption?

by Sean Burke

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Businesses and individuals are now more aware of their energy consumption than ever, partly as a result of increasing electricity and gas prices that have made it economical to compare prices and find the most cost-effective energy tariffs. Switching your energy supplier is just one way to effectively manage your energy consumption though, and with new smart grid systems and renewable energy options, there are now many ways for companies to take control of how much energy they use.

Installing smart meters in your business premises will provide up-to-date information on exactly how much electricity is being used over certain periods of time, especially when you take baseline readings for comparison at regular intervals. When you sign up for a business electricity tariff, you should also check whether your meter readings can be viewed online, making it even more convenient to monitor your energy usage.

Smart meters and online energy monitoring tools have already achieved great success with many businesses, especially smaller companies, and can lead to savings of up to 40 per cent on gas and electricity prices. By making energy usage more visible to businesses and their employees, it can be easier to plan and implement strategies to reduce your energy consumption - from installing dimmer switches and replacing standard light bulbs with energy saving equivalents to considering investment in solar power and other sustainable energy systems, allowing you to start generating your own electricity for free, without having to rely on the grid.

If you're primarily keeping track of your energy usage to lower your business electricity prices though, you should be aware that some energy monitoring services charge annual or monthly rates, which may not prove so cost-effective even if these services help you to identify key areas in which your company can make savings. Instead, it may be more beneficial to educate yourself and other people in your organisation in good energy usage habits, such as turning the lights off when leaving the room and making sure computer systems are shut down before leaving the office in the evening.

Learning about the major energy costs for businesses could also be beneficial when making changes, especially since some results may be surprising. Lighting typically accounts for the greatest energy drain in business premises of all sizes, and favouring energy efficient models when buying new computers and other devices or appliances for your workplace could also lead to permanent reductions in your electricity bills.

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