

Corporate responsibility - The Derelict

 By [Dawie Botes](#)

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Having worked in corporate offices for years, I've picked up on an alarming situation plaguing our electricity supply. I call them 'Derelicts'; the remnants of people's positions, still hanging around long after someone have left an office.

Let's examine the Derelicts and discover an amazing cost-saving exercise that every corporate should undertake.



Humming away electricity

The Derelicts are desktop computers - old computers plugged in, powered up and humming away, without ever being used. They normally get left behind, under a desk or pushed into a corner, but due to the company's policies, only an IT Technician is ever allowed to plug out and move a PC, and no one ever bothers to call them. As a result, a computer can sit idle for months, even years, without ever being removed.

Now, considering that most desktop computers after 2000 came built in with power-saving features (sleep mode after idle time, Hard disk shut downs etc.), one would think that these Derelicts pose no threat. But then you should have a closer look and notice that, due to corporate IT policies, these desktops are not allowed to enter sleep mode, because most companies perform software updates outside of office hours; in the evenings, early mornings or during the weekend.

As such, the Derelicts just keep on humming away.

What's more, they're still connected to the company network, either via cable or WiFi, consuming scarce resources like IP addresses, which are easy to run out of with regard to heavily managed sub-nets. If connected to WiFi, the Derelicts even contest against active users for connection points, decreasing the overall performance of the network.

Heavy cost

For a desktop computer, especially the older generation ones, we can conservatively pen down a usage of 90W during idle time. Running 24/7, we can extrapolate this to being 2.16kWh a day. About 65kWh a month and about 780kWh a year for doing, well, nothing! If this doesn't sound too bad consider that, at today's rate of about R1.50 a kWh, this will work out to R1,170 worth of electricity a year.

Now for the shocker. Like I said before, I've been in the offices of corporates for years and, to make an estimate, for every 20 office workers, there's at least one Derelict. In other words, for around 5% of your workforce, there are Derelicts. Consider a company with 20,000 staff members - the number of Derelicts could come to 1000. This brings our electricity cost up to R1,170,000 a year, increasing annually.

So, how do we fix this situation?

There are many opportunities to create jobs requiring very little qualification, with a lot of training happening on-the-job, with reference to South Africa's current political space. For R1,170,000, at least five jobs can be created to visit every single desk in said company to plug out computers.

Also, consider changing the policies of your software updates to run at specific, scheduled times, even during office hours, instead of continuously outside of office hours. Lastly, allow your staff to plug out unused desktop computers. If they're

qualified to plug a kettle out, then they can plug out a PC.

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