Data Centre Budgeting

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Many IT departments are currently looking at setting budgets for running their data centres for the next financial year, and those that aren't are having to find ways of making sure that the budget put in place a few months ago can be stuck to.

This is against the backdrop of a data centre that in many businesses represents a budgetary black hole, as costs escalate and efficiencies simply cannot be gained and/or maintained. Accordingly, some who operate in and around the data centre market recommend pursuing a standard integrated architecture for the data centre. This allows a data centre manager to understand where efficiencies can be gained, where additional benefits can be seen and how to best control the various parameters of the environment.

However, even this is not as far as can be gone. Every data centre has its own unique requirements, determined by a number of factors that simply cannot all be legislated for. As a result, there can be no one-size-fits-all approach with data centre best practice. The only way to achieve the very best in efficiencies, and therefore manage budgets most effectively, is to manage the centre on an individual item basis.

Many data centre managers can control their facilities on a building or even aisle basis, though few can assert control on a rack by rack basis. Hardly any can monitor and control the status of individual pieces of equipment, and so hardly any are even close to efficient.

But why is this important? A standard data centre may well have hundreds of aisles, each comprised of multiple cabinets, within each of which are dozens of pieces of IT equipment. A good data centre manager needs to make sure that he or she is not spending budget keeping unnecessary kit cool, supplied with power and maintained, or implementing a single environmental approach which impacts upon some items' performance.

Indeed, a granular view of equipment may highlight opportunities to physically group equipment together that share environmental needs and therefore establish a zonal approach to the data centre's environment. The manager may also identify equipment that can be switched off or replaced with more power-efficient versions, or even consolidated.

Naturally, this sounds entirely logical, so why has this not been done to date? Until now the emphasis has been more on IT and maintaining business-as-usual, rather than identifying how to cut utility costs. But now, with rising energy fees and the need to comply with carbon emission regulations, efficiency and suitable visibility has to become a central part of budgetary planning.