

# The CIO as Chief Sustainability Officer

COGNIZANT



Cognizant

## Executive Q&A

*Most CIOs don't think of themselves as leaders in the battle against climate change. Yet given IT's role in driving efficiencies of all kinds, the CIO is in many ways well-suited for the job. He/she has the landscape view of the IT organization – itself a vast consumer of energy – and leads people who are accustomed to solving complicated puzzles. Greening is just another solvable puzzle.*

*Mark Greenlaw exemplifies this new model. Until recently, Greenlaw was our CIO, overseeing a staff of more than 1,000 professionals. He was recently appointed the company's first Chief Sustainability Officer. His transition signals our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and our desire to help clients reduce theirs, largely through measures related to technology.*

*In this conversation, Greenlaw discusses our methodical efforts to find, measure and reduce carbon across an enterprise that spans the globe; how we are developing our first-ever annual environmental report; and why the CIO is an ideal candidate for the job of chief sustainability officer.*



Mark Greenlaw

**Q:** Most CIOs wouldn't consider themselves eligible for the job you've taken on. Why do you think otherwise?

**Greenlaw:** CIOs work with almost all the functions of the business, so they have a unique understanding of how companies work from end to end – everything from the supply chain, to how you hire people, to real estate and buildings and travel.

The IT team has a very forward-thinking, cross-functional view of the company. Because of that, we are able to identify pockets of inefficiency. A lot of it comes down to waste, whether that's waste of electricity, paper or water. Efficient systems almost always consume fewer resources.

CIOs are also accustomed to dealing with large, cross-functional initiatives and obtaining funding for them. Let's say you want to invest in renewable energy. Cognizant, for example, is looking at wind in India right now. That's a fairly substantial investment. Not every executive is familiar with how such a thing would be presented, let alone funded. What will the CFO and board need to see? How do you put together a business case? CIOs are adept at that.

Change management is another skill set that crosses over nicely. On a daily basis, the CIO has to handle significant change that's part of all large IT projects. In my CIO organization, I had a small cadre of organizational change management experts who do training and education and awareness. We built that team to do a large global ERP implementation, so they're adept at cultural change programs, behavioral change and process adoption. We tapped the same team to do the cultural change around our "Go Green" program.

I have a report from Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship.<sup>1</sup> They confirm that the best people for corporate citizenship/sustainability roles actually have many of the same traits as a CIO. At Dow Chemical, the CIO actually does both jobs.<sup>2</sup>

**Q:** What are the environmental challenges at a knowledge-based company like Cognizant?

**Greenlaw:** Our carbon footprint and environmental impact is primarily around providing offices for our 85,000 employees – office space, data centers, employee business travel. You would compare us to sectors such as financial services or pharmaceuticals.

**Q:** What has Cognizant done so far?

**Greenlaw:** We first started measuring our carbon footprint with our first carbon inventory last May, for the year 2008, and then we did it again this year and re-

**"A lot of it comes down to waste, whether that's waste of electricity, paper or water. Efficient systems almost always consume fewer resources."**

ported that publicly, as part of the Carbon Disclosure Project [an independent not-for-profit organization holding the largest database of primary corporate climate change information in the world].

We uncovered a lot of surprises in terms of how big our footprint is, where it is and what's driving it. Some of our facilities are quite large – they house 14,000 to 16,000 employees. Most are in a hot climate, so you're talking about heavy air conditioning. Surprisingly, we found that two facilities in the same city could show vast differences in how much energy they consume.

“Elevators are tremendous energy consumers, so if you can reduce the frequency by turning off elevators in low travel times, there are tremendous energy savings there.”

Once we had the base data, we were able to benchmark one facility vs. another, and we found that some facilities were operating two to three times more efficiently than others in terms of their energy consumption and, therefore, their carbon output.

**Q:** What accounts for the wide gap?

**Greenlaw:** A mix of things. The quality of the facility – how airtight it is, insulation, glass, etc.; the building management systems and whether they are fully implemented and tuned; and making sure the temperature is right and uniform across the building. Another degree difference in cooling makes a huge difference. Elevators are tremendous energy consumers, so if you can reduce the frequency by turning off elevators in low travel times, there are tremendous energy savings there.

The other obvious low-hanging fruit that many large companies have looked into is PC power management. We have over 65,000 desktop computers in India. If all those stay on all night long, it's a huge draw of electricity, so that was one of our larger initial projects. We implemented PC power management controls and have saved \$2.5 million annually in energy and about 22,000 metric tons of carbon.

**Q:** Where do you go after lucrative low-hanging fruit like PC power management has been picked?

**Greenlaw:** We are looking deeper. This includes installing sub-meters to see where power is being used – air conditioning vs. data center vs. PC vs. lighting. We've also built dashboards to sit on top of that. Rather than someone crunching all these numbers, we are working toward real-time reporting, or near-real-time reporting, of our energy consumption and carbon emissions. That way, we can see when a new trend emerges. When something starts to go wrong, we can do preventative maintenance.

**Q:** Dashboards are said to create a sense of momentum within organizations that attain this level of measurement. Is that true for Cognizant?

**Greenlaw:** Yes. We have a very competitive culture, so when one facility saw they were operating at 2.8 kilowatts per square foot and the other one was 1.8 kilowatts – one showing up green on the

dashboard and the other red – there was suddenly competition within those organizations. Facility managers can make a major difference. These are the guys who are running the electrical plants and the technologies that control or conserve energy.

After that, it's an education process. We educate all our employees about simple things, like flipping off your PC when you're away from your desk for more than 15 minutes. We talk about sharing elevators and turning lights off. That's where the dashboards and the reporting are paying off. You make it visible and transparent to the company. We have a lot of 18- to 32-year-olds in our population – millennials.

“Facility managers can make a major difference. These are the guys who are running the electrical plants and the technologies that control or conserve energy.”

Those people tend to really care about these issues; they feel personally invested. In fact, once we started communicating more about green initiatives, our employees responded and got excited.

**Q:** What about paper?

**Greenlaw:** We also benchmarked our paper consumption, and it has dropped significantly, which reduces cost. The larger savings are in the consumables associated with printing, like toner cartridges. Citi Group did a study years ago and found that for every ream of paper that you print, there's an additional \$32 in other costs, including energy and toner.<sup>3</sup>

**Q:** Are you applying green IT to the Cognizant supply chain?

**Greenlaw:** That too. We're a people-based business, so our supply chain is basically the facilities to house our people and IT equipment and provide Internet access and wide-area networks and servers. Those are the main elements we focus on our supply chain.

We are frequently asked by our customers if we are reporting our carbon emissions and have lately been encountering requests to state our environmental position in RFPs from customers.

Soon, we'll also start encouraging our suppliers to report their emissions. In some cases, suppliers like IBM and Dell already have very good stories; they are the leaders. But some of the smaller suppliers, not so much.

In our evaluation of equipment, we are now insisting on PC Energy Star compliance. And we realize that real estate is an aspect of our supply chain, so we've begun building greener buildings, paying attention to LEED certification to reduce our environmental impact.

“Now, with green IT, we are doing it well ourselves and starting to do it for other companies. The opportunities are immense.”

**Q:** Would you call Cognizant a green leader?

**Greenlaw:** Certainly our goal is to be a leader. A lot of the reporting you see out there is marketing fluff. The vital thing is to be authentic in what we do and not overstate our accomplishments.

Whatever we can do first ourselves builds credibility around sustainability. When a service company creates a new offering, it always need to find that first customer. In effect, we are the first customer. Now, with green IT, we are doing it well ourselves and starting to do it for other companies. The opportunities are immense.

---

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> “Leadership Competencies for Corporate Citizenship,” Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> David E. Kepler is Executive Vice President, Business Services; Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO); and CIO for The Dow Chemical Co. He has global responsibility for customer service, information systems, purchasing, Six Sigma, supply chain, work process improvement, public affairs and environment and health and safety.

<sup>3</sup> “Results of the Citigroup-Environmental Defense Partnership to Improve Office Paper Management,” Environmental Defense and Citigroup, 2004.

# COGNIZANT

---

## World Headquarters

500 Frank W. Burr Blvd.  
Teaneck, NJ 07666 USA  
Phone: +1 201 801 0233  
Fax: +1 201 801 0243  
Toll Free: +1 888 937 3277  
[inquiry@cognizant.com](mailto:inquiry@cognizant.com)

---

## European Headquarters

Haymarket House  
28-29 Haymarket  
London SW1Y 4SP UK  
Phone: +44 (0) 20 7321 4888  
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7321 4890  
[infouk@cognizant.com](mailto:infouk@cognizant.com)

---

## India Operations Headquarters

#5/535, Old Mahabalipuram Road  
Okkiyam Pettai, Thoraipakkam  
Chennai, 600 096 India  
Phone: +91 (0) 44 4209 6000  
Fax: +91 (0) 44 4209 6060  
[inquiryindia@cognizant.com](mailto:inquiryindia@cognizant.com)

