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#Carbon Footprint | #evaluation | #impact

Guide: Best Practices for Responsible Digital Use in Organizations

Structure : Institute for Responsible Digital Technology



Addressing the environmental footprint of digital technology is part of a global effort to combat climate change, biodiversity loss, and the depletion of natural resources. Current scientific studies estimate that digital technology accounts for 2.1 to 3.9% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Digital technology also has a significant material footprint that comes up against the finite nature of mineral resources. For use in France, the extraction and manufacturing phase of digital equipment accounts for up to 80% of the environmental impacts when various

environmental indicators are taken into account. For example, the extraction and manufacturing of a 2-kilogram computer requires 800 kilograms of raw materials and 1.5 tons of water, not to mention the so-called “gray energy” needed for these stages. These hidden impacts are grouped under the concept of the “ecological backpack.” Beyond environmental impacts, the phases of mining, manufacturing, and electronic waste processing have significant social impacts, notably child labor in mines or illegal dumping in the Global South. What is more responsible digital technology? A more responsible use of digital technology involves significantly reducing the environmental, social, and economic footprint of the information system, the organization, and the business. A more responsible digital approach must prioritize prevention and reduction efforts while also addressing potential rebound effects. Extending the lifespan of equipment and reducing the number of devices are key challenges for limiting the impacts associated with their manufacturing. More responsible digital technology is also more ethical digital technology, for example by taking into account people with disabilities (digital accessibility), issues of inclusion and diversity, etc. This guide brings together examples of best practices for more responsible digital technology under nine themes:

- ? a. Strategy and Governance
- ? b. Awareness and training
- ? c. Measurement and evaluation
- ? d. Reducing Purchases
- ? e. Sustainable procurement
- ? f. Usage phase, administration, and configuration
- ? g. Digital services
- ? h. Server room and data center
- ? i. End of use

Some key principles:

- ? Consider the entire lifecycle of digital equipment and services, not just their use.
- ? Consider all environmental impacts, not just greenhouse gas emissions.
- ? Take social aspects into account.
- ? Adopt a mindset of sustainability: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle…
- ? Be wary of rebound effects, defined as “the increase in consumption linked to the efficiency of a technology,” and indirect impacts.
- ? Prioritize absolute results over relative ones.
- ? Do not overlook measures for which the benefits are difficult or impossible to quantify. ?

Prioritize best practices to be implemented based on their potential to reduce environmental impacts.

? Focus on integrating the “Responsible Digital” approach into a comprehensive strategy to reduce the negative environmental and social impacts of the organization’s activities.

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https://ecoresponsable.numerique.gouv.fr/docs/2023/guide-de-bonnes-pratiques-numerique-responsable-version-1.pdf