

Green-tech and 4IR: Supporting a sustainable future

By [Kristof Symons](#)

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Imagine running your enterprise on current funds. No more revenues coming in. This is exactly how we are running our planet since 29 July known as 'Earth Overshoot Day', the day when our demands on ecological resources in a given year outstripped what the earth can generate.



Source: [Pexels](#)

The United Nations (UN) recently issued a grim future for our planet if we don't address climate change as a matter of urgency. Everybody has a role to play and in our ICT industry, harnessing the power of green IT and Industry 4.0 will help improving energy efficiencies, reducing carbon emissions and driving a circular economy.

Climate change is already impacting businesses

We are already seeing the significant impacts of climate change. Climate-related events are already affecting more than one in four organisations worldwide, according to Deloitte Global's 2021 Climate Check report. Nearly three in 10 organisations are seeing operational impacts of climate-related events such as flooding and wildfires which have destroyed facilities and displaced workforces. The result is broken and disrupted supply chains.

Customers are driving change

Enterprises that don't embrace smart manufacturing and green technologies are leaving themselves open to a significant dent in their bottom line. Why? Because consumers are driving change, seeking out products, and changing their shopping habits to reduce environmental impact. For example, in a recent study, 72% of those surveyed said they were willing to pay a premium for brands that support recycling.

With more and more consumers demanding companies to be ethical and take big steps towards net-zero carbon emissions targets, many big tech companies have pledged to reduce their emissions within the next 20-30 years. In Orange, we have aligned ourselves with the Paris Climate Agreement and have set the ambitious target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2040 as part of the Orange Engage 2025 strategy.



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With our Green Act, which encapsulates our goal to become a benchmark among ICT players and accelerate our digital decarbonisation, we are driving Green IT initiatives. This includes the eco-efficiency for our data centres and using energy alternatives such as solar power. We have, for example, deployed a network of sensors in three large data centres in Europe to measure energy consumption. As a result, we have already achieved a 10% reduction in consumption between 2019 and 2020.

Businesses must embrace sustainability

Climate change has now a growing role in business competition and drives significant opportunities. India is expecting to see its renewable energy capacity quadrupled by 2020, generating \$90bn in GDP and creating two million jobs. Businesses understand that there is no one size fits all approach to being sustainable. Each company's approach will need to fit in with its overall business strategy.

Gartner recommends that enterprises adopt six strategic imperatives to realise key benefits in doing business in a circular economy such as increased customer engagement, raw material resilience and meeting environmental goals. These include developing a long-term vision and accepting there is a learning process to the journey. The analyst firm suggests moving to product-as-a-service to retain control of materials and setting up teams to manage end-of-life products and assess how they can be re-processed.

Industry 4.0 can be a game-changer to promote sustainability and global economic decarbonisation. IDC predicts that by the end of 2021, 90% of Global 2000 companies will mandate reusable materials in IT hardware supply chains. In addition, they will demand carbon neutrality targets for providers' facilities and low energy as a non-negotiable requirement for doing business.

A greener landscape

The widespread adoption of Industry 4.0 and green technology can't happen overnight. There are obvious challenges such as legacy systems and securely integrating IT/OT environments. But with commitment, a robust strategy in place that aligns with business outcomes and trusted partners, enterprises can undoubtedly start to see a noteworthy reduction in their carbon footprint quickly. We all need to move in tandem to make this happen and create a greener landscape for future generations.

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