



Ford Saves \$1.2 Million by Shutting Off Computers at Night

Ford Motor Company, which is on a tear recently after announcing a surprise profit and catapulting to the top of the Detroit carmakers by staying financially healthy, estimates that it can save \$1.2 million a year by actively managing the [power settings](#) on its desktop and laptop computers. The company further estimates that it can reduce its [carbon footprint](#) by 16,000 to 25,000 metric tons annually by powering down machines at night.

The secret to Ford's success is software, especially one called PC [Power Management](#) with NightWatchman from software maker 1E Inc. According to 1E, almost half of all PC users do not power down their computers at the end of the work day, resulting in \$2.8 billion in PC power costs being wasted. Ford's number was even higher, with 60% of its employees not turning off their computers at the end of the day.

The software actively manages the computers by turning them off at a predetermined time. If an employee is working late, the software allows them to override the turn-off setting. The software also detects when MS Office is running, and saves documents before turning off the computer, preventing unwanted data loss. Finally, the software allows machines to be awakened for delivery of software patches and updates.

Although it's not entirely clear, I'm guessing the \$1.2 million figure is arrived by calculating the worldwide cost savings. After all, Ford has massive operations in Europe and Asia that all use the company's internal networks. The software is being rolled out to U.S. users this month, and will migrate to worldwide users later in the year.

Hopefully Ford's computers are smart enough to detect when a U.S. employee is traveling so that it doesn't try to shut a laptop down in the middle of a mid-day powerpoint presentation in Shanghai. And there's still no word from the company on whether the software will be rolled out to its in-car computers, which are increasingly looking like desktop PC's with every new generation. Still, it's a fine effort for the company to engage in, and demonstrates how with very little investment, a company can save a ton of money and cut back on a ton of carbon emissions all at the same time.