



EPEAT takes wildly successful green IT certification global

One of the largest green IT certification services is expanding globally to meet the growing demand.

» **By: GreenerComputing Staff » Reuters**

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The Green Electronics Council today announced that it was expanding its environmentally friendly electronics certification, the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), to include 40 countries around the globe.

The growth will allow electronics manufacturers as well as purchasers to more quickly determine which products are available in their home countries. The expansion also enables multinational firms to simplify their procurement process by finding products that will be available for offices in far-flung parts of the world.

"We're responding to a rapidly expanding demand in interest," explained Jeff Omelchuck, the executive director of EPEAT. "But it also allows more specificity for manufacturers to see what is out there and available."

Since the program launched in 2006, EPEAT has grown dramatically -- in our 2009 State of Green Business Report, we found that EPEAT-certified products increased dramatically between 2007 and 2008, especially in the greener EPEAT Silver and Gold categories. But Omelchuck said that at the same time, smaller companies based outside the United States faced challenges from a U.S.-centric platform.

Omelchuck offered the example of NTT, a Polish electronics company whose products are EPEAT-certified, but which were rarely available in the United States. With the new international registry, purchasers can instantly search for products available in any of the 40 countries, rather than searching for EPEAT-certified products and then talking to domestic suppliers to see which products are available.

The EPEAT certification offers manufacturers three levels of achievement based on points achieved. There are 23 required criteria to meet the lowest level of EPEAT certification, EPEAT Bronze. These criteria cover the entire life cycle of a product, from a reduction of the toxic materials used in production of the products, to the energy it uses while it is in operation, and the recyclability of the materials at the end of life. Products that meet all 23 criteria receive Bronze certification, and those that meet an additional 14 or 21 optional criteria receive Silver or Gold certification.

The EPEAT certification process itself is unchanged by today's expansion, but a couple minor shifts have been incorporated to reflect the new complexities of certifying products on a global level.

"It is the same EPEAT standard [everywhere] -- it's still the same structure, and all that remains the same," explained Sarah O'Brien, EPEAT's Outreach Director. "There is a slight bit of flexibility in meeting a few of the optional criteria -- you might be able to meet them in a broad array of countries."

Five optional criteria out of 51 total criteria can now apply to some countries and not others. O'Brien offered the example of the reusable packaging criterion: because it's a complex logistical operation, a company that is able to supply reusable packaging throughout the European Union but not in Brazil is able to reflect that in its certifications for each country.

Today's expansion of the EPEAT system follows on a rapid expansion since the program launched in July 2006. The growth has been driven by two factors: an overall increase in demand for energy-efficient computers and monitors (and soon televisions), as well as purchasing requirements from large-scale corporate and government buyers. In January 2008, three departments of the U.S. government required that all its new computer purchases meet EPEAT standards.

And manufacturers have rushed to meet that demand as well; at the end of 2008, the then-18-month-old program had certified its 1000th product. Mary Jacques, a senior engineer for Global Environmental Affairs at Lenovo, said that EPEAT has also had a significant impact on their manufacturing and design practices.

In the past, Lenovo had focused entirely on sourcing the recycled materials for their products from post-industrial sources; but since the launch of EPEAT, the company has moved almost entirely to post-consumer sources for its recycled materials.

"Since EPEAT [launched], we've used over 4 million net pounds of post consumer recycled content, where before that we hadn't focused on post consumer content at all," Jacques explained.

More details about EPEAT, as well as the new, international search function, is online at EPEAT.net.

Source: [Reuters](#)