

GREEN DATA GUIDE BY VAST FORWARD

Checklist to sustainably manage digital data in everyday life

The checklist from our GREEN DATA GUIDE: The result of VAST FORWARD's sustainability initiative VAST GREEN, based on the analysis of our supply chains and an in-depth examination of our digital infrastructure.

WHAT IS GREEN DATA?

In the context of VAST GREEN, we understand it as a complex topic that encompasses all areas affecting our digital lives: from individual communication behaviors such as emails, video calls, or the use of tools, to daily data handling in projects, the filing, storage, and exchange of diverse data, all the way to “looking under the hood” of our projects, into the programming and architecture of our products.

Since 2022, we have been working on evaluating our digital processes in the ‘Sustainable Product Working Group’. In this checklist, we have compiled the essential points from our Green Data criteria list and want to make them freely available for public use.

GREEN COMMUNICATION AND PROJECTMANAGEMENT

Sustainable products require a sustainable infrastructure which necessitates management, planning, and control of resource, tool, and technology use. At its core, sustainability involves proficient project management. The fundamental topics include communication, data handling, and also sharing and demanding sustainable data usage.

In the following, we guide you through topics that can be checked off or actively implemented when reviewing projects.

1. VIDEO CALLS

General Information:

In principle, avoiding "too many" video calls is encouraged. A video call uses about four times as much data as an audio call. Checklist to reduce data transfer and thus the CO2 footprint:

- In general: Avoid too many video calls
- Creative handling in fully remote-structured teams:
 - Activate cameras only during presentations for visual feedback to the presenter, especially useful and helpful for audience interaction
 - In work meetings where all participants are collaboratively editing the same document, deactivate cameras (e.g., in working group meetings)
 - Use video compression when possible
 - Actively raise awareness to partners/clients about this topic
 - Announce when and why cameras are being (de)activated
 - Generally: Make conscious situational decisions about when video use is appropriate/necessary

2. E-MAILS

General Information:

An email generates approximately 27g of CO2 (average value). This may not sound like much, but according to Statista, 300 billion emails were sent worldwide per day in 2020 alone. (Source: Amount of emails per day worldwide | Statista). Steps to reduce email volume and consciously decrease data:

- Bundle emails
- Keep Cc groups small
- Encourage partners/clients to reduce distribution lists
- Use plain text instead of HTML emails
 - (Avoid signature with graphics)
- Reduce file sizes/attachments in settings
- Make large attachments available via cloud (download "on demand" instead of broadcast)
- Store only important emails, delete attachments (reduce storage space)
- Regularly delete unnecessary emails (SPAM, newsletters, notifications, etc.)
- Unsubscribe from unnecessary newsletters

3. CHAT

- Use only one communication tool
- Minimize file/image sending in chat e.g. send a link via Chat (attachments are stored on servers).
- Make data available via the cloud
- Delete old files (older than one year)
- In calls: Share screen instead of sharing screenshots

4. SOFTWARE

Tools and Programs

- Generally applies: Tool minimalism (less is more)
- Check for consistent tool usage and sensible application
- Activate automatic browser and program updates
- Uninstall unused programs
- Close programs when they require a lot of energy/CPU
- "Clean up" the computer system (e.g., free up unnecessarily used storage space)
- Turn off automatic background updates (mobile device)
- Recommendation: use a tool for this (e.g. CleanMyMac)

Data Storage and Transfer

- Data Hygiene/Digital Minimalism: Avoid duplicate storage, always delete unnecessary data!
- Store data in cloud services instead of locally - also a basis for collaborative work (There are exceptions, e.g., in programming, development often starts locally)
- Use a smart folder structure for better overview and identification of relevant and irrelevant data, sharing with customers/partners
- Create only backups of data that is actually needed
- Share data via cloud services, avoid large email attachment
- Regularly clean up/tidy computer system (e.g., CleanMyMac)
- Regularly clear system cache (↗ [Tip](#))
- When possible, send files via PAN (e.g. Bluetooth or AirDrop) or Wi-Fi

5. HARDWARE

Energy Reduction

- Shutting down computers and monitors at the end of the workday
- Ending standby mode, unplugging devices from the socket
- Activate automatic sleep mode on computer after 5 minutes
- Using preset energy-saving modes on devices (Note: This may cause display errors when testing website animations)

- Turning off devices/monitors at the end of the day/when not in use, also unplugging to avoid standby mode
- Deactivating "power nap function" for laptop when closed
- Activating sleep mode after 5 minutes on laptops
- Using sustainable search engines like Ecosia (set as standard browser)

Devices

- Reviewing the hardware in use
 - Easy-to-use and thus efficiency in daily work
 - Security
 - Updatability for long-term use
 - Susceptibility to failure and repairability (planned obsolescence)
 - Transparent production background, e.g., regarding compliance with human rights standards

Circular Economy

- Actively managing hardware usage, "2nd or 3rd life for hardware" e.g., by donating to family, friends, or those in need
- Tip: Use partners for support, e.g., for larger quantities of devices for selling hard drives, keyboards, old phones

6. PRIVACY AND DATA SECURITY

Password Management

- Manage passwords using a password manager (VAST FORWARD collaboratively uses 1Password)
- Do not leave laptops or mobile devices unattended in public spaces

Customer Management

- Always store customer data on secured servers
- Manage access to customer systems using a password manager
- Always protect test servers/access to website data with password protection

Cookies

- Review current cookie policies
- Integrate appropriate consent banners for references to external pages

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