

Schwarzenegger, Green IT and the Economy on Display at CeBIT

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HANOVER, DE -- Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger had scolding words to say to those "whining and complaining" about the economic crisis as he used an appearance Monday in Germany to push further an aggressive green technology agenda.

Sporting a bright green tie and rattling away (happily, it seemed) in his native tongue, the governor had dropped in on this northern German city to promote more than 50 California companies -- many of them textbook cases in how to go green -- at CeBIT, the world's largest technology trade show. At times, though, Schwarzenegger's can-do tone of optimism seemed overshadowed by his stark warnings about the consequences of going down the wrong path.

"It doesn't make any sense for people to sit back and whine and complain about the economy slowing down," Schwarzenegger said. He called out countries where "the tendency now [is] to talk about protectionism again," reminding his European audience that "closing borders, punishing people for doing business outside their country is something we have done in the past in America -- and it has backfired in a huge way."

"We should not go that direction," the governor said, defending the rights of consumers to choose to purchase products at all times on the global marketplace. "We have to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem," he added, "and green technology has a huge potential for that."

Of the more than 5,000 companies from 100 countries showing up here this week, some were big players that have been making rapid advances in green IT -- from Hitachi and Siemens, to the emissions reduction consulting work of IBM and the energy-saving replacement of hard disks with flash memory chips at Sun Microsystems.

However, it was the number of small- to medium-sized firms that Schwarzenegger was most optimistic about. "You've seen this last year that of the \$3.3 billion in venture capital invested in California, 50 percent was in green technology. [That means] tens of thousands of jobs," he said.

An example of a mid-range tech company rapidly succeeding in the race to go green is Netgear. The San Jose-based firm has developed Ethernet routers (of 5, 8, 16 and 24 ports) whose ports shut down when not in use, saving up to 50 percent of total energy used. Another innovative feature: the router uses less energy when connected to short cables than to long ones.



"Going beyond Energy Star certification and making a conscientious effort for the environment was something we had to do," said David Soares, the senior vice president of the company, which employs 550 and has an annual turnover of \$750 million. "Most customers usually have free ports, so those savings are very real,"

A more explicitly green tech venture, Capstone Turbine Corporation, replaces the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) battery -- which relies on a utility grid, more often than not powered by burning coal -- for commercial energy use with a 65kW micro-turbine that runs on natural gas, produces energy at 30 percent reduced costs, and emits less carbon while also providing building coolant. The company, a San Fernando Valley operation that employs 200 and nets \$50 million a year, has been selling the product like hot cakes these days. "We're struggling to build them and get enough units out the door," said Steve Gillette, a vice president at Capstone.

Another evolving green success story is Homeplug Powerline Alliance, a San Ramon-based coalition of power companies, including PG&E and Southern California Edison, working on smart grid technologies. The group's smart electric meter helps home consumers manage and reduce their energy consumption while enabling power companies to adjust heat by turning down thermostats at times of energy spikes to avoid power shutdowns. The smart electric meter stands to win big in President Obama's stimulus plan, and the product is "getting pushed ... with a focus and amount of investment like never before," said Homeplug's president, Rob Ranck. "It's like your cell phone: you'll use [energy] less depending on how expensive the minutes are."

During his visit, Mr. Schwarzenegger met with Chancellor Angela Merkel and praised Germany's environmental record in recent years.

"With its [development of] renewable energy and reduction of greenhouse gases, Germany has become an inspiration to all of us," he said.

Speaking to an eager national press corps, the governor recalled his days living in Munich between 1966 and 1968, when he managed a gym and won two world bodybuilding championships. He said the experience in Germany launched him on his celebrated U.S. career as an actor, businessman and finally as a politician -- and that the green values practiced in this country must resonate in California and beyond.

"Some people say that to protect the environment the economy needs to suffer. Not true," he said. "You can protect both the economy and the environment at the same time.

"We have to turn the 'me' upside down and make it a 'we.' It's about we, it's about us -- the whole world has an economic slowdown and the whole world can benefit if we work together [on green technology]. It's very important that we do not go in the opposite direction."

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