Best Practices in Reuse

Reuse has a higher priority on the waste management hierarchy, and is preferred over recycling. Whether reuse is done by a not-for-profit organization refurbishing computers for low-income families or by a for-profit recycler remarketing items that still have useful life, reuse gets the highest and best value from the resources invested in an electronic product.

Reuse can occur at a thrift store, a used computer store, through donations to a school or not-for-profit, through brokers of material, within a business that sells equipment to employees, or in many other ways. Among organizations engaged in reuse, some are primarily focused on reuse activities, while others do it as one part of their business. An organization that is primarily focused on reuse should be able to refurbish and redistribute a large percentage of the material they accept. Conversely, a recycling company may reuse some materials, but is primarily focused on demanufacturing and recycling components instead of whole units. ***The important thing is to look for opportunities for reuse first!***

When working with a reuse organization, here are some practices to look for:

1. Responsible Equipment Acceptance Process

A responsible reuse operation will:

- **Define material needs** – an operation should have a defined list of acceptable items for reuse that is consistent with its customers' or clients' needs.
- **Screen incoming materials** – an operation should ask a series of questions of the donor/generator in order to screen out unneeded or unwanted materials.

2. Responsible Materials Management

A responsible reuse operation will:

- **Manage incoming and outgoing materials responsibly** - materials must be properly managed from the point of collection to the point of redistribution, including packing materials and transporting materials consistent with Department of Transportation requirements.

- **Engage in employee/volunteer training** –a reuse operation must fully train employees on the various aspects of accepting materials, handling materials, refurbishing materials, and redistributing materials. In addition, employees must be trained on appropriate health, safety and environmental considerations, and equipment operations. A responsible reuse operation will provide on-going training opportunities for their employees/volunteers.
- **Ensure only legitimate export practices** – some reuse organizations work with international relief organizations to provide technology to developing countries. Reuse organizations should be able to document legitimate partners in developing countries and should be exporting only working equipment.
- **Meet or exceed all IOSHA, IDEM and DOT requirements** – a responsible reuse operation will follow and/or exceed all federal, state and local laws regarding worker health and safety, environmental management and transportation regulations.
- **Institute a quality control program** – a responsible reuse operation will plan and implement programs that create internal controls to address all appropriate operational procedures and will institute and enforce policies that support the adherence to such controls. For example, if a reuse organization sets a policy for all volunteers to be properly trained on environmental health and safety procedures, it is important that the policy is implemented and that all volunteers are actually trained.
- **Develop an exit strategy** – a responsible reuse operation will provide information about and documentation of a strategy for managing all incoming and stored electronics in the event the organization shuts down. Financial assurance mechanisms, such as insurance and/or bonding, should be in place as a safety net.
- **Meet or exceed a reuse goal of 75%** - organizations that are primarily focused on reuse (instead of recycling) should strive to meet or exceed 75% reuse of the materials brought into the facility for refurbishment and redistribution. A recycling company, on the other hand, may reuse some materials, but is primarily focused on demanufacturing and recycling components instead of complete systems.

3. Data Security and Liability

A responsible reuse operation will:

- **Store materials and inventory in a secure location** – a responsible reuse operation should secure inventory in a manner so that there is no potential for theft of equipment or of data contained on the equipment.
- **Develop inventory control systems** – a responsible reuse operation should maintain a database for all equipment and keep inventory records based on type, quantity, point of generation and redistribution.
- **Eliminate data before redistribution** – a responsible reuse operation will have and follow a policy for destruction of data contained on equipment. There are a variety of levels of data elimination available and the generators should determine which is most appropriate for their data. Options range from reformatting the hard drive, which provides minimal security, to destruction of the hard drive, which is very secure but does not allow for hard drive reuse. Typically a generator requires a minimum hard drive cleaning equal to the Department of Defense's minimum process. Some generators will want to manage their own data elimination. However, reuse organizations should make the service available to those wanting to have it performed..
- **Comply with operating system and software laws** – reuse organizations need to issue equipment with a legal operating system and provide licenses for any software loaded on

equipment for redistribution. Some licenses transfer with the equipment, while other licenses are issued to a person, not the equipment.

- **Develop and follow quality controls** – a responsible organization will develop internal controls to ensure that all equipment is handled in a manner that secures data contained within, legally manages operating system and software issues, and can provide the donor or generator with proof of such action.

4. Proper Documentation

A responsible reuse operation will:

- **Allow appropriate access to records** – a responsible reuse operation should be prepared to provide records pertaining to specific donors or generators of equipment or to an end user of the equipment.
- **Allow facility site visits** – a responsible reuse operation will have an open door policy for any donor, generator, customer or client to see its operations and view first-hand whether they are actively doing the things they say they are doing.
- **Provide data elimination certification** – upon request, a responsible reuse operation should be prepared to provide certification of data elimination to any donor or generator regarding equipment acquired by them.
- **Provide tax donation verification** – a not-for-profit, Internal Revenue Service 501(c)(3) organization must provide verification of their 501(c)(3) status along with a list of donated equipment (by model, serial number and quantity of major units) in order for the donor to receive a tax deduction.
- **Have a legitimate recycling market** – a responsible reuse operation should have relationships with legitimate recycling companies for all non-reusable equipment, parts and components.

Thank you for your interest in working with reuse organizations that are working towards or meeting best practices in reuse.