Blank is eco-friendly

Learn how data erasure is making it possible to put devices back into the circular economy—securely.

With millions of used devices heading to landfills every year, the environment faces a mounting and serious threat.

Let's look at how sustainably focused, yet high-risk, organizations can help stem the tide.

Across the globe, society generated a record 53.6 million metric tonnes (Mt) of electronic waste, or e-waste, in 2019. That's according to the UN's Global E-waste Monitor 2020.

That same report predicts global e-waste— discarded products with a battery or plug— will reach 74 Mt by 2030, meaning the global quantity of e-waste is increasing at a rate of nearly 2 Mt per year.

This makes e-waste the world's fastest-growing domestic waste stream, with about half of this being IT devices.

Blank is eco-friendly, providing a necessary option to organizations to limit their carbon footprint while protecting data stored on end-of-life devices. Yet on the face of it, security and eco-friendliness may seem at odds with each other, especially when dealing with highly regulated industries. Is this concern valid?

In May 2022, John Rydning, research vice president of IDC's Global DataSphere, stated that the Enterprise DataSphere would grow more than twice as fast as the Consumer DataSphere over the following five years.

We're getting there quickly.

That's why it's critical that IT-dependent organizations take a hard look at their asset disposal policies and practices—through the lenses of both data risk and environmental harm.

Which Is Better: Technology Recycling or Reuse?

Risk-averse organizations can advance environmental sustainability—and protect their data. Here's how.

The amount of data we process around the globe is staggering, and each virtual bit requires physical resources: chips, drives, smart devices, laptops, servers, and more:

- Even before the COVID-sparked acceleration to cloud, ComputerWorld predicted that data centers could generate 3.2 percent of the total worldwide carbon emissions by 2025, and use at least a fifth of the world's electricity.
- By 2030, we could experience a deluge of Internet of Things (IoT) devices—around 30 billion of them. This IoT increase affects data processing, data storage, device manufacturing, and device and battery disposal.
- In 2020, pandemic-sparked changes accelerated worldwide creation and acquisition of devices to make remote work, virtual classrooms, and digital business possible.
- Devices are shrinking in size while expanding in storage capacity. Yet, Global E-Waste Monitor 2020 reports that as of 2020, global e-waste is up 21 percent in five years.

All of this strains natural resources. We need enough new product to meet unprecedented demand. Those products require additional mining of minerals and rare earth elements. And, when new product becomes old, device disposal compounds the environmental impact.

For businesses, government, and other large enterprises, there are two primary, eco-friendly paths for device disposal: recycling and reuse. Both have data privacy and protection implications to address.

Technology recycling challenges in an age of miniaturization and risk

The reality is that extracting recyclable materials is increasingly complex. In fact, the dynamics that shrank the processing capacity of yesteryear's mainframes to wristwatch size make extraction incredibly laborious.

Increased miniaturization also makes data security harder to guarantee through physical means as chips get smaller and data gets more condensed.

In our 2020 research, we discovered that 35 percent of enterprises used physical destruction to sanitize end-of-life equipment because risk-averse leaders believed it to be better for the environment. Of these, 46 percent believed some resulting waste could be recycled or reused.

Unsurprisingly, the rest still heads to the landfill.

Technology reuse benefits and data security implications

Data erasure, particularly when automated, streamlines device readiness for the circular economy without fear of sensitive data being extracted.

When evaluating technology recycling vs. reuse when disposing of IT assets, the more sustainable option should win—as long as the data is secure.

In the case of decommissioned IT, a better first-line option is reuse. However, any remaining data could be discovered by the device's next user, so before redeployment, return, or resale, the device must be "sanitized."

With the right methods and levels of software-based sanitization (data erasure), data is permanently rendered inaccessible while leaving the device intact. This enables functional, often expensive, drives and devices to be used and reused longer—without compromising data security.

Not only does this prevent usable devices from prematurely heading to landfill, it steers around the resource-taxing processes that first recycle only a portion of usable devices, then use additional energy to repurpose those materials for other things.

Data erasure, particularly when automated, streamlines device readiness for the circular economy without fear of sensitive data being extracted. This gives original owners greater return on their technology investment. It also supplies affordable technology for households, businesses, schools, and global communities—all without relying on new device creation.

Weighing whether to recycle or reuse your IT assets? Discover the more eco-friendly choice.

Blancco's automated data erasure technologies allow enterprises—as well as service providers who process devices on their behalf—to efficiently and securely prepare a multitude of devices for reuse.

To date, more than 270 million Blancco erasures have occurred worldwide. New and innovative automation capabilities increase the sustainability impact that global enterprises, IT asset disposition (ITAD) vendors, and recyclers can have while decisively addressing the need for data protection.

These solutions are ready to demo across a variety of devices and technologies to show how enterprises can dramatically reduce their environmental impact—all while safeguarding their data.

Blank is eco-friendly

With millions of successful Blancco erasures, enterprises have been able to choose more sustainable technology reuse over traditional recycling, diverting e-waste from landfill and reducing both carbon emissions and natural resource depletion.

That helps them reach green goals and cut their environmental impact, even as they safeguard sensitive data.

With our solutions, there's no need to choose between security and eco-friendly. You can balance both.

Want to learn more about balancing green initiatives with top security?

At Blancco, we believe that a single solution is the best solution. Even assets held by the most sensitive organizations can be reused through software-based data sanitization.

But that's not its only benefit. See our resources to learn more.

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This article based on Blancco's accepted submittal to present at the World Trade Organization's ITA Symposium: 25 Years of the Information Technology Agreement on September 16-17, 2021. Blancco Vice President of Enterprise & Cloud Erasure Solutions Fredrik Forslund presented "The Use of Data Protection Technology in an ICT Circular Economy" at the event. Content has since been updated.