

[Home](#) > [Management and Careers](#)

Green gotchas: The pitfalls of tech recycling

A few simple steps can keep an IT green policy from turning into your own ecological disaster.

 By **John Edwards**

May 18, 2009 12:00 PM ET

 Add a comment

 Like

 +1 0

Computerworld - Wendy Burchard, procurement coordinator in the IS department at the University of Richmond in Virginia, knows all about the pitfalls of [recycling old equipment](#).

Burchard discovered that the firm that was carting away the school's unwanted computer hardware for recycling was actually reselling the equipment. "We thought everything was getting crushed up into little pieces. Then we found out later that they were reselling our stuff," Burchard says. "They never told us they were doing that."

Like most IT professionals these days, Burchard was simply trying to help her shop follow [environmental best practices](#). "We would never want to do anything to hurt the environment," she says. "We want to always do the right thing."

In recent years, recycling has become a [high priority for IT departments](#). Yet as recycling efforts are ramping up, more managers are finding themselves coping with shady recyclers that dispose of IT assets in environmentally irresponsible ways, potentially exposing sensitive enterprise data in the process.

Burchard's brush with an unscrupulous recycler put her job on the line. "The last thing that we want is to have somebody find a University of Richmond computer over in China somewhere," Burchard says.

Avoiding Landfills

Christine Pfendt, CEO of Citigate Cunningham, feels Burchard's pain. When she joined the public relations firm several years ago, Pfendt didn't anticipate acquiring a recycling headache. But that's what she got when she inherited 5,000 square feet of obsolete computer equipment and peripherals. The previous management team had taken a novel approach to equipment disposal, she says. "Instead of recycling or repairing, they'd just buy new equipment" and cast aside the old.

A staunch environmentalist, Pfendt wanted to find ways to use everything to its end of life, avoid waste and keep the items from adding to landfills.

Five steps to surprise-free recycling

- 1. Research the provider.** Find out everything you can about the company. Search the Web for reports and reviews. Ask colleagues what they think about the firm. Get references, and speak with current and past customers.
- 2. Check qualifications.** Check to see if the business has achieved ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004 certification.

Top Stories

- [Phishing scams likely, warns DHS](#)
- [Image gallery: Steve Jobs through the years](#)
- [Elgan: How Apple will kill cable TV](#)
- [Wireless carriers prep for Hurricane Irene](#)

Management and Careers White Papers

[Linking Infrastructure Management and Application Performance Management to Ensure Reliable Service Delivery](#)

By integrating application performance management tools with existing infrastructure management solutions, IT will be better positioned to develop a holistic management capability that...

[Linking Infrastructure Management and Application Performance Management to Ensure Reliable Service Delivery](#)

By integrating application performance management tools with existing infrastructure management solutions, IT will be better positioned to develop a holistic management capability that...

[The evolving role of IT managers and CIOs](#)

Mounting regulatory demands, the growth of 24x7 online business and the constant shadow of an uncertain economy underscore the importance of managing risk...

[Harness the Power of Data Visualization to Transform Your Business](#)

This paper explores the shortcomings of traditional reporting tools and explains how business visualization enables organizations to easily extract maximum value from business...

[The SMB IT Decision Maker's Guide](#)

Small and midsize businesses that are using software as a service (SaaS) to automate their IT help desk(s) and IT infrastructure are reporting...

[All Management and Careers White Papers](#)

Management and Careers Webcasts

[Private Clouds - Practical Approaches to Deployment & Management](#)

A private cloud helps you maximize your infrastructure, reduces operational costs, and aligns IT teams more closely with the business. In this Quest...

[Essential Guidance for Successful Enterprise Private Clouds](#)

Ready to deploy or expand your private cloud? Mary Johnston Turner, Research Director for Systems Management Software at IDC, discusses key trends, proven...

[The Business Case for Private Cloud](#)

Alexander Verharen, Product Center Manager at QAD

Cutting through the clutter proved to be an arduous task. "We had to figure out what was usable and what was not," she says. Staff members separated items that contained sensitive information from those that didn't. "For cell phones and pagers without confidential info, we gave them to a battered women's shelter," Pfendt says. "For the servers, we created a script that wiped away the info." The machines could then be safely recycled.

3. Get everything in writing. Don't assume that the recycler is disposing of your assets properly. Get the company to state in writing how it's handling each consignment. Work with your finance department to ensure that assets being disposed of are being recorded accurately.

4. Get input. Consult with key departments, such as procurement and legal, to verify that equipment is ready and safe to be recycled.

5. Monitor the situation. Visit -- or hire someone to visit -- the recycler's site to view processes and talk to employees.

— John Edwards

Unneeded monitors, however, were advertised on Craigslist. "The person who came for them told us they were a nonprofit," Pfendt recalls. But she later learned it was a for-profit company that was reselling the monitors -- on Craigslist. Lesson learned: "Require a copy of their 501(c)(3) status in advance," she says.

1 2 Next page ▶

Comments (Add a comment)

Print

Like

+1 0

From CIO.com

- 21 Chrome Web Apps for Serious Work
- Why You Shouldn't Buy a Discounted TouchPad Tablet
- Workplace Conflict: How to Diffuse Battles with Co-Workers
- What CIOs Need to Know About HP's Acquisition of Autonomy

Questions From IT Pros

- How do I protect my privacy on Google+?
- What's the best way to restore a Mac OS X Lion drive?
- How do I determine the cost of running Hadoop?
- How do I prevent a SQL injection attack?

» Read more at ITworld Answers

Additional Resources



WHITE PAPER

Options for Protecting against Web Threats

This independent paper from senior analyst Jon Collins at FreeForm Dynamics considers how Web-based security threats are evolving, within the context of IT trends including mobile, home computing and other forms of remote access that could potentially increase the attack surface of the companies. It defines the scale and types of threat, what to look for in a corporate web security solution and compares the different types of technological approach available to companies and the processes that need to be considered for effective protection.

Read now.



WHITE PAPER

Enter the Security KnowledgeVault

Security is not an option. This KnowledgeVault Series offers professional advice how to be proactive in the fight against cybercrimes and multi-layered security threats; how to adopt a holistic approach to protecting and managing data; and how to hire a qualified security assessor. Make security your Number 1 priority.

Read now.

and Jennifer Christiansen, e-Learning Curriculum Manager at Alcatel-Lucent discuss how a private cloud implementation can be...

VMware vCloud Director QuickStart Series Part 2: Architecting Your Cloud

This is part 2 of a two-part course series that covers the multiple components of VMware vCloud™ solutions and services, discusses the relationships...

Accelerating Cloud Computing Adoption by Federal Agencies

At VMware, we believe the key to accelerating safe and secure adoption of cloud computing is to pool virtual infrastructure resources in your...

All Management and Careers Webcasts

Newsletter Sign-Up

Receive the latest news test, reviews and trends on your favorite technology topics

- Management/Outsourcing
- Application/Web Development
- IT Jobs
- Computerworld Blogs

Your Email

Industry

Job Title

Company Size

Country

Subscribe

View all newsletters | Privacy Policy

IT Jobs

Software Engineer, Computer Engineer,...

Fort George G Meade, MD - National Security Agency (NSA)

Chief Technology Officer

New York, NY - Purpose

Chief Technology Officer Job

Los Angeles, CA - Thomson Reuters-boston

Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Boulder, CO - Motus IT

Senior Software Engineer, Office of the...

Sunnyvale, CA - Yahoo!

See All Jobs Post a job for \$295

job title or company location Go

Jobs by SimplyHired



WHITE PAPER

Guide to SMB Communications

To date, small businesses have been unable to cost justify an IP-based communications system. This paper provides organizations with fewer than 250 employees a way to meet unique voice and data communications needs even with a limited budget and small IT staff.

[Read now.](#)



Comments powered by **COMPUTERWORLD**

[Our Commenting Network](#) | [Policies](#) | [Privacy](#)

Add New Comment

[Login](#)



Showing 0 comments

Sort by newest first

[Subscribe by email](#) [RSS](#)

Partnered Content



2011 Web Security Report

The first few hours of a new Web attack show that traditional defenses lack adequate

protection. This 2011 Web security report details how cybercriminals have modified their tactics to successfully use the Web as their attack vector and highlights the need for a Web defense layer to evaluate dynamic Web links leading to Web threats.

[Download this white paper](#)



Magic Quadrant for Secure Web Gateway

Web 2.0 and associated malware threats continue to drive the secure Web gateway

market. This Gartner Magic Quadrant ranks the key vendors in this market and highlights their product differentiators. Read Gartner's opinion on on-premise solutions vs. cloud-based services and discover the vendors that are leading the charge to keep the Web secure.

[Download this white paper](#)



Corporate Web Security - Market Quadrant 2011

The corporate Web security market has many vendors offering

appliances, software, hosted services, and hybrid solutions that help secure and manage Web traffic. This Radicati Market Quadrant evaluates key features such as malware protection, URL filtering, and data loss prevention and ranks the market leaders according to product functionality and market share.

[Download this white paper](#)

[Skip to top](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Contacts](#)

[Editorial Calendar](#)

[Subscribe to Computerworld Magazine](#)

[Help Desk](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Jobs at IDG](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Reprints](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Ad Choices](#)

The IDG Network: [CFOworld](#) | [CIO](#) | [Computerworld](#) | [CSO](#) | [DEMO](#) | [GamePro](#) | [Games.net](#) | [IDC](#) | [IDG](#) | [IDG Connect](#) | [IDG Knowledge Hub](#) | [IDG TechNetwork](#) | [IDG Ventures](#) | [InfoWorld](#) | [ITwhitepapers](#) | [ITworld](#) | [JavaWorld](#) | [LinuxWorld](#) | [Macworld](#) | [Network World](#) | [PC World](#)

Copyright © 1994 - 2011 Computerworld Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission of Computerworld Inc. is prohibited. Computerworld and Computerworld.com and the respective logos are trademarks of International Data Group Inc.