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# Rethinking The Hardware Refresh Cycle with Refurbished Hardware

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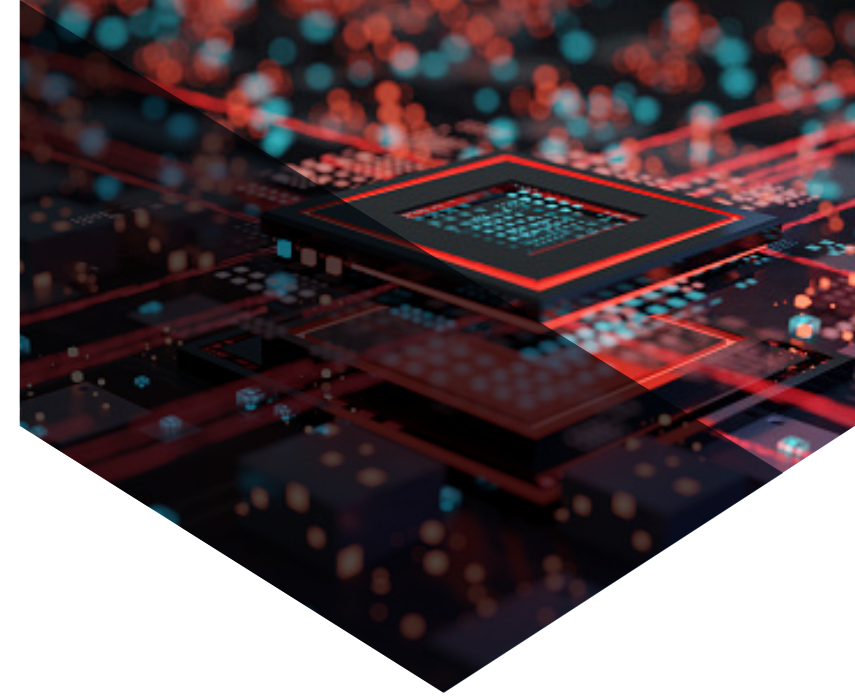


## Executive summary

As organisations face a new era in IT device management, the upcoming end of support for Windows 10 and the ageing of devices purchased at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have brought hardware refresh cycles into sharp focus. Many IT leaders find themselves balancing an urgent need for high-performing, secure, and future-proof devices with a growing responsibility to reduce electronic waste and contribute to sustainable practices. Traditional approaches to hardware refreshes - replacing devices outright with brand-new models - can be both financially and environmentally costly.

Refurbished technology is now rapidly gaining acceptance across industries. For example, IDC predicts that used smartphone shipments will reach 431.1 million units in 2027.

The increased reliance on refurbished tech is driven not only by cost savings but also by companies' desire to reduce e-waste and support Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals, thereby aligning technology investments with sustainability objectives. In this whitepaper, we explore the factors shaping IT leaders' attitudes and decision-making considerations and how organisations they partner with can assist. ■





# Evolving IT needs: Flexible and sustainable solutions

As organisations increasingly rely on advanced software and complex data ecosystems, hardware must keep pace with evolving workloads. The end of support for Windows 10 adds additional urgency, compelling companies to consider upgrades to avoid security vulnerabilities and incompatibility issues. Meanwhile, the devices deployed during the pandemic, which supported a massive shift to remote work, are reaching the end of their reliable lifecycle.

In a traditional refresh cycle, ageing devices are replaced with new models - a strategy that often involves high capital expenditure and significant environmental costs.

In general, respondents characterise their refresh cycles as “ongoing” and occurring on a “rolling basis” as and when new devices are needed. Some respondents identified the move to Windows 11 as accelerating their refresh plans. However, some highlighted the need to “sweat the assets” and hold off on refresh plans due to budget constraints.

The disposal of electronic devices is among the fastest-growing sources of waste globally, with only 20 per cent of e-waste being formally recycled. This environmental impact weighs heavily on modern businesses, many of which are under pressure to meet Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and ESG benchmarks. ■

“ TRADITIONAL REFRESH CYCLES OFTEN INVOLVE HIGH CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS.

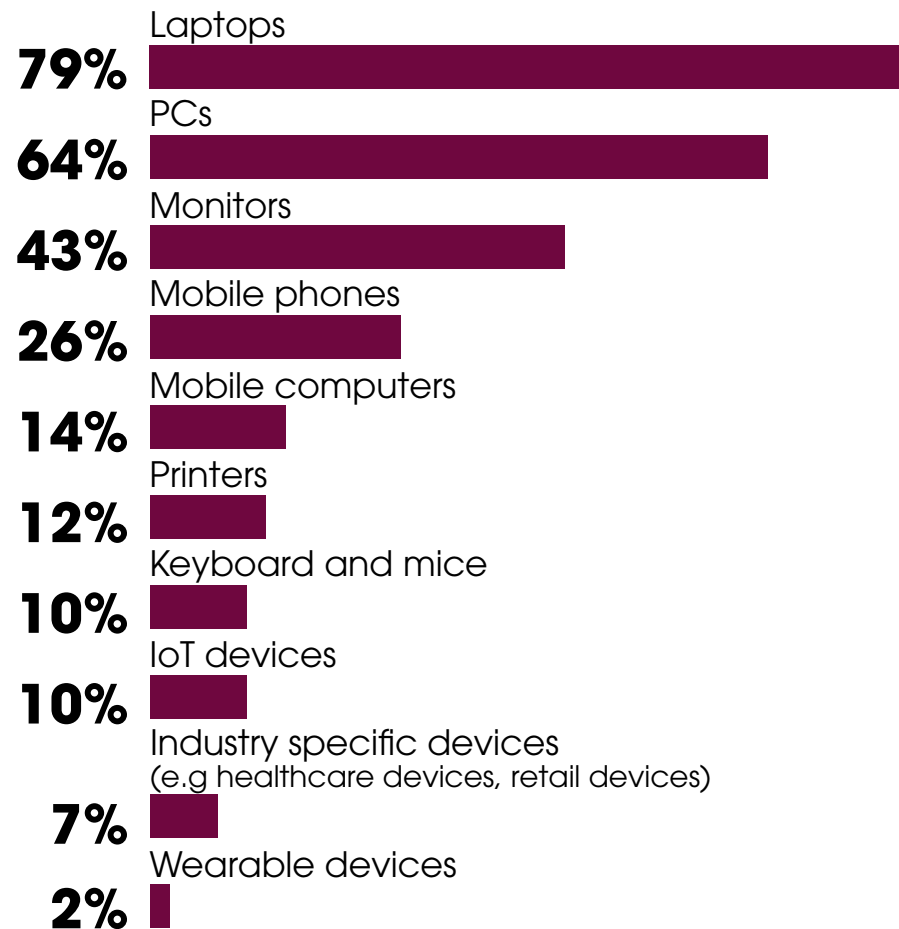


# The case for refurbished hardware

**W**e surveyed 150 senior IT leaders and professionals to ask their perspectives on technology refresh cycles, including their views on using refurbished tech to manage hardware needs. The participants work across diverse sectors, with a strong presence in education/training, technology, and business services, while the majority of their organisations employ between 25 and 500 people.

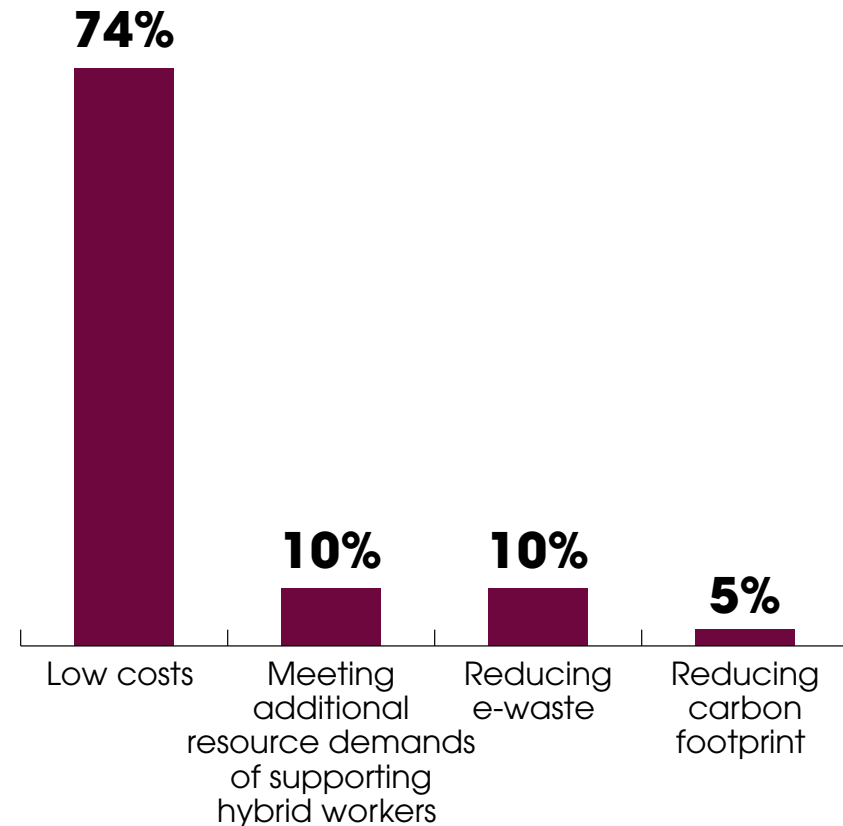
28 per cent of these respondents said they currently use refurbished devices, and 54 per cent said they have carried out a device refresh in the past year. ►

**Fig. 1:** What type of refurbished devices does your organisation have?



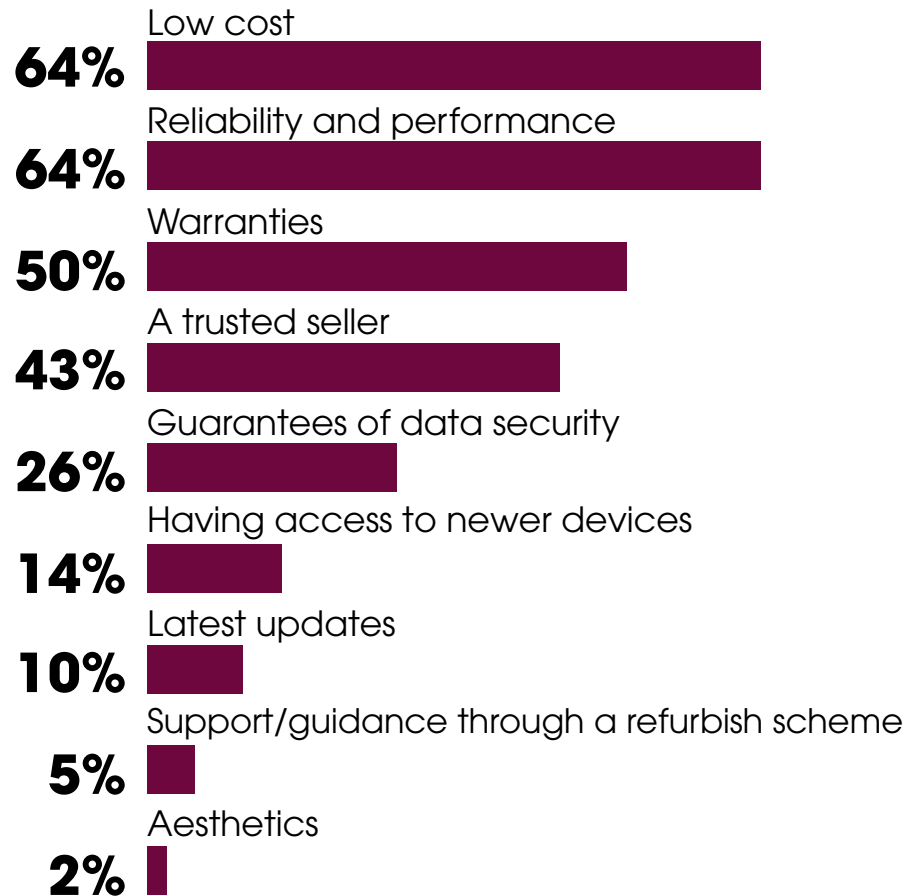
The most common type of refurbished device organisations have is laptops, followed by PCs, monitors and mobile phones.

**Fig. 2:** Biggest driver behind choosing refurbished devices



74 per cent of respondents cited budget considerations as a key reason for adopting refurbished tech. The lower cost of refurbished devices enables organisations to meet hardware needs without overextending their budgets. Given the budget constraints many IT departments face, especially in the current economic climate, refurbished tech allows for greater financial flexibility, freeing up resources for strategic projects and investments. ▀

### Fig. 3: Which of the following is most important to have in a refurbished device?

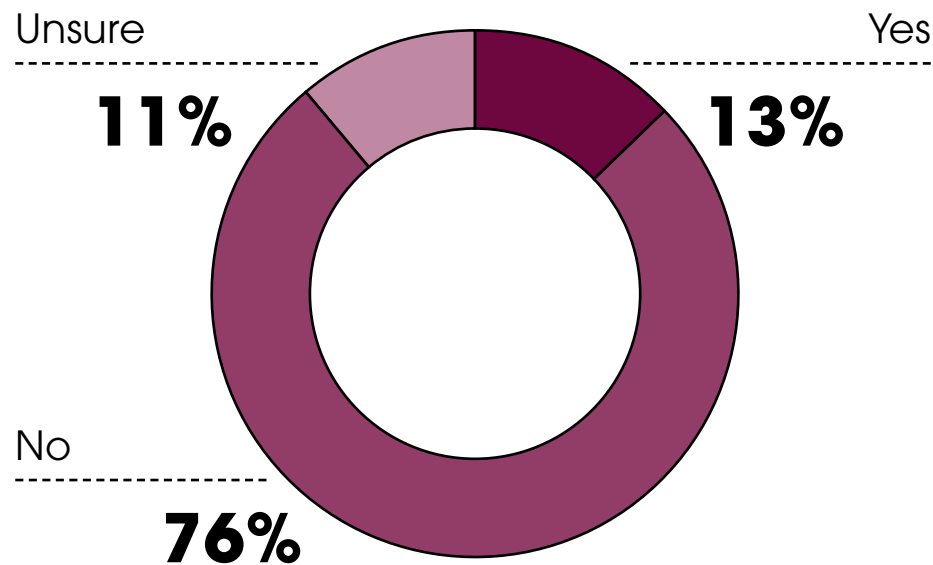


Performance is also an indispensable factor in device selection, with 64 per cent saying reliability and quality are one of the most important considerations. Refurbished technology today is vastly improved, with high-quality standards ensuring that pre-used devices meet enterprise-grade performance criteria. Advances in the refurbishment process allow companies to acquire devices that can handle modern computing demands, from running data-intensive applications to supporting cloud-based workflows.

A further 50 per cent mentioned warranties as one of their top three most important considerations. To meet this demand, refurbishment providers are increasingly offering certification and warranties to ensure that pre-used devices meet industry standards for quality and reliability. Certified refurbishers have established rigorous processes for testing, upgrading, and certifying devices, providing IT leaders with greater assurance that refurbished tech will meet the demands of their organisation.

However, survey recipients are still wary of refurbished devices. When asked to share their reasons for not opting for refurbished tech, concerns include reliability, security, and longevity, with refurbished devices perceived to have a shorter lifespan and are less likely to support necessary software updates or handle the latest applications. Some respondents also cited a perceived lack of economic benefits when choosing refurbished devices and “snobbishness in the business around used devices”. ▀

**Fig. 4: Does your organisation have a specific ESG policy related to refurbished devices?**



Reducing e-waste and lowering carbon footprints are critical components of many organisations' sustainability agendas. Yet our research found that while businesses are exploring alternatives to mitigate the environmental toll of their technology strategies, these are still in their infancy, and 76 per cent said that their organisation doesn't have specific ESG goals and policies related to refurbished devices.

As can be seen in Figure two, only 15 per cent said that reducing e-waste and carbon footprint was the biggest driver in choosing refurbished devices. Furthermore, 44 per cent agreed that financial considerations are more important than environmental considerations when opting for refurbished devices. While cost is clearly a driving factor, each refurbished device conserves the materials, energy, and water required to manufacture a new one, thus reducing the overall ecological impact of IT procurement. For companies with formal ESG targets, incorporating refurbished hardware into fleets refresh cycles is a meaningful step toward achieving these objectives. ■



# IT strategy

As organisations continue to prioritise sustainable practices, the adoption of refurbished technology is steadily growing as a part of IT refresh strategies. ►

**Fig. 5: Our use of refurbished devices has...**

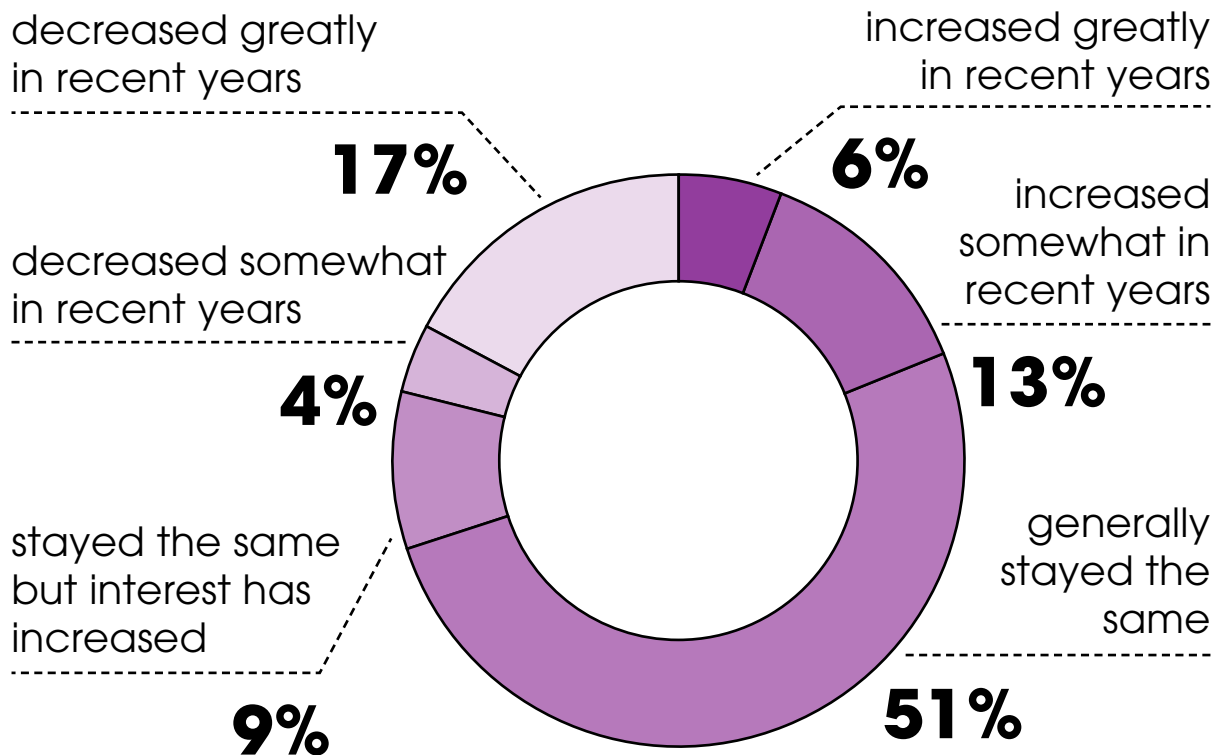
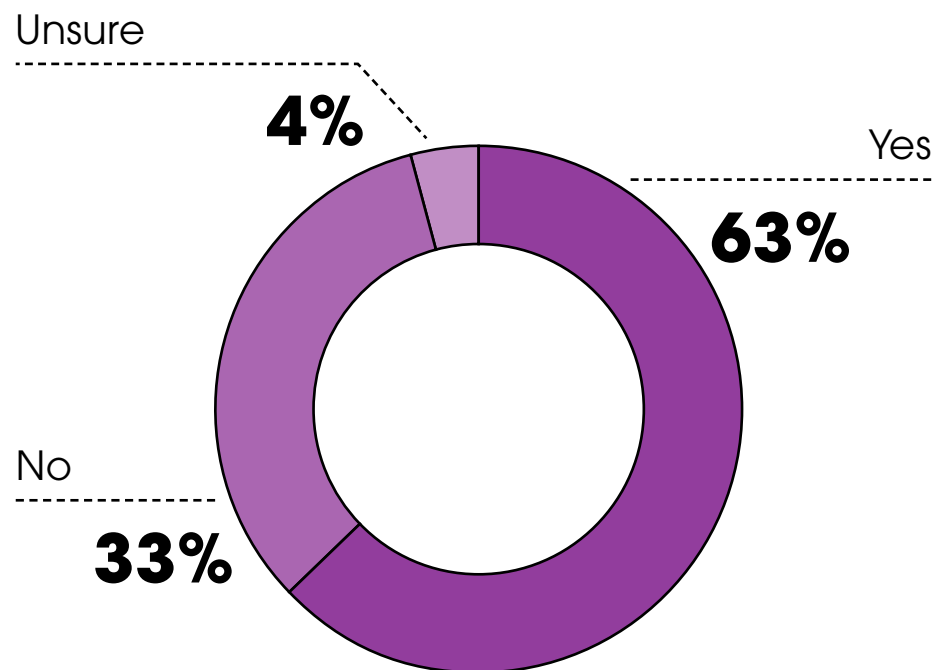


**Fig. 4: Does your organisation hold onto devices for longer than it did previously?**



Our survey data supports this trajectory. Nearly 18 per cent said that their use of refurbished devices has increased in recent years and 63 per cent of respondents said they hold on to their devices for longer than they previously did. This is due to a combination of factors, including tighter budgets and economic uncertainty, which make frequent upgrades less appealing. Improved hardware durability and better device performance mean that older models continue to meet users' needs, reducing the urgency to replace them. Advances in software and security updates, now available for older models, also contribute to longer device retention, as users feel they can maintain functionality without investing in new hardware.

This shift signals an evolution in procurement philosophy, moving away from linear buying cycles and towards a more circular model that emphasises reuse and resource conservation. ■



# Benefits for IT and procurement teams

For IT leaders, incorporating refurbished devices into their technology strategy offers several distinct advantages.

- **First**, the reduced cost of refurbished tech allows for more flexible budgeting, making it easier to scale device fleets in response to organisational growth or changing requirements.
- **Secondly**, refurbished devices provide a reliable alternative to new models, supporting performance needs without compromising on security or quality.
- **Finally**, by choosing refurbished devices, IT departments can contribute to their organisation's sustainability goals, reinforcing their commitment to responsible business practices.

From a procurement perspective, the increasing quality of refurbished devices has broadened their appeal. Organisations that may have previously avoided refurbished tech due to concerns over quality or functionality are now recognising the value of pre-used devices that have been rigorously tested and certified. In fact, 29% agreed that their use of refurbished devices will likely increase in the future. This paradigm shift opens the door to partnerships with suppliers that specialise in refurbished tech, potentially creating long-term value as demand for sustainable solutions grows. ■

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# Strategic recommendations for embracing refurbished tech

Organisations looking to integrate refurbished devices into their IT refresh cycle should consider the following strategies:

**1. Partner with certified refurbishers:** Working with certified refurbishment providers or channel partners with expertise in this area ensures that refurbished devices meet industry standards for quality, security, and reliability. Certifications and warranties are essential in building trust in refurbished tech.

**2. Develop a long-term refurbishment strategy:** Incorporating refurbished devices into refresh cycles should be part of a long-term strategy, with clear guidelines for assessing device performance and determining refresh timelines. Establishing these standards will make it easier for IT teams to integrate pre-used devices without disrupting operations, and may require the support of a third party.

**3. Educate stakeholders on benefits:** IT leaders should communicate the financial, performance, and environmental benefits of refurbished tech to key stakeholders, ensuring buy-in from across the organisation and wider supply chain. Highlighting the cost savings and alignment with ESG goals can make refurbished tech an appealing choice for decision-makers.

**4. Monitor technological advancements:** As technology advances, the capabilities of refurbished devices will continue to evolve. IT leaders should stay informed about improvements in the refurbishment process and the expanding availability of certified, high-performance refurbished tech options.

As companies strive to meet evolving IT demands and sustainability goals, refurbished technology offers a compelling alternative to traditional hardware refresh cycles. With financial advantages, strong performance standards, and environmental benefits, refurbished devices enable organisations to meet both operational and ESG targets. Our survey data shows that the adoption of pre-used devices is set to rise, signalling a broader shift towards circular economy principles in enterprise IT.

Incorporating refurbished tech is not just a cost-cutting measure but a strategic approach to device management that aligns with the future of sustainable business. By partnering with reputable organisations and emphasising quality and sustainability, IT leaders can make refurbished tech a big part of their hardware refresh strategy, paving the way for a resilient and responsible approach to device procurement. ■



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