

# Sustainability, IT Security, and Business Economics

## ENTERPRISE DATA SANITIZATION RECOMMENDATION

IT asset disposal and data erasure policies are rapidly becoming commonplace in US enterprises to address regulatory and privacy concerns. At the same time, organizations are looking for sustainable operations due to both economical causes and environmental impact.

This creates a need for a data sanitization method that alleviates privacy concerns and allows equipment reuse. However, the traditional data-overwriting methods have been slow, cumbersome to deploy, and, worst of all, their results have been difficult to verify and audit. Policies become just good intentions if they cannot be enforced. The rapid rise in information theft and fraud has made the issue of data erasure and IT asset disposal as important to an enterprise as the integrity of its corporate networks. An organization that fails to properly secure its business information when assets leave its premises risks severe penalties on a variety of legal, financial, and marketing-related fronts.

A sound and well planned end-of-life IT asset and data policy should be an essential component of every organization's information strategy. The three most important business advantages of a well-structured data erasure and asset disposal policy are:

**1. Reduced Business Risks** - A well-planned data erasure policy reduces the potential for costly risks, liability, regulatory requirements and public embarrassments that can occur when business data falls into wrong hands.

**2. Reduced Environmental Impact** – A well-orchestrated asset reuse policy results in most energy efficient computing; the largest amount of energy, for cradle-to-grave computer, is being used when manufacturing the computer. Extension of a retired computer lifespan through reuse is the most effective way to reduce its relative environmental footprint.

**3. Reduced Asset Costs** - A thorough and regular data erasure policy enables an organization to safely remarket their aging IT equipment, thereby reducing the costs associated with the acquisition of new equipment and implementing sound and asset disposal practices.

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### » **Bank customer data sold on eBay**

*Details of customers of three companies, including a leading UK bank were involved.*

*The information is said to include account details and in some cases customers' signatures, mobile phone numbers and mothers' maiden names.*

*A spokeswoman for the third company reported to be involved said it took the security of its card members' data "extremely seriously."*

*"Clearly such details should never have been included in the hard drive of the computer offered for sale on eBay" »*

– 2008, BBC News



# What to look for when selecting a Software-based media sanitization tool

Many IT departments still use simple overwriting functions available in many disk utilities. However, these tools may have significant drawbacks which could compromise an organization's security. Good enterprise-grade overwriting software must have the following functions and capabilities in order to ensure the integrity of the sanitization process:

## Security & Performance

- Run independent of, the OS loaded on the drive
- Independence of, the type of hard drive being sanitized (e.g., Advanced Technology Attachment (ATA)/Integrated Drive Electronics (IDE) or Small Computer System Interface (SCSI) type hard drives)
- Overwrite the entire hard disk drive independent of any Basic Input/Output System (BIOS) or firmware capacity limitation that the system may have
- Detect, overwrite and report on locked and hidden sectors such as HPA, DCO, remapped sectors both for ATA and SCSI drives as well as wiping hot spare hard drives in RAID configurations
- Detect and clear the Grown Defect list (G-list) within SCSI drives

## Reporting & Auditability

- Provide the user with erasure certificate/report indicating that the overwriting procedure was completed properly
- Identify and report vital hardware configuration information with computer serial numbers and asset tags
- Identify and report e.g., main software serial keys for license harvesting
- Ensure report's integrity with digital signatures
- Provide means for easy report integration with asset management systems

## Deployment & Administration

- Distribute erasure software to target computers via network
- Centrally administrate execution of erasure software
- Centrally monitor erasure process and to collect and maintain erasure reporting



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