

IT Hardware Services for Your Remote Workforce

From device redeployment to disposition, the right partner can ease a growing burden for your IT department.



eBOOK

Office centrality may be over, but the need for capable IT hardware services continues

The COVID-19 pandemic produced a sudden seismic shift in the nation's workforce, relocating a large contingent of employees away from office buildings to kitchens, spare bedrooms, and basements. And, although the crisis will eventually abate, it's becoming increasingly clear that the work-from-home trend will continue into the foreseeable future.

In a recent social media post, Shopify CEO and founder Tobi Lutke summed up the situation not just for his company, but for a broad cross-section of commerce: "As of today, Shopify is a digital by default company ... *Office centrality is over.*" Echoing this assessment is Kate Lister, president of Global Workplace Analytics, who estimated that 25% to 35% of the U.S. workforce will be working from home multiple days a week by the end of 2021 (source: Forbes.com).

Besides protecting the health of employees, a number of factors are driving continuation of the "remote-first" workforce, from reduced overhead costs for businesses to increased employee productivity. Technology, most notably videoconferencing apps, also has played a major role in the ability of employees to connect and collaborate with each other.

But even as technology has become a powerful enabler of a remote workforce, it also has created new challenges for employers — in particular, for IT departments. Instead of managing IT hardware for hundreds or thousands of employees working in one or a few centralized facilities, their reach must now extend to hundreds or thousands of office locations.

IT responsibilities range from furnishing employees with laptops and other devices to the proper disposition and data sanitization of decommissioned hardware. The question is, how can IT departments, without any increase in staffing (or even with staffing cuts), effectively meet their obligations across so many widely dispersed locations? This is the quandary faced by countless businesses and IT departments across the country.

Given their staffing constraints, a growing number of organizations are alleviating this burden by outsourcing some or all of their remote IT hardware services. As this guide will discuss, thoughtful evaluation is essential for choosing a remote IT hardware services (RITHS) partner, considering the many financial, operational, and regulatory implications.

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Work-from-home model magnifies and adds to IT department challenges

Despite the massive employee migration to a work-from-home model, many elements of IT hardware management have not changed, including:

- Employees require fully functioning, company-compliant laptop computers and/or other devices to perform their jobs.
- These devices eventually will need to be replaced.
- Replacement devices must be procured, configured, and delivered to employees.
- Devices at the end of their useful life must be disposed of properly, consistent with company policy and regulatory requirements.
- Sensitive data must be securely handled and scrubbed from decommissioned hardware.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most IT hardware was concentrated in a single company location and perhaps across a few satellite facilities. Consequently, IT departments could manage these devices in a highly efficient and controlled manner.

Virtually overnight, the challenges of IT hardware management increased exponentially, as employees were sent home to stem the spread of COVID-19. In some cases, these individuals departed with their company devices and were quickly up and running in their home offices. Other employees did not have company-issued hardware to take home, creating an urgent dilemma for IT departments: how to procure and distribute dozens, if not hundreds, of devices as quickly as possible to maintain worker productivity.

Compounding the difficulty for many companies, nobody appears to be going back to the office anytime soon — which means IT departments, already stretched thin, must figure out how to distribute replacement devices to a multitude of locations.

No respite from proper IT asset disposition

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Work-from-home model magnifies and adds to IT department challenges continued

Specific components of IT asset disposition (ITAD) typically include:

- Secure pick-up, transport, and handling of decommissioned devices
- Processing of this hardware, which may involve refurbishing (i.e., for reuse or resale), value recovery, and/or recycling, in compliance with national, state, local, and company environmental rules
- Sanitizing or destroying data on decommissioned hardware according to all applicable regulatory requirements
- Verification of regulatory compliance

As any compliance officer knows, failure to follow proper protocols can result in substantial penalties, restitution, and lawsuits, as well as prison sentences in some cases. Moreover, businesses may face severe, even irreparable, damage to their reputation and brand.

Preventing the theft of data from disposed electronics has become a particularly sharp focal point in recent years. Certain industries, such as healthcare and financial institutions, must be extremely vigilant in protecting sensitive data, at the risk of incurring harsh penalties.

These obligations have not abated during the COVID-19 crisis or in its immediate aftermath. In fact, they've become significantly more daunting, considering the broad geographic disbursement of IT hardware created by a remote workforce. Meanwhile, an IT department's internal customers expect service that's as prompt as ever, whether the request pertains to a new hire or an existing employee.

Given this enormous and growing workload, coupled with hiring freezes and reduced budgets, it's not surprising that IT departments are looking for help with managing their company's hardware.

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Evaluating potential remote IT hardware services (RITHS) partners

There's a lot at stake in choosing a RITHS partner — and many questions to ask when evaluating vendors.

How comprehensive is their IT hardware services portfolio?

IT hardware management encompasses a broad range of services, including end-of-life device disposition, electronics recycling, legislative compliance, product refurbishment for redeployment or resale, materials recovery, and data security. Many of these services are interconnected, so it makes sense to choose a partner with a comprehensive, seamless service portfolio that can meet the needs of your entire workforce.

On the other hand, if you're only trying to fill certain hardware management gaps, you should have the flexibility to select only the services you need.

Be aware that some vendors with a "comprehensive" portfolio may actually outsource some services, and it's important to verify that these subcontractors adhere to the same standards and practices as the primary vendor.

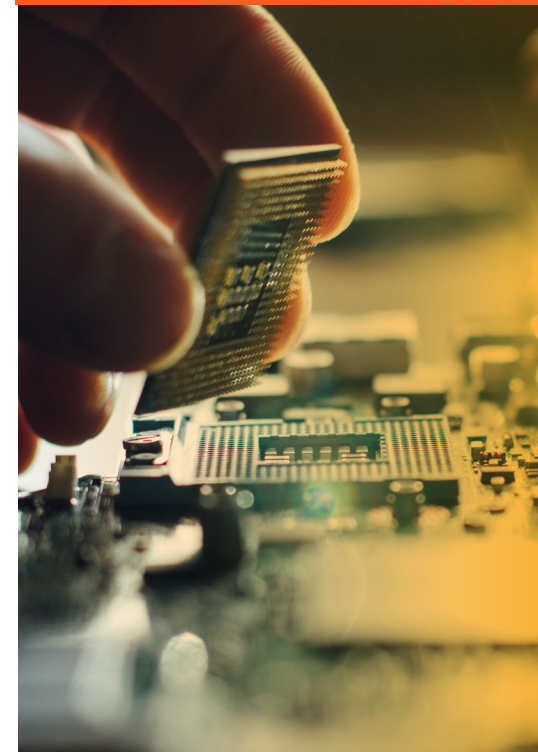
Are they able to meet the IT needs of your remote workforce?

The larger and more widely dispersed your remote workforce is, the more difficult it can be to meet everyone's IT needs on a timely basis. Look for a RITHS vendor with a strong national presence and the ability to meet a broad range of needs, such as the redeployment of decommissioned laptops and other devices for use by remote employees; pick up and delivery of laptops at employee locations; disposition of assets that reach the end of their useful life; and secure erasure of data on those devices.

How do you know they will adhere to industry best practices and regulations?

One of the most reliable indicators of best practices and regulatory compliance is certification. This holds particularly true with ITAD, which is inherently risky due to the potential for landfilling or improper recycling of hardware and the theft of sensitive data from decommissioned devices. To reduce your risks, verify that the vendor/partner and any downstream vendors have been certified by nationally recognized governing bodies.

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Evaluating potential remote IT hardware services (RITHS) partners *continued*

For companies specializing in RITHS, key certifications include:

- National Association for Information Destruction (NAID),
- e-Stewards (independent industry certification),
- Sustainable Electronics Recycling International (R2 certification),
- ISO 9001 (quality management),
- ISO 14001 (environmental management), and
- ISO 45001 (health and safety management)

Be sure that the vendor you choose is actually *certified*. Certification represents a significant effort and investment, and certified businesses are often subject to audits. On the other hand, when vendors state they are “compliant” with an organization’s standards, you may not know which standards they’ve chosen to adopt, which ones they’re disregarding, and who (if anyone) is holding them accountable. Failure to comply with just one standard could prove costly to your organization.

How strong is their commitment to data security?

Data security is one of the top areas of concern for most organizations. The data practices and policies of reputable RITHS vendors will satisfy this concern. Besides possessing relevant certifications, they should offer a robust and flexible set of services that address data security from a number of critical angles.

Moreover, the highest degree of data security practices must be followed throughout the entire “chain of custody,” from the time a device is picked up at an employee’s work location until it is processed and scrubbed of sensitive data. Ideally, your partner will be NAID AAA-certified, meaning its transport operations comply with NAID regulations and are subject to NAID audits. Other logistics criteria include the timeliness of asset pick-up, secure storage of equipment until processing occurs, and the availability of transport tracking reports to ensure accountability.

Data sanitization or destruction should comply with Department of Defense, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) 800-88, and NAID standards. In addition, the partner needs to carry adequate liability insurance — a minimum \$10 million policy — to cover data breaches.

Some companies prefer to perform their own data sanitization prior to shipping decommissioned hardware. Find out whether the vendor offers a cloud-based, scalable solution that can be used by remote employees to erase data on their devices (if allowed by your company’s policy and IT infrastructure).

Key certifications for companies specializing in RITHS should include:

- NAID
- e-Stewards
- R2
- ISO 9001, 14001, and 45001



Evaluating potential remote IT hardware services (RITHS) partners continued

Do they think beyond recycling?

Many of your organization's decommissioned IT hardware contain latent value; it may take the form of refurbished devices for redeployment to your remote workers, recovery of IT components for remarketing, or recovery of precious metals and non-ferrous scrap for sale to processing facilities. Inquire about the value recovery services offered by potential RITHS partners — and whether they are willing to share revenue generated by sales to third parties.

How easy is it to access their services and track assets?

Businesses with a widely dispersed workforce need a centralized web portal for complete transparency into the entire ITAD process. It should house a full spectrum of capabilities that readily allow employees to:

- Request the vendor's services
- Schedule pick-ups
- Access account information
- Look up assets received
- Track order progress and shipping in real time

This system should be flexible and scalable for access by any number of remote employees, consistent with your company's policies.

Your RITHS partner's centralized web portal should provide access for any number of remote employees to:

- Request services
- Track assets
- Access account information

Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations: Leading the way in IT hardware services for highly dispersed organizations

Though spawned by a pandemic, the large-scale migration of employees to a work-from-home model is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, according to many experts. Consequently, businesses seeking outside assistance with IT hardware management must consider the ability of a partner to meet the needs of a remote workforce.

Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations is a proven leader in meeting the IT hardware management needs of organizations from coast to coast. Consider these key advantages of partnering with Dynamic:

- **Comprehensive services** — includes procurement, product refurbishing for redeployment or resale, transportation/logistics, legislative program management, materials recovery, e-recycling, certified data destruction, lease management, inventory management, and warehousing
- **Risk mitigation** — offers a closed-loop solution, with control over the entire chain of custody involving decommissioned IT hardware, from device pick-up or drop-off to ultimate disposition and data destruction
- **Flexibility** — choose as many or as few services as you need to fill your hardware management gaps
- **National certifications** — NAID, e-Stewards, R2, OHSAS 18001, ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and others, ensuring safe, compliant handling of your hardware and sensitive data
- **Easy online access** — track assets in real time, schedule orders, and view a broad range of account information via Dynamic's online customer portal, which is available 24/7
- **Global coverage** — Dynamic and its network of fully vetted partners have operations in more than 100 countries in North America, Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific and other locations around the world

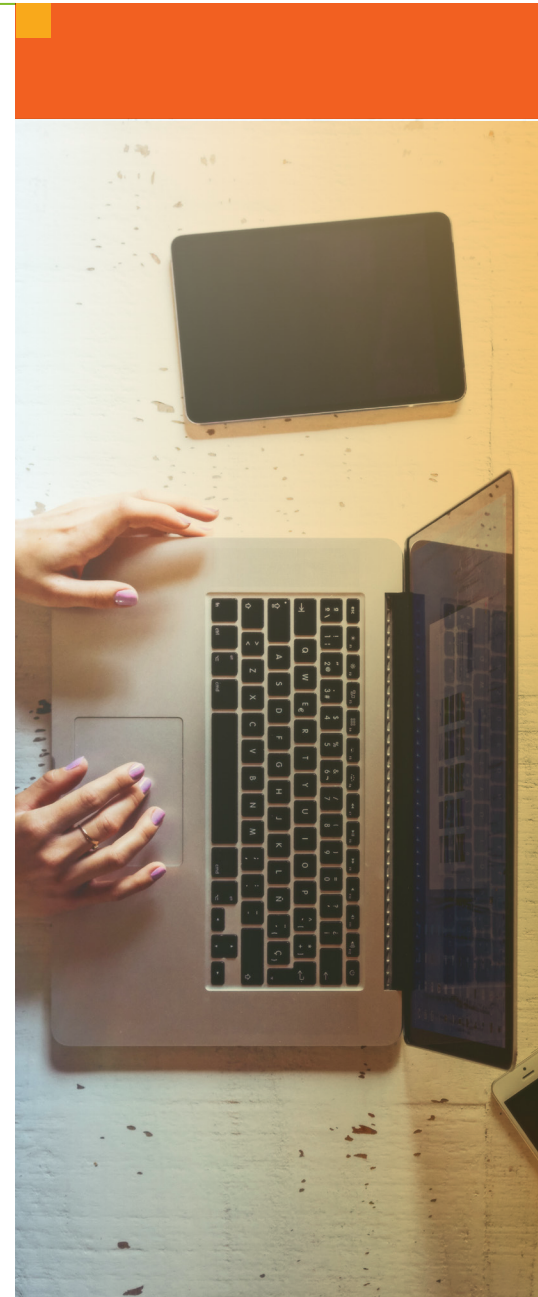


Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations: Addressing the unique needs of a remote workforce

Thanks to robust logistical capabilities, supported by leading-edge technologies, Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations can extend a broad range of IT hardware management services to companies with a large, widely dispersed workforce.

Dynamic's RITHS portfolio includes:

- **IT asset disposition** — Eventually, IT equipment will reach the end of its useful life. Dynamic can ensure the efficient, safe, and environmentally sustainable disposition of this hardware, regardless of where it's located. Dynamic's ITAD services include asset tracking, data destruction, testing, remarketing, materials/value recovery, and recycling.
- **Cloud-based remote data destruction** — If allowed by your organization's corporate policy and IT infrastructure, Dynamic offers a proprietary cloud-based solution called XERO that enables IT staff and/or remote employees to wipe data from hardware prior to shipping. This eliminates the security risks associated with transporting end-of-life devices. XERO can be scaled to any size organization, and it only requires a Wi-Fi connection to communicate with Dynamic's hosted server.
- **Logistics** — A widely dispersed workforce creates special challenges when it comes to collecting and transporting end-of-life hardware. Dynamic can remove this burden through point-to-point logistical services, including providing shipping labels and packaging materials to remote employees and then arranging pickup and NAID-compliant transport of the hardware to Dynamic for disposition. Optionally, Dynamic can accommodate large consolidated shipments of devices.
- **Hardware redeployment** — By tapping into your inventory of decommissioned IT hardware, Dynamic can help you equip your remote employees with laptops and other devices — at a lower cost and with shorter wait times versus buying new hardware. Dynamic's services include refurbishing, reimaging, and testing devices to meet or exceed your requirements for performance and reliability. Each device is backed with a minimum 60-day warranty. Dynamic can deliver refurbished hardware directly to remote employees or, if you prefer, ship the device to your facility for distribution to individual team members.



Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations: Addressing the unique needs of a remote workforce continued

- **Online customer portal** — You may choose to extend Dynamic customer portal access to an unlimited number of remote employees for requesting device pick-up.
- **Employee buy-back program** — As a value-add for your remote employees, you can offer them the opportunity to purchase laptops that you've decommissioned. Dynamic will wipe data from the hard drive and test the device before returning it to an employee. Another option is the build-to-order (BTO) program, which allows you to purchase and customize a similar unit, if available, from Dynamic's e-commerce site.

For more information, visit the Dynamic Lifecycle Innovations website: thinkdynamic.com.

