

Choose a Qualified End-of-Life Partner

Standards & Certification in IT Asset Retirement

IT asset management – along with the service providers that support it – has been an industry in transition for the past several years. Once a fledgling role in just a few organizations, we are now excited to see enterprises around the world establishing IT asset management teams to realize the benefits of professional accountability for IT assets. Service providers have emerged or adapted to support the needs of asset managers for every stage of the asset lifecycle.

In terms of certification, we have seen great strides in best practices for both software and hardware asset management, and IAITAM has been a leader in developing a robust education program and establishing individual certification in asset management disciplines. It is also important to have tools to evaluate service providers who support the asset managers in their tasks.

IT asset managers face many challenges every day, but only one has the ability to cause *irreparable harm* to your company: the improper retirement of assets. Both compliance and cost necessitate the best practice of outsourcing this responsibility to a service provider, but how do you qualify one? How do you know that your partner is handling your equipment and data securely, recycling in an environmentally responsible manner, refurbishing and reselling to maximize value recovery, and providing a reliable and detailed audit trail to protect you every step of the way? Fortunately there are certifications present and emerging in the industry for precisely that purpose.

The Baseline

A company's internal management systems ensure they have controls in place to process your gear reliably – in accordance with your expectations, every asset, every day. Any service provider that hasn't invested in internal controls and external audits is one that is not taking appropriate care in mitigating your risks.

1. **Quality Management System** – A QMS certified to

meet **ISO 9001** requirements is an absolute must.

Fundamentally it requires that a company have processes documented and monitored, and that there's a continuous improvement cycle of audits and corrective action.

Without a certified QMS, there's no guarantee that procedures will be consistently followed (or that they even exist). How can you rely on your service provider's report that disk drives have been thoroughly erased when they don't even document and audit their own processes?

2. **Environmental Management System** – Are you relying on your partner's promises that none of your assets will end up in a landfill, a developing country's dumping grounds, or on the 6 o'clock news? Don't rely on promises or marketing hype – look for an EMS certified to meet **ISO 14001** requirements. ISO 14001 requires an environmental policy (i.e. your partner's promises); but it also requires identification and measurement of environmental impacts of the recycling processes, continual improvement of those impacts, and regulatory compliance. A sound EMS paired with the appropriate policies (see Downstream Diligence Policy below) and targeted processes can provide strong assurance of environmental stewardship.
3. **Occupational Health & Safety Management System** – Not only do you want your assets processed reliably and responsibly, you also need to ensure your assets do not cause harm to workers as they are handled. Many corporations have social responsibility policies which frown on worker exploitation and human rights violations. Unfortunately, these tragedies don't just occur abroad – they are present in the U.S. as well. An OH&S management system certified to meet **OHSAS 18001** requirements will help ensure employees are protected from hazards and injury as they process your assets. Key components of an effective OH&S system include policies,



compliance requirements, incident tracking and corrective action, and thorough responsibility and accountability.

4. **Downstream Diligence Policy** – All of the systemic programs described above are crucial to effective management and control of your partner’s operations. But these systems depend on underlying company policies, especially when it comes to processing your assets. When combined with ISO certifications, a strong and transparent downstream stewardship policy is a linchpin in a service provider’s assurance of responsible reuse and recycling of end of life assets. A multi-stakeholder group including the EPA, OEMs, recyclers, and NGOs has developed best practices for electronics recycling called **“R2” for “Responsible Recycling”**. R2 practices include not only requirements for recycling instead of landfill disposal, but they also establish strict requirements for management of “focus materials,” those materials which contain toxins and are problematic to recycle and dispose. The downstream recyclers of focus materials must be audited and vetted to ensure they meet many of the same requirements you expect of your service provider. Your partner’s downstream diligence policy should at the minimum include all of the R2 elements and be an integral part of their QMS, EMS, and OH&S systems.

Certification of Best Practices

Some service providers have it all together – they have the whole package. They don’t just promise or pledge to do the right thing – **they can prove it** through independent third party certification of their policies, processes, and practices. Your company’s assets are high value. And high risk. Are your company’s reputation and compliance, and especially your job, worth gambling on? There are two certifications that can put your mind at ease:

R2/RIOS: The baseline described above will cover all the fundamentals: QMS, EMS, OH&S (taken together, QEHS), and R2. So like some companies, you can validate your partner’s ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 certifications and perform a thorough audit of their R2 downstream diligence. Or you can rely on the new certification program introduced by ISRI, the recycling industry association: **“R2/RIOS”**. RIOS stands for Recycling Industry Operating Standard, and incorporates the ISO 9001, ISO 14001, and OHSAS 18001 requirements under a single standard. When combined with R2, this provides a comprehensive QEHS management system certification and downstream due diligence certification to best practices in the industry.

The comprehensive R2/RIOS certification is now available, with third party auditors accredited to thoroughly validate implementation and adherence to the standards. A number of qualified electronics recyclers are pursuing certification.

GRADE: World-renowned market intelligence firm IDC has been monitoring best practices in the industry for several

years. Recently a number of very large corporations posed a query to IDC. These companies were aware of the high risks associated with IT asset disposition, but were confused by the many service providers pitching similar messages regarding security, value recovery, and environmental stewardship. They asked IDC for clear guidance on who can best meet the asset disposition needs of large enterprises.

In response, IDC established the **“GRADE Certification”** (Green Recycling and Asset Disposal for the Enterprise) as the gold standard in the industry for asset recovery services. The handful of companies that have achieved GRADE are uniquely qualified to IDC’s standards to provide the full range of asset disposition services for enterprises. IDC considered the internal management systems as well as the functions that impact your business operations and footprint. Some of the key areas examined are a service provider’s onsite services, robust reporting, end-to-end chain of custody and security, refurbishment operations and value recovery, and thorough recycling with downstream accountability.

There are a number of other standards available or in development which address various aspects of security, environment, transportation, or recycling. Additional certifications may be helpful, but they could also be misleading in their applicability or purpose. The baseline and best practices certifications outlined above are comprehensive and provide a complete picture of the systems and investments a partner has made to meet your needs.

Rest Easy

In the varied landscapes of electronics recycling and asset recovery, it can be difficult to find a partner that aligns with your needs for security, accountability, stewardship, value recovery, and the need to sleep soundly. The industry, including the EPA, industry associations, OEMs, NGOs, market analysts, and leaders in all categories, recognized this problem. Independently verified standards exist – just look for certifications for the baseline management systems and the best practices, and you can rest easy. After all, your assets are retiring – shouldn’t you?

Key Resources for Standards Information:

- R2: www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserva/materials/recycling/r2practices.htm
- RIOS: www.isri.org/rios
- GRADE: www.idc.com/research/greenit/grade.html

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Waste-free, Worry-free IT Asset Disposition

One company, independent and financially strong
National footprint to support you where you most need it
Dock to dust security and downstream diligence
Independently certified to prove it all



Learn about Standards, Certifications,
and Risks in the disposition best
practices track Thursday at 11:00.

Visit Booth # 9-10 for a personal
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