

USED & REFURBISHED EQUIPMENT SPOTLIGHT

Check Out Used Equipment Before You Buy

A Little Bit Of Detective Work Can Help Ensure Quality

by Julie Knudson

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FOR ORGANIZATIONS INTERESTED in saving money, refurbished equipment offers good quality for a great price. Sometimes, though, customers aren't quite sure what to expect. Are used components banged up and dirty? Will everything work when it arrives? Does their purchase order match what they received? Learn how to become a used-equipment sleuth and avoid problems before you buy.

Beware the "too good" price. The old adage certainly applies to refurbished equipment prices: If it seems too good to be true, it probably is. "I find that buyers who are new to purchasing refurbished equipment make that mistake more often than any other, where everyone has quoted \$3,500 but one vendor has the thing for \$1,000," says Benjamin Ingwersen, vice president of Frontier Computer (www.frontierus.com).

"Chances are there's probably some issue with that one." Instead of reveling in your good luck when you get an unusually low quote, put on your skeptical face and dig a little deeper.


Pay attention to part numbers. Savvy buyers check part numbers ahead of time, because you don't want to receive equipment that's close to—but not exactly—what you thought you were getting. "For example, aftermarket memory is often less expensive than memory that has an HP sticker on it," says Morris Scott, president of DMD Systems Recovery (www.dmdsystems.com). "This may not mean that the aftermarket memory is inferior, it may just mean that the customer didn't get what they paid for." Checking that components carry only original part numbers is a good way to know exactly what you're buying.

Ask for a trial period. Physically inspecting equipment before you buy it can be

difficult, especially if your vendor isn't local. However, you may be able to swing a brief trial period to confirm that everything is in order. "The customer has the right to request a period of time to test and evaluate equipment and return [it] if necessary," Scott says. Test and inspect the components right away, and contact the vendor if you find any defects.

The payment method you choose could also offer safeguards, such as the dispute resolution available through most credit card companies. "PayPal is also a great one," Ingwersen says. "It makes people feel very comfortable. They can dispute [a purchase] and get their money back." Depending on your company's buying position and relationship with the vendor, you may also be able to get a sample piece

of equipment. This is often a good route for data centers looking for multiple identical components or considering a shift to a new manufacturer or platform.

Check those references. To get useful, real-world information about the caliber of equipment typically sold by a potential vendor, get several references and follow up with each. Ingwersen suggests going one step beyond the regular reference check. "Ask them for one good reference and one bad reference," he says. "If they try to tell you they don't have any customers who've been upset with them, they probably haven't been in business long enough." Knowing how a reseller handles unhappy customers is a good indicator of the quality of equipment and service you can expect to receive. 

Find Used & Refurbished Equipment For Sale

Once you've made the decision to purchase used or refurbished equipment, finding the equipment you need is easy with Processor's online Data Center Products For Sale Database.

From Processor's home page (www.processor.com), you can search for a specific part number, make, model, or description. Enter the information in the appropriate box and click Search. You'll see a list of available equipment. If you don't see the particular piece you're looking for, scroll to the bottom of the search results page to conduct a more detailed search. There, you can search by part number, model, price, location, and more.

Don't know the specific part number or model? Use the drill-down search on the Processor home page to view results from specific manufacturers. Simply click the manufacturer name, and you'll see a list of all equipment listings from that manufacturer.