

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

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We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

Recycling or, What the Heck do you do with Old Tech?

Getting a new Mac, printer, cell phone or other high tech toy is lots of fun. But, what do you do with the old stuff? That old Mac or phone probably still works great (though it might be awfully obsolete), so why not make sure that it still has a job?

Three options for your old stuff...

1) Repurpose it. 2) Sell it. 3) Give it away.

Repurpose. Many old tech toys can be given new jobs. For example, if you have treated yourself to a new *MacBook*, *MacBook Pro* or *MacBook Air* you probably did so, in part, for freedom from your home office; to roam about the house, landing where you like, computing in comfortable surroundings.

That's nice, but what if you need to print something, make a back up or access lots of files from that lovely, shady spot in the garden? Let your old Mac do the job by turning it into a print and file server for free.

To do this, your old Mac needs to be running *Mac OS X 10.4* or newer. Set it in a convenient, unobtrusive place. Connect your printer and back up hard drive to it and use the *Sharing* system preference to turn on printer and file sharing. If you have lots of music, movies, TV shows and podcasts, turn on *iTunes* sharing as well. Now, you will be able to print, listen to tunes, watch video, make back ups and access files that are on the old Mac, from anywhere your home network reaches. Nice, indeed.

Old cell phones are easy to repurpose. Old *iPhones* can become *iPod Touches* by removing the AT&T SIM card. The old phone won't do phone calls anymore, but it will do everything else including *Skype* as long as WiFi is available. And, you can do all of this without a cell phone account.

Or, just make your old cell phone an emergency phone. Even without a contract, cell phones can still call 911 in an emergency.

Sell. Unless your old tech is smashed to bits, it still has value (heck, even the bits probably have value to somebody). So, sell it.

Newspaper classified ads, garage sales, *Craig'slist*, *ebay* are all options, but what a hassle! I like *Gazelle*, a new service that buys old tech over the internet.

To use *Gazelle*, start by visiting their web site: <http://www.gazelle.com>

Once there, type in what you have to sell, answer a few questions about condition and options and accessories that the item might have and you get an instant quote of what *Gazelle* will pay you for it. If you like the price, *Gazelle* will send a free shipping box, return shipping labels and pay all of the shipping costs. Pretty easy.

When *Gazelle* receives your item, they will evaluate it. If you fudged a little about the specifications or the condition, they will make a new offer. You can accept or reject the offer (if you reject it, they send the old thing back to you). If you accept, a check soon arrives. *Woo hoo!*

Expect *Gazelle* to offer mid to high wholesale value for your used tech item. I've found their offers to be quite fair when I've used the service. Of course, if you want to handle selling it yourself, you'll get more money, but *Gazelle* is so convenient that I find it quite worthwhile.

Give it away. No matter how funky your old tech is there is some value in it. Perhaps it's only good for parts or its content of glass, metals and plastic. But if it still runs well, somebody can probably use it.

You may know someone who has basic needs: word processing or email. Even a very old Mac can do these things, so they may be very happy with your old friend. But, most likely, you'll want to donate the old fellow to a worthy cause.

Some thrift stores are happy to receive old computers, cell phones and such. *The Salvation Army* and *Goodwill Industries* both accept donations of used tech items.

Many schools and community service organizations run e-waste programs doing collections a few times each year. These programs can provide much needed funding for these groups. Sadly, some of the e-waste recyclers, that handle the actual disposal during e-waste drives, are less than scrupulous in their practices. Be careful about these programs. I avoid this option.

And then, there are specialists in used technology. Two that I can recommend are:

The Marin Computer Resource Center

<http://www.mcrc.org>

42 Digital Drive, #3

Bell Marin Keys

Novato, CA 94949

415-883-1428

Computer Recycling Center

<http://www.crc.org>

3227 Santa Rosa Avenue

Santa Rosa, CA 95407

707-570-1600

Both will be delighted to accept your donations. Computers, printers, monitors, TVs, VCRs, stereos, phones and all of their accessories. Household or office, working or not. They take them all.

California Computer Care

P.O. Box 9445

Santa Rosa, CA 95405

(800) 540-8989

Like an
auto club
for your
computer.

These are responsible, reliable recyclers. They refurbish the good items and sell them or donate them to worthy organizations. Some items are used for repair parts and unrepairable tech is recycled for its useful raw materials. They do not ship junk overseas to create environmental disasters elsewhere. They responsibly utilize all useful parts and dispose of toxics properly.

As a courtesy to *California Computer Care* customers, you can have us transport your old computers, phones, printers, scanners and other tech to these recommended recyclers. There is no charge to members for this service. Non members pay a \$25.00 transportation fee.

The trash can is not an option. Tossing old tech into the trash is more than wasteful, it is dangerous and illegal. Sadly, our old toys are filled with toxic materials like solvents, adhesives and heavy metals. Old fashioned CRT computer monitors and TV sets contain many pounds of lead. Transformers and capacitors are chock full of nasty PCBs. Please do not take this lightly. (When intact and in use, these toxic components are harmlessly doing their jobs, but when the equipment is smashed with other trash, the toxic elements are released to do havoc.) Because of this, it is illegal to throw electronic items into the trash and landfills are required to reject them.

August Tip —

How fast is your internet connection? Are you getting the speed that you are paying for?

Check it out at:

<http://www.speedtest.org>

Click the *Begin Speed Test* button and then the *San Francisco* button and soon you will see how fast you usually connect.

Comcast users should get in the neighborhood of 20000 kbps download and 4000 kbps upload.

DSL users should get something around 700 to 8000 kbps download and 300 to 1000 kbps upload depending on the level of service that you have purchased.

If you aren't getting the speed that you are paying for contact your internet service provider's technical support to have your services tested.