

The Circular Channel Incentive Guide

What vendors now pay IT partners for certified refurbished, takeback and asset recovery

The circular channel is the part of the IT channel that earns from the second life of equipment, through certified refurbished sales, takeback and asset recovery, sold by the same partners who sell new technology and increasingly rewarded for it by vendors.

Definition: The Channel Institute.

Why this guide exists

Vendors say partners don't understand the financial case for circular business. Partners say vendors don't pay for it. Both have a point, and both are out of date. Over the past three years the largest PC, networking and power vendors have started paying partners for refurbished sales, takeback and asset recovery, often on terms that partners haven't noticed.

This guide puts the current incentives in one table, shows what each one asks of you, and deals with the problem that stops most sales teams selling circular deals even when the vendor pays: commission.

Every row carries the month it was checked. Programme terms change, sometimes by region and fiscal year, so confirm eligibility with your vendor or distributor account team before you build a bid around a rebate.

What the incentives are worth on a real deal

Take a refresh of 1,000 laptops at €1,000 each. Supply 40% as certified refurbished at a 35% discount and the hardware bill falls from €1,000,000 to €860,000. Embodied carbon falls from about 337 to about 210 tonnes CO₂e. The customer's procurement team sees a 14% saving; its sustainability team sees a 38% carbon cut.

Your revenue on the deal falls by €140,000, which is why so many partners hesitate. The incentives below are what close that gap: a rebate on the refurbished units, a rebate or margin on the asset recovery of the 1,000 retired devices, and in some programmes a payment to the individual seller. Add them up per deal before deciding whether the mixed bid costs you anything at all.

The Circular Channel Bid Calculator at channelinstitute.com/circular-channel runs these numbers for your own deal and writes the paragraph for your proposal.

Vendor incentives at a glance

Checked October 2026. "How to claim" is the route we recommend for confirming eligibility, not a vendor-published procedure.

Vendor and programme	What it pays	What it asks of you	How to claim	Checked
Lenovo: Lenovo Certified Refurbished; Asset Recovery Services; LEAP	Rebates on Lenovo Certified Refurbished for partners of all metal tiers in selected EMEA markets, rolling out during FY26/27. New rebates on Asset Recovery Services, CO2 Offset, TruScale and Premier Support. Individual sellers rewarded through LEAP.	Lenovo partner of any metal tier in a participating EMEA market. Refurbished stock is supplied through distribution with regular inventory updates.	Ask your Lenovo channel account manager which markets and SKUs qualify in your fiscal quarter, and register sellers in LEAP.	Oct 2026
HP: HP Certified Refurbished (HP Renew Solutions) under HP Amplify	The same Amplify compensation on certified refurbished PCs and printers as on new.	Any HP partner authorised to sell HP products can resell the refurbished editions. Portfolio varies by region.	Confirm the refurbished portfolio for your region with your HP partner account team; sales count through Amplify as normal.	Oct 2026
Dell: Asset Recovery Services (Dell Technologies Partner Program)	7% rebate on Asset Recovery Services.	Sell Dell Asset Recovery Services as a Dell partner.	Register the deal and confirm the rebate with your Dell partner account team.	Oct 2026
Cisco: Cisco Refresh and trade-in	Additional rebate on eligible Cisco Refresh sales through the Refresh Partner Incentive Program (RFIP). Trading in old Cisco equipment adds up to 9% to new hardware discounts.	Register in RFIP. Refresh products carry the same Cisco warranty and support options as new.	Register in RFIP through Cisco or your distributor; quote blended new and Refresh bills of materials.	Oct 2026
Westcon-Comstor: Cisco Refresh (Circular Technology Solutions)	Two stacked 3% rebates on Cisco Refresh, plus incentives and 0% financing.	Buy Cisco Refresh through Westcon-Comstor.	Ask your Westcon-Comstor account manager for the current rebate terms and blended-quote support.	Oct 2026
Eaton: UPS collection	\$25 to the salesperson per UPS collected, plus a rebate.	Collect end-of-life UPS units through Eaton's scheme.	Confirm terms with your Eaton partner manager.	Oct 2026

Vendor circular programmes have almost no search footprint. "Cisco Takeback and Reuse" and "HPE Technology Renewal Center" get no measurable monthly searches; "Dell Asset Recovery Services" gets about 30 and "Cisco Refresh" about 90 (Ahrefs, US, October 2026). Your customers don't know these programmes by name, which means the partner who brings them into the conversation sets the terms of it.

The commission problem

A refurbished deal carries a smaller ticket. On the example above, the refurbished share brings in €260,000 rather than €400,000. A salesperson paid a percentage of revenue earns less on it even when the margin percentage on refurbished is as good as new, or better. Ask a sales team why circular deals stall and this is usually the answer.

There are four common fixes, and they can be combined.

Pay commission on gross profit.

This is the cleanest fix. If refurbished margin is healthy, the salesperson is no worse off, and a mixed bid that wins against a new-only competitor pays more than a lost new-only bid.

Credit refurbished units at new-equivalent value towards quota.

The commission rate stays the same, but quota attainment counts each refurbished unit as if it were sold new. It costs little and removes the incentive to steer customers away.

Add a circular bonus.

A fixed amount per refurbished unit, takeback or asset recovery engagement. Eaton's \$25 per UPS collected is the vendor-funded version of the same idea, and Lenovo's LEAP rewards individual sellers directly.

Pass the vendor rebate through.

Where a vendor pays a rebate on refurbished or asset recovery, share a fixed part of it with the seller who closed the deal. It makes the rebate visible to the person who decides whether to propose it.

Bidding refurbished lots with warranty parity

The objection that kills most refurbished lots is risk, and it's usually raised by IT operations rather than procurement. Warranty parity answers it. Vendor-certified programmes increasingly offer it: Cisco Refresh equipment carries the same warranty and support options as new, and Lenovo Certified Refurbished devices come with renewed warranties.

When you bid a circular lot, make the parity explicit rather than leaving the buyer to ask:

Specify vendor-certified refurbished, by programme name, so the buyer can tell it apart from grey-market stock. Quote the warranty term on every refurbished line, next to the equivalent new line. Name the data sanitisation standard used for the devices you take back, and supply the certificate. Supply device-level carbon data with the quote, because the customer can only count the carbon saving if you do. Price the refurbished share as a separate lot or line, so a buyer who wants it can award it without re-tendering.

Public frameworks are asking. Ireland's Office of Government Procurement needed three attempts to award its remanufactured notebook framework, worth up to €30m over four years: the first two rounds drew no compliant bidder, and the third drew two bids, one compliant. The UK's main government technology framework now has a dedicated lot for sustainability and circular IT. A partner that can bid these lots competently faces very few rivals.

A 30-day plan

Week one: list the vendors you already sell and check each against the table. Ask each account team, in writing, what you would earn on a refurbished unit, a takeback and an asset recovery engagement this quarter.

Week two: fix the commission plan for circular deals using one of the four approaches above, and tell the sales team before the next forecast call.

Week three: pick three live refresh opportunities and price a mixed bid for each with the Circular Channel Bid Calculator. Put the summary paragraph into the proposals.

Week four: get product carbon footprint data for your top ten SKUs from the vendors, so every mixed quote can carry device-level carbon figures.

Join the Circular Channel Benchmark

Almost no partner economics for circular business have been published. The Circular Channel Benchmark will change that: what circular business earns partners per deal, covering margin, attach rate, rebate take-up and sales cost, compared with new-only deals.

Participants get the full results before publication. No individual partner's numbers are ever shown. To register interest, email corporate@channelinstitute.com with the subject "Circular Channel Benchmark".

Sources

Omdia, Lenovo 360 Circle Summit 2026 (July 2026). Trellis, "Why HP now lets its sales partners offer refurbished equipment". Dell Technologies Partner Program 2023. Cisco, "Introducing Cisco Refresh". Westcon-Comstor, Cisco Refresh. IT Channel Oxygen, Canalys calls for more vendor incentives on circular IT. Office of Government Procurement (Ireland), remanufactured notebook framework. Cranfield University study of laptop remanufacturing (carbon figures, a single-company best case). Ahrefs keyword data, October 2026.

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