

Case Study - Seek-It Ltd

Company Background

Since 1998, Seek-It has been developing cost-effective collection, assessment and demanufacturing processes for waste electronic equipment. From the outset, Seek-It was formulated to balance the concept of social enterprise with profit. Continual research has seen Seek-It develop and implement safe and environmentally friendly methods to recover 'end of life' electronic and electrical equipment.

Seek-It is primarily focused on the redundant Information Technology market, having developed a complete process of collection, assessment, secure data destruction and ultimately disposal via refurbishment/reuse or demanufacturing. In-built robust accountability and a firm policy of avoiding landfill as a waste disposal route has ensured Seek-It's 'on demand service' attracts an impressive, ever expanding client list.



Seek-It expect to process 200 tonnes of redundant IT equipment this year, with 81% of this able to be re-used

Summary of Key Achievements

- During 2003 Seek-It reused over 81% of all equipment collected, which equated to some 70 tonnes
- Developed commercial IT collection and processing operation with ability to offer high security and accountability to ensure no breach in the Data Protection Act
- Awarded lead role in pilot stage of a Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive project to re-use/recycle electronic wastes. The project has led to the creation of a further 10 new positions
- Working with people returning from long-term unemployment providing support to ensure the best chances of success
- Developed easy to use software systems with inbuilt training, support and guidance thereby enabling a non-skilled workforce to be fully capable of running the operation



KEY



ENVIRONMENTAL
BENEFITS



BUSINESS
BENEFITS



ECONOMIC
BENEFITS



SOCIAL
BENEFITS

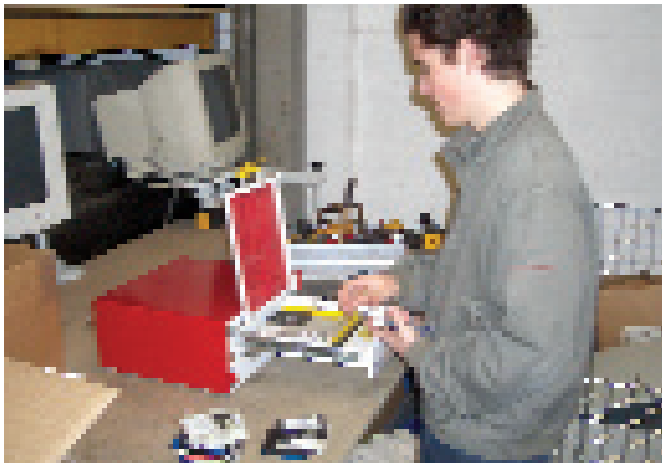
Sustainability Initiatives

All waste residuals from Seek-It's operations are handled responsibly, without employing disposal methods that contaminate the environment, such as landfill. Seek-It's belief is that 'best practice' recycling is reuse. It is constantly developing and adjusting its processing methods: achieving maximum reuse is one of its fundamental objectives. Its integrated approach of collection, assessment, repair, resale or demanufacture enables them to obtain a high reuse potential from the equipment. In 2004, the company's internal waste management/minimisation practices gained them ISO9001 and ISO14001 certification.

Contribution to a Sustainable Economy

Seek-It is committed to achieving a sustainable economy through maximising the recyclable value of the goods that it handles. During 2003, Seek-It reused over 81% of all equipment recovered, some 70 tonnes and intend to maintain similar recovery rates going forward. In 2004, tonnage of equipment processed is estimated to exceed 200 tonnes.

During its development of commercial IT collection and processing operation, it has developed the ability to offer high security and accountability to ensure no breach in the Data Protection Act, acquiring G-Cat accreditation. This service encourages organisations to dispose of their equipment through Seek-It, with the assurance that Seek-It is accountable and able to ensure no breach of the Data Protection Act. Seek-It has also set up online tracking of equipment, enabling organisations to track the disposal process to the point of 'end of life' certification.



Seek-It offer high security and accountability to ensure no breach of the Data Protection Act, enabling redundant hard drives to be re-used and recycled

Seek-It, having been recognised for its expertise and understanding of the waste electrical and electronic directive and equipment processing, has been awarded lead role in the pilot stage of a waste electrical and electronic directive based demanufacturing project. This first phase of the project sees Seek-It able to create a further 10 new positions, seven of which are intended for people from social disadvantaged backgrounds.

Seek-It's custom designed and made software is fundamental in opening up its operation to a wide audience. Its modular software provides an easy to use interface to manage all aspects of daily operations. Making heavy use of email and the Internet, the system is based on an integrated approach providing seamless information flow between accounts, clients, collections, assessments, statistics and stock. The company's work developing software packages tailored to the users needs means that other such units can be set up around the country providing meaningful sustainable work and training for people with limited experience. The software packages have been designed around the touch screen approach, which can provide tailored profiles for the user, giving them as much guidance and training as they require through the prompt screens and help notes.

Inherent in the software is the capability to support remote operations, affording future assessment centres the same level of operational support and provide unified data source to compile enhanced statistics. With the implementation of the WEEE directive in August 2005, the requirement for such assessment and demanufacturing units could see the creation of some 2,000 jobs in the UK.

Enhancing Environmental Quality

Equipment that cannot not be reused is demanufactured to its constituent components and then filtered into the appropriate stream to provide a new source of materials. Through the pilot WEEE demanufacturing project, Seek-It intends to investigate advanced sorting techniques that will enable the return of valuable plastics directly back to electrical/electronic manufacturers, closing the loop as opposed to traditional 'downward recycling'

processes. In order to obtain the maximum value from the materials collected it is important to ensure high quality sorting into waste streams. These then become not so much waste as assets, with the high costs of manual demanufacturing required to ensure strict segregation being recovered through the increased value of the recyclates. The recyclates are then sold on in many cases to provide new source materials.

Improving the Social Wellbeing of Stakeholders

From the outset, Seek-It was formulated to balance the concept of social enterprise with profit. Through its IT-Exchange programme, Seek-It is able to bring IT solutions to charities, voluntary organisations and those who would benefit from IT equipment on a not-for-profit basis. Systems that are provided to such organisations are of good quality with at least a three year operating life, ensuring that they are not just shifting the disposal problem elsewhere.

Seek-It is also involved with the Community Recycling Services, which brings together various Hampshire Community based recycling organisations to discuss opportunities for providing refurbished equipment and 'end of life' services for other community based organisations. This forum also provides them with the opportunity to share their expertise and best practice knowledge.

Seek-It has recently worked with Hampshire Natural Resource Initiative (HNRI) in providing a costed blueprint for a community style WEEE assessment centre, which was mentioned previously.

Seek-It actively works with those from social disadvantaged backgrounds and seeks to provide further employment opportunities in the future. Seek-It also offer opportunities for voluntary work and "New Deal" employment which has highlighted the range of problems that face people returning/entering the job market. Seek-It recognises the need for support, especially during the early period of the transitional change, in order to give them the best chance of success. To this end, the new project includes a full-time mentoring post. Seek-It also offers summer employment to "soon to be" students.

Future Initiatives

Seek-It is very positive about the benefits it can bring through the establishment of the WEEE pilot project and see this as an opportunity to further develop its skills in achieving maximum sustainability from redundant IT and other electrical equipment. The company hope to determine whether careful collection is the key to reuse and whether careful sorting produces a higher-grade recycle.

Company Contact

Ian Whiteland-Smith, Seek-It Ltd, Managing Director,
52A Northern Road, Cosham, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO6 3DP
T: 02392 376500 F: 02392 384488 E: enquiries@seek-it.co.uk

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