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## Entrepreneur shifts focus from creation of technology to its disposal

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When Dublin resident Chris Irion bought a new computer and cellular phone a year and a half ago, he discovered a technical problem not addressed in the products' user manuals: What should he do with his old equipment?

"I knew from an environmental standpoint I shouldn't throw them in the trash," Irion said. "I realized there are a lot of consumers who likely face the challenge of what to do with used, obsolete electronics."

The former Silicon Valley executive tapped his personal savings to build a company that would provide relief not only to the millions of consumers with outdated electronics stashed away in their closets and drawers, but also help charitable organizations and schools locally and nationwide.

Leaving the corporate world behind, Irion launched e-Cycle Inc., and focused on the more fulfilling business of recycling and refurbishing technology that would otherwise sit in landfills and leak hazardous chemicals into the ground.

His facility is located in Plain City, about three minutes from downtown Dublin.

The company recycles or refurbishes materials at a reduced cost, making the proper disposal of obsolete hardware more affordable for schools and small businesses.

The unique aspect of his business plan is that a percentage of the proceeds from e-Cycle, a for-profit S corporation, go to major charities and local school districts.

"I always wanted to start my own company, and I really wanted to feel like I made a difference," he said.

The company travels to schools to hold technology drives and to educate youngsters on the importance of recycling old equipment. When consumers and business owners drop off obsolete technology, they can choose the charity to which the proceeds should go.

Donors also could walk away with the money for which the phone or computer is likely to sell if refurbished.

More than 133,000 new personal computers are retired daily, and more than 100 million cell phones are purchased annually. Only about 10 percent of the old materials are recycled, Irion said. The rest sit in basements, closets and landfills for indefinite periods of time. The rapid growth of his company has been the most daunting challenge Irion has faced in his first year of operation, he said.

The company recently announced its plan to move the current 4,000-square foot operation into a new 12,000-square-foot building, and Irion said the challenge of keeping up with increasing demand has been a very welcome, but taxing, challenge.

"There is so much great new functionality to cell phones (and other mobile devices) that consumers are upgrading every two years instead of every five years. That's creating a glut, so to speak, of discarded consumer products," he said.

The company has fund-raising partnerships and strategic alliances with several national non-profit organizations, which he declined to name, and with school districts throughout Columbus and the Midwest.

"The difference between my company and competing companies, is I will basically charge companies 50

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percent less than what my competitors charge," he said.

His company also recycles and refurbishes personal digital assistants, printers and other electronics.

Irion is a Dublin native who earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Miami. After graduation, he spent the next 10 years working for some of the largest technology companies in Silicon Valley and Boston.

Companies can call (614) 873-5551 for more information or to schedule a pick-up, or equipment can be dropped off for recycling at 8055 Corporate Blvd., Plain City.