Used Equipment Offers Dual Green Benefit

Bill Whittemore

With a better understanding of used equipment options, hospitals can save up to 75 percent.

With an understanding of the sources, classification of rebuilding and types of vendors involved, professionals can find used equipment that functions like new.

Hospitals and surgical centers are not immune to the current economic condition, and as a result the purchasing of used equipment has become a more prominent option. These bargains not only preserve capital and lower overhead, but also allow for upgrading operating suites with modern equipment.

While finding a low price might be easy enough, ending up with a quality product that will continue to function at the high levels demanded in a modern surgical suite or surgery center is another matter altogether. Without some idea of what to expect, the used medical equipment market can prove to be a minefield of disappointments.

“Price is what prompted us to buy used equipment, and we have found it to be just as good as the new,” offers Nicole Lombard, the materials manager for The Surgery Center of the Woodlands (Texas). “We’ve purchased used beds, tourniquets, wire drivers, etc., and haven’t had any problems with the equipment or its service.”

By forgoing brand-new equipment for previously-owned but fully-refurbished products, many hospitals are securing quality equipment at 40 to 75 percent of its original cost.

A Feel For The Landscape

Currently, the U.S. is awash in extremely well-made, high-quality products that are no longer needed by the original purchaser, yet function flawlessly or can be refurbished to OEM specifications. These products enter the used medical equipment stream from various sources that include retiring practitioners or those combining offices, hospitals undergoing remodeling or closing, new equipment dealers wishing to liquidate some of their offerings, or original equipment manufacturers opting to discontinue a certain line of products.

It’s important to note that certain classifications indicate what type of work has been performed to improve the condition of a product over the status of “as is.”

For example:

- Reconditioned means the product already operates to OEM specifications. Only cosmetic work, such as cleaning, polishing and touch-up painting is required.
- Refurbished goes one step beyond in that new parts, while perhaps not OEM parts, get installed into the piece of equipment to ensure that it meets the original specifications.
- Remanufactured differs in that all worn parts get replaced with only new OEM parts.
- While such clarification proves extremely helpful, ultimately, the veracity of any claim rests with the reliability and reputation of the vendor.

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Seller Types

While used medical equipment sells for as much as 75 percent of the cost of new, the adage of “you get what you pay for” still applies. This consideration comes into play when selecting among the types of sellers that offer used medical equipment. Generally, original owners are individuals, such as a practicing doctor, who no longer want a given piece of equipment in the office.

However, there’s a difference between using E-bay, Craigs List or auctioneers who sell equipment “as is.” A used medical equipment specialist, however, can offer a large selection of equipment and some degree of refurbishing and remanufacturing. The experience of dealing with a used medical equipment specialist should mirror, if not supersede, that of the OEM.

Here are some criteria to examine before selecting a used medical equipment specialist:

- The vendor’s knowledge base of the medical specialty. As you know, each surgical discipline demands its own specialized set of equipment. In orthopedics, for example, an air-driven oscillating saw can’t substitute for a reciprocating saw. A reliable supplier shouldn’t stumble through these distinctions.
- The company that sells the used medical equipment should be knowledgeable in the equipment they offer. Finding the technical expertise to repair and refurbish to the correct OEM standards is in itself a major undertaking. Many people can fix or repair equipment, but where are they on the learning curve?
- Experience pays off—you don’t want to end up paying for a re-seller’s lack of knowledge.
- The used medical equipment specialist should be up-to-date on all product

recalls.
- Assurance should be provided that the re-seller has adhered to and incorporated all necessary upgrades relevant to the remanufactured unit.
- All required accessories that came with the original piece of equipment should be included, including, when applicable, a copy of the operations manual.
- The ability to peruse the used equipment specialist's selection via the internet and/or a print catalog is also a big plus.
- A full parts and labor warranty for no less than 90 days should be included on all the products sold.
- Access to an in-house, full service repair division. You'll like the fact that if there is something wrong, it can be sent back and get taken care of right away.

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