



Risky business? Sims Recycling Solutions “blancco” used electronics to wipe out business risk for clients

Sims Recycling Solutions harnesses the power of Blancco data erasure tools to create an innovative online asset management system that lets clients safely reuse or resell data-rich equipment.

On a daily basis, businesses struggle to secure data on computers and other electronic assets that have served their initial purpose. To simplify management of these assets, Sims Recycling Solutions created WebView, an online system fueled by Blancco (www.blancco.com) -- the world's most certified data erasure software. Through WebView, Blancco provides customers with proof and peace of mind that data and software licenses are properly secured by Sims Recycling Solutions' facilities or on-site services before asset reassignment.

With 37 sites around the world, Sims Recycling Solutions (www.simsrecycling.com) is a global leader in electrical and electronics recovery and recycling. The company is part of Sims Metal Management, the world's largest listed metals recycler with more than 230 operations, over 5,000 employees, and annual revenues of almost \$5 billion. Sims Recycling Solutions recycles all types of electrical, electronic and communications equipment, allowing businesses to unlock value in their surplus computer hardware, while also meeting sustainability objectives. In 2009 alone, Sims Recycling processed more than 660 million pounds of electronics and refurbished 1.5 million assets.

To help customers mitigate business risks associated with electronic asset recycling, Sims Recycling Solutions created Webview, a proprietary web-based information technology (IT) asset management system. Used throughout the world to secure information on PCs, servers, flash drives and other data-rich equipment, WebView provides customers with real-time information about recovered IT assets throughout every stage of the asset recovery process. A critical element in the WebView system is Blancco data erasure software, which provides disk wiping, harvesting of software licenses and auditable reports of disk erasure status.

“WebView is a business critical system for Sims Recycling Solutions that controls our facilities, logistics and the secure reuse of IT assets for our clients,” says Jon Godfrey, Product Director for Sims' Lifecycle Services proposition. “Blancco software is integral to WebView's functionality in that it tells us whether each asset is data safe and also captures a variety of information about those assets, without manual intervention and potential human error. With Blancco embedded into WebView, we can reduce business risk for our clients by providing an effective, auditable and secure asset management system.”

Secure data erasure services

For secure removal of all customer data from hardware slated for refurbishment or disposal, WebView relies on Blancco data erasure products, which employ software overwriting to remove information so that it cannot be recovered. Blancco's certified solutions not only conform to the highest standards and regulations,¹ but also exceed most legislative requirements. In addition, they can erase data from all types of hardware and will alert WebView if unable to erase the entire disk -- a key financial and risk management consideration for Sims Recycling Solutions.

"In designing WebView, we assessed a number of products in the data erasure market, but they didn't cope with all drive types and many would report full erasure when it wasn't accomplished, which is unacceptable in our business," Godfrey describes. "In the UK where WebView was developed, there are data laws and regulations which can mean a fine of up to \$7 million per event for leaking data that impacts customers – a potential catastrophe in our business."

Blancco products can erase hidden and locked areas such as host protected areas (HPAs), device configuration overlays (DCOs) and remapped sectors. The data erasure tool is easily deployed to target multiple networked PCs, works on a broad range of network hardware and functions in high-end server and storage area network (SAN) environments with disk types that include:

- Serial ATA
- SCSI
- Serial Attached SCSI (SAS)
- Fiber Channel
- Larger sector sizes

The peace of mind that Blancco tools provide is as important as the technical benefits, says Godfrey, both for Sims Recycling Solutions and its customers. If a disk cannot be fully wiped because of damage or other factors, Blancco tells WebView, which allows a customer to opt for full physical disk destruction.

"If for any reason an item is not data safe within the WebView business process, Blancco lets us know so that we do not sell or recycle that asset, which helps us reduce business risk for our clients, as well as our own operations," said Godfrey. "I can sleep at night knowing we have processed a couple of thousand PCs that have been 'blanccoed' – a term commonly used by our technicians to indicate an asset is fully erased and secure."

Detailed recording of IT asset data

As the Blancco data erasure tool wipes a disk, it continually reports asset information to customers through WebView, including:

- Erasure date
- Hard drive serial number
- Specifics about the disk
- Name of erasure technician
- Results/errors concerning the erasure process

Blancco also sends WebView a validation certificate if the overwriting procedure was successfully completed and provides an audit trail that ensures compliance with major government and industry standards throughout the world.

“WebView captures the hardware profile from Blancco, enabling accurate retirement of assets from a customer’s asset list,” Godfrey explains. “Because this is automated through WebView, customers can use the MAC address, hard drive serial number(s) or other data as a unique asset identifier that cannot be changed by user input error.”

Because Blancco tools are operating system independent and work at the bit level, they do not require password or domain access. This means that customer data is not compromised, as only WebView and Blancco access the asset data and the WebView operators do not see confidential information.

WebView provides clients with brand, business unit, site specific and even individual user reporting in a format to suit their reporting infrastructure, such as XML or SQL feeds. There is also an environmental element with reports, which provide tangible environmental measurements, such as re-use and recycling rates. All data captured is viewable online and is exportable.

Software license harvesting for compliant reallocation

In addition to transmitting hardware details to WebView, Blancco captures the software profile just before the drive is securely erased. This provides customers with data that proves software removal, which is essential because application or system software that remains on a drive when an asset changes hands – even internally -- may violate vendor site-licensing terms and carry heavy fines.

Also, Blancco’s harvesting of software profiles provides for fast internal reallocation of software and prevents the purchase of additional licenses. It empowers WebView to easily mirror pre-deletion software profiles for equipment that is scheduled for re-use internally.

“With Blancco, WebView can directly report the software status of a disk to our clients, allowing them to remove the device from their select agreement literally at the point where we are data wiping it,” Godfrey says. “Some of those businesses are taking assets off lease or off maintenance agreements, so our ability to capture and report this information quickly and efficiently is key.”

Powerful marketing message for a global tool

With the security and detail Blancco data erasure software provides, Sims Recycling Solutions is able to approach potential customers with a powerful message about implementing processes with WebView that protect sensitive business information, as well as brand, reputation and sustainability status. The asset management tracking system’s ability to automate this process is especially important, as it removes the potential for human error.

“Many organizations and even businesses in the IT asset recycling market rely on humans to manually erase a drive and put a sticker on it to indicate it’s safe, but this is problematic in that humans only execute such repetitive processes correctly around 98% of the time, at best,” says Godfrey. “When dealing with large volumes of sensitive data, this margin of error is extremely dangerous. If our process was only 98% successful, we could have leaked data from 13,000 PCs last year alone.”

WebView has been used in the UK for several years, but a recent global agreement that standardizes the system with Blancco is allowing Sims Recycling Solutions to roll out the tool throughout all facilities worldwide. Currently in use in Europe and Australasia, WebView is now in the early stages of deployment at the company’s 12 North American recycling facilities.

“Our sales staff have identified a huge need for a tool like WebView that supplies the information from proven data erasure software like Blancco,” says Eric Jones, of Sims Recycling Solutions in West Chicago, Ill. “Customers want to see exactly how our asset management process works, and with Blancco’s information in WebView, we can actually show them how assets are properly processed, as opposed to simply telling them. This will provide them with an extra level of confidence that their data is secure.”

When asked how they manage obsolete assets, many potential customers say they are donated and are vague about the details, according to Jones. This provides an opportunity to explain how sensitive information is in jeopardy with such a loosely defined process, opening the door to discuss WebView – and Blancco.

“Sales can now explain how WebView incorporates Blancco, which meets standards all over the world for securing data and complying with regulations, as well as providing auditable reports for compliance requirements,” Jones describes.

Easy operation supports on-site services

For technicians at Sims Recycling Solutions who work directly with the Blancco data erasure tool, the software is intuitive and easy to use, even in a complex environment. According to Godfrey, “companies have a huge diversity of platforms, yet our technicians are able to easily run Blancco servers to keep the erasure process moving.”

The Blancco software is so simple to use on a standalone basis that it supports a growing business effort for Sims Recycling Solutions’ on-site services. Having the capability for a technician to erase disks with minimal training is especially important in developing markets.

Strong partnership fuels business strategy

In addition to using Blancco data erasure software as a key element in WebView, Sims Recycling Solutions is a development partner with Blancco. The relationship fuels the company’s business strategy to have the most effective, auditable and secure asset management system in WebView.

“We are a partner that pushes technology rather than reacts to it, and Blancco responds extremely well to this focus by incorporating our suggestions,” Godfrey says. “If we are to stay ahead in our market, we need a data erasure partner that also stays ahead, and Blancco does this by keeping a long-term focus and continually improving and investing in its products. We deal with critical risk on a daily basis, and we can do so with confidence by using Blancco tools.”

In addition to Blancco’s core data erasure product used in factories, Sims Recycling Solutions also employs the company’s server, Sparc architecture and solid state products. This breadth of products is important because it allows WebView to easily support global recycling contracts that require data erasure of “more technical, niche hardware,” according to Godfrey.

Blancco’s team of technology specialists not only keep WebView on the cutting edge of data security, they also provide a fast and accurate response should issues arise, according to Godfrey. Rather than simply forwarding a user to a call center, Blancco will send a specialist for on-site support if the problem or development need necessitates a visit.

1. Blancco 's certificates and approvals include:

- NSM (Certified version: Blancco - Data Cleaner+ 4.5, Blancco - Data Cleaner 3.3r7)
- ABW - The Polish Internal Security Agency (Certified software: Blancco – Data Cleaner+ v4.2r1)
- DIPCOG - the Defence INFOSEC Product Co-Operation Group of the UK's Ministry (Certified version: Blancco - Data Cleaner 3.3r7)
- CESG (Certified verison: Blancco - Data Cleaner+ 4.8 HMG, Blancco - Data Cleaner 3.7r1)
- DCSSI (Central Information Systems Security Division under the authority of the French General Secretary for National Defence).
- RITEA - Refurbished (reuse) Information Technology Equipment Association
- USA DoD - USA Department of Defense
- NSTL - National Security Testing Lab
- NATO recommendation
- TÜV confirmation (version: Blancco - Data Cleaner+ 4.7)
- AIVD (version: Blancco - Data Cleaner+ 4.8)
- Swedish Armed Forces (version: Blancco - Pro 4.8)
- The Finnish Software Industry
- FinnSecurity
- The Association of Finnish Work
- The Finnish Junior Chamber of Commerce

Magnetic erasure standards:

- Air Force System Security Instructions 5020
- Bruce Schneier's algorithm
- BSI (German overwrite standard by Federal Office for Information Security/ Bundesamt für Sicherheit in der Informationstechnik)
- German Standard VSITR
- HMG Infosec Standard No: 5 (baseline) [Note! Certified versions: 4.8 HMG and 3.7r1]
- HMG Infosec Standard No: 5 (enhanced) [Note! Certified versions: 4.8 HMG and 3.7r1]
- Navy Staff Office Publication (NAVSO P-5239-26) for RLL
- NSA (Overwrite standard by National Security Agency)
- OPNAVINST 5239.1A
- Peter Gutmann's algorithm
- The National Computer Security Centre (NCSC-TG-025)
- U.S. Department of Defence Sanitizing (DOD 5220.22-M, DOD 5220.22-M ECE)
- US Army AR380-19
- NIST 800-88/ATA secure erase
- Extended NIST 800-88

Flash based erasure standards:

- NAVSO P-5239-26 (TOP SECRET) for SSD
- NAVSO P-5239-26 (SECRET or CONFIDENTIAL) for SSD
- US Department of Defense Sanitizing DOD 5220.22-M for SSD