Hardware Circularity Outlook 2027: Record AI Investment, Slower Equipment Replacement and Growing Competition for Retired Assets

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Executive assessment

The global technology industry enters 2027 with substantial investment in artificial intelligence infrastructure, rising component prices and weakening unit demand across parts of the personal computing market. These developments are creating uneven conditions for the hardware circularity industry, with opportunities in enterprise infrastructure recovery and component remarketing developing alongside pressures on the availability of used computers.

Corporate earnings research conducted by Compliance Standards indicates that the relationship between technology spending and equipment retirement is becoming less predictable. Higher investment does not necessarily produce more retired hardware, particularly when infrastructure operators retain existing systems to accommodate growing computing demand. Rising equipment prices also encourage corporate customers to extend replacement cycles, delaying the release of assets into secondary markets.

The competitive environment is changing at both ends of the recovery chain. Technology distributors are expanding into reverse logistics and repair, while metals producers are acquiring interests in businesses that collect and process electronic scrap. Between these two developments, independent IT asset disposition (ITAD) providers face growing

competition for access to corporate equipment.

Compliance Standards expects 2027 to offer substantial growth opportunities for selected recovery businesses without a corresponding acceleration across every segment of the industry. Commercial performance will depend increasingly on access to equipment, the ability to recover value from individual components and the contractual arrangements governing asset disposition.

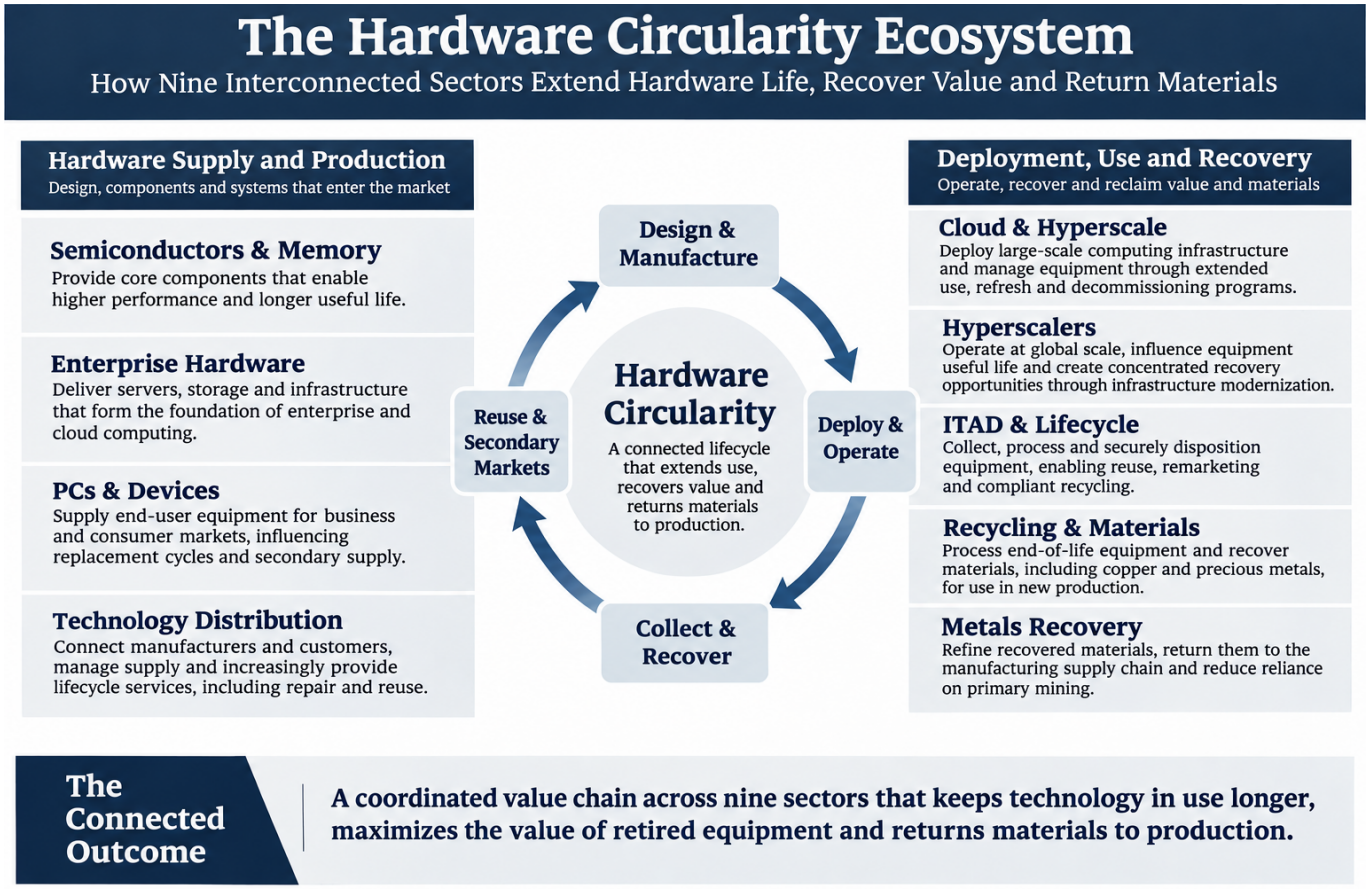

Figure 1. The Hardware Circularity Ecosystem
Source: Compliance Standards, 2026.

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