

Include a cable

Elsewhere, I saw technicians at long counters working on robotic vacuum cleaners. The units were plugged into outlets under the counter—they have to be charged before they can be evaluated—and hundreds, if not thousands, more were stacked nearby, on tall warehouse shelves. “The No. 1 issue with robot vacs is that people don’t know how to use them,” Adamson said. This is partly because the buyers tend to be older, but also because successfully making the necessary Wi-Fi connection can be frustrating even to people who do read instructions—an issue with other products as well. “A really good partner of ours does over fifty per cent of all the refurbishing of HP consumer printers in the U.S.,” Adamson said. “On all the newer printers, the only connection option is Wi-Fi, so when they refurb them they include a printer cable. Problem solved.”

Adamson told me that he used to be “an ardent hater” of companies that merely buy and sell returns. “I thought they just demonstrated the inefficiency

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