

Lowe's kicks off smart energy home push

By [Katie Fehrenbacher](#)

Jan. 5, 2012, 6:00am PT



Following on the heels of [Best Buy making](#) a modest bet on home energy gear, big box retailer Lowe's announced on Thursday that it will start selling smart energy home gadgets from startup AlertMe. The partnership is also U.K.-based AlertMe's first move into the U.S.

AlertMe says Lowe's will use its cloud-based home management system as the backbone for a new service called Iris, which will enable Lowe's customers to digitally manage their

home appliances and devices via a computer or mobile app. Iris will be launched in the second quarter of 2012 in stores and online, according to AlertMe.

The partnership isn't Lowe's first, and the retailer already sells some home energy devices like the [PowerCost Monitor](#), which is made by Canadian company Blue Line Innovations and which clips onto household electrical meters and beams data into a home dashboard via Wi-Fi.

These types of smart home services are still relatively new to consumers, but more and more vendors are offering them, including telcos like Verizon and AT&T, cable companies like Comcast, and startups like Nest with its learning thermostat. Digital home tools can help home owners remotely turn off and on heating and cooling systems, lock and unlock doors, monitor the home via video security cameras, and use a mobile app as a digital remote.

Other startups are focused on working with utilities as a distribution channel for energy-specific devices and services, and some of those companies include Opower, Tendril, and Control4.

The market for all these types of devices is pretty small right now. Microsoft, Google and Cisco all moved out of the home energy management market after a couple years of launching tools and seeing little take up.

AlertMe is backed by Good Energies, Index Ventures, SET Venture Partners, VantagePoint Capital Partners and British Gas.