Smart Grid in Your Home?

Smartenit plug-in device delivers a home's energy info to ZigBee or Insteon home area networks.

Blue Line Innovations PowerCost Monitor sensor to Smartenit ZBPCM plug-in device to home area network display.

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Say you want to manage the electricity usage in your home to save energy and money. Should you wait for your local utility to roll out "smart grid" programs that might allow you to do that—or do you invest in a potentially expensive energy management/home control system?

Affordable alternatives are becoming available. Smartenit, formerly known as SimpleHomeNet, has introduced a ZBPCM device that can take the energy usage info from an electrical meter and populate it to a wireless ZigBee-based or Insteon home area network. The ZBPCM plugs into an electrical outlet and receives a wireless signal from a Blue Line Innovations' low-cost PowerCost Monitor sensor, which attaches to the meter to read the energy usage. The ZBPCM then passes that signal on to a ZigBee-based radio frequency (RF) mesh network or Insteon's dual RF/powerline network.

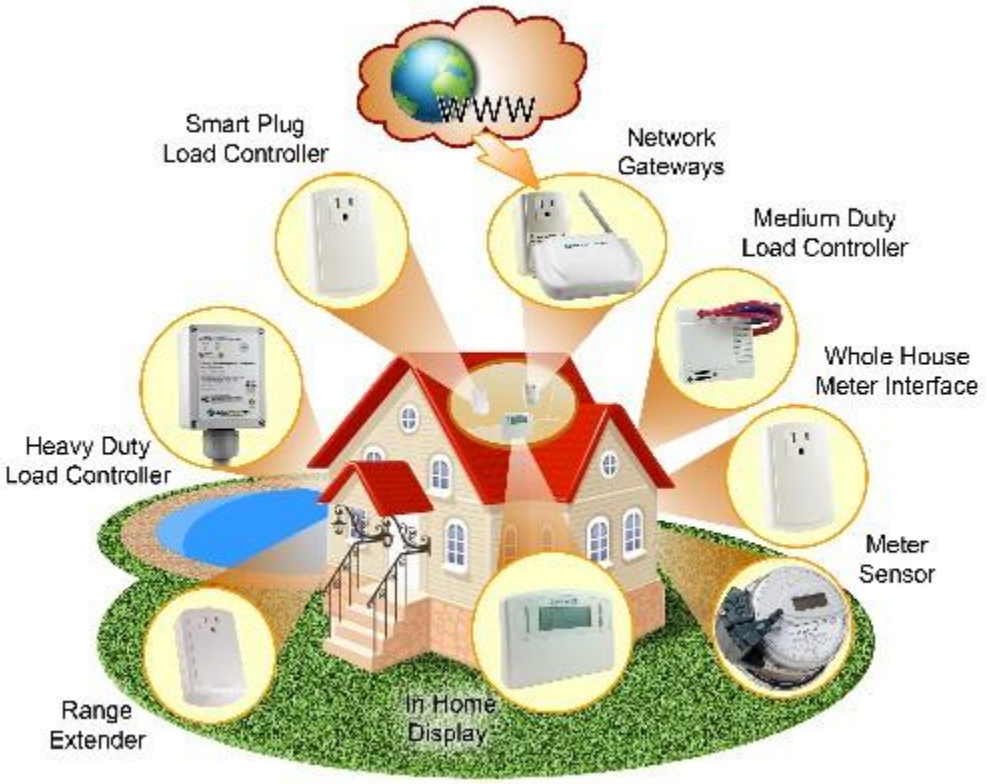
The companies call getting real time energy information from an electric meter into a home control network "the missing piece of the energy management puzzle." Other, typically more expensive options include energy monitoring systems that attach to a home's circuit panel to read total or circuit-based energy usage.

"Having energy consumption information available is only the first part of the equation. A more important aspect is to have that information automatically generate actions for more impact to consumers, their bottom line and the environment," says Al Choperena, president of Smartenit.

With energy info on their networks, consumers can customize parameters to allow for automated responses that will save energy. Smartenit also manufactures ZigBee plugs and load controllers that report energy usage to provide deeper layers of energy management capability.

This data from the meter or smart plugs is then displayed over dashboards for the customer's viewing. Armed with all this information, consumers can then set very specific parameters as to when energy adjustments are to be automatically executed, truly smartening their environment. They can track, monitor and control their usage from devices such as smartphones, tablets and computers.

"This really puts the data to work and drives comfort and savings for the homeowner," says Peter Porteous, CEO of Blue Line Innovations.



We're likely to see more and more products that can take the energy information from electrical meters and put it to use in home area networks—whether they consist of expensive home control systems or more affordable options like Insteon.