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MICROSOFT HOHM AND POWERCOST MONITOR TEAM UP!

By Chris

Microsoft has been making some moves in the residential energy monitoring space since the time we first covered them in our post, “Energy Monitoring and the Big Three: Google, Microsoft, Apple” back in January 2010. When they first released Microsoft Hohm, I wasn’t that impressed.

It basically took in a whole bunch of data on your home and output some generic recommendations. But since then they have made some drastic improvements (and their idea is eerily close to the vision of Mapawatt we have been working on for over a year now....but I digress). One of their partnerships we covered in April was with Ford on developing tools for any plug-in cars that Ford releases.

The key to getting users engaged in energy monitoring is having an automatic feed into energy monitoring software.

To do this, you need a smart meter or a home energy monitoring device. Google Powermeter achieved this with their partnership with TED 5000, and smart meter companies and utilities are working with third party vendors to achieve much the same thing.

One device that we reviewed at Mapawatt back in November of 2009 is the Blue Line Innovations PowerCost monitor (also brand-labelled by Black and Decker for their Power Monitor). In that post, I pointed out one of the shortcomings of the PowerCost monitor in which I said:

But the biggest flaw I see with the B & D Power Monitor (*a.k.a. PowerCost monitor*) is that it doesn’t have any software that can do detailed analysis on the data, or serve it up to other sites like Google’s PowerMeter. This is probably the main reason it is \$100 cheaper than the TED 5000. But while this is a flaw for me, some people may prefer the fact that it is simple to use and doesn’t require software.

It seems that this all changed today when the CEO of Blue Line Innovations, Peter Porteous announced their relationship with Microsoft Hohm (see the announcement on Microsoft Hohm’s blog). From Peter’s press release:

With the Blue Line technology integrated into Hohm, consumers see and analyze their home’s real time and trended electricity consumption via their home computer and mobile device.

Blue Line Innovations has been in the real time energy reporting space since 2003. Today’s announcement and our collaboration with Microsoft® Hohm™ take our company to a new level. The announcement validates our patented technology, confirms the market potential and will open consumer’s eyes to this joint solution.

While over 130,000 North American households are using our PowerCost Monitor, software interface and a broad consumer tool kit of technologies is not a core competency of Blue Line. Our expertise is around simplifying the array of electricity meters, utilities and rate structures to provide a simple, universal, safe method to access that real time electricity data – the PowerCost Monitor. But our customers have been asking for more functionality and deeper, richer applications of the technology. This is precisely the core competency of Microsoft and the solution they have developed with Microsoft® Hohm™.

The release goes on to say:

The new Blue Line Innovations PowerCost Monitor™ WiFi Edition includes the optical sensor for acquiring the data, wireless in home monitor and the WiFi Gateway preconfigured with Microsoft® Hohm. It is available for sale today. MSRP is \$249.

And

The PowerCost Monitor™ WiFi Gateway can also be purchased separately as an upgrade accessory for families with a Blue Line Innovations PowerCost Monitor™ or Black & Decker® Power Monitor™. MSRP is \$159 for the Gateway only. Note a home wireless network solution is required.

It's interesting to see that the pricing on the PowerCost Monitor is right around the TED 5000 pricing. There are three big differences in these two products:

1. PowerCost monitor reads your meter with an optical eye. TED 5000 uses Current Transformers (CTs) installed into your breaker panel.
2. PowerCost monitor communicates with the base station through a wireless network. TED 5000 communicates through your home's electrical wiring.
3. PowerCost monitor has a relationship with Microsoft Hohm. TED 5000 has a relationship with Google Powermeter

The big question is who is Mapawatt going to have a relationship with?

It's an exciting time in the home energy monitoring space and I look forward to seeing what innovations we have in store for us. More to come!