

# MeterGenius keeps customers engaged with use data



Website/mobile app wins praise from energy retailer

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

MeterGenius is set to pilot its website and mobile app with a utility and a retail energy supplier starting in April, MeterGenius President Ty Benefiel told us this week, declining to name the pilot partners. The products let users with smart meters track and analyze their previous day's power use to the quarter hour.

The firm last year ran a six-month pilot of its power-tracking and analysis system with 3,000 Houston, Texas, customers of energy retailer Infinite Energy, Matt Houchens, the retailer's digital marketing manager told us. Gainesville, Fla.-based Infinite Energy sends monthly emails with energy-use reports to customers but the MeterGenius software let customers slice and dice energy-use data many ways, including comparing use to their neighbors', he added.

Houchens believes the pilot improved customer retention and made recruiting new customers easier.

The app and website provide customer-specific suggestions on cutting power use. One suggestion might be to turn down the heat by two degrees one hour earlier in the evening. The app can be programmed to issue a reminder at the right time, Benefiel said.

The software can be linked to a rewards program, too.

Retail power suppliers pay MeterGenius to give customers access to their information via the website and the app which are branded with the retailer's name. "They'll never know who MeterGenius is," said Benefiel. He formed the firm in 2013 with three other graduate students while he was working to earn an MBA at Northwestern University.

"We were all interested in launching a startup, but as we investigated the market, we found that customers weren't willing to pay for a solution for energy efficiency because engagement with electricity was just too low," he explained.

"We had to figure out another way to get a product to consumers that created value for another entity."

MeterGenius differentiates itself from firms such as OPower, which offers utilities energy-reporting and energy-alert software in addition to other software, by offering customers continuous information on power use, Benefiel said. "OPower takes advantage of the fact people don't think about electricity by telling you what your neighbors are doing.

"We deliver persistent-engagement change because customers continue to see results. They'll see results at the beginning with [apps from other firms], but then they decline significantly over time because customers aren't engaged anymore."

MeterGenius last year won a \$50,000 grant from St Louis nonprofit Arch Grants with the requirement MeterGenius move to St Louis for a year, he added. With the move, the firm gained access to funding, co-working space, legal and marketing services, website hosting and mentoring, he added.

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