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A smart power outlet goes industrial



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PicoWatt: remote control for plug loads via Wi-Fi.

(Credit: Tenrehte)

The average consumer isn't likely to spend much effort managing home energy. Big power users in businesses, on the other hand, will go out of their way cut down on waste.

Start-up company **Tenrehte** [\[http://www.tenrehte.com/\]](http://www.tenrehte.com/), based near Rochester, New York, **launched its PicoWatt smart outlet at CES** [\[http://ces.cnet.com/8301-31045_1-10429865-269.html\]](http://ces.cnet.com/8301-31045_1-10429865-269.html) two years ago, aiming to appeal to green-

mind consumers. The idea is that a sub-\$100 Wi-Fi-enabled smart outlet would transmit energy data to an online app which would let consumers save money by scheduling things to run at off-peak times.

Now two years later, Tenrehte has changed its focus to industrial and commercial customers that want to remotely control power-hungry equipment, according to founder and CEO Jennifer Indovina.

The company raised \$140,000 in angel seed funding three months ago and is expecting to close a \$2 million series A round by next month, she said. With the money, Tenrehte (which is Ethernet spelled backwards) plans to start making thousands of its PicoWatt smart outlets for business customers.

There are already a number smart outlets or **simple switches to cut vampire power** [http://www.cnet.com/8301-11128_3-57334985-54/a-dead-easy-way-to-kill-vampire-power/], but Tenrehte is making a relatively high-end item that it hopes will be a platform for connected appliances and entertainment gear.

"It is literally putting a PC level of intelligence at the outlet--it's not just a cheap switch," Indovina said. "We have visions for PicoWatt to play well with other connected home technologies so we don't want to have to redesign the hardware platform."

The gadget, which runs on an ARM-based processor, costs about \$300, and is being tested. A school, for example, is using the smart outlet to turn off smart boards in classrooms, white boards that can capture and store whatever's written on them. Now facility managers can remotely turn off the PC and projector in an ordered sequence, saving money on energy and preventing equipment problems caused by improper shut-down.

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The smart outlet connects to a company network and plugged-in devices, such as air conditioners or factory equipment, can be scheduled or remotely operated from a Web site.

At **CES** [<http://ces.cnet.com/>] this year, networking everyday objects in the home--appliances, thermostats, and entertainment centers--is again one of the themes. This smart home gear should make those devices easier to control and save energy by shutting gear off when it's not needed.

But pitching smart outlets as "green" to consumers is a tough sell, Indovina said. "I just

don't think a consumer customer cares about energy data. I think they want (the system) to be intelligent enough to make smart decisions," she said.