

# Missing PowerMeter & Hohm? Here are 12 other home energy tool options

By [Katie Fehrenbacher](#) Jul. 5, 2011, 12:00am PT [15 Comments](#)

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Internet giants Google and Microsoft have officially given their web-based energy management tools the Donald Trump (as in, “You’re Fired!”), and last week, announced they would be closing them down in the near future. I’ve already dug into a few reasons why I think [Google’s PowerMeter tool](#) and [Microsoft’s Hohm app](#) didn’t make the cut.

But there are still over a dozen tools out there trying to tackle this difficult market, from direct-to-consumer gadgets to more high-end services bundled with security, broadband, and solar systems. Will the startups, entrepreneurs, tech firms and investors behind these energy services succeed in a market that already has a good deal of collateral damage? Well, many more will struggle, but there could be a few breakout hits out there if they position themselves in the right way. Here are a dozen companies still vying for this market:

## Home automation, security, broadband partners

**Control4.** Control4, founded in 2003 to provide home automation services, [moved into the energy management space in summer 2009](#). In the energy space, the company sells wireless devices and services to utilities for home energy management, and counts customers like Nevada utility NV Energy. Utilities can use Control4’s tools to do residential demand response, which is basically asking customers to turn down their energy in various ways when the utility wants to more tightly manage the grid’s power use. Control4 has raised close to \$75 million in funding from Frazier Technology Ventures’ Partner, vSpring Capitals, and Thomas Weisel Venture Partners.



**iControl.** iControl is the company behind Comcast’s new home security and energy management service, and [has raised](#) over \$100 million from investors including Comcast Ventures (the VC arm of Comcast), Cisco, Intel’s VC arm Intel Capital, Kleiner Perkins’ iFund, and the parent company of security firm ADT. iControl says its latest round of \$50 million will help the company expand its energy-based software and services, which enable home owners and utilities to be able to remotely manage lights, connected thermostats and smart appliances.

**4Home.** [In December, telco gear giant Motorola](#) announced it was buying home automation and energy monitoring startup [4Home](#) via its communications subsidiary Motorola Mobility. 4Home’s software enables home owners to access information — from digital media to energy info, home security and health data — across devices, and remotely. [Verizon is using the 4Home service](#) for its first trial of home automation and energy management.

**Xanboo.** [AT&T bought](#) home automation and energy player Xanboo in December. [Xanboo](#) is a decade-old firm that was one of the original home automation players and enables home owners to monitor security, energy consumption, and digital media across devices.

**EcoFactor.** EcoFactor sells a service to utilities and broadband service providers (and other channel partners) that automates turning down a connected thermostat. The company shaves off energy use without the customer feeling the difference and provides a lower bill for the customer. EcoFactor says it has reached 17 percent energy savings in its trials.



**Utility-focused energy services**

**Tendril.** Tendril is the poster child for a company that has aggressively focused on reaching the home energy management market via utilities. The company sells software and devices that monitor and manage the home energy consumption of consumers, and [recently scored a deal](#) with (and an investment from) energy gear provider Siemens. Tendril has raised at least \$73 million from investors including VantagePoint Venture Partners, Good Energies, and RRE Ventures.

**OPower.** OPower isn’t yet really in the home energy gadget or service space. Instead, it uses its software to help utilities send aggregated, detailed bills. But OPower is [considering adding an energy gadget to its portfolio](#), the company told us. That move could put it squarely in competition with other utility-focused home energy management players like Tendril.

**Silver Spring Network's home energy tool.** Smart grid network player Silver Spring Networks bought Greenbox a few years ago to be able to offer its utility customers home energy tools. So far, its [energy savings in trials have been impressive](#).

### Direct-to-consumer energy tools (some of these work with utilities, too)



**PowerCost Monitor.** Canadian [Blue Line Innovations](#) has started selling a \$99 energy management device called the PowerCost Monitor at big box retailer Fry's Electronics. That's one of the lowest-cost home energy management devices we've seen yet that's widely available. The PowerCost Monitor comes in two parts: a sensor and radio device which fits onto any electricity meter, and a display, which picks up the wireless signal of the home's electricity data emitted by the sensor/radio. Blue Line Innovations was founded back in 2003, and already has over 100,000 PowerCost Monitors in the field today, mostly through utility installations. But the company told me that it has been shifting its primary focus to the consumer.

**WattVision.** [Wattvision](#) is a two-year-old [Y-Combinator](#)-born company that sells a bare-bones, low-cost energy management tool that it says is a snap to install on your meter and can be monitored via the web. It costs about \$250 on its website, which is higher than I expected when I interviewed the company a couple of years ago. When Google shut its PowerMeter tool down, WattVision offered a \$50-off coupon for the coupon code: "bypowermeter".

**TED, The Energy Detective.** The TED device is made by Energy Inc, which was founded back in 2001, before energy management was a hot topic anywhere. Energy Inc. President and CEO Dolph Rodenberg [told me in an interview](#) that about 40 percent of its sales come from utilities — though declined to name its utility customers — while the majority of its sales come from the direct-to-consumer market. TED was also the first company to work with PowerMeter. Energy Inc also has backing by 3M.

**AlertMe.** AlertMe is a startup based in the U.K. that makes a home automation, security and energy management service. I've played with the company's kit, and it has a nice design and is pretty easy to set up. AlertMe is backed by Index Ventures, Good Energies, VantagePoint Venture Partners, SET Venture Partners, and British Gas.

*Images courtesy of Blue Line, Silver Spring Networks, GigaOM Events, and EcoFactor.*