



GE Signs Smart-Grid Development Pact with Tendril

Dow Jones Venturewire Clean Technology Insight

By Samuel Rubinfeld

July 9, 2009

GE Consumer & Industrial said Wednesday that it inked a joint development agreement with Tendril Networks Inc. to create technology that would bring GE's appliances closer to the smart grid.

Tendril Chief Executive Adrian Tuck, speaking in an interview with Clean Technology Insight, wouldn't reveal the terms of the agreement. "Both [companies are] contributing time, engineers and resources to the project," he said. He did say, however, that the deal didn't change Tendril's financial makeup.

The Boulder, Colo.-based company has created a residential energy ecosystem that allows home consumers to see how much power they use in real-time, giving them the ability to easily cut energy costs. The consumer can program their appliances to turn on and off automatically using a smart-phone, or a special screen in the home installed by Tendril at no cost, Tuck said. The company has also created technology linking that real-time data to public utilities, allowing them to implement time-of-use tiered pricing schemes to compensate for times of higher energy demand.

Tuck said he's currently working with 12 public utilities mostly concentrated in California, Texas and the northeast, though he wouldn't identify them. The goal of the agreement with GE, he said, is for both companies to be the conduit between the consumer and the public utilities, so everyone involved can conserve energy and save money.

"GE is building new appliances that are grid aware. That means they know how clean the energy is and how much power is available on the grid," Tuck said. "[They've] done some amazing control algorithms that are largely invisible to the consumer, that allow them to save money."

For example, a smart-grid-enabled GE refrigerator would automatically stop making ice during a hot summer day so more energy could be used elsewhere as the demand spikes, and when that spike ebbs, the refrigerator would begin making ice again, he explained.

"A seamless connection between GE's demand-response appliances and the smart grid will deliver real value to consumers," said Kevin Nolan, vice president of technology for GE Consumer & Industrial, in a statement. "Through our collaboration with Tendril, consumers will have unprecedented access to information that will enable them to become more educated about their energy use and how to reduce it - without interrupting their lifestyles."

A national smart grid is about five years away, Tuck said, but he emphasized that now is the time to start innovating to prepare. "Smart grid is going to be as big as the Internet revolution and we're the first [company] with the truly open system that anyone can build applications for our product," Tuck said.

Clean Technology Insight reported in June that Tendril closed a \$30 million Series C round of funding with VantagePoint Venture Partners taking a 25% stake in the company. Other investors in the company have included Good Energies, RRE Ventures, Vista Ventures, Applan Ventures and Access Venture Partners.

GE Consumer & Industrial is a unit of General Electric Co., based in Fairfield, Conn.