

**BUSINESS OWNERS REALIZING
TRUE ENERGY SAVINGS THROUGH**

SMART GADGETS

By Alan Lamme

Like in many areas of business, new developments in technology have recently been helping energy consumers like never before. More pointedly, although "energy management devices" have been on the rise in recent years, they have just recently started to gain some serious traction on a broader-scale basis. There's no doubt that there have been a lot of new "smart products" designed to reduce energy consumption and to increase the bottom line for business owners that have recently been offered to the marketplace. However, wading through all of them and their features, as well as knowing how to best integrate one into your business (or home), can be a bit overwhelming. Therefore, here's a few features that business owners should consider employing in 2019:

BUSINESS OWNERS GET TECH-SAVVY TO INCREASE BOTTOM LINE

By upgrading and integrating a business with smart capabilities, these gadgets allow HVAC, lighting, water and security systems to use energy more efficiently. Small investments can typically save business very notice-

able money at the end of each month, plus the newest batch of gadgets on the market make life easier for business owners.

It sounds basic, but interestingly enough, the use of "smart thermostats" is just now starting to gain some traction in the marketplace for business. Electricity expenses for heating and cooling purposes are typically one of the most significant utility expenses for businesses, so if business owners install only one new gadget this year, it should be a smart thermostat. This particular device takes energy efficiency to a new level, preventing business owners from ever forgetting to adjust the temperatures in their locations. Smart thermostats include brands like Nest, Hive and Ecobee, which can learn a business's habits and adjust the thermostat accordingly. Some Texas Retail Electricity Providers (REPs) even offer electricity plans that include a smart thermostat to help their customers save on their energy usage.

Why is the heat or air-conditioning on in your location when you or your employees are not in it? Smart thermostats take programmable thermostats to the next level by learning how and when your business uses the most and

least heating and air-conditioning. Smart thermostats can also be adjusted remotely from an app on a smartphone if adjustments need to be made on the fly. These thermostats adjust automatically, thus providing smart energy savings all year long.

AMAZON ECHO AND OTHER VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

At the heart of most smart-equipped businesses is a hub, and the Amazon Echo is undoubtedly a favorite choice among business owners and regular consumers. The Amazon Echo (along with the Amazon Dot) is the personal/virtual assistant that instantly becomes a part of your business. It's a voice-activated speaker, and so much more. Connect the Amazon Echo to a number of supported smart gadgets and control the thermostat or lighting systems with the power of your voice. Echo is the home of Alexa, the imaginary virtual assistant who's always there.

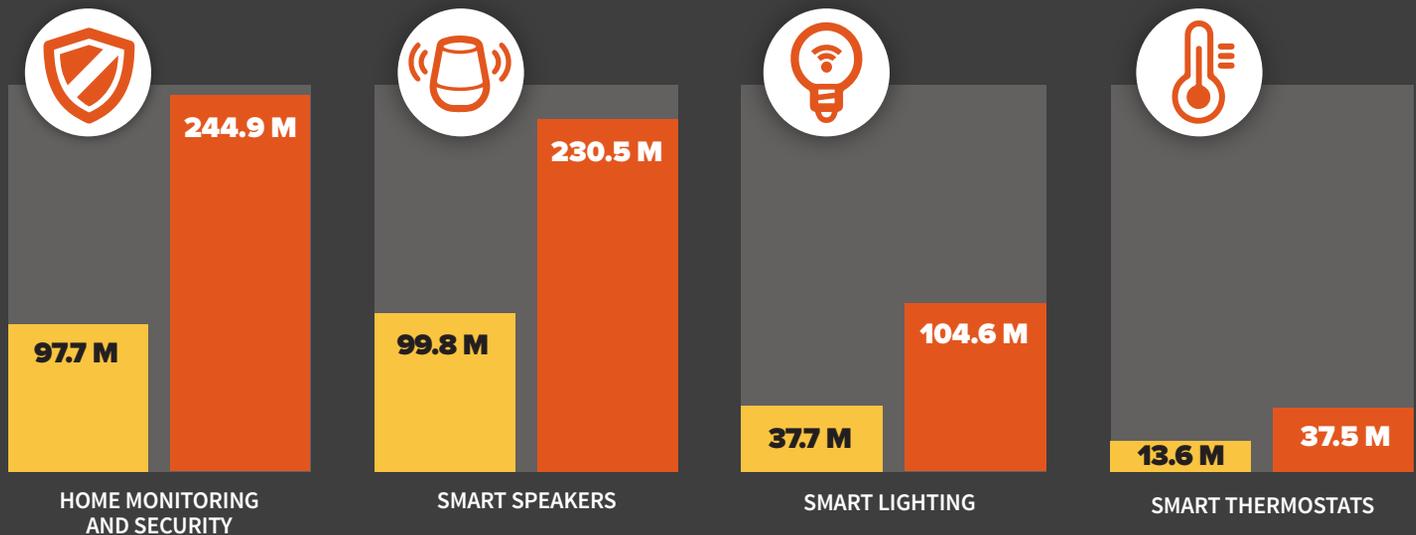
CONTROL WATER USAGE WITH RACHIO SPRINKLER CONTROLLER

While electricity is a large business expenditure, another large one is water

SMART TECHNOLOGY POISED FOR GROWTH

Forecast of worldwide smart home device shipments, by category (in million units)

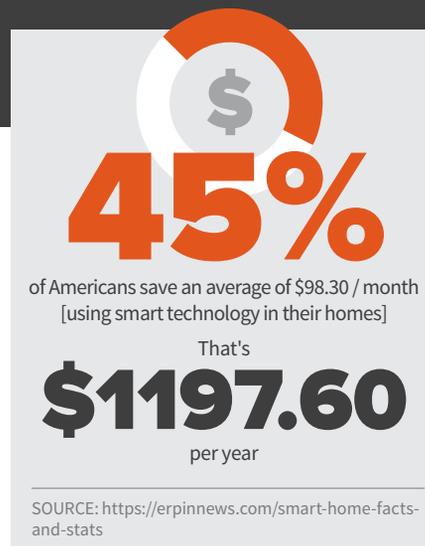
2018
2022



usage. For many businesses, finding ways to mitigate water expenses can be challenging, however, management of one segment of a water bill can be as easy as controlling the sprinkler system for your business. This is particularly important for restaurants, hotels and other businesses that have significant landscaping investments, which can consume large amounts of water. The Rachio Sprinkler Controller connects with local forecasts, considers plant and soil types and remembers what type of sun exposure is most impactful to the health of grass, flowers and plants. All of these features create a custom-watering schedule that is optimized to meet the needs of any type of landscaping, which saves water and money and works with Amazon Alexa or other virtual assistants.

SMART-LIGHTING VIA LED BULBS REALIZE BIG ENERGY SAVINGS

Other than heating and air-conditioning, one of the largest energy consumers of a business are the lights. However, in recent years there have been huge advancements made in Light Emitting Diode (LED) bulbs. In particular, Sengled LED bulbs are actually high-tech appliances disguised as LED light bulbs. They offer LED



bulbs with stereo systems installed (for public restrooms), LED bulbs with security cameras, an LED light with a built-in Wi-Fi repeater and many more. Sengled bulbs can be controlled from an app on a smartphone, which also measures a business's energy savings from these appliances. The combined systems in the Sengled line serve to simplify a smart-equipped business experience and can realize notable energy savings, while also providing other features that customers will enjoy.

SMART PLUGS FOR OUTLETS AROUND THE BUSINESS LOCATION

One of the most recent developments to hit the marketplace for

SOURCE: <https://www.statista.com/chart/15736/smart-home-market-forecast/>

businesses and general consumers, which is just now starting to be widely utilized, is the introduction of the "smart plug." One smart plug that has gained quite a bit of popularity due to its ease of use and solid reliability is the "Wemo Smart Plug." Wemo works with a business's Wi-Fi router and any Apple device. These outlet adapters allow business owners to turn any appliance on and off from any distance from any internet-enabled device. The uses of these devices are incredibly far-reaching and are much more than just turning off the lights from a remote location. They can be used for scheduling different types of machinery to begin production of various products, or management of anything that can be plugged into a wall outlet.

RETAIL ELECTRICITY PROVIDERS OFFERING ENERGY APP'S

With all this new energy-management technology being offered to business owners and energy consumers in general, there are several REPs who have jumped on the technology bandwagon and are now equipping electricity customers with smart meter apps. These apps are designed to closely monitor power usage and provide helpful information about how

and where to save money on energy. In fact, many of the apps will show where your business is using too much power along with when it's happening, giving a clear road map toward energy savings.

MICROBOT PUSH FOR NON-WIFI/NON-CONNECTED APPLIANCES

Although for the last couple of years, appliance manufacturers have started offering appliances that are already equipped with technology to connect to the internet, there are plenty of businesses and consumers with older appliances that are non-connected. In order to upgrade an older appliance to become "connected," it is as simple as installing a "MicroBot Push." This automatic button-pusher turns conventional appliances into smart appliances. Attach the MicroBot Push to any appliance with a rocker switch, push button, toggle switch or any other tactile switch object, and it will press the button remotely. This will virtually turn all old appliances into smart devices and will allow business owners to utilize energy-management technology to their advantage without having to spend a bundle on new appliances.

TECH-SAVVY BUSINESS "AIR QUALITY" MONITOR

Doctors' offices, clinics, hospitals and even hospitality industry businesses have a huge need to monitor air quality in their respective locations. Interestingly enough, there is a relatively new (and affordable) technology that does this as well, known as Foobot, which is energy saving as well. Foobot monitors the quality of the air in businesses that have a high need for quality, clean air. It checks for toxic chemicals, particulate matter, humidity and CO₂. The Foobot's bright LED lights, as well as management apps, will alert business owners when any substance in the air reaches critically high levels so that it can be managed.

In summary, in the new world of technology where it seems that everything is starting to become "connected"

to the web and smart devices via automation systems, most business owners will be amazed at how much they can impact a business in a positive way. After all, their goal is to make life easier, save noticeable money and allow owners to access their business in ways that wouldn't have been possible even just a few short years ago. **N**

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