

Smaller Box, Big Savings

Family Dollar reduces energy use by 22%, saving \$20 million annually

By Marianne Wilson

Smaller-box retailers that still question the value of energy management should consider this: Family Dollar has reduced its energy consumption by an average of 22% per store since implementing an Internet-based energy management system.

The fast-growing discounter currently operates more than 6,800 Surveyor systems from Venstar, Chatsworth, Calif., in 44 stores and will install the systems in an additional 300 stores in fiscal 2011. The solution allows the chain to remotely monitor, control and manage its heating, air-conditioning and lighting/electrical systems. It also provides detailed reporting along with real-time live views into stores' energy usage that help Family Dollar be proactive in managing its stores.

"Surveyor gives us unprecedented visibility into our stores, providing business intelligence about our energy usage," said Marilyn M. Morse, VP facilities management, Family Dollar Stores, Matthews, N.C.

On average, Family Dollar stores range from 7,500 sq. ft. to 9,500 sq. ft. and are mostly operated in leased facilities. Lighting is divided into four zones: work, sales, sign and site. Most locations have total peak loads of 20 kW to 60 kW.

Morse and her team evaluated about 12 different energy management systems before selecting Venstar's Surveyor. It came out on top in all the categories in which the systems were rated, including hardware, software, customer service, ease of use, technical support and company financials. Most important to Morse: Surveyor was designed specifically for small-box retailers like Family Dollar. Another key selling point was that the system could easily be customized to meet the chain's specific needs.

Most of all, Morse was confident that Surveyor could help Family Dollar meet its goal of providing a comfortable environment for its customers and team members.

Using Surveyor and the Internet via her desktop computer, one Family Dollar project manager — Erin

DeBerardinis — manages and controls the energy use for the entire chain. She can track usage by store, region, types of stores or virtually any other parameter (she can also manage outdoor lighting at the locations where it applies).

Because of the system's reporting capabilities, DeBerardinis knows when and where anomalies in energy use occur and is able to respond immediately and arrange repairs or replacements of malfunctioning HVAC units or lighting equipment. And while the system has automated scheduling features, she is also able to make changes on the fly as needed.



Family Dollar VP facilities management Marilyn M. Morse said that the chain has reduced its energy usage by 22% with the implementation of an energy management system.

Surveyor allows designated executives and divisional maintenance managers at Family Dollar to know the energy usage at their stores by sending them daily e-mail reports. Each week, Family Dollar's five divisional store operations VPs also receive reports on energy consumption.

The system's exception reporting also alerts the executives to stores that are unusually warm or cold. If needed, the divisional maintenance managers can proactively arrange repairs for the broken or malfunctioning HVAC equipment. Surveyor also gives Family Dollar's security team a heads up if lights are unexpectedly turned on, so they can check out the situation.

Cost Savings: Using Surveyor, Family Dollar has reduced its energy usage by an average of 22% per store within the first year of usage, saving \$20 million annually. The chain realized a return on its investment in 18 months.

The system has also helped the chain become greener. The resulting energy savings has resulted in an annual CO2 reduction that is equivalent to taking more than 27,000 cars off the road.

"It's not just about the cost savings," Morse said. "Being a green company is very important to us. We want to make informed energy decisions that have a positive environmental impact."

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