

# Vendor Profile



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## Taking Control of Energy Use

Reducing energy use remains a critical priority for retailers, adding to their bottom line and helping the environment. Steve Dushane, president and CEO of thermostat and energy management system supplier Venstar Inc., spoke with *Chain Store Age* editor Marianne Wilson about how Venstar is helping small-box retailers decrease energy through better controls.

### What are some of the most common mistakes retailers make when it comes to energy controls?

A common mistake is for a retailer to view its energy management system purely as a solution for its energy usage. Most energy management systems can function more like a facilities management system if the user sets the parameters to do so.

For example, in addition to the energy savings, an energy management system can contribute to ongoing maintenance benefits and associated cost savings, allowing better overall management of the entire facility.

### What best practices do you recommend?

Start with setting up exception reporting to determine if locations are unusually warm or cool, so that broken or malfunctioning equipment can be repaired or replaced. Also:

- Set up lighting by zone to ensure that lights are turned on only when they are needed.
- Consider outside lighting needs, such as for parking lots, to ensure lights are on when needed.
- Look at the energy usage patterns for the entire chain, by region and by individual stores, where it makes sense, to determine overall energy savings strategies.

### How do you see the technology of HVAC, lighting and refrigeration controls evolving?

The energy management industry itself is evolving in that it is broadening out to encompass much more than just energy use. As a result, the energy management system of today will become the facilities management systems of tomorrow, expanding to monitor maintenance functions and implement work order systems.

### Venstar has launched a new energy management system product, Surveyor, for retail chains and other multisite businesses. Tell us about it.

Surveyor is an Internet-based energy management system that allows small-box retailers, restaurant chains and other multilocation businesses to remotely monitor, manage and control their energy usage.

With Surveyor, one person can easily manage a chain's entire portfolio, regardless of whether it encompasses hundreds or thousands of locations.

Surveyor is currently installed in nearly 13,000 locations, primarily small-box retailers. We are also in the testing phase with other retailers, including many Fortune 500 companies.

### What makes Surveyor unique from other EMS products on the market?

Surveyor is one of the most affordable energy management systems available, giving customers a very fast return on investment of typically less than 18 months. Venstar can deliver this affordability since it designs and builds every piece of the Surveyor energy management system.

Also, Surveyor was designed specifically for the small-box retailer. We are not trying to shoehorn a large, overly complex building system into a small location. And Surveyor's architecture was designed so that it requires very little of the customers' network bandwidth. It has minimal impact on our customers' IT infrastructures. Venstar is one of the world's largest thermostat suppliers, giving us insight into how best to manage energy needs.

### What type of energy savings can Surveyor customers expect to see? What about return on investment?

Our Surveyor customers, which include AutoZone and Family Dollar, typically see 20% to 35% energy savings. It can vary both from chain to chain and from store to store. We've seen stores that were so poorly managed that they realized a 70% to 80% energy savings using Surveyor. Across larger chains, the typical savings is about 25% to 30%.

As for ROI, Surveyor pays for itself very quickly, and most of our customers have been seeing a return on their investment in about 18 months. But the energy savings can go on forever.

### What other products/services does Venstar offer retailers?

Venstar provides a strategic partnership to our customers. We help each one with the analysis of the data and suggest steps to implement, to avoid energy waste and provide a good environment for customers and team members alike.

In addition to our Surveyor energy management system and top-notch support, Venstar offers a full line of thermostats that employ the latest technologies, including wireless products, voice recognition and full-color touch screens. We have a number of exciting new products coming soon.