

Demand Value-Adds From Power Protection Vendors

New subtle but important features in UPS (uninterruptible power supply) products can help VARs better service customers while lessening their own workload.

BY GENNIFER BIGGS

UPS is a topic I often discuss in terms of its importance as an automatically included component in a thorough installation of most any network solution. I know it isn't sexy, but it's key to insuring both uptime as well as extended runtime in the case of an emergency. But how do you as a VAR determine which UPS is the best fit for your business — and your customers? One way is to watch for the subtle but important value-adds that UPS vendors have begun to offer. David Slotten, director of product management at Tripp Lite, talked with me about what VARs should expect from their UPS vendors and products. "Any VAR that can articulate the many compelling benefits of today's UPS systems will make itself stand out, improving their competitiveness and ultimately their margin opportunity," says Slotten.

Among those value-adds are management tools that save both VARs and end users time and effort, "smart" UPSs that offer energy savings, and simplified maintenance options. Slotten explains that in larger deployments where UPSs are installed at various points in the end user's environment, past installation efforts included configuring each UPS, one at a time, and then managing those devices, one at a time. "It is vital to a business that power flow is not left to chance. Nothing works without power. We want people to manage their UPS devices just like any other critical network device, so we needed to make that process simpler for everyone," says Slotten. For VARs, the value is twofold. "VARs should look for tools that ease deployment and management." For example, UPSs offering a centralized management tool allow a VAR to configure a customer's power fleet easily, pushing policies out automatically. "In the past, VARs had to initiate a session with each device — a requirement that frequently didn't happen, leaving users unaware of emerging power issues and battery deficiencies," says Slotten. "Now, a VAR can configure a single UPS centrally and then push that configuration out to the rest of that customer's UPS population. With a simple click, you have configured all the devices." He stresses that not managing the UPSs in place at a customer's site is almost as bad as not installing them to begin with. "If you don't manage your UPS, it is really just a battery in a box, and it is not being used

to its full potential," he says.

New UPS Products Increase Value VARs Offer

Another value add your UPS vendor should help you articulate is green energy. "We all hear a lot about going green, and many higher-end UPSs can show customers energy savings," explains Slotten. Some online UPS systems, which condition and regulate the flow and quality of electricity, are now intelligent enough to recognize when the electricity coming into a network is adequate and stable and therefore not waste energy overconditioning that flow. "Let's say your UPS is backing up a switch, and you want that online UPS to deliver the highest level of power conditioning," explains Slotten. "Via an economic mode,

that device can look at the power environment, dynamically adjusting power quality when it is truly needed." The end result can be a power consumption savings of up to 10% over a traditional UPS design.

Last, VARs should look for vendors that have made main-

tenance simpler. UPS maintenance has traditionally demanded planned downtime, an inconvenience to customers as well as IT providers that might have to tackle those repairs during off hours. Today, Slotten says VARs should expect hot swappable capabilities to be offered in many UPS products. "It used to be that you had to plan downtime in the event of an UPS fault, and with hardwired systems, you would be reliant on an electrician or other service provider to handle repairs," explains Slotten. Now, he recommends VARs look for UPSs that are mechanically constructed so anyone with a screwdriver can replace them without taking down the network. This allows VARs to provide quick service or for the user to service the UPS. "For the VAR, this helps maintain control of the client experience and doesn't contribute to an unnecessary expense. There is another subtle value to this — you are not micromanaging your customers," he says. Slotten recommends VARs demand the same service and ease of management from UPS vendors as they might from another network component vendor. Otherwise, a VAR might not be delivering as much value as it can, missing the opportunity to stand out from the crowd. ●



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