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## Integrators Take Lead in Energy Management

Two-man operation Foothill Integrated Systems is integrating its energy management offering with a giant utility's smart grid solution.

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By [Jason Knott](#), February 03, 2011

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Is “the perfect storm” brewing that will elevate integrators’ role as an [energy management](#) contractor? The guys at [Foothill Integrated Systems \(FIS\)](#) in Pasadena, Calif., certainly think so. In fact, they’re banking on it.

The two-man operation is billing FIS as an energy management integrator and has aligned itself closely with the region’s major utility - [Southern California Edison \(SCE\)](#). FIS has already installed a prototype [Control4](#) system at SCE’s “Smart Energy Experience” inside its [Customer Technology Application Center \(CTAC\)](#) demo facility in nearby Irwindale, Calif. The system showcases how the electrical utility’s new smart meters can be tightly bound to a [home automation](#) system for monitoring demand and usage, along with controlling various home functions.

Co-owners Greg Moon and Tom Jacob even drive a Prius plastered with Control4 logos to show their commitment. The duo believes even small integrators can [take the lead in this energy niche](#), and form a strong working relationship with a utility.

### Trends Guiding Energy Focus

For many CE pros who built their businesses on energy-hogging consumer electronics, the transition to energy management can be tough. But according to Moon and Jacob, most integrators are already the primary energy contractor in the home, they just don’t know it. According to Jacob, nearly every FIS installation relates back to energy.

“At first glance, you might look at our typical residential installation and calculate 15 percent or so of it is related to energy management, but it’s much higher than that,” says Jacob. He estimates that energy management touches some aspect of every system they install, from power management for home theaters to HVAC control to shade control to security to lighting control. Even more importantly, he sees energy management as the key discipline that helps sell customers into full-blown whole-house integration.

#### Quick Stats

**Company:** [Foothill Integrated Systems, Inc.](#)

**Location:** [Pasadena, Calif.](#)

**Principals:** [Tom Jacob](#) and [Greg Moon](#)

**Years in business:** 6

**Number of employees:** 2

**Specialty:** [Custom audio](#), [video](#) and [control](#)

**Top Brands:** [Control4](#), [Sonance](#), [Marantz](#), [Lutron](#)

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then the typical client certainly doesn’t understand. “Most homeowners don’t even know their own total energy consumption,” says Moon, adding that they also likely have no idea of how much electricity each home



Using what could become a template for smart grid connectivity, Tom Jacob (left) and Greg Moon installed an energy management and home control system at Southern California Edison’s Customer Technology Application Center.

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appliance or consumer electronics device uses. "Education is the key, and that will be a major part of our focus over the next few years."

### Tackling The CTAC

Because of FIS' energy focus, it was logical that Control4 contacted them back in March 2010 to install an energy management system at Edison's CTAC demo room. After several months of planning, the installation itself took FIS only about two months.

The CTAC is a mock home built inside an industrial building where Edison conducts free docent-guided tours for homeowners on ways to reduce energy use. The Irwindale location is one of two the utility operates. In 2011, the 2,260-square-foot mock home will host some 200 seminars and 11,000 people. Architects, interior designers, engineers, homebuilders, developers and even legislators have toured the facility, in addition to consumers.

Edison will have retrofitted 5 million customers with its smart meters (dubbed Smart Connect) by the end of 2012. It has already installed 1.7 million meters and is converting up to 10,000 homes daily.

In a nutshell, the installation has two levels. Part I is a basic feedback mechanism using Control4 that provides load response electrical usage and demand data for the homeowner via ZigBee-based smart meters. The new Smart Connect meters use ZigBee wireless technology to send demand and usage data to the Control4 EC-100 gateway device, which displays the information on a small 4.2-inch Control4 panel.

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### About the Author



Jason Knott, Editor, CE Pro

Jason has covered low-voltage electronics as an editor since 1990. He joined EH Publishing in 2000, and before that served as publisher and editor of Security Sales, a leading magazine for the security industry. He served as chairman of the Security Industry Association's Education Committee from 2000-2004 and sat on the board of that association from 1998-2002. He is also a former board member of the Alarm Industry Research

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and Educational Foundation. He is currently a member of the CEDIA Education Action Team for Electronic Systems Business. Jason graduated from the University of Southern California.

## 1 Comments (displayed in order by date/time)

Posted by [Mark Coxon](#) on 02/03 at 06:48 PM

I've been to CTAC and seen this system. CTAC is a great resource for customers and architects and the head of CTAC is a class act.

Mark C

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