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Devices you already own can be greener

by Sharon Vaknin

Many companies are investing in the green market by creating energy efficient appliances, but those new devices tend to be pricey. Besides, why replace something that still works? Tenrehte Technologies, a start-up located in Rochester, NY and Austin, TX, would like to help people reduce the power consumption of products they already own.

The PICOwatt looks like a small extension cord. Nothing complicated about it.
(Credit: Tenrehte Technologies Inc.)

PICOwatt, Tenrehte's first product, allows consumers to turn off any appliance with just a few clicks. Appliances plugged into the device are controlled by the consumer via Wi-Fi. Energy usage, timers, and power are all controlled with a smartphone or computer. For example, instead of using appliances during peak hours, a timer can be set-up for your dryer to run in the middle of the night.

Tenrehte has been selected as a finalist for many competitions, in recognition of the fact that its innovative technology allows consumers to cut costs, reduce power consumption, and control their carbon footprints. CEO Jennifer Indovina says that despite the "interesting" economy, the company has found creative ways to keep moving, and focus on the end result. Her team is mostly composed of engineers with backgrounds in start-ups.

The PICOwatt will be available on Earth Day (April 22, 2010) for $79.99. It's expensive, but Tenrehte suggests that it will pay for itself in about two months, and save consumers 10 percent off their annual energy bills thereafter.

Sharon Vaknin is the CNET Labs' go-to intern. When she's not testing MP3 players, blogging, or making the lab look presentable, she can be found playing computer games. Sharon formerly worked for Best Buy and is currently studying journalism at San Francisco State University. E-mail Sharon.

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