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App rewards homeowners switching off devices when dirty power plants serve their house

APP REWARDS HOMEOWNERS SWITCHING OFF DEVICES WHEN DIRTY POWER PLANTS SERVE THEIR HOUSE

 PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION

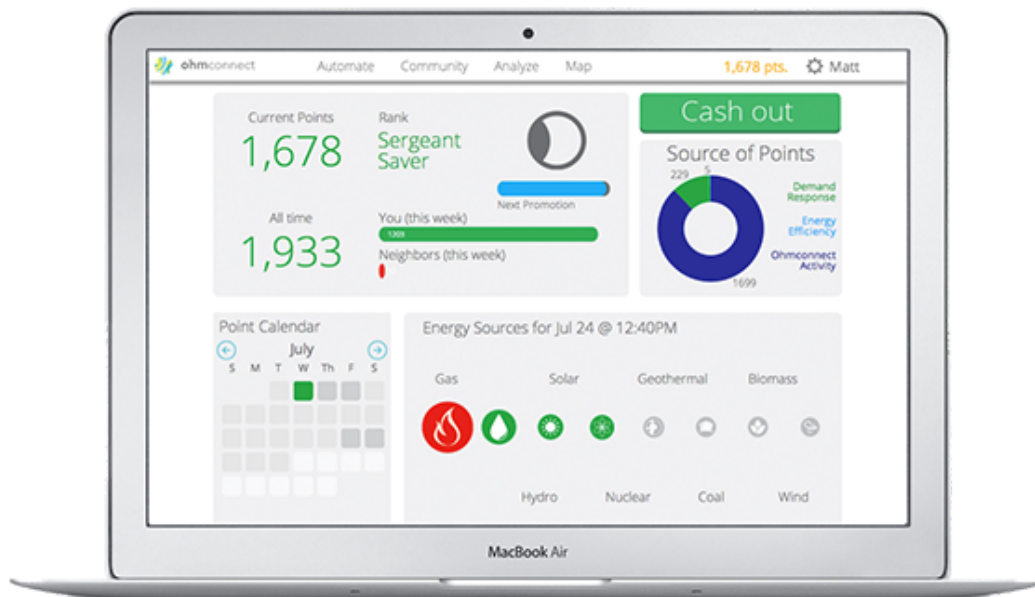
Ohmconnect notifies customers of the best times to reduce energy consumption and offers cash rewards for doing so.

Eco-minded consumers are increasingly looking to reduce the 'dirty' energy used in their home. In the past, marketplaces like the Netherlands' [Vandebron](#) have handed control over to consumers by letting them decide how local and green they want their energy to be, and choose their own suppliers. But now [Ohmconnect](#) is taking a different route by notifying customers of the best times to reduce energy use and offers cash rewards for doing so.

Unfortunately for consumers concerned about their environmental impact, all major energy companies use a multitude of different sources to power their customers' homes. While these businesses typically publish a fuel mix ratio, consumers can never know exactly where their energy is coming from at any given time — except when peaker plants come into effect. These plants are typically used between once and three times a week in the case that energy consumption in a particular location peaks above the predicted amount allocated for the region. The plants can quickly generate and distribute energy, but they're often expensive to operate and use fossil fuels inefficiently.

By monitoring energy use across the US, Ohmconnect can detect when and where peak energy periods take place, something it calls #OhmHour. Those downloading the app receive alerts whenever a peaker plant near them becomes active. The app can be linked with popular devices such as Nest and the Tesla Smart House system so users can automatically reduce their home energy when an alert is sent out and the company can detect the drop. Alternatively, they can

manually turn off energy-sucking appliances and Ohmconnect will detect reductions through smart meters located in 95 percent of homes served by PG&E. Users gain points whenever they save energy during #OhmHour, which can be converted into cash when they meet the required threshold. The app also offers a detailed breakdown of energy use for each user.



Ohmconnect makes its money from selling this saved energy — essentially generated energy that's gone unused — back to the energy market. By doing so, dirty energy consumption is reduced and consumers get a share of the reward. Are there ways that utilities companies could use big data in a similar way to help reduce bills for their customers?

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Email: talk@ohmconnect.com

Website: www.ohmconnect.com