

# FINANCE & COMMERCE

## Energy

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### Accelerated Innovations speeds up drive to expand Web-based MyMeter business

by [Bob Geiger](#) Staff Writer

Striving to maintain customer service while conserving energy, eight electricity cooperatives in Minnesota and South Dakota have turned to MyMeter, an internet-based software tool that helps customers monitor and manage their electricity use.

"This MyMeter product demystifies the kilowatt hour," said John Wodele, a spokesman for Accelerated Innovations LLC, a Rockford-based manufacturer of home energy conservation software that gives homeowners a graphic view of their energy usage.

MyMeter was developed in conjunction with Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electrical Association as a conservation tool for the cooperative, which completed installation of 38,000 smart meters in 2008 and promoted the Web-based MyMeter service.

Currently, Accelerated Innovations is using cooperatives as a client base because they "have always been ahead of the utilities in terms of customer service," Wodele said. "They are very, very interested in providing tools for their members."

And for good reason. The Minnesota Legislature mandated that utilities cut their energy consumption by 1.5 percent as part of a conservation improvement program, or CIP.

While larger utilities such as CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy are encouraging conservation by mailing out monthly energy-usage reports, MyMeter enables remote access to their home's power usage via the Internet.

"You can put a marker on the day that you bought a new Energy Star appliance," Wodele said. "Seeing is believing. And you can work to conserve energy. Software can track your energy usage, and usage can be easily altered."

And people are logging on to check on their energy, he added. Customers of one co-op, Lake Region Electric Cooperative, have logged onto view MyMeter from 27 different states – likely customers with winter residences checking to see if their power is still on.

Currently, cooperatives offering MyMeter are Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc., Crow Wing Power, Dakota Energy Cooperative Inc., Lake Region Electric Cooperative, McLeod Cooperative Power, Stearns Electric Association, Tri-County Electric and Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association.

The cooperatives pay an annual licensing fee of \$1 per customer up to 10,000 customers. Beyond that, prices gradually decrease.

In February, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) presented Wright-Hennepin with the association's National Community Service Award for Energy Efficiency.

That NRECA honor was underscored by the trade association's complimenting Wright-Hennepin on installing the smart meters.

An Accelerated Innovations sales brochure pictures a couple viewing power usage on their computer screen illustrates that approach, with a headline, "Real people saving real energy in real time."

Real time updates, that is, down to increments of 10 seconds for MyMeter screen displays, which can be altered with a click of a mouse to reflect monthly, daily and hourly energy use.

Founded in 2007 by software designer Josh Headlee, now CEO of the company, Accelerated Innovations' staff has expanded to 13 employees.

That growth likely will continue because Accelerated Innovations has started work with Grand Forks, N.D.-based Minnkota Power Cooperative Inc., a regional power generation and transmission company that distributes power through 11 cooperatives.

Minnkota Power distributes electricity to in a 34,500-square-mile service area that includes eastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota, and has engaged Accelerated Innovations to work on a pilot basis with Beltrami Electric Cooperative Inc.

Wodele said the Beltrami pilot project, which is designed to test the cooperative's ability to save energy, could lead to other work with additional Minnkota distribution cooperatives.

The company's possible gain of business in North Dakota and Minnesota is complemented by a search for large electric cooperatives to contract with in North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas, Wodele said.

"The more market share in one state, the easier it is to get people to come. There's probably a window here of five or six years where smart meters are going to be installed throughout the country."

MyMeter isn't the only energy-related product manufactured by Accelerated Innovations. Another software-as-a-service product that applies to the windy areas that the company's clients supply power to is a real-time Wind Generation Monitoring System that provides information from individual wind turbines to a central website.