PARTNER'S GUIDE TO

Supercharging Your Power Management Sales

SHUTTERSTOCK

Opportunity abounds in the power management industry. Here are six ways partners can ramp up their power management sales. Some are old standards, while others take advantage of new trends. **By Scott Bekker**

Power management technology is a growth industry. A surprising number of Microsoft partners don't take advantage of power management sales opportunities, but a few recent developments and other factors make the technology worth a look for almost anyone selling complete IT solutions to customers.

A June report from market researchers at IDC contended that the technology—and the broader Datacenter Infrastructure Management (DCIM) field, of which power management is a part—will continue to be a growth area.

"The DCIM market is hitting its stride," IDC said in a research news release for the study, "IDC MarketScape: Worldwide Datacenter Infrastructure Management 2013

Vendor Analysis." The report continued: "Datacenters are expanding to power the Third Platform, a new era of computing built on mobile devices and applications, cloud services, big data and analytics, and social technologies. Expansion into new geographies, improvements in disaster recovery, and expansion of workloads beyond current power and processing capabilities of current datacenters has challenged datacenter managers to find ways to manage resources and change."

There are several ways Microsoft partners, even those serving smaller customers, can capitalize on the trends to supercharge their power management sales.

1. OFFER POWER MANAGEMENT

It's obvious that you can't make money selling power management solutions if you don't offer power management solutions. Still, a lot of partners selling server, virtualization or datacenter solutions never try to explain to their customers the benefits of integrating power management into their infrastructures.

They're ignoring a significant upsell opportunity with a high margin. That means either potentially surrendering that sale to another partner (who could go on to poach future business from the customer) or leaving the customer unprotected from a host of critical problems that power management products solve.

2. GO WITH THE DATACENTER FLOW

Microsoft solution-focused partners who include power management on their line cards will soon get an unintentional boost from Microsoft. The software giant for years offered competencies for

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CONTINUES TO BE A BIG DEAL IN THE CORPORATE WORLD. PARTNERS SELLING POWER MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS HAVE AN OBVIOUS WAY TO CAPITALIZE ON THAT TREND WHILE SAVING THEIR CUSTOMERS MONEY.

partners who, after clearing some substantial technical, training and customer evidence hurdles, wanted to have a Microsoft badge to show customers in order to establish their expertise in a specialization area.

In January, Microsoft will tweak the competency list in a way that rolls several specific competencies into one that's broader. The new competency is called Datacenter, and it brings together three previous competencies: Server Platform, Identity & Access, and Management & Virtualization. By reducing the focus on Microsoft software products and placing it instead on general expertise in datacenter deployments and issues, Microsoft in some ways is setting up partners with an umbrella for delivering broader datacenter solutions. Both by getting partners focused on datacenters rather than specific servers or server technologies, and by implying to customers that the partners are capable of offering a broader portfolio of datacenter-related services, Microsoft is priming the pump for broader solutions.

Server hardware sales and recommendations were a part of many Server Platform competency partner solutions, for example. Now, however, the new Datacenter tag can signal end-to-end capability—an excellent framework for recommending power management products—from uninterruptible power supply (UPS) and surge suppression to power distribution, automatic transfer switches and other physical aspects of disaster recovery.

3. PREPARE DISASTER BATTLECARDS

Many Microsoft partners of all sizes generate at least a side income from disaster recovery and business continuity (DR/BC). Many of the selling points of disaster recovery

for managed services providers (MSPs) and other solution providers apply to power management, as well.

For those partners who don't generate significant sales from DR/BC already, those partners who do sell it often report more success with customers when they can offer specific data about storms and outages. Traditional disaster examples are useful for power management product sales. An additional type of metric that's extremely relevant is blackout information.

One source of such information comes from the Eaton Corp. Inc. "Blackout Tracker," an annual report detailing blackouts for the past year in dozens of countries. In the 2012 U.S. version of the report, Eaton tracked 2,808 blackouts over the course of the year affecting 25 million people. The year's knockout events included Hurricane Sandy, with its 8.1 million outages (some of those for weeks); a huge June storm in the Ohio Valley and Mid-Atlantic; Hurricane Isaac; a Michigan windstorm; and a Michigan late-winter snowstorm.

Partners looking to further localize their customer battlecards can drill down to state-level data, as well. In Washington state, for example, 2012 brought 90 outages affecting an average of 9,600 customers each and lasting an average of 249 minutes.

That kind of detailed data is a good starter for conversations around whether a business' existing UPS (if any) is robust enough for the types of outages common to the area, and whether some of the more sophisticated power management solutions, such as automatic shutdown of non-critical servers in an outage to conserve battery life for critical functions, would be appropriate.

4. MAKE IT ABOUT GREEN

Environmental sustainability continues to be a big deal in the corporate world. Partners selling power management solutions have an obvious way to capitalize on that trend while saving their customers money.

Peak hype (to date) for green computing may have occurred a few years ago, but the concepts are getting locked into international treaties and U.S. government policies in a lasting way.

In a February blog post, Cynthia Curtis, chief sustainability officer for Computer Associates Inc., predicted that corporate pressures to focus on green datacenter technology were proliferating:

> "Enterprises will increasingly make decisions to mitigate supply-side electricity-related risks, for reasons including:
>
> **1)** In most regions around the globe, electricity costs are escalating well ahead of inflation in the long term.
>
> **2)** The utilities' abilities to sustain low-cost and rock-solid reliability are increasingly being challenged by factors such as:
>
> * Aging assets
> * The Integration of intermittent, renewable energy generation capacity, such as wind and solar into the grid
> * Unclear, or in the case of the United States, opaque national energy policy
> * Increasing environmental concerns."

All of these are reasons that customers will continue to look to power management technologies for energy and cost savings.

5. NO DATACENTER, OR DATA CLOSET, TOO SMALL

While many of the ways to supercharge power management sales focus on larger customers, there are power management solutions on the market for every size business. The biggest datacenters may have the most to gain from power management infrastructure, but every business has a utility bill. The right technologies in the computer closet of even a small business can make a measurable difference to the customer's bottom line.

6. SELL INTELLIGENCE

The "Internet of Things" is huge and growing larger at a fast clip. ABI Research, based in London, released a report in May finding that what it calls the "Internet of Everything" (IoE) now consists of 10 billion wirelessly connected devices, and predicting that the number would increase to 30 billion devices.

Power management hardware is following the spirit if not the letter of that definition. Because many of the devices are designed for datacenters, they often sport connection ports rather than wireless technologies. (For devices with no connections but a power cord, some newer power management software can detect unconnected devices in other ways.)

Partners who understand how much smarter power management technologies have become have an opportunity to help their customers transition to more sophisticated technologies that can do a lot more for their businesses.

"Many organizations use standalone software from multiple vendors to monitor and manage their [UPSes], power distribution units [PDUs] and other crucial power quality and environmental devices," wrote Jim Tessier, product manager of Eaton's Power Quality Division, in a June white paper about power management. "Short on features and poorly integrated with other management resources, these outdated applications only add further complexity to a variety of common power-related administrative challenges."

According to Tessier, power management devices and software can now aggregate power device quality information, monitor and manage virtualized server environments, maintain power system reliability, allow administration of remote datacenters, and manage use-based electricity billing schemes. Tessier explained one of the most interesting capabilities of newer systems in his white paper:

"Intelligent power management software helps technicians deal with power outages more efficiently. For starters, the latest power management solutions let technicians divide receptacles on their UPS hardware into separate load segments that can be monitored and administered individually. By grouping their least-important infrastructure resources together in distinct load segments, companies can position themselves to make non-essential systems the first ones they shut down during a power outage. That conserves battery capacity and maximizes the amount of backup power available to keep mission-critical devices up and running."

A smarter power management infrastructure offers customers more power at a lower monthly utility bill, and offers partners a new opportunity for revenues, even for customers with existing solutions.

Plug some of these strategies into your customer conversations and you could create a comfortable new source of revenues. •

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