

Ventura County
Community College District

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How an IT solution provider improved customer uptime

UPS PROTECTION — California, USA

An IT solution provider added a managed power services offering to its portfolio and grew its revenue while providing peace of mind to customers.

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EcoStruxure™ IT Expert is an advanced remote monitoring tool for wherever-you-go visibility and alarms, preventive management, and data-driven recommendations to mitigate security and failure risks of your data center and distributed IT infrastructures. It is part of Schneider Electric's IoT-enabled EcoStruxure architecture.

UPS Protection is a California-based IT solution provider and electrical contractor specializing in the design, sale, installation, and service of single-phase and three-phase uninterruptible power supply (UPS) solutions. Owner and CEO Dan Coffman bought the business 15 years ago and quickly established the goal of providing his clients with reliable, high-quality power protection solutions. "When I first bought the business, we immediately became a Schneider Electric partner," he said. "The brand awareness of APC products is so strong that, many times, it's the first thing my customers ask for."

Coffman has recently expanded his business to offer next-generation remote support services for customers with edge computing environments who are looking to supplement the efforts of overburdened staff. Once again, he has turned to Schneider Electric as a strategic partner for providing reliable customer support. "Schneider Electric is unique in its depth and breadth of marketplace offerings when it comes to edge computing: highly reliable APC Smart-UPS™ combined with a portfolio of software and services for remote IT infrastructure management. This gives our customers the flexibility of selecting support levels that are aligned with both their particular needs and their budget. Offerings such as EcoStruxure IT Expert and [EcoCare services membership](#) offer the building blocks that clients need to secure high-availability IT and networking equipment performance."

Goal

Supplement IT staff effectiveness and improve edge network wiring closet uptime through next-generation remote monitoring support and EcoStruxure Ready APC Smart-UPS.

Story

A growing California-based community college looks to a Schneider Electric IT solution provider to provide an integrated remote monitoring support solution to reduce IT support staff workload constraints.

Solution

A roll-out of 120 APC Smart-UPS power protection devices and the implementation of EcoStruxure IT Expert and EcoCare services membership solutions from Schneider Electric.

Results

- An IT solution provider who builds new recurrent revenue streams while gaining customer trust and loyalty.
- An end user who experiences less downtime and seamless next-generation technical support.



Community college confronts issue of IT staff shortages

A case in point is one of Coffman's long-time customers, the Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD). The community college's district IT team consists of six people who are responsible for:

- A community college system with more than 32,000 students across three college campuses spanning 380 acres
- Supporting the entire installed base of IT, network, and communications systems infrastructure that supports staff, student and faculty information access
- Servicing an aging population of 120 campus-wide network wiring closets

Coffman and his company, UPS Protection, were asked to propose a strategy for upgrading the resiliency of the network closet infrastructure. "VCCCD was encountering a number of issues," said Coffman. "Their limited staff was being overworked."

Their technicians are expected to manage a diverse range of tasks:

- Resetting user passwords
- Fixing network connectivity issues
- Resolving hung switches and servers
- Maintaining the performance of all connected components

In essence, the IT team ensures that information continues to flow in a predictable and consistent manner across the multiple campuses.

"They needed an improved management system for their wiring closet network," said Coffman. "Not all of their closets were protected with a UPS, and they had no way of telling which closets were protected and which weren't. When a UPS failed, it resulted in a load drop as they had no means for monitoring UPS performance and for anticipating potential failures. They were then forced to scramble to replace UPS batteries and/or units. That break/fix approach to solving the problem was no longer sustainable, especially in an environment where more and more of the classes were being offered online instead of in person," he said. "We had to come up with a solution to unburden the IT staff and make their overall jobs easier and less stressful."

Digital services ease the support burden

Working in conjunction with Schneider Electric, Coffman and his team proposed a new solution to address VCCCD's power protection and management issues. The solution consisted of APC Smart-UPS power protection devices and remote support in the form of both EcoStruxure IT Expert and an EcoCare services membership from Schneider Electric.

"By combining 24/7 monitoring, troubleshooting, on-site support, and any necessary parts, the service reduces our time spent on reactive maintenance, keeps us focused on achieving our commitments and timelines, and helps us gain OpEx efficiencies."

— Dan Watkins,
Associate Vice Chancellor,
Information Technology,
Ventura County Community
College District

EcoStruxure IT Expert combined with the EcoCare services membership enables 24/7 remote monitoring by Schneider Electric experts that automatically address any UPS problem and make any technical issue invisible to the IT staff and the operations they support.

When a UPS issue occurs (such as a battery that is about to fail) across any of the 120 wiring closet locations, EcoStruxure IT immediately sends out an alarm to Schneider Electric's Connected Services Hub. The technical experts at the Connected Services Hub quickly diagnose the issue through remote monitoring and then, if needed, dispatch the proper parts and service personnel the next day to address the issue.

In addition, all of the APC Smart-UPS units installed in the wiring closets are equipped with network cards that are capable of performing a remote reboot of any of the attached networking systems (such as switches and routers). As such, members of the campus networking staff no longer have to wake up in the middle of the night, physically go to the location of the downed wiring closet, and perform a manual restart.



End user benefits include operational simplicity and peace of mind

The new solution has directly addressed the needs of the IT systems administrative staff. "Schneider Electric EcoCare services membership and EcoStruxure IT Expert have enabled our IT teams to focus on mission-critical activities that support VCCCD's key priorities," explained Dan Watkins, Associate Vice Chancellor, Information Technology at VCCCD. "By combining 24/7 monitoring, troubleshooting, on-site support, and any necessary parts, the service reduces our time spent on reactive maintenance, keeps us focused on achieving our commitments and timelines, and helps us gain OpEx efficiencies," he said.

Since deploying the new technologies, the college is also experiencing better management of their network with fewer instances of downtime. VCCCD can now rest assured that its UPS investment is protected while Coffman and his staff at UPS Protection are able to bring more value to the college through lifecycle management of its assets.

Additional benefits experienced by VCCCD include:

- Precise management of network wiring closet uptime so that VCCCD students, faculty, and staff can experience better education access, especially when a remote classroom approach is required.
- Increased operational savings because the Schneider Electric service experts help VCCCD to avoid the expense of having to hire additional staff to properly manage the growing network of wiring closets.
- Fewer incidences of unanticipated downtime as a result of better power protection and improved productivity as IT staff are now freed up to concentrate on central IT management issues (such as technology compatibility and network modernization and growth).

"Thanks to EcoCare services membership and EcoStruxure IT Expert, we have been able to provide a full package service to our customers to relieve their staff from maintenance duties and give them the peace of mind to dedicate their time to their focused activities."

- Dan Coffman, CEO,
UPS Protection, Inc.

IT solution provider benefits include new recurring revenue streams

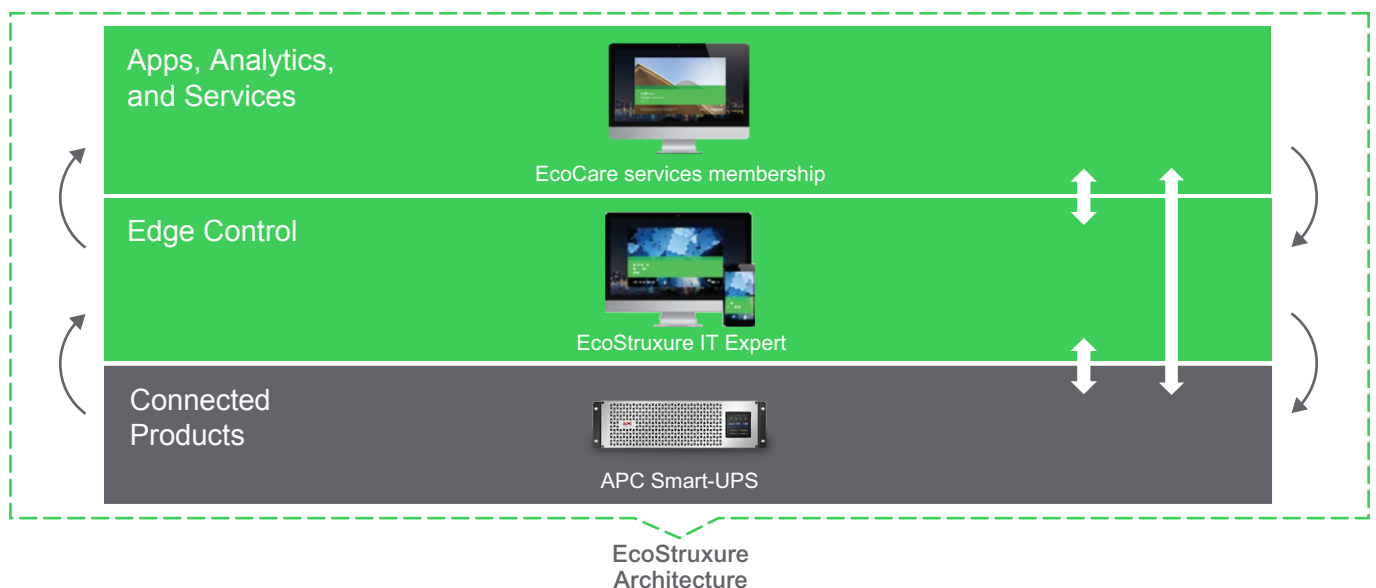
For Coffman and his UPS Protection team, the Schneider Electric software and digital service offerings provide many flexible options to a wide variety of potential clients. This enables his organization to grow its service-related source of recurring revenue. "For IT solution providers selling rack-based solutions, EcoCare services membership represents additional, recurring revenue that we can earn on top of the hardware sale. At VCCCD, we were able to offer a holistic management solution for 120 network closet UPSs through EcoCare services membership."



The experience of working with Schneider Electric technical support teams also helps UPS Protection to lower risk and to offer solutions that are unique in the marketplace. "None of our competitors was able to offer our client such a simple yet comprehensive service package," explained Coffman. "Now we can offer similar solutions to our other community college customers, regardless of which level of technical post-installation support they require," he said. "Thanks to EcoCare services membership and EcoStruxure IT Expert, we have been able to provide a full package service to our customers to relieve their staff from maintenance duties and give them the peace of mind to dedicate their time to their focused activities."

Coffman also feels that working with Schneider Electric helps position both his customer and his own organization for the future. "Because of the reliability of the APC hardware, we anticipate no short-term risk of these UPS products failing. Now that we are providing our customer with EcoStruxure IT Expert and EcoCare services membership, in three to four years from now, when the power in the UPS batteries begins to run out, we know that any major power-related downtime issues will be avoided thanks to the watchful eye of the Schneider Electric Connected Service Hub" he said.

EcoStruxure™ for IT Innovation At Every Level



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