



SAVANT

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Ghosts in the System are kept out by SurgeX

The Challenge

A house in rural upstate New York was outfitted with an enormous Savant home automation system, containing over 20 zones of audio and video, installed by regional Massachusetts dealer, Tune Street. But when the project was completed, Tune Street was being repeatedly called by the client to reboot or fix lighting, shades, set top boxes and other parts of the system that were randomly dying out or malfunctioning. If remote reboot was not an option, Tune Street had to send a team member out to the house, which was three hours away.

“The power supply to the home was so horrible because of the generator and the equipment providing service to the house like Apple TV, Direct TV, and components of the client’s Savant system were dying constantly. It was never-ending,” said Tune Street President Luke Germain; “It was an installer’s nightmare.” Reboots were needed so frequently in the home that the Tune Street team installed reset switches in the customer’s racks to make it easier for them to remotely reboot their devices.

Tune Street couldn’t determine the source of the issues with the system that was causing device failure, and fielded repeated service calls for a year. “I’d talk [the client] through rebooting his stuff, praying that it would work remotely,” said Germain. “It was a constant reboot process or the products would literally be dead and we’d have to replace them,” added Germain.

Beyond frequent remote reboots and on-site service calls, Tune Street found themselves replacing equipment earlier than its standard life cycle. “We had replaced his equipment so many times that the racks literally looked like spaghetti after a year,” commented Germain.

The Solution

After a year of reboots, service calls, and chasing ghosts in the system that were causing product malfunction, Germain learned about SurgeX power quality and diagnostic intelligence solutions. Power issues affecting equipment was a problem that his team hadn’t yet considered. “Unstable power can cause devices in a system to lock up and require reboot or replacement which is why the number one piece of dealer feedback that always comes back to me after they’ve converted to SurgeX is, ‘We’re rebooting less devices, less frequently than we used to have to’ explains Jimmy Paschke, Manager, Residential Sales at SurgeX.

Once he learned about power quality issues, Germain sought a resolution for the New York house with a two-step approach consisting of monitoring and power quality protection with the SurgeX devices. He installed an Envision diagnostic intelligence monitoring device with Expert Manager analytic software to determine the power quality conditions in the home, and to provide proof to the client that the issues were coming from the utility, and not the installed equipment. “The first thing we did was put the power-monitoring Envision unit in and we left it there for a week and pulled up the logs,” said Germain. “We showed the client that every hour his power was dipping down to 110 volts in a lot of instances. It was a mess.” The Envision device also revealed that power surges and spikes were hitting the system constantly, and were the unseen culprit for the compromised devices.

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Security

A/V

Lighting

Services

Zones

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Having determined and provided proof that there were unsolvable power issues in the home, Germain explained, “We put SurgeX products in each rack, there were four total in the house.” The SurgeX products included a XR115 120V/15A outfitted with SurgeX’s patented Advanced Series Mode surge elimination technology and Impedance Tolerant EMI/RFI filter to safeguard the client’s digital equipment from AC surges and electrical transients that erode performance, and a UPS-1000-OL that would supply constant, clean power to the home during the frequent blackouts and brownouts.

The Tune Street team selected the XR115 for the surge elimination component of the install to provide a long-lasting solution that would end equipment replacement, because it’s a non-sacrificial solution capable of eliminating surge energy up to 6,000 volts without degradation, and won’t produce harmful side effects such as ground contamination or common-mode disturbances.

“Every other brand in the surge protection device space lets significant surge energy through to connected equipment and shunts energy to the ground and neutral causing problems with audio video equipment,” explained Paschke.

The Results

Since installing the SurgeX power quality foundation, Tune Street has seen a dramatic reduction in service calls from the New York homeowners. Germain said, “When we put the SurgeX equipment in, we waited maybe a half a year and since there were no issues, we redid all the racks and cleaned them back up. To this day, we still have had no issues.” After seeing the results of his experience, Germain and Tune Street require SurgeX power protection for all of their installations to safeguard their clients’ systems and prevent service calls.

Paschke and the SurgeX team see cases consistent with the issues that plagued Tune Street at the New York installation; “What we’re trying to help the dealer benefit from, when it comes to a solid power foundation, is not having to react to the call from the customer saying ‘something doesn’t work’ nearly as often.”

This experience with power monitoring and protection solved the mysterious and constant product failures in the New York home, and caused Tune Street to update their approach to all size installations. Paschke notes that power protection is important for every type of installation to keep systems running smoothly, with low amounts of reboots and no need for product replacement; “I usually tell dealers that no matter what size the job is, it’s important to take the stance of putting in the solid power foundation but also a solid network because those are two of the main reasons why you’ll have to go back to the job site.”

Tune Street agrees, and now all projects that they work on come with the strong recommendation of power quality from SurgeX: “In pretty much every system, especially every large-scale system, we install SurgeX product. Our clients don’t have a choice,” said Germain.

Dealers who know of the negative effects of poor power quality and surges can provide better service and proactive protection to their customers; “dealers who recognize that power, the network, temperature, and the quality of the install itself are all factors that play a role in whether or not they’ll have to go back to a job site have a definite advantage and are thinking about their projects the right way,” adds Paschke. In this house, the Tune Street team used the power-monitoring Envision unit to diagnose their client’s power conditions and installed SurgeX solutions to create a solid power foundation to solve a major headache for both their team and their client. “At the end of the day,” Germain added, “we had a serious problem and SurgeX solved it.”