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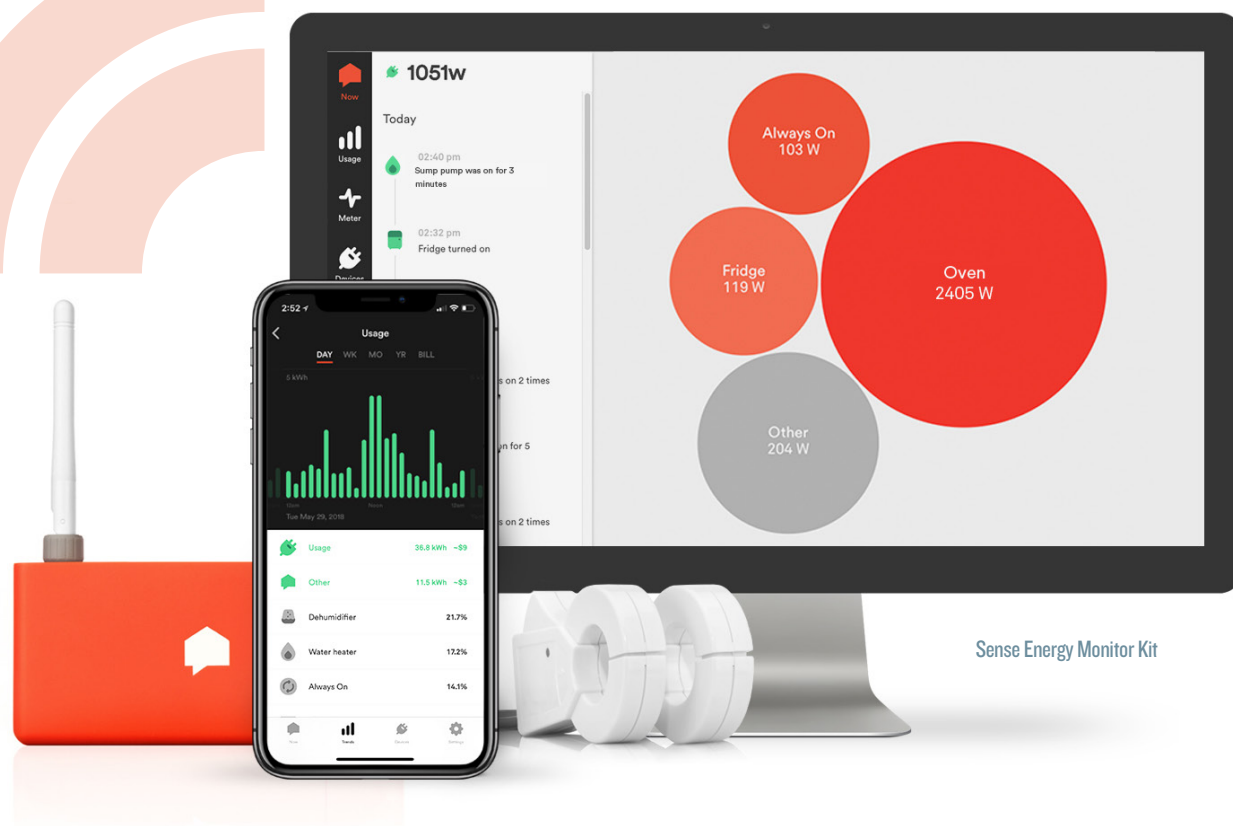
Design & Home

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Get Smart

Commonplace and cutting-edge technology along with connectivity can turn anyone into a master of their universe

In the same breath that you lament the screen—incessant texts from the office, a toddler’s howl for Peppa Pig, another push notification about a celebrity tweet masquerading as breaking news—you’re nearly giddy at the prospect of even more information. And control. Through a series of taps, we can create the just-right climate, conjure a

romantic mood, double check on dangers, and orchestrate a host of household chores. We’re a nation of paranoid, power-hungry Goldilocks. But maybe we’re onto something.

According to statistics database Statista, the United States is the largest consumer of smart home technology. In 2019, we spent \$23.5 billion on smart home products.

Spending will continue to increase. A recent Houzz survey of over 125,000 renovating homeowners reports that 27 percent regard integrating smart tech as a high priority.

Kyle Tripp, a system designer at Massachusetts-based Audio Video Design says, “The desire for smart home technology has only deepened for most clients building new homes or renovating.” Sarah Lawson, owner of S+H Construction in Cambridge, makes an estimate similar to Houzz’s findings saying, “In large-scale renovations, about 25 percent want a big fancy system.” She also notes, “It’s not the heyday

of the smart house, but it will trend up now that systems are easier to use.”

The most popular smart products are thermostats, security systems, and lighting, preferably controlled by voice via a smart speaker (that’s you Alexa). “Today’s homeowners are looking to add smart technology to every corner of their house. They like the convenience of using their phone or other device to control not only their thermostat, but their shower, kitchen faucet, and more,” says Lani Smith, a project manager at Frank Webb Home which has showrooms throughout the Northeast.



Ecobee Smart Thermostat



DXV SpaLet Smart Bidet Toilet



Kohler Kconnect



While anyone with WiFi and a smart phone (aka everyone) can integrate devices controlled by individual apps, others opt for centralized systems. “Some clients are fine using multiple apps from different brands to access systems,” Tripp says. “Many are still interested in the unified control approach.”

Lawson concurs. “We have customers who want the whole enchilada on one system,” she says. “It costs more, but it’s seamless.” One might have “dinner party mode,” during which music starts playing, the shades go down, and the lights dim, all coordinated with the press of a button. Other scenarios might include “vacation mode” with decreased heat use and lights that automatically switch on and off, or “teen hangout” mode with personal

playlists loaded and the basement doors on lockdown so more friends can’t sneak in unbeknownst to the adults.

This past November, experiential retailer b8ta opened in the Seaport offering on-trend tech gadgetry with which shoppers are encouraged to interact. “Homeowners are constantly seeking new products that optimize their daily life,” a b8ta spokesperson says. Indeed. As such, the market is flooded with devices that range from life-saving—air-quality monitors that use color and sound to communicate—to just plain fun—lightbulbs that cycle through every color of the rainbow.

We asked area experts for smart home products they love:

There are two major smart thermostats on the market.

Frank Webb Home favors the **Ecobee Smart Thermostat**. The newest model has a built-in Alexa speaker, which means that you can control it and all of your other smart home devices with it using your voice. You can also use it as an intercom, and to stream music. Don’t worry, it carries out its primary function—adjusting the temperature based on preferences and occupancy—to perfection.

The **DXV SpaLet Smart Bidet Toilet** takes cleanliness and comfort to extremes. The lid opens automatically, the seat is heated, and the five-position wand for front and rear cleansing has three water temperature settings and six pressure options adjustable via remote control. There’s also an air circulation and deodorizing

system, plus a nightlight. It’s energy efficient too. Frank Webb Home project manager Lani Smith says, “Once you have it, you can’t live without it!”

When it comes to smart sinks and showers, Donna Zinckmoore, director of retail operations at The Portland Group/Splash and Spritzo, recommends **Kohler Kconnect**. She says, “The voice activation makes it easy to do everything from filling up a pot in the kitchen to setting the temperature of your shower.” The line includes the Sensate Kitchen Faucet which can dispense specific amounts of water on command (no more measuring cups!), while its sensor monitors water usage. The DTV+ Showering System offers 11



Grohe Sense & Sense Guard



August Smart Connect Lock



Amazon Smart Plug



AXIS Gear



Sense Energy Monitor

spa experiences plus settings for steam, light, and music.

For value-added reflections, Zinckmoore looks to Electric Mirrors. “They’re perfect for getting ready in the morning,” she says. The company’s newest release, the **Savvy Home SmartMirror** allows you to download any Android-based app (stock quotes! Insta stories! recipes!), turning the mirror into a touch-screen display. It can also act as command central for other smart home devices, such as video doorbells. Although originally developed for hotel bathrooms, the contemporary aesthetic fits into an entry, kitchen,

office, or home gym, making it ideal for streaming workouts.

Control4 Smart Home and Neeo Remote is the whole house system on which to splurge. Greg Brett, owner of Sounds Good Corporation in Waltham, points to its melding of form and function. “Home-owners want smart home benefits and they want beautiful products,” he says.

While the Control4 Smart Home Operating System seamlessly connects every device in the house (its capacity is in the thousands), the Neeo Remote, which is intuitive and feels good in your

hand, Brett says, “makes it easy to control and personalize.”

More smart home favorites

Want easy control over your bedside lamp or box fan? Plug anything into an **Amazon Smart Plug** and start talking. All you need is the Alexa app.

Eliminate worry about forgetting your keys or dropping off an extra set for the dog walker. **August Smart Connect Lock** lets you let in anyone from anywhere.

Let in some light without lifting a finger or spending a fortune. **AXIS Gear** is an after-market device that turns

manual blinds (assuming they have looped chains) into motorized ones.

Avoid water damage and mold with **Grohe Sense & Sense Guard**. The pair sends alerts about leaks and risks of frost, and if a pipe might burst, automatically shuts down the water supply.

The **Sense Energy Monitor** tracks the power consumption of every appliance in your home, allowing you to identify problems, adjust habits, and ultimately save energy and money. [x]