

# Decisions

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October, 2005



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## The quest for clean power

**To maintain uptime and reduce servicing, the latest generation of electronic power conditioners guards data in case of power failure or lockups in ATM systems.**

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In the race to deliver 100% reliability for ATM applications, every integrator, value-added reseller and in-house system operator knows that power is everything, and even a momentary interruption of line voltage can lead to irreparable damage that only a site visit and rebooting can restore.

To prevent such catastrophes, resellers and network administrators are turning to a new option: digital UPS (uninterruptible power supply) units that not only provide "computer grade" power, but possess the intelligence, in the absence of an operator, to safely close down a running application in case of an unexpected power failure, thereby preserving valuable data. Recent innovations have brought the price of power-conditioning UPS units into a more affordable range, meaning dealers and integrators can costeffectively reduce unnecessary service calls while increasing ATM performance. One Canadian systems reseller reports installing more than 3,000 transformerbased filtering (TBF) units throughout a bank's network; the units did the job at an acceptable price to the bank.

The quest for "clean power" is borne out by the experience of service techs who have rushed out to handle a system crash, only to discover that the troubleshooting results in "no problem found." While damage caused by a large power spike, such as a lightning strike, is easy to identify, the insidious effects of power surges (less than 200 volts) prove far more difficult to pinpoint. Yet, according to studies by well-known manufacturers and independent labs, 87% of power-related failures result from low-voltage surges that cause "logic confusion," thereby yielding system errors and frozen screens.

Unstable line power often stems from poor wiring in old facilities. Yet, even new facilities can suffer from the immediate effects of power surges and sags from line-voltage variations within the building, such as when an HVAC system cycles on and off.

In the past, standard surge protectors and higher-priced power filters have been used to protect against high-voltage spikes. However, these devices are not intelligent enough to handle the relatively small spikes and over-voltages that momentarily disrupt sensitive electronic equipment.

While isolation transformers—the traditional choice by some technicians—have been available to help avoid power surges, they are prohibitively expensive and unwieldy in size and weight for the tight spatial constraints of most ATM applications. In addition, UPSs have traditionally lacked the ability to safely close down an open application before they run out of power. No one device could cover all the bases.

Recent technological advancements by companies like SmartPower Systems ([www.smartpowersystems.com](http://www.smartpowersystems.com)) in the field of power conditioning have yielded devices that provide computer grade power—a clean, filtered power supply to the protected equipment—at the same price as limited-function surge protectors or filters and traditional UPSs.

TBF devices, on the whole, offer protective feature set so robust that some resellers have already recognized the benefits and started installing these new electronic power conditioners in a number of locations. More importantly, newly developed TBF-equipped UPSs offer a USB port and "watchdog" software that has the unique capability to reboot the program which is locked up—without restarting other open programs—to safely preserve data.

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