

# Personal Trainer

Smarthome's Insteon takes control of your vacation home **BY KAREN J. BANNAN**

**Kari Konapelsky** is a member of the National Charity League, a philanthropic mother-daughter organization. As a result, the sculptor and mother of three girls is constantly hosting parties and social events in her Irvine, Calif., home. One of the ways she helps her guests feel at home is by creating a relaxing ambiance that includes soft lighting and good coffee.


When it comes to creating the perfect mood lighting, Konapelsky is getting a little help from Smarthome's Insteon home control network technology, which controls the lights in her living room, dining room and kitchen, among other things. "I don't like to have the lights very bright, and now I can dim lamps that I normally wouldn't be able to," says Konapelsky. "Whenever I have guests coming, I can hit a switch and make everything relaxing and inviting."

While Konapelsky's Insteon product, which uses both wireless radio frequency (RF) and powerline technology, is new, the idea behind it is not. The line joins two other popular home automation technologies: X10, which has already gained a foothold in the marketplace, and Z-Wave, a newer RF protocol designed by Zensys. Experts say people want to control their environments remotely—a functionality that is especially significant for those who own vacation homes. Joe Dada, the CEO of Smarthome, says his new technology will eventually take home automation past simple lighting control and allow homeowners to manage almost anything in the house.

For example, right now Insteon products, which are backward-compatible with X10 home automation, can turn any light switch or outlet into a controllable device. Homeowners can dim, turn on or turn off a lamp plugged into a floor outlet or turn on their coffeemakers while sitting in bed. In the future, says Dada, Insteon will lock and unlock doors, turn on outside irrigation systems and control music systems, window coverings, thermostats and fans. Dada says products that may launch within the next year include a programmable key fob that will instantly unlock the front door and applications that can automatically alert you when your housekeeper leaves or your dryer cycle is completed. And since everything will eventually go through an Internet connection, vacationers will be able to have the lights on and the coffee brewing when they reach their destination.

"Anything that's electronic or electrical will be controlled using Insteon," explains Dada. "As the system grows, you'll be able to add a computer interface and grow and manage events. You'll set lights to automatically go on and off. We'll have environmental sensors that will turn off lights as the ambient light gets brighter." A burglar deterrent, if there ever was one.

The best part: Insteon operates about 30 times faster than X10 technology, which is like a nanosecond to end users, says Dada. And since it uses both wireless frequencies and powerline networks, you can combine control of a floor lamp as well as an overhead light wired into your home's electrical system.

Konapelsky loves the Insteon so much, she says she will be installing it throughout the Dana Point, Calif., home she and her family are moving to this fall. "We're moving to a large ranch on a quarter of an acre right near the beach. I hope to have Insteon in every room," she says. "I'm hoping Smarthome adds a capability to start up the Jacuzzi and the pool light, too." 



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