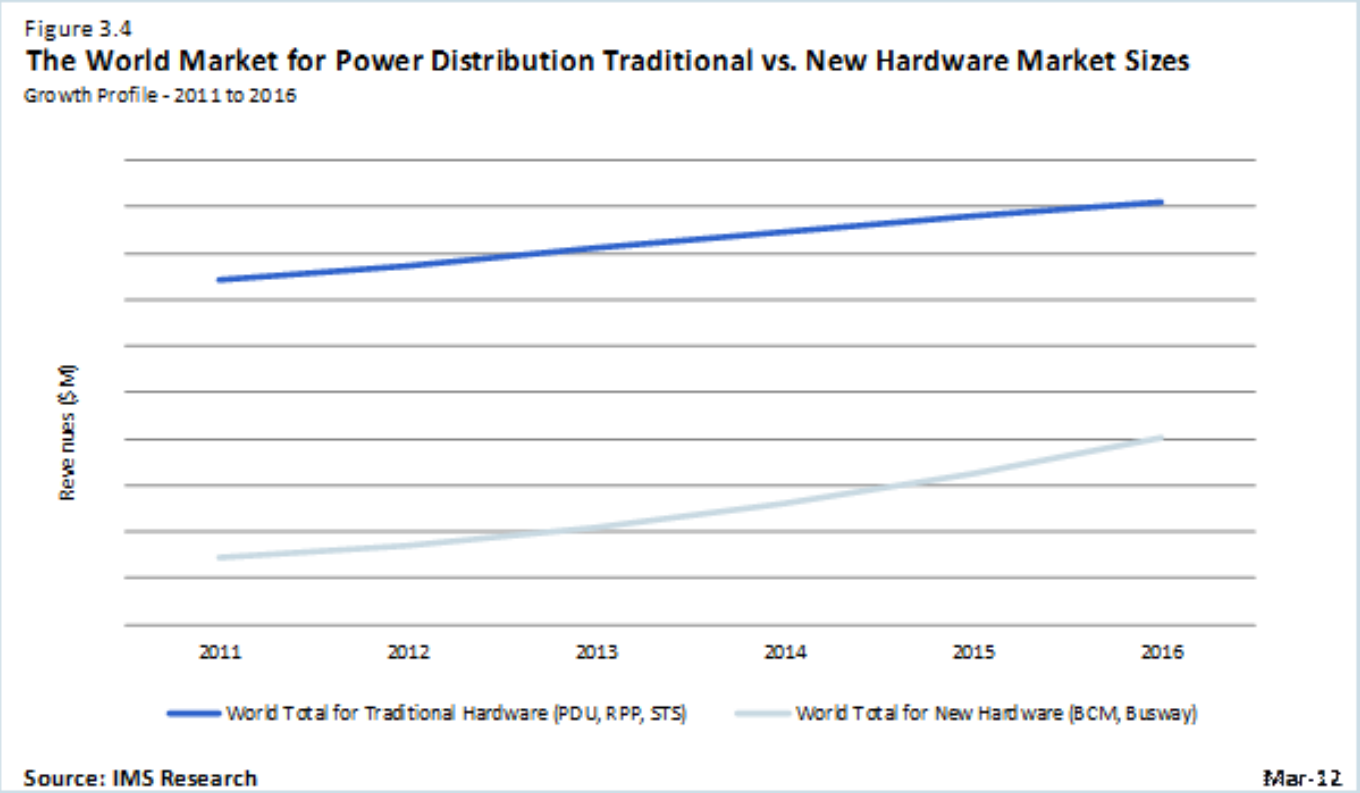
Branch circuit monitoring and overhead busway to drive growth for data center power distribution

More than 80 percent of the $440 million dollar global revenues in 2011 from data-center power-distribution hardware came from transformer-based power distribution units, remote power panels, and static transfer switches. This is according to IMS Research (recently acquired by IHS) in their new study covering three-phase power distribution in data centers. However, the forecasts show new products, such as overhead busway and branch circuit monitoring, will become increasingly popular, commanding upwards of 30 percent of hardware sales by 2016.

The overhead busway market is currently being driven by new enterprise data centers. Retrofitting existing data centers with overhead busway is complex and expensive; however, new builds can immediately realize the benefits of lower installation costs, space savings, and flexibility in future expansion from using overhead busway. While this is a large growth opportunity, it is somewhat limited by the fact that new data center builds take an enormous amount of capital and tend to get pushed back in tough times.



Branch circuit monitoring (BCM) is the smallest of the three-phase power distribution hardware markets. Growing concern over the energy consumption of data centers, combined with increasing electricity prices, has opened the BCM

market to significant opportunities for growth. IMS Research Analyst Lori Lewis explains, “BCM is already on the rise in colocations because of their ’pay for the power you use‘ billing approach. With all of the bells and whistles that can be configured into BCM. However, more data centers are likely to adopt it to monitor and manage their power consumption.” Lewis adds, “Soon, BCM will become a standard feature in much of the hardware that is sold in the data center; this is why we are forecasting revenue growth, not only for BCM, but also for power distribution units (PDUs).”

With the competitive landscape largely based in the United States, North America is the largest market for both of these products. While PDUs and RPPs have tended to be seen largely as North American products, BCM and overhead busway have universal appeal. Asia’s market is relatively small compared with that of North America, but there is potential for market growth for these products in the next five years. Growth in Europe, on the other hand, will be delayed as the region will require further convincing of the benefits of overhead busway, and will need local supplier presence to drive cost-saving and product awareness.

Right now, the largest suppliers of overhead busway are Starline, Power Distribution, Inc., and Eaton, each with more than 20 percent market share. BCM’s largest suppliers are Power Distribution, Inc., and Schneider Electric, each with more than 25 percent market share. While these markets have just a few major suppliers, it is likely that more competitors will try to gain a stronger presence because of the important opportunity these products represent. This will further grow this market in size and recognition.

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