





## **Armed and Loaded**

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**By Rob Kirkbride**

Innovative Office Products has been in the news a lot lately. You have seen the pictures of traders holding their head in their hands at the New York Stock Exchange as the market goes through another day of turmoil. The monitor arms on the floor of the Exchange are made by the Easton, Penn. company.

The company supplies the monitor arms that keeps the world's economy humming. "One of the first players in LCD (computer screens) was the New York Stock Exchange," said Innovative Office Products Sales and Marketing Manager Joe Tosolt. "It was a big client of ours and still is. If we are in the paper or on TV, it is usually bad news (when the market drops)."

Innovative Office Products is a niche manufacturer of mounting solutions. While they handle major clients like the New York Stock Exchange, the company also works as an OEM for office furniture makers and works in many other markets. Customers include IBM, Lockheed Martin and NASA.

The company has been around for more than 20 years. It was founded in 1986 and was known for making anti-glare filters and mounting arms for CRTs. In the mid-1990s, when the computer industry moved to LCD screens, the company was quick to adapt with monitor arms that would support the new products. Innovative Office Products is one of the few companies that has focused its entire product portfolio on mounting solutions.

The company's products have broad applications and a diverse customer base — any company with a computer. Innovative Office Products is not limited to the office furniture industry, though it does have a strong presence there. The company has an engineering heritage. One of the company's founders was an engineer and creator. Innovative Office Products is heavily invested in research and development and it owns many patents on its products. All of the company's design and engineering is done in-house.

One of the company's strengths is its willingness and capability to do custom work. Instead of working off a finite list of products and a "take it or leave it" attitude, Innovative Office Products creates a precise products that fits the needs of its customers.

A big pillar of its business is its OEM relationships. Innovative Office Products makes monitor arms for several of the large contract furniture makers that are sold under the manufacturer's name. The company also has OEM relationships with healthcare companies and the Department of Defense.

And next time your flight leaves an airport, chances are the monitor arm being used by the air traffic controller is made by Innovative Office Products.

"A lot of our product development is driven by our customers because we do so much custom work and OEM work," said Bradley Derry, who is in charge of design and development. "Customers will come to us with their problems, we solve the problems. As technology evolves, we evolve with it. Tablets have become hot in the last few years. Those types of solutions are being demanded and we are responding to that."

Much of the product development comes directly from the field. Designers and the company's sales staff talks to customers and dealer networks to get the latest input on what is needed. They identify product nuances that can be changed and

they attack those problems, Derry said. The company's product development focuses on user centered design.

That is reflected in the company's radical redesign of its EVO LCD monitor arm that was launched at NeoCon. EVO is a dynamic monitor mount that enables easy adjustment of monitor height and position. The new EVO has a totally redesigned look and uses "Better Balanced" technology, an entirely new counterbalance technology invented by Innovative Office Products.

"Since its launch in 2006, EVO has been recognized worldwide as the premiere monitor mounting solution," said Bud Oddsen, president of Innovative Office Products. "Now we are pleased to raise the bar even higher with the introduction of Better Balance technology, which provides unprecedented freedom of motion at a radical new price point."

The new EVO features one SKU that supports monitors from six to 20 pounds; an arm that extends up to 18.6 inches and offers a vertical adjustment range of 10.4 inches; integrated cable management; features that reduce installation time; and environmentally friendly manufacturing methods and extensive use of recycled and recyclable components.

Better Balance technology uses a spring mechanism that provides constant force across the arm's range of motion. Unlike simple spring mechanisms, EVO does not rely on friction to support the arm, which provides a smoother, more dependable motion and longer product lifespan.

"The original EVO was really successful for our company," Derry said. "It set a new standard for our company design-wise. Fast forward five years later. We asked ourselves how can we refresh it and make it look cooler and also make it more cost effective, more beautiful and function better. We attacked the problem and came out with EVO II. It is the same sort of family of products that our customer is used to in a new modern image."

The innovation is in the product's guts. The company eliminated the gas strut and went with spring and cable technology. They gave it a chrome finish so it looks great when it's on a desk. At the same time, the arm disappears in the background when it is mounted. "The product should be beautiful on its own, but it should disappear and be muted when it is in place," Derry said. "We want to let the desk speak for the desk."

Innovative Office Products is coming out with the EVO Pole late this fall and a dual monitor version in the first quarter of the year. The company also is addressing the move to tablet computers. Innovative Office Products has worked with its clients on custom solutions, including a tablet arm that works with point of sale in retail environments. The company is also involved in making monitor arms for heavy iMac computers.

"We will bend and twist product development as technology moves us," Tosolt said. "We are a mounting solutions company. There will always be a need to make more ergonomic and useful technology products that are being developed out there."

In 2006, the company opened a subsidiary in Denmark, Innovative Europe. This year, the company opened a subsidiary in Brazil and also opened distribution in Africa and Australia. Innovative Office Products has become a truly global operation. Most of the company's products are assembled in Easton, PA. ☛

