



INNOVATION: FROM LAB TO REALITY - PART ONE

The word “innovation” is one we strongly believe in because it implies not a goal but everything that gets us to that goal – plus, it never ends; change is constant. There are creative minds working in university and research labs all around the world on a continuous quest, people filled with new ideas and how to make them reality. What’s going on behind the scenes, and what can our new realities perhaps become? Here’s some food for thought:

1. **Pseudo-tasting Coffee:** Like your coffee dark roasted and tasting gutsy? Unfortunately, major producers want a more uniform taste to service more of the mass market. The best beans are now shipped in vacuum-sealed bags, not burlap, and coffee roasters make that cup taste like berries or toasted almonds. Dark roast evens out flavors and hides flaws so coffee will “lighten” up and take on other flavors.
2. **Sensory Underwear:** Finnish company *Myontec* has developed and started to market underwear embedded with sensors that measure your muscle activity; athletes and coaches are the first “guinea pigs” for the clothing. Data is analyzed and lets you know how mobile or immobile you are.....talk about your conscience telling you to work out more!
3. **Electric Clothing:** *Wake Forest University* (North Carolina) scientists have developed fabric converts temperature differences into electricity. So a shirt’s temp can vary 10 degrees from armpit to cuff, the result being you could power up your MP3 without budging. A mobile phone’s case lined in this fabric could increase its charge by 15% by using the heat from your pants pocket.
4. **Maximum Multi-Tasking:** Monitors everywhere are a nuisance – laptop, tablet, phone – so spunky design firm *Frog Design* (NY) envisions entire rooms being made of tactile screens. So the morning news is read right on the kitchen counter and e-mails answered on a cabinet door. The best part is when finished, one swipe erases it all!
5. **Ergonomic Computing:** *Philips Electronics* (NL) giant is working on a monitor with built-in sensors that detect whether the PC user is sitting too close, too far, with neck tilted and so on, positions that invariably lead to medical difficulties. When the data is analyzed, the user is told how to reposition to attain correct ergonomics.....as well as let you know when you need to get up for a break.
6. **Commuter Gaming:** Game addicts could one day thank Chinese industrial designer Jiang Qian who has come up with a subway/bus hang strap that doubles as a video game. With buttons on the sides, the user controls movements by simply twisting the handle and keeping your balance while the vehicle is in motion could be part of the game itself.
7. **Smart Shopping:** *Chaotic Moon Labs* (Texas) are testing an intuitive physical shopping cart that utilizes the cart’s computer and Microsoft’s Kinect-motion sensor technology. The cart inputs your list, guides you through the store, scans and finalizes your purchase...no checkout line!

There’s more, so check out next month’s article!