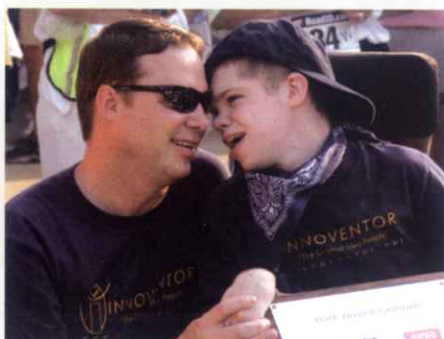


SBA HONORS *innovator* *founder*



ABOVE: *Innovator founder Kent Schien and his son Alan.*

Kent Schien (BSME 1981), founder and president of Innovator, Inc., an engineering consulting firm, has been named the 2006 Region VII Subcontractor of the Year by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA).

In making the award, SBA administrator Hector Barreto said, "Your hard work, innovative ideas and dedication to your community have made you a success in your business, and SBA is pleased to be able to recognize you for these achievements."

It is the first national award Innovator has received, Schien said. "It really feels wonderful to know that the team that we've put together has the caliber of people who deserve that kind of recognition."

Innovator provides systems integration, packaging, testing, instrumentation, controls, product development, and engineering services to customers in a variety of industries, including aerospace, military, medical, pharmaceutical, transportation and renewable energy. The company, which Schien founded in his basement after 14 years with McDonnell Douglas and LaBarge Products, celebrated its 10th anniversary in January 2006. He attributes Innovator's success to a simple guiding philosophy: always deliver more than you promise.

"We'll do little things, such as giving customers software subroutines in control packages that allow them to do diagnostics that we feel they might need. Even when they make change orders to a project, we work very hard to keep to the original schedule," Schien said.

In addition to "deliver more," Innovator operates by another constant: there has to be something more than money at the end of a job—a problem solved, a significant improvement made, a societal need filled. He cites as a recent example

Innovator's involvement in the "swine manure to crude oil project" being led by the University of Illinois Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. His company is working to refine and adapt its patented air scrubber to reduce hog farm emissions to zero at the property line. Innovator has also produced a next-generation glucose monitor that uses fiber-optic technology to determine glucose levels. It works with edema fluids in the first two layers of skin, so there's no sensation of pain and no blood drawn.

"These are classic projects that Innovator would take on because they answer tremendous societal needs," Schien said. "These are the kind of projects that I really think are cool."

Innovator also has been named to the Greater St. Louis Top 50 Companies by the Regional Commerce and Growth Association four years in a row. Schien may be proudest, however, of being named 2004 Exceptional Parent of the Year by *Exceptional Parent* magazine in recognition of more than 20 years of work with Easter Seals at local, regional and national levels. His only child, Alan, developed muscular dystrophy before he was three years old. It changed life forever, Schien said, and made him a committed advocate for children with disabilities, as well as a tireless volunteer in fundraising events. It also inspired him to foster an organizational culture of giving back to the community at Innovator, which sponsors four community events every year.

"This whole experience has been a tremendous benefit for me, both in business and in keeping my perspective," Schien said. "I was given quite a gift when I was given my little angel."

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