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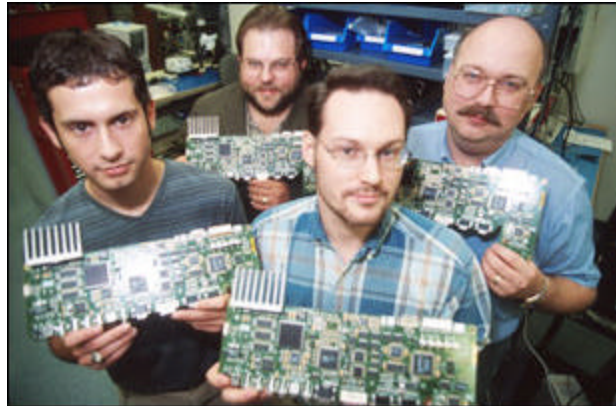
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COMPANY CULTURE
OPINION



COURTNEY PERRY

Paragon's electronics paved the way for 3M's new display system.

Paragon helps 3M churn out next-generation projector

6/18/2001

By [Scott Boyter](#)

Paragon Innovations Inc. of Plano (www.paragoninnovations.com) contributed the lion's share of electronics found in a new display system from 3M Corp. The system is designed to eliminate projector frustrations shared by just about everybody who has ever given a presentation.

The system, unveiled June 13 in Las Vegas, will supposedly put an end to the days of presenters having to be extra cautious where they stand, lest half of the screen's contents end up plastered across their bodies. The 3M Wall Display System is expected to be available in a handful of markets starting in September, and in Dallas in October or November. Financial terms of the development contract between **Paragon** and 3M were not disclosed.

"This is a wall-mounted system with the image projected from above the height of the speaker," said Mike Wilkinson, **Paragon's** founder and chief executive. "You can practically stand in front of the screen — it's optically challenging to project from the top of the image.



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"We provided some pretty innovative electronics," Wilkinson said. "Other companies did the mechanical and industrial design and optics, and 3M orchestrated the whole thing."

The screen measures 60 inches diagonally and can double as a dry erase and digital whiteboard. Speakers are located at the top corners of the unit, the video source for which can be a television, DVD player or a VCR. A mechanical arm at the top of the unit swings out to project the image onto the screen.

"It's a big, versatile flat panel, like a rear-projected (television)," Wilkinson said. "You don't just see a cheesy whiteboard. Nothing can get in the way of the image — that was never possible before."

The 3M system will initially be marketed toward corporations to put in their boardrooms, then eventually to smaller enterprises for use in conference rooms. Ultimately the product could find its way into classrooms and homes as well, although no one from 3M would guess as to when that may occur.

"This is (eventually) going to be my new TV set," Wilkinson said. "It's not as good as HDTV (high definition television) but it's close. It's basically a large computer monitor."

"In one sense it's not new, while on the flip side it's totally new," he said. "This is professional and slick."

Steve Saxe, project manager of the 3M Wall Display, said the St. Paul, Minnesota-based company chose **Paragon** for its experience in a wide range of electronics products and its attention to detail. He did not divulge how much the system would cost.

"We bring together a large diversity of technologies to make presentation products — a lot of expertise that no one can bring together under one roof," Saxe said.

"Part of the reason we chose **Paragon** was they're in Dallas, making day trips easy in case we had to take care of problems," he said. "But they also have a staff of trained and disciplined engineers able to take this kind of project on. They have a rigorous design philosophy, and that was really a critical piece for us."

Paragon, founded in 1990, develops systems used in several industries, including the semiconductor, medical and Internet industries. **Paragon**'s 18 employees are involved in electronic hardware and software design as well as electronics manufacturing. Among the products the company has helped design are cardiac output monitors, miniaturized insulin pumps, underwater robotics systems and wireless Internet appliances.

"This (the 3M display system) is some pretty pioneering stuff we've been working on for (more than) a year," Wilkinson said. "It was definitely a team effort that no individual company could have completed."

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