SAMPLE

AMERICAN INNOVATORS

If the number of patents is indicative of innovation, American companies are still holding their own

	Rank Among Top 50 Patent Winners Worldwide	Number of Patents	
1	IBM	3,277	1
2	Hewlett-Packard	1,780	4
3	Micron Technology	1,761	5
4	Intel	1,604	7
5	General Electric	978	14
6	Texas Instruments	915	16
7	Advanced Micro Devices	803	20
8	Eastman Kodak	714	25
9	Sun Microsystems	679	27
10	Agilent Technologies	651	28
11	Microsoft	629	29
12	Motorola	567	30
13	Delphi Technologies	552	31
14	Lucent Technologies	546	33
15	Honeywell	536	34

SOURCE: IFI Claims Patent Services

That Headache May Come From Your Screen

ERGONOMICS Headaches. Tired eyes. Neck and shoulder pain. Sure, you've been logging lots of time at the office lately, and you figure you're feeling the stresses and strains associated with all that hard work. But if you spend hours each day staring at a computer screen, you might wind up suffering from computer vision syndrome (CVS).

The above symptoms "result from how our eyes focus—or more accurately don't focus—on a computer screen," says Jon Torrey, an entrepreneur. In the '80s, Torrey was doing some product development work with engineers who were heavy computer users; they often complained about eyestrain and headaches. Their gripes got Torrey thinking about what happens when people spend hours each day looking at computer screens. He applied his curiosity to research by teaming up with an optometrist to create a diagnostic tool that simulates how eyes focus on a computer screen. Today, Torrey is president and CEO of Prio, a small company that he founded to develop and market tools to diagnose CVS.

As Torrey explains, the lens in the human cornea focuses on objects by changing shape, a process that is essentially made easier when objects have distinct, defined edges. On computer screens, the pixels used to create images, whether it's text, photos or graphics, have fuzzy, ill-defined edges. Therefore, says Torrey, computer users are constantly yet imperceptibly focusing and refocusing their eyes; such ongoing efforts cause eyestrain and ultimately CVS. The discomforts of CVS, says Torrey, invariably end up taking a toll on employee productivity.

To solve the problem of CVS, computer users often need corrective lenses specifically prescribed for computer viewing, and that's where Torrey sees a promising business opportunity. In 1993, Prio launched its first CVS testing device and began selling it to optometrists. The test takes about three minutes to administer and usually costs an extra $10. To date, says Torrey, Prio has sold its tool to 10 percent of the optometry market. Also Prio recently joined other lens manufacturers by jumping into the market of selling frames and lenses just for computer users. *–Megan Santosus*

Prio's diagnostic test for computer vision syndrome

PHOTO COURTESY OF PRIO