



[Left to right, standing]: Company founders Sean Anderson and Bill Riley with Ferris [seated].

SPARK Engineering

Bruce Ferris already knows what your next must-have product will look like—and how it will work.

Ferris is project manager and principal of SPARK Engineering. An engineer-led product development firm, SPARK integrates design, engineering, and manufacturing to help clients take inventions from concept to production. Sean Anderson and Bill Riley founded SPARK in 1997 and recruited Ferris in 2001.

He and his colleagues take pride in being easy to work with and cost-effective. “We strive to tailor our process around the clients needs, not the other way around,” says Ferris.

When Richmond-based Tridium created software that integrates multiple HVAC controls into a single platform that can be man-

aged over the Internet, they turned to SPARK for user-friendly enclosures and hardware that could withstand factory and mechanical-room conditions.

When National Optronics created the 5T, a state-of-the-art lens design and frame tracing system, they needed expertise in industrial and plastic part design. SPARK developed a modern aesthetic and visual design language for the 5T and gave it a small footprint, user-friendly features, and a cost-effective DFM&A (design for manufacturing and assembly).

About half of SPARK’s clients are from the industrial and medical sectors. SPARK is also a sponsor of the Virginia Biosciences Development Center. But that doesn’t mean all of their projects are big.

SPARK produced Barbara Bennett’s Mineral Case, a sleek organizer and travel case for mineral make up jars. And inventor Mike Bucci hired SPARK to implement his Painter’s Pyramid, a set of plastic triangles that allow you to paint all sides of an object without waiting for the paint to dry.

Ferris sees brainstorming and face-to-face collaboration as key to SPARK’s effectiveness.

“We can’t be the company we want to be by just talking to clients on the phone. Sometimes the best ideas grow out of the wacky ones. A simple gesture gives you a clue about the shape or function of the client’s product. Ideas build on each other, but you have to be in the same room for that to happen.”