

# Inventor has right touch

Holographic switch has many uses in germ world

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Updated: 09/01/2009 08:11:06 PM EDT



R. Doug McPheters has developed a magic touch over the years.

Recently, the Stamford resident and founder of HoloTouch Inc. created a holographic switch that is opening new doors for him -- literally.

"This has the same function as an ordinary switch but you don't have to worry about what the people before you had on their hands," McPheters said, of the roughly 2-inch-wide floating image, which sends an infrared signal to a power source upon passing a finger through it. "This has endless possibilities as a switch."

The holographic switch can be used with 110- or 220-volt electric doors needing as much as 8 amperes of power, said McPheters, 66, who has been working on the hologram's development since 1992.

"It's meant to be versatile," he said, adding that it greatly reduces the spread of germs by eliminating human contact. "This switch will probably be installed on the doors of operating rooms so that doctors won't have to touch anything."

McPheters said he has entered into a licensing agreement with Italian technology firm TecnoRS Srl to use the technology in several control panels, such as ATMs.

"The things that live on those screens can kill a maggot," said McPheters, who in 2005 created Beam One, a holographic keyboard for computers. "Part of this project is to put this in front of companies so that they can make the leap with it to their own products."

McPheters said his inspiration for creating holograms came from a novel

he has been working on about a superhero who runs a loan-sharking operation in the former Soviet Union.

"He has a computer that uses a hologram," said McPheters, who filed his first hologram patent in 1993. "Since then, I've had a number of patents on the sophisticated improvements."

Not including installation, the holographic switch costs about \$275 to the end-user, said McPheters, who is working with the Connecticut Technology Council in East Hartford in marketing the device.

Before HoloTouch, McPheters ran a law practice for 25 years in Manhattan after serving as a chief engineer on a diesel-electric submarine.

HoloTouch is one of many fledgling technology firms that need help in attaining success for the sake of the state's economic future, said Matthew Nemerson, president of the Connecticut Technology Council.

"Our role is to figure out the ones we should be paying attention to and then help them blossom," he said, adding that HoloTouch's holographic switch merits that attention. "You know someone's going to make this work."

The development of novel products such as those by HoloTouch is critical to the region's economy, said Joseph McGee, vice president of public policy and programs for the Business Council of Fairfield County.

"That's the kind of innovation we want," he said.