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## 2010 Minneapolis / St. Paul Business Journal Fast 50 Fastest Growing Private Companies

Selling office supplies is not as cut and dry as it sounds for **Jennifer Smith**. It's an industry desperately in need for better customer care, making the potentially miserable experience enjoyable, Smith said. She embraced that philosophy when she started the firm almost a decade ago, and now it's one of the Twin Cities' fastest-growing private companies.

From 2007 to 2009, Innovative Office Solutions' revenue increased almost 34 percent, with 2009 sales hitting nearly \$20 million. With 20 sales representatives all over Minnesota, Innovative Office Solutions prides itself on the face-to-face relationships it's able to maintain with all its clients, Smith said.

Each business client also is assigned a customer-service representative. "The relationship is what our whole company is built on, and we feel that is very important for today's customer," she said.

Innovative Office Solutions carries 40,000 products ranging from supplies to furniture to technologies. The Minnesota Wild has been a client of Innovative Office Solutions since 2002. It's a relationship that has paid off for the hockey team, which found the Burnsville company when it was unhappy with another officesupply distributor, said **Tim Wolfram**, facility manager for the Wild. "They immediately offered a personal touch,"

Wolfram said of Innovative Office Solutions. "They were interested in making us successful, instead of just making themselves money."

Housing the office supplies are 31 distribution centers dispersed throughout the United States. Smith said these strategically placed centers make it possible to guarantee free next-day delivery. Smith attributes Innovative Office Solution's success to a number of factors; however, one main reason was a decision she made in October 2008 when it was apparent a full-blown recession was going to hit. Instead of downsizing, Smith added 25 percent to her work force, bringing the number of employees to 60, while also investing in the company's technology to better serve clients, Smith said. It was a move that paid off with a nearly 23 percent increase in revenue in 2009. "We really bring our customers a great way to save time, space and money," Smith said. Going forward, Innovative Office Solutions plans to expand its stock into various janitorial supplies, break room supplies and print management, which is an area of great potential, Smith said.

"Basically, if it is in your office, we are going to have it," she said.

