# **Meadowlark Optics**

Industry Entrepreneur Experience

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### **Prior Experience**

Farming and ranching



Solar physicist – 13 years

No Experience in a for profit manufacturing company

### Founding

1979
One product – Pockels cell

- Location Spare bedroom
- Part time activity

### Early Growth ♦ Full time – 1981 Funding of \$100,000 ♦ Moved to barn and chicken coop -1983 No pay for 3 years ♦ 80 to 100 hours per week for me.

### Filter Concept

### **Early Product Line**

- Pockels cells
- Dichroic polarizers
- True zero order retarders
- Achromatic retarders

### **Product Line Growth**

- Liquid crystal variable retarders
- Spatial light modulators
- Tunable bandpass and notch filters
- Polarimeters

### Markets Served



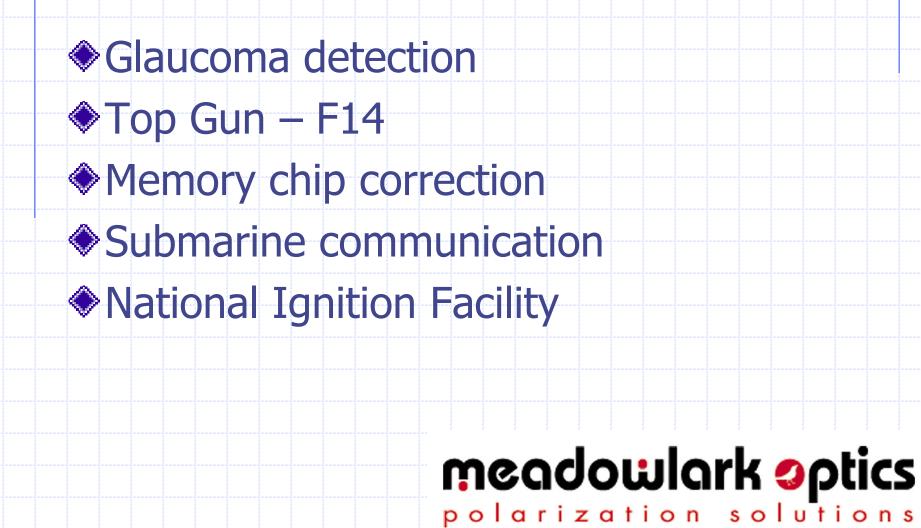
### SBIR's

#### 10 grants

#### Total value of almost \$3 million

#### Key supplement to internal funding for new product development

### **Application Examples**



### The Technology Bubble

- Heavy order load for telecom
- Order backlog disappeared almost
  - overnight
- Contraction from 45 to 25 people

### **Picture Today**



- Annual sales above \$2 million and growing
- Increased dependence on public sector orders
- ♦ 10% to 20% of orders for export
- Crushing paperwork burden

### What I've Learned

Niche product companies can bootstrap their way to success.

It's exciting and a bunch of work!

Hiring good people is everything.

Growing and employing people is very satisfying.

### Advice

- Decide if you have the drive and energy to do this.
- Respect the disciplines of business.
- Select an appropriate funding model but always be a penny pincher.
- Use SBIR's sparingly.