

office **DNA**
Test Drive



Connexion

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By **ROB KIRKBRIDE**





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When I was a kid, one of my favorite toys was my Steve Austin action figure from the “Six Million Dollar Man” television show. You could look through the back of the action figure’s head and virtually see through his “bionic” eye. But the feature I liked the most was the bionic arm that worked on a ratchet and lifted a plastic cube in the shape of a heavy weight.

Yes, a bionic arm sounds good since I often feel like I don’t have enough hands. I often find myself sitting in an office chair with a hot espresso in one hand, my iPad in the other and no way of controlling the tablet. I can’t open an app, swipe the screen or type a message.

I supposed I could plop the iPad on my desk if I had room for anything with all the clutter. So I need something to hold my iPad while I sit at my disorganized desk. Steve Austin’s bionic arm would do.

Until Google builds my bionic arm, I have to make do with other means to hold my iPad while I sit and work. I’ve found a solution in a nifty product from Neutral Posture, the Connexion Arm. The Connexion Arm takes your tablet out of your hands and really lets you work while sitting.

Connexion is an articulating arm that is connected directly to your chair (in the case of my test model, the Neutral Posture 2000 Series. I’ll get to a review of the chair shortly). While much has been made of the Steelcase Gesture Chair for allowing the user to get in the right posture to handle high-tech devices, the Connexion Arm goes one step further, allowing the user to go hands-free.

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lived up to the expectations I had after playing with it in the Neutral Posture showroom.

The trick in any successful arm created to hold technology is designing it to be easily maneuvered into a comfortable position, yet making it sturdy enough to stay in place while it is in use. The Connexion Arm works flawlessly in that regard. In fact, the Connexion Arm is so flexible in terms of positioning that it works for both sitting and standing up.

The arm is plenty long and I could easily adjust it to any position I wanted. Still, while the iPad was in place (I was using an iPad 2) the arm didn’t jiggle or move. The Connexion Arm was rock solid. I’ve had it for several months and the adjustability and stability has held up perfectly.

To use the Connexion Arm, you simply slide your iPad (or other tablet device) into the tablet holder. The holder uses a simple friction connection to stay in place. The rubber pads on the tablet holder kept the iPad safe in the portrait or landscape position. My iPad 2 fit a bit loosely in the holder, but not enough that I was worried it would fall out. I’m not sure how it would work with the even-thinner iPad Air. A swivel on the back of the tablet holder allows the user to twist and turn the iPad into any position that is comfortable.

The Connexion Arm also stays out of the way enough that I could use a laptop tray on my lap to hold a keyboard. That way, I could use my iPad as a mobile laptop (a setup I used to write this review).

While it stays out of the way when you are working on it, the same can’t be said about the Connexion Arm



when it is not in use. When the chair it is attached to spins, the arm swings wide. I have a few notches in the drywall in my office from the arm extending when I swiveled around. The arm folds into itself fairly tightly, but it would be nice to have a clip of some sort to hold it stowed in place when not in use. It can be mounted on the left, right or both sides of the chair.

The Connexion Arm is a great product for someone like me who likes to get away from the desk to work. I work almost half the time on my iPad now, a percentage that is likely to increase as products make it easier to do so. I can imagine an office design where a half-dozen chairs with Connexion Arms flanked a fireplace. It would be a nearly perfect, inexpensive collaborative office area.

The Connexion Arm I tested was attached to Neutral Posture's 2000 Series mesh back chair. While it is not the prettiest chair I've ever tested, it is a workhorse that I sat in for many 10-hour days in comfort. Once it was dialed in right, it was a comfortable sit. I like that Neutral Posture is not afraid to use a generous amount of foam in the seat.

The mesh back is adequate and the independent lum-

bar provided good support. I like a lot of back support in my chairs and the 2000 Series fit me well. Its design is straightforward; the 2000 Series is not going to win any beauty pageants, but it isn't ugly either. In automotive terms, the Series 2000 is like a Honda Odyssey minivan — it's not the kind of car you take to the racetrack, but it is damn comfortable for a drive cross-country.

My main gripe with the 2000 Series is its maddeningly clunky adjustments. There are paddles, levers and knobs jutting from every direction out of the bottom of the chair and none of them are intuitive. The mesh back is adjustable as well, but I found that when I pulled the chair around by the back, it adjusted on its own. I had a hard time figuring out the adjustments and I've sat in a few chairs in my day. It would be difficult for an average office dweller to find the right setting.

That being said, when the chair is dialed in right, it is a satisfying sit, comfortable for long, intense work sessions in front of the screen. With a little work on the chair adjustments, the Neutral Posture 2000 Series would be a first-class ride. 

