Superflex Raises $9.6MM to Introduce Powered Clothing: Apparel to Enhance Strength, Mobility, and Core Wellness

Global Brain Leads Series A Round with Contribution from Horizons Ventures, Root Ventures, and Sinovation Ventures

MENLO PARK, Calif. — Dec. 20, 2016 — Superflex, a powered clothing company spun out of SRI International, today announced it has raised a $9.6MM Series A round, led by Japanese venture firm Global Brain, marking their first lead investment in the US, with additional participation from seed investors Horizons Ventures and Root Ventures, and new investment from Sinovation Ventures. Zak Murase of Global Brain and Wendy Yu of Horizons will join Manish Kothari, President, SRI Ventures, and Rich Mahoney, CEO of Superflex, on the board.

Superflex has hired a team of leaders in textiles, industrial design, robotics, biomechanics, and data science to develop the new category of Powered Clothing: lightweight, connected apparel, comfortably worn under any outfit, with integrated electric “muscles” that add intelligent wearable strength and natural mobility to muscles and joints, enabling everyone — from seniors to athletes to people with a wide range of physical disabilities — to achieve their full physical potential.

Superflex technology was developed at SRI for a DARPA-funded program to reduce injury risk and enhance soldier endurance while carrying heavy loads. Recognizing its profound application beyond the military, Superflex spun out of SRI to explore the technology for a wide range of consumer products. While the potential applications of powered clothing are broad — from sports and recreation to apparel and healthcare — the company is initially focusing on the aging market because of its size and need. This is reinforced by the fact that more than one-third of seniors have a mobility limitation and most tech purchases are made by those over 45.

In the coming months, Superflex will unveil its initial product concept: a powered suit designed for those experiencing mobility difficulties later in life, or challenging work environments, to provide core wellness support for a wearer’s torso, hips, and legs. Reacting to the body’s natural movements, the suit will provide power lift to naturally complement one’s strength during the act of standing up, sitting down, or staying upright.

“We’ve looked at dozens of companies across the world for one that would truly stand to benefit the Japanese market, and this is the only one that has met our criteria,” said
Yasuhiko Yurimoto, CEO of Global Brain. “Superflex’s new category of ‘powered clothing’ represents, in our view, the future of movement, with profound physical and emotional benefits to offer global society.” In addition to its investment, Global Brain will work with Superflex to set up a Japan office and leverage its network to assist the company in entering the domestic market.

“Our origins are in robotics, our future is as an apparel company,” said Rich Mahoney, co-founder and CEO of Superflex, who previously served as the Director of Robotics at SRI International. “We’ll combine comfort and style with power assist for clothes that look good and help people feel good. Our powered clothing will give people the ability to move more freely, to gain strength and confidence, to be more injury-free in the workplace, to achieve higher levels of wellness and social engagement, and to stay in the home longer.”

About Superflex

Superflex has hired a team of leaders in textiles, industrial design, robotics, biomechanics, and data science to develop the new category of Powered Clothing: lightweight, connected apparel, comfortably worn under any outfit, with integrated electric “muscles” that add intelligent wearable strength and natural mobility to muscles and joints, enabling everyone — from seniors to athletes to chronically ill children — to achieve their full physical potential. Superflex technology was originally developed at SRI International for a DARPA-funded program to reduce injury risk and enhance soldier endurance. Recognizing its profound application beyond the military, Superflex spun out of SRI to explore the technology for a wide range of consumer applications, starting with the aging market because of the size of the opportunity and the need this population faces, Superflex is initially focused on the aging market.

Media Contact:

Nora Murray
SoundBite Communications
419.250.0016