

## Company helps those who've lost upper limbs rebuild lives

By Lora Hines December 12, 2014



Scott Spring, a prosthetist at Advanced Arm Dynamics, specializes in upper limbs. The company recently opened an office in Houston.



Scott Carriker, with his new bionic hands, says, "I didn't want to change the way I carried myself." He couldn't imagine relying on others to help him dress.

Scott Carriker was still in the hospital in Houston recovering from the work accident that resulted in the partial amputation of both his arms when he learned about and got on the phone with Advanced Arm Dynamics, a family-owned, California-based company specializing in upper limb prosthetics.

A big and burly utility lineman with a personality to match, Carriker couldn't imagine relying on others to help him dress or care for himself. The patient testimonials he found on the company's website had him demanding a company representative meet with him in his hospital room so he could regain functionality and independence as quickly as possible.

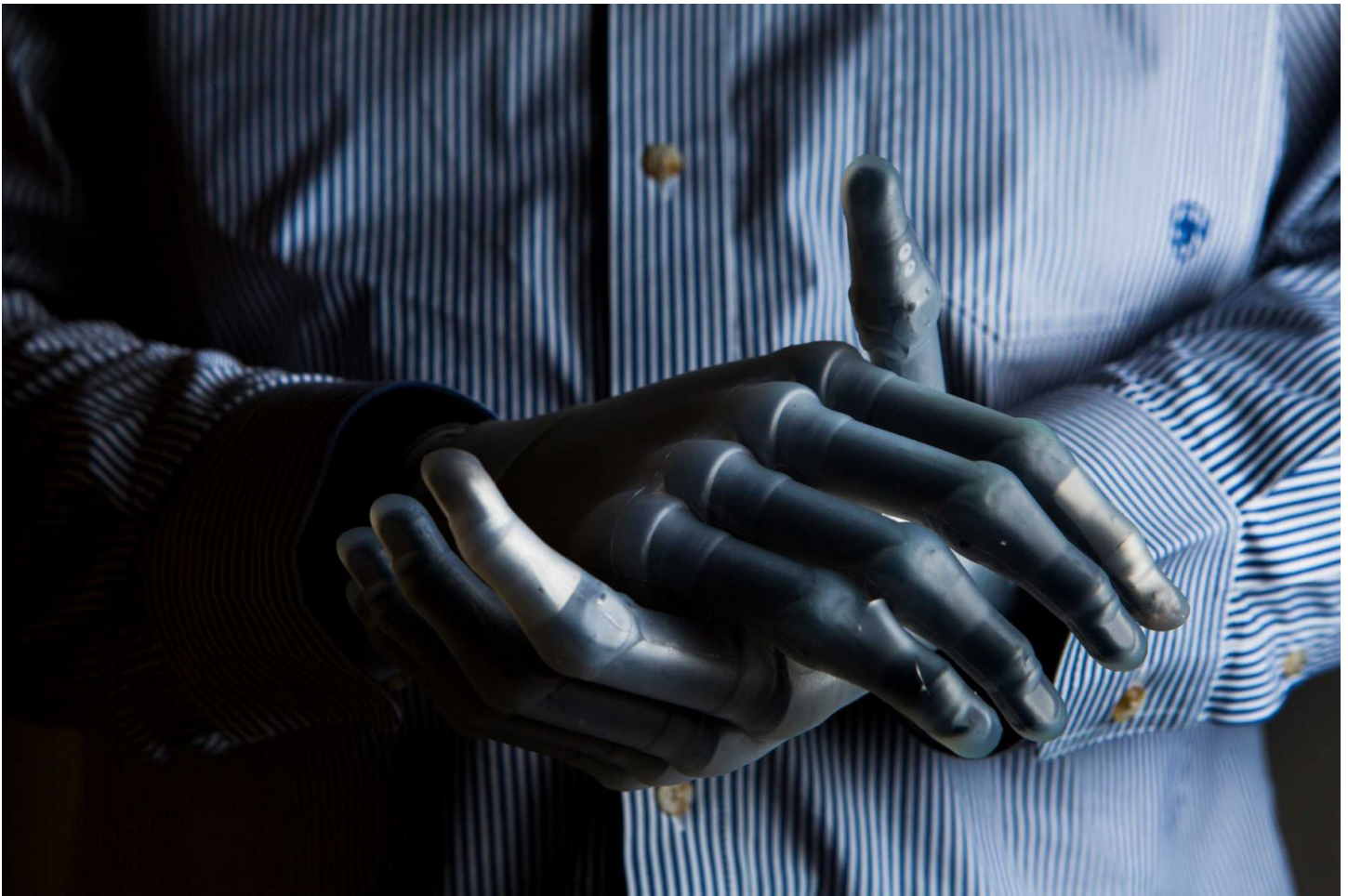
"I couldn't do anything," said Carriker, 54, who had been injured when he came in contact with a live electrical wire while on a job in Baytown. "I couldn't use the bathroom by myself. Now, that's bleak. You want to know you have a life beyond that."

There he was Thursday, at Advanced Arm's recently opened Houston office near the Texas City Medical Center, waving his new bionic hands as he spoke.

So was prosthetist Scott Spring, an upper limb specialist who had responded to Carriker's first call. He spent hours evaluating the patient's needs, expectations and capabilities to recommend the best options. It took months to tweak the custom molds he produced in his office to ensure the prosthetics fit perfectly.

Spring wants to fit patients for prosthetics that help them meet their goals - and not end up unused in a closet. A therapist also works with Spring's clients to ensure they can use their prosthetics.

"It's all about expectations," Spring said as he described the devices offered to patients, including Carriker's bionic hands, which can cost about \$100,000. "It's important for us to facilitate life."



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Advanced Arm, with six offices nationwide, is a 16-year-old privately run company that focuses solely on upper limb prosthetics, even though almost all amputations involve legs, company spokeswoman Carol Sorrels said.

Company officials decided to expand to Houston to capitalize on its size, as well as its ties to energy production and health care. Many of the estimated 200,000 people who have lost upper limbs are men between 20 and 45 years old who work in manufacturing, including the energy sector, Sorrels said.

“Even if we get someone who needs an upper and a lower prosthetic, we won’t fit the leg,” she said. “It’s a different business model.”

Until its Houston expansion, Advanced Arm has only one Texas office, in Irving. Sorrels wouldn’t say how many patients the company expects to see at the Houston office or how much revenue it could generate.

Advanced Arm Dynamics works with researchers at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore as well as other research organizations to develop and test the latest prosthetic technologies, she said.

Patients find Advanced Arm through doctor referrals or, like Carriker, through its website, Sorrels said.

Carriker, who was injured in April, recently returned to work and traveled for business. He considers his prosthetics as tools he uses to accomplish tasks.

“I didn’t want to change the way I carried myself,” Carriker said as he demonstrated how he uses his prosthetic hands and hooks. “You have to learn how to do things. Put me in a room and let the wrestling match begin. I might come out sweating. You just have to figure it out.”