

# Retail Innovation Shout Out: Osprey Revolutionizes the Backpack

by Al Meyers

I recently saw a presentation by [Osprey Packs](#) at a retail conference and was impressed with their approach to innovation. In fact, their mission statement: “to create innovative high-performance gear that reflects our love of adventure and our devotion to the outdoors” puts innovation at the forefront of all they’ve done for more than 40 years of making quality, highly functional products for outdoor enthusiasts.

Their head of product management, Erik Hamerschlag, shared with me that hiking trails and wilderness areas serve as their R&D lab where they see what could work better in real world user situations. A key breakthrough innovation, their AirSpeed™ Suspension backpack, is designed to make heavy loads feel lighter, making the user’s long trail hikes a more pleasurable experience. Old pack designs, for decades, relied upon positioning the load primarily on the hips to leverage leg strength. Osprey found that by using a ‘tensioned mesh panel’ they could more evenly distribute the weight of the load across the entire back using ANTI-GRAVITY™ technology. Their ‘breathable’ custom mesh conforms to the back by pulling seamlines in different directions to naturally contour to the body while keeping the user cool.

A key to their innovation success and product quality is having a team in Asia near their factories who visit daily. Their own sampling and design center is nearby so they can do their own sewing and construction of new products prior to mass production; all of which saves time and increases quality. Their “All Mighty Guarantee” lifetime warranty states that Osprey will repair any damage or defect for any reason free of charge.

This summer, Osprey will launch their next innovation - the revolutionary new Super Ultra Light pack weighing in at under 2 lbs. I’m excited to see how Osprey will continue to keep innovation at the forefront of all they do and produce.



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