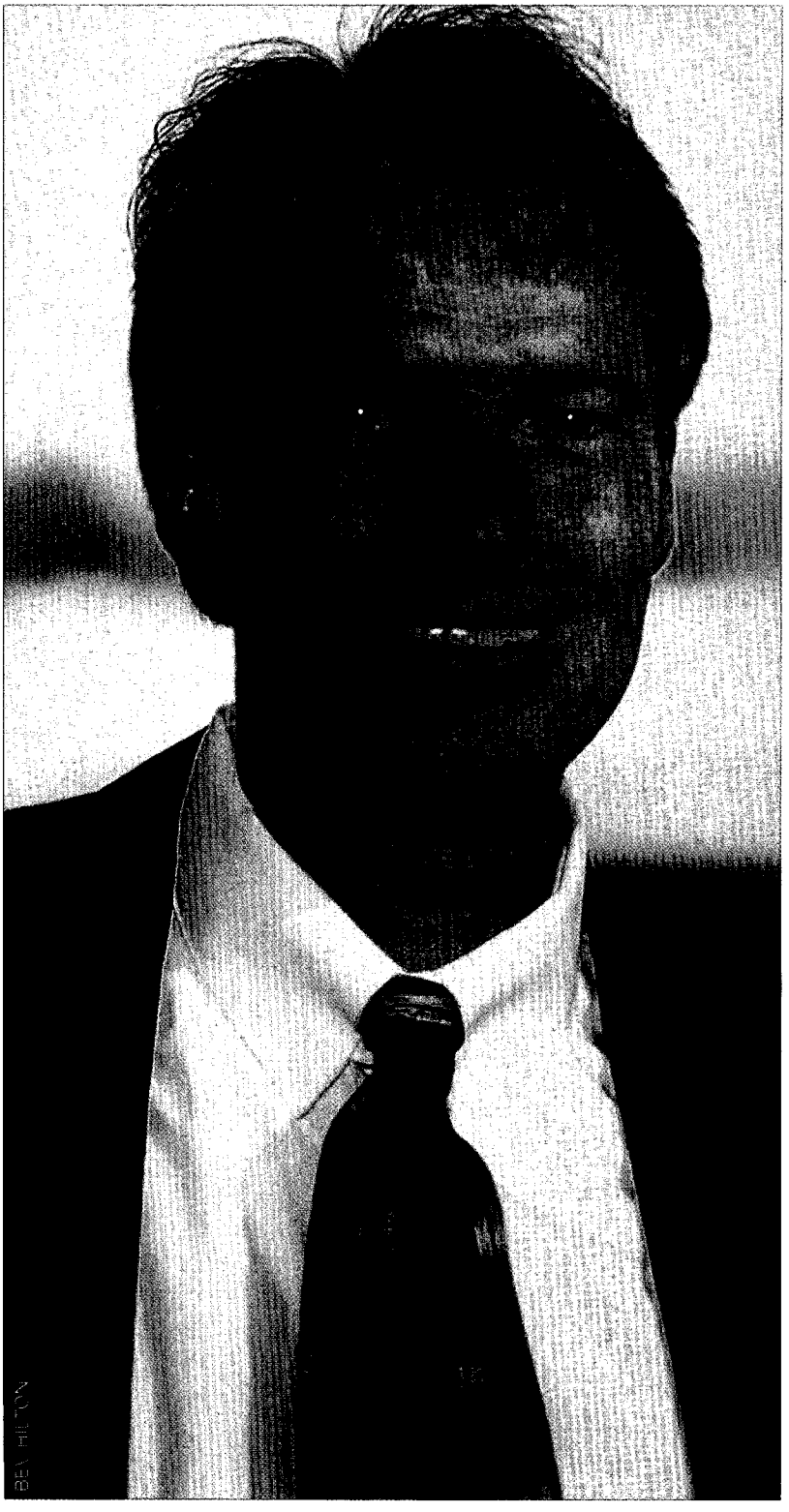
PROGRAMMED FOR SUCCESS



Mike Strand's name may not be up in lights, but his company's logo appears on the digital signs that StrandVision has deployed on CVTC's campuses.

Strand, the Menomonie-based firm's founder and CEO, developed and patented StrandVision's Web-based digital signage software that enables users to create and, via the Internet, display messages and other content on LCD and plasma displays, computer screens, and Websites. Founded in 2003, the company's signs can target viewers in a variety of settings, from banks, grocery stores, health clubs, hotels, and medical offices to employee break rooms, workplace lobbies, and other gathering places. The content can include anything from daily schedules to community information and campus events to news updates.

Strand, who earned degrees in Industrial Electronic Technology and Data Processing at CVTC's main campus in Eau Claire, didn't necessarily set out to make his mark on the college. But he does take pride in having his efforts represented on multiple flat-screen monitors there, as well as at the CVTC campuses in Chippewa Falls, Menomonie, and River Falls, and at the West Campus Emergency Service Education Center in Eau Claire.

"It's great to provide services to as many people as you can, but especially nice to know that the young generation sees what the old generation can do," he says. "Hopefully it gives them a little bit of a road map. Maybe they can go off and do their own thing as well."

Hard work, quick results

Strand certainly knows something about doing his own thing. While finishing his studies at CVTC, Strand began his first job in 1982, working at nearby Cray Research. As a programmer analyst, he eventually worked directly for founder Seymour Cray, who is widely regarded as the father of supercomputing.

While at Cray, Strand found programming—which he had studied in numerous classes at CVTC—much more

Entrepreneur Mike Strand traces his success to CVTC, where the results are now on display in the form of digital signs powered by his patented software.

BY TODD NELSON

interesting than working on hardware. The discovery would greatly influence his future. "You're able to see results a lot quicker with programming, often in weeks rather than months, as with hardware engineering," Strand says. "You can pretty much have results as fast as you can program."

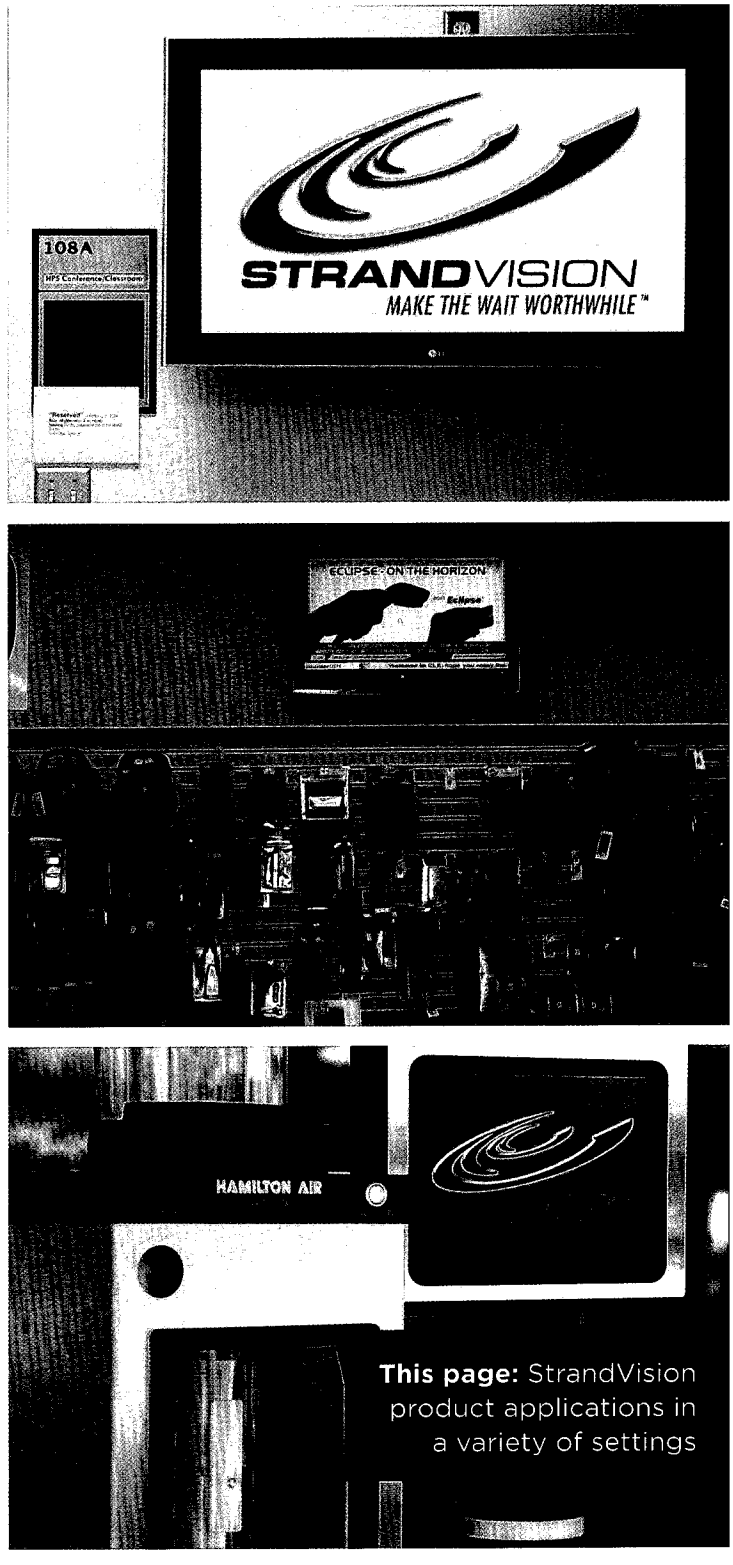
After four years at Cray, Strand spent two years as a programmer at Wisconsin-based Delta Technology International before he left to found his own business in 1988. That company was Strandware, an award-winning bar code label software firm that helped bring bar code technology to a variety of applications and users, including government agencies, labs, manufacturing facilities, and the like. The company generated over $25 million in sales over its 13 years in business, employed up to 46 people in a given year, and had a roster of big-name clients, including Wal-Mart, Exxon, Microsoft, GE, and IBM.

Next steps

After Strand sold Strandware in 2001, he began looking for his next venture. He invested several years in product development and market research before forming StrandVision in 2003. He explains that the company's unique approach reflects his long-time interest in using emerging technologies to solve complicated business challenges.

That sense of driven purpose has helped drive Strand's career. He says he chose CVTC because he could get his degrees in two years instead of four and with much more intensive, hands-on experience. The training he received at the college helped him succeed right out of school and continues to benefit him today. "To go from a blank screen to a finished program, you need a solid foundation of overall knowledge," he says. "A big part of it is knowing how to find answers to questions. CVTC gave me a lot of answers, but it also gave me the infrastructure to know there are more answers out there—if you just go find them."

PHOTOS COURTESY STRAND VISION (3)



This page: StrandVision product applications in a variety of settings