



The Future

IS HERE

TWO CENTRAL FLORIDA COMPANIES ARE MAKING BIOMETRICS AND TELEHEALTH AN EVERYDAY REALITY.

By Steve Blount and Mark Onusko



Thanks to Central Florida's fertile high tech sector, innovation is the seed that grows many local companies. Sequiam Corporation and Cnow, Inc., are but two such companies involved in bringing us into the future with innovative technologies that were fantasies of Hollywood sci-fi movies only a few years ago.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEQUIAM

FINGERPRINT FOR SUCCESS

If Nick VandenBrekel isn't at your front door yet, he will be soon. VandenBrekel is president of Orlando-based **Sequiam Corporation**, a major player in biometric security. When Harrison Ford used an iris scanner to identify human clones in the 1982 film *Blade Runner*, the idea of scanning an eye or a fingertip to verify identity was far fetched.

That was then.

Now several laptop computers use biometric scanners instead of passwords and early this year you'll be able to buy a Sequiam-designed biometric lock for your front door at the local hardware store for about \$129. No key, no combination. Just swipe your finger over the sensor and you're in.

A partnership between Sequiam and lock company Kwikset, a division of Black & Decker, will put biometric security — once the province of Homeland Security applications — literally in the hands of the average consumer.

"We think about it not just from the security standpoint, but also about convenience," VandenBrekel emphasizes. "Think about not having to carry keys. At some point in the near future most, if not all, of human transactional behavior will be authenticated through biology."

Sequiam is not only on the ground floor of a growing industry that's projected to reach \$8 billion by 2009, it built a big piece of that floor.

While its talent is largely home-grown, the company's reach extends far beyond the Metro Orlando area. In addition to the 30 employees at its headquarters near Orlando International Airport, where it does its microchip design and software, Sequiam has offices scattered across the United States and the globe — Houston, Washington, D.C., Beijing, Brussels, Cape Town — and it recently partnered with Hanyue Manufacturing in Guangzhou, China.

Sequiam has aggressively sought partners in Central Florida. The massive developer Unicorp, also headquartered in Orlando, will be using Sequiam's biometric security for at least one development. The World's Fair for Kids,

which will be held annually at the Orange County Convention Center beginning in April of this year, is using security hardware provided by Sequiam. And Sequiam buys its fingerprint sensors from AuthenTec of nearby Melbourne, Fla.

For VandenBrekel, the future for his company and the area is extremely bright: "[Five years ago] people still looked at this city as a tourist haven, giving it very little credit for its tech assets. Since then, Orlando has put itself on the map."

Plus, he adds, "I'm a firm believer that you should work somewhere where you like to live, and I like being here."

REACHING OUT TO TOUCH SOMEONE

There is something going on that is connecting Metro Orlando's Lake County to the rest of the world, literally. Mt. Dora-based **Cnow, Inc.**, is connecting people in a way that is changing lives.

In 2002, leaders from Carlton Palms Education Center, a comprehensive transitional education center that serves nearly 100 persons with developmental disabilities, conceptualized Cnow to explore ways of expanding its services through videoconferencing technologies. The result: a kind of super video conferencing system that provides high-definition picture clarity and full virtual interaction with the ability to adjust volumes, and pan and zoom cameras in remote locations. Cnow's software allows clinicians and specialists located at different locations to teach, aid and observe people with mental and behavioral challenges.

Cnow CEO Luke Baker describes their product as, "providing support to people residing in their personal homes, and also to people living in group homes under congregate care arrangements, who, to this point, haven't had this type of technology available to them. Cnow affords them



Cnow's System Architect Tim Miller and CEO Luke Baker

access to specialists across the spectrum of care."

A grant with the Celeste Foundation and a partnership with the newly formed National Institute of Telehealth (NIT) have allowed Cnow systems to be installed in homes of children with autism in a pilot program that aims to establish standard practices for the telehealth industry. Families involved in the research spend a week at the 56-acre NIT campus in Lake County for software training, as well as to participate in the development of an educational program for their child. After training they are given a computer with the software, and a camera and microphone are installed in their homes, connecting them to professional support around the clock.

"Our focus has been in serving persons with developmental disabilities and others with special needs who require a range of services that they are just not getting with enough frequency. This medium provides that bridge from the service providers to the person's home," says Baker.

The security of the network is also on the cutting edge, using encrypted video streams.

Obviously, anyone can think of a number of alternative uses for technology like this.

Baker, of course, recognizes the potential.

"There are other applications that could benefit tremendously, such as elderly care, juvenile justice, and education applications. It also has tremendous potential for training and case management." 