



## Calvin Mills Jr.

**T**he events that led to Calvin Mills Jr. opening his own business started about six years ago when a customer failed to read the fine print in a Best Buy list.

Mills was working at the electronics store when a family came in to buy a computer on sale for \$400. "I told them that was the price after the rebate, and they said the computer was too expensive for them," he said.

When the family started to walk off, Mills told them he could build a computer out of component parts and sell it for \$400.

"That's what gave me the idea I could do this for other people," says Mills, who majored in computer science, minored in business and played football at Southern University.

Opening his own business had been a longstanding ambition for Mills. While most students at Southern were wearing the standard college uniform of jeans and T-shirts to class, Mills wore it every day. "I approached school like it was a business and not playtime," he says.

For several years, Mills and his partner, Volker Gant, built computers for families, spending weekends putting together basic systems for schoolwork. In summer 2006, Mills decided to go into business for himself. "It just hit me that if I wanted to do this, I needed to make it my main thing," he says.

Two months after C&V became a full-time enterprise, Hurricane Katrina struck. Mills threw himself into studying the regulations on how to do business with government agencies. Within three days, he landed a contract to help FEMA set up a call center tracking Katrina evacuees. "The storm really gave me a push in the butt to get up and do something," he says.

In the months after Katrina, Mills worked around the clock, supplying FEMA and other agencies with computer equipment and setting up systems in Baton Rouge, New Orleans and across south Louisiana. For his work, C&V was presented with the Small Business Outstanding Performance Award from the Department of Homeland Security in 2006.

Since Katrina, Mills has wanted to diversify his business, bringing up contracts with local governments. He's also in the process of writing up EdTech, a program to teach black teenagers about careers in business and computer science. Mills says he can be a role model to young boys. Mills' father died when he was young, and he was raised in New Orleans by his mother, a schoolteacher. "I'm reliable to them, because I won't talk with a silver spoon in my mouth," he says.

Story by Timothy Brown  
Photography by Steve Delaney

**POSITION:** Chief executive officer and founder

**COMPANY:** C&V Technologies of Louisiana

**WHAT THEY DO:** Sell computers to government agencies and low-income families

**REVENUE:** \$350,000

**NEXT GOALS:** On track to break \$1 million in revenue during 2008; want to do \$10 million in business by 2012 and eventually take the company public