

Business

cars.com

TRENDING TOPICS

KWAME KILPATRICKSELFRIDGE JOBSNICKLAS LIDSTROMBRANDON INGEGETAX PROTESTSDETROIT FINANCESGOOSE ATTACK AT OSU

HomeBizBusiness

APRIL 26, 2012 AT 1:00 AM

Small business spotlight: 3-D technology use expanding

Commerce Township company is growing due to diversification

BY LAURA BLODGETT SPECIAL TO THE DETROIT NEWS 3 COMMENTS



Steve Harman, front, and Aaron Vlk demonstrate a power window portable projection system Tuesday at IGI in Commerce Township. (Bryan Mitchell / Special to The Detroit News)

Holographic images and 3-D glasses are not only fueling movie attendance but the resurgence of a Commerce Township company.

IGI is selling its large-scale, high-resolution projection systems to clients such as Boeing and General Motors Co. that use virtual reality to improve their designs and engineering and get their products quickly to market.

"Car companies are continuously trying to go to market quicker," said Pat Hernandez, founder and president of IGI. "If you can hit the market when that product is hot, you can sell more."

After [business](#) slumped during the auto industry's crisis and the recession, IGI had its best year in 2011, Hernandez said. The company plans to add

Expecting?

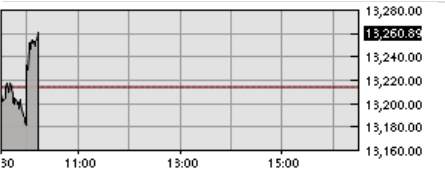
We're with you every step of the way.

Free maternity app - classes, calendars, reminders & more

Click Here

ADVERTISEMENT

Dow NYSE NASDAQ S&P 500



ADVERTISEMENT

Events Calendar

- Aziz Ansari - Buried Alive...**
Saturday, May 5, 7:00 pm
Royal Oak Music Theatre, Royal Oak
- George Clinton**
Friday, May 11, 9:00 pm
Royal Oak Music Theatre, Royal Oak

Baconfest Michigan
Saturday, Jun 2, 6:00 pm
Royal Oak Farmers Market, Royal Oak Charter Township

10 employees within the year, he said, adding that he hopes to open a satellite office on the East Coast within a couple years, in addition to an existing office in Carmel, Ind.

IGI's fortunes have grown because its [technology](#) helps its clients move beyond developing physical prototypes. Companies can look at their product inside and out in a 360-degree circumference. The quality is so refined that details such as the leather texture on the instrument panel are crystal clear, Hernandez said.

"You would swear you were looking at the real vehicle," he said.

Ford Motor Co. is using this technology in its Immersive Vehicle Environment lab, launched in 2007, which receives system support from IGI — formerly known as Immersion Graphics Inc.

In the lab, an image of a vehicle is projected out into the room and users wear special glasses that constantly change the view based on where users turn their heads. When they look behind them, for instance, they see the backseat of the car.

"It's like taking a 3-D movie one step further," said Elizabeth Baron, a Ford technical specialist in the virtual reality lab. "It's identical to you sitting in one of the cars except when you reach out to touch something nothing is there."

Ford even has a more advanced station where users can grab and feel attributes of the car, such as the virtual steering wheel.

"In an F-150, you need to feel upright, where in a Mustang, you need to feel low and angled," Baron said. "When you grab the wheel, it's a different feel."

The appeal of this technology, she said, is that it allows workers to make more adjustments while the vehicle is still in development. From designers who determine the swoop of the cockpit to engineers who make sure all mechanical aspects function properly, everyone can see how their choices really appear in a vehicle.

Using virtual tools has shaved six to 18 months off Ford's product development time and dropped the use of prototypes — which cost \$250,000 to \$500,000 each — from a minimum of four to one or two per launch, according to the Dearborn automaker.

IGI has a handful of advanced visualization competitors. But what's important to clients, Baron said, is their knowledge of the visualization system — where IGI has an edge.

"Truthfully the technology, the projector, you can probably buy off the web," she said. "It's really the expertise we are looking for — understanding how we can get the most realistic projections."

IGI's clients have grown to include military operations and even post-production companies in the movie industry, prompting Hernandez to open an office in Culver City, Calif.

But IGI has no plans to abandon Michigan, where all the company's equipment is designed and built.

"The automotive industry has driven a lot of technology in visualization and advanced design, robotics, manufacturing and [software](#)," Hernandez said. "The car companies helped us get to where we are."

IGI

Founded: 1998

Employees: 24

Contact: www.werigi.com or 248-624-6520

Strategy: Sell large-scale, high-resolution projection systems for advanced visualization applications.

Lesson for other businesses: Providing expertise to clients on how they can get the



Joan Rivers

Friday, Sep 14, 8:00 pm

Andiamo Celebrity Showroom, Warren

Add an Event || More

1
Tue

2
Wed

3
Thu

4
Fri

5
Sat

All
events

- Top events
- Music
- Sports & Outdoors
- Restaurants
- Performing Arts
- Community
- Detroit events
- Movies

Most Popular

- In photos: Chris McCosky's mock draft includes controversial pick for Lions
- Want to save Detroit? Help tear it down
- Booby traps on hiking trail found by military expert
- GE CEO defends tax rate after protesters disrupt speech
- Slugger Brad Eldred tearing it up with Mud Hens; will Tigers come calling?
- Judge Wade McCree's racy photo lays bare dilemma
- Booby traps along Utah trail targeted humans, officials say
- Pitching, hitting fail Tigers in lopsided loss to Mariners
- Lions in the market for a corner
- Royal Oak store selling records said to be from Dilla's personal collection

Events Calendar

Aziz Ansari - Buried Alive...
Saturday, May 5, 7:00 pm
Royal Oak Music Theatre, Royal Oak

George Clinton
Friday, May 11, 9:00 pm
Royal Oak Music Theatre, Royal Oak

Baconfest Michigan

Saturday, Jun 2, 6:00 pm
Royal Oak Farmers Market, Royal Oak Charter Township

Joan Rivers
Friday, Sep 14, 8:00 pm
Andiamo Celebrity Showroom, Warren

Add an Event || More

1
Tue

2
Wed

3
Thu

4
Fri

5
Sat

All
events

- Top events
- Music
- Sports & Outdoors
- Restaurants
- Performing Arts
- Community
- Detroit events
- Movies

most out of a product creates a competitive edge.

Join the Conversation

The Detroit News aims to provide a forum that fosters smart, civil discussions on the news and events that we cover. The News will not condone personal attacks, off topic posts or brutish language on our site. If you find a comment that you believe violates these standards, please click the "X" in the upper right corner of the post to report it.

POLICIES

- Community Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Service



PhotoStore

Purchase outstanding photos from Detroit's past and present

[Go to the PhotoStore](#)

Data Center



This section provides easy access to our databases, data-driven stories and interactive graphics on topics such as schools, population, crime, speed traps and golf courses.

[Explore the Data Center](#)

Your Own Business Website

Get a Free Business Web Address, Website and Listings from Google!

[GYBO.com/Michigan](#)

Starting a Business?

14 Ideas for Promoting Your Small Business - Download Our Guide Now!

[PRWeb.com](#)

On-Site Computer Repair

Fast & Convenient - Home & Office \$30 Off
Coupon Code: GOOG30

[www.bezallu.com](#)



More From Business

1:00 AM

Path clear for building revival at Capitol Park

Detroit's Downtown Development Authority Wednesday cleared the way for Lansing's Karp and Associates to renovate several publicly owned, empty buildings in the city's Capitol Park area.



1:00 AM

Mortgage defaults down 73% in Metro Detroit from year ago

1:00 AM

Small business spotlight: 3-D technology use expanding

1:00 AM

Interactive: Student loan quagmire

1:00 AM

Burger King promises cage-free chicken, pork

1:00 AM

Briefs: Coca-Cola Co. seeks approval for stock split

1:00 AM

Market watch: Apple profits propel 2% surge in stocks

More from The Detroit News

SEEN IN THE PHOTOSTORE



Purchase Detroit News images of historic events, scenes, places and people.

[Go to the PhotoStore](#)

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up for home delivery today

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER

@Chrysler posts \$473 million profit in first quarter, quadrupling year-ago numbers:
<http://t.co/Cz8weN2v>

THE DETROIT NEWS APPS

Stay up to date on the go with the latest from The Detroit News apps

The Detroit News connects you with the best news, sports, auto and entertainment coverage from our team of award-winning journalists.



ARCHIVES

- Yesterday, Apr. 25
- Tuesday, Apr. 24
- Monday, Apr. 23
- Sunday, Apr. 22
- Saturday, Apr. 21
- Friday, Apr. 20
- Thursday, Apr. 19

See our **paid archives** for news older than a week.

ADVERTISEMENT

Detroit, MI 48220	Directory + Contacts	Newspaper Subscriptions	Web + Mobile	Photographs	Contact The Detroit News
(313) 222-2300	Jobs at The Detroit Media Partnership	Manage Account	Newspaper		Contact The Detroit Media Partnership
	Terms of Service	Report a Delivery Issue	Classifieds		Facebook
	Privacy Notice	eEdition	Death Notices		Twitter
	Ad Choices	Newletters			
	Newspapers In Education	Mobile			
		RSS			

© 2011 The Detroit News. All rights reserved.

Subscriptions

|

eEdition

|

Mobile

|

Text Alerts

|

Newletter

|

RSS