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Pay attention to this company. CogniSign provides image recognition technology that can be applied to photo search applications and the Consumer Mobile industry.

"We are aiming to be the Google of image and video search and advertising," said Bryan Calkins, CEO of CogniSign, based in San Francisco, California. He used the search capability at Google Images as an example. "Image search at Google is not recognizing accurately what is in the content of the image because Google search algorithms look at only text based information, such as file names and copy surrounding an image on a web page," he continued.

Today's image search engines rely on a user entering a succession of keywords one after the other to describe the type of image being looked for. This is a time consuming trial and error process and users often cannot find what they want. CogniSign's technology solves this problem. "When humans look at images, their visual attention captures both colors and key shapes. We developed our technology to mimic this very human process of image recognition," Mr. Calkins explained.

CogniSign's innovative technology analyzes images by looking at key features within the images and their spatial relationship to one another. The company launched its technology platform last year by deploying it to a stock photo search portal at [www.xcavator.net](http://www.xcavator.net). This site searches over 7 million photos from 6 different partners, providing powerful visual search tools and extremely fast search results. It even allows a user to search for similar photos by selecting key features within a particular image, like "a white flower with blue sky behind it".

CogniSign is not limiting the applicability of this technology to the stock photo market; the company plans to apply this turnkey image and video recognition technology to address problems in advertising. "With our technology, publishers of content will benefit from more sophisticated contextual-based advertising in the near future," said Mr. Calkins. "For example, when you are watching a food channel TV program featuring pasta, you will see very targeted advertisements about pasta and perhaps cooking, because our technology recognizes that this streaming content is about pasta and directs the advertisement engine accordingly."

CogniSign was founded in 2003 by Mr. Calkins and Dr. Leonid Kontsevich (now the company's Chief Science Officer). Dr. Kontsevich has spent most of his 25 year career studying the human visual recognition system and how it might be applied to developing man-machine interfaces for personal computers.

Various service possibilities for new man-machine interfaces are being explored with customers and partners in the Consumer Internet and Mobile markets. A more recent effort underway is to have the CogniSign technology built into mobile camera phones. Image search can be conducted without overloading carrier networks, because the CogniSign technology converts the image information into simple and concise numerical data. This will allow for smooth and easy image searches from a

cell phone. "We're talking to potential partners and customers about new services for cellular phones that better link the phone with ecommerce," explains Mr. Calkins. "Let's take a pair of shoes a friend is wearing, for example. You like the shoes, but don't want to buy exactly the same ones. So, you take a picture using a cell phone camera and do searches on shopping sites from the phone for similar shoes of other brands or with slightly different colors."

CogniSign sees Japan as a very important market for new Consumer Internet and Mobile applications. With support provided by the Japanese Export/Import Trade Organization (JETRO), they have started discussions with several Japanese consumer product manufacturers. Mr. Calkins is excited about the company's prospects in the Japanese market. "In Japan, the Consumer Internet and Mobile infrastructure is very advanced, and people are more advanced in their consumer behavior too. For example, a great deal of ecommerce is now being conducted using cell phones. We will be making our services available soon."

*Mamiko Fujita, Silicon Valley Office, Nikkei Business Publications*

## **Company Summary**

Company:	CogniSign, LLC
Headquarters:	San Francisco, CA
Foundation:	2003
Annual sales:	Not released
President:	Bryan Calkins, CEO
No. of employees:	12
Web sites:	Corporate: <a href="http://www.cognisign.com">www.cognisign.com</a> Stock photo portal site: <a href="http://www.xcavator.net">www.xcavator.net</a>