

# Entrepreneur

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## Forever Young

BY PETER KOOIMAN

**Even a reluctant economy can't curb the drive and ambition of these young millionaires.**

**Rod Hill, 30, & John Calhoun, 39**

**Integrated Management Services**

**Year Started:** 1996

**Web site:** [www.imsengineers.com](http://www.imsengineers.com)

**Based in:** Jackson, Mississippi

**2001 Projections:** \$10 million



Although Rod Hill and John Calhoun met in the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity at Mississippi's Jackson State University in 1990, the two were never your typical frat boys. Instead of going to beer bashes, Hill and Calhoun spent weekends studying engineering design and mathematics.

"Education was my only ticket," says Hill (above, second from left), who in 1995 became the first member of his immediate family to get a college degree. After graduation, he and Calhoun (above, third from left) decided to start their own civil engineering firm. But there was just one problem: Neither of them had much money, and banks wouldn't give them loans. So Hill and Calhoun maxed out their credit cards and founded Integrated Management Services (IMS) in 1996, one of only a handful of minority-owned engineering firms in the country, and the first of its kind in Jackson.

IMS built up an impressive list of clients, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as well as government agencies throughout Mississippi. This year, IMS projects revenue of \$10 million and plans to become a regional firm within five years, with hopes of going national in the next decade.

But even with such heady plans, Hill and Calhoun haven't abandoned their inner-city roots. IMS sponsors an outreach program in Jackson for at-risk 10-to-18-year-olds, teaching them how to succeed both in business and in life. "Looking where I'm at today, I wouldn't trade places with anybody," says Hill. "At the end of the day, you see how your hard work benefits the public."