



# IS USP THE KEY?

MANY GEOSPATIAL COMPANIES TRY TO FIND THEIR PRODUCTS' UNIQUE SELLING POINTS, BUT A LOOK AT THE HUMBLE ASPIRIN REVEALS WHERE THEY'RE GOING WRONG, SAYS ALISTAIR MACLENAN

Would you be more successful if you had to market and sell aspirins or vitamins?

If you are involved in promoting your company's geospatial products and services – and if you're not, what are you doing? – it will be a very useful exercise for you to answer this well-worn marketing case-study question.

You may have heard that identifying and promoting your products' or company's unique selling point (USP) is the absolute key to success. A USP is the thing that differentiates you from the competition and makes you the 'must-have' of the moment. It clearly defines why a prospect should become your customer. So is it the key to success? Well, like so many things in life the answer is 'sort of'.

The simplistic test paper answer is that it is easier to sell aspirins because they address an obvious and urgent customer need. People with headaches – both real and metaphorical – want or even need to buy something that will take them away as quickly as possible.

Conversely, the benefits of taking vitamins may not be seen for many years and are hard to quantify. Are you really feeling better because you took vitamins, especially as you should get your recommended daily intakes from a reasonably balanced diet?

The conclusion that should be reached if our eager marketing student wants that A-grade is that they would be much more successful selling aspirins. By extrapolating this to the geospatial industry, all companies that identify the pain that they can take away from their customers will be hugely successful too.

And it isn't a bad conclusion. If your geospatial offering addresses a specific need within a customer's organisation and – crucially – you are able to communicate that effectively, it is going to sell well to that customer. If the requirement it meets is common to all customers in your target industry, then you are likely going to be able to sell successfully to the majority of prospective companies. Spending time and effort identifying that pain and then designing your marketing

to tell the story (see *GI June*) of how you can take it away is a perfectly sensible use of your resources.

But (you could tell there was a but coming, couldn't you?) worldwide analgesic sales are worth roughly US\$25bn whilst vitamins and other nutritional supplements are worth more than US\$80bn. The latter figure has grown strongly over the past decade and is predicted to continue to do so.

Vitamins can bring positive ongoing effects to so many aspects of your life (it says here) whilst people don't have headaches all the time. If they do, their condition will require treatment far beyond the capabilities of aspirin. Also, only solving one problem makes aspirins a utility and no one really cares what type of electricity, water or gas comes to their homes – they just buy those that are the cheapest.

I continue to see geospatial companies launch their products on the back of a single USP; many take off like a rocket, with the concomitant expense, only to blow up like a firework. The geospatial industry as a whole needs to improve its storytelling and, just as creating lists of features of products will do nothing for sales, becoming beholden to only one USP will see many companies' products come under increasing price pressures.

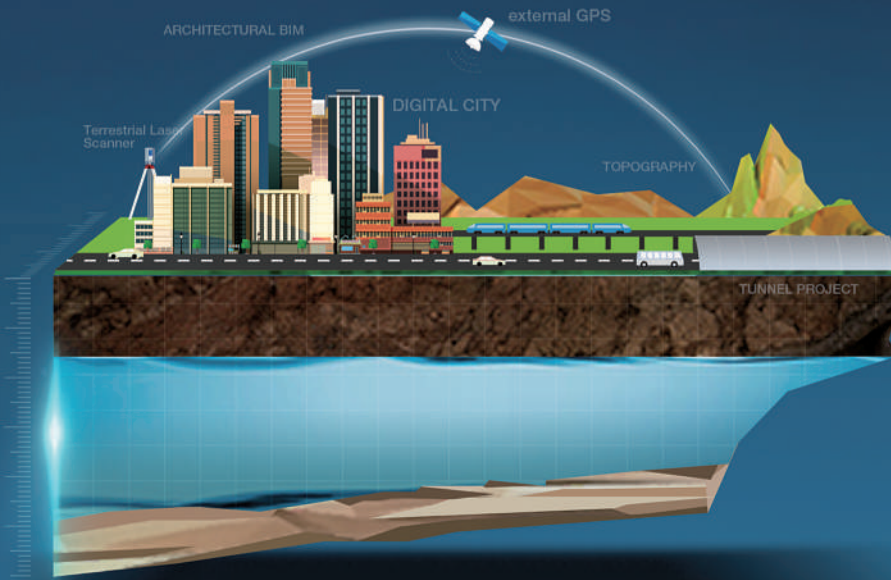
Marketing geospatial companies and products provides so many opportunities to tell stories, based on so many selling points, that it shouldn't be hard to find more than one.

**BECOMING BEHOLDEN TO ONLY ONE USP WILL SEE MANY COMPANIES' PRODUCTS COME UNDER INCREASING PRICE PRESSURES**

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