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Expand your offering

Andy Beckerson suggests why relying on 'gut' instinct may no longer be sufficient to see things through in today's geospatial market place

Do you have a strategy for expanding your business? If not, one potential route would be to consider the Ansoff Matrix. Much has been written about this business development tool developed by the late H. Igor Ansoff, but to summarise, it considers four areas of potential growth;

Market Penetration: probably where you are today, looking to achieve growth with existing products in your current market segment.

Market Development: looking for new customers/market segments with existing products and services.

Product Development: looking for new products or services that you can develop in your existing market segment.

Diversification: looking for new products or services to bring to new market segments, or put another way, taking things you don't understand to market segments you don't know!

It is also important to note that the geospatial industry is constantly evolving. Two useful examples of this are the development of laser scanning technology and the resurgence of photogrammetry.

Laser Scanning

This segment has moved from product development to market penetration in little more than five years, progressing from expensive and cumbersome instruments to more affordable and compact scanners such as the FARO Focus 3D. This has been followed by the launch of long range 'time-of-flight' scanners such as the Trimble TX8 and even the opening up of completely new application areas as a result of mobile laser scanning technology where laser scanners are mounted on vehicles, boats and, more amazingly, on UAVs.

While the technology is becoming more niche-driven with products featuring ever longer ranges, improved accuracy and faster scanning rates, we can also anticipate handheld scanning solutions for the 'close ups' demanded by forensics and archaeology.



Contemporary laser scanners lend themselves to operation on a variety of road, rail, ship and airborne platforms

Resurgence of photogrammetry

Photogrammetry - the science of taking measurements from photographs - is seeing a huge resurgence, with a plethora of methods for capturing imagery, many of which reduce or obviate the need to enter hazardous or restricted areas. And while even the most meticulous surveyor can fail to capture all objects on site, the camera or scanner captures everything, thereby reducing the need for costly revisits. Moreover, this type of work is no longer restricted by the need for an 'expert' level of knowledge

To return to the Ansoff Matrix, Diversification is probably a strategy that's too high in risk, but there are other ways we can expand business through the remaining options of Market Penetration, Market Development and Product Development.

While many of us simply look to increase our customer and product base without any strategic thought I would, instead, urge us to learn more about our clients' businesses. We may discover needs that can be addressed by augmenting our skills and services and in fact many clients welcome this—it's often easier for them to work with a single, multi-faceted contractor that truly understands their needs than with several specialised ones.

If we wish to expand our business then the Ansoff Matrix is a useful tool, especially for those of us who have previously relied on a 'gut' instinct to see things through!



Today's geospatial professionals have a daunting array of methods for capturing imagery, e.g., mobile mapping systems and Total Stations with on-board cameras and video such as Trimble's recently-released Vio imaging rover with VISION technology (pictured)