



Andy Beckerson is Director of Business Development at KOREC ([www.korecgroup.com](http://www.korecgroup.com)) and can be contacted by email at [andrew.beckerson@korecgroup.com](mailto:andrew.beckerson@korecgroup.com)

# Get closer to your customer

Andy Beckerson gets down to earth - and then all at sea in finding out what makes for good customer relations

As the products or services that you offer become increasingly available in the market place, how can you differentiate your offering, not only to retain your existing customers but also win new clients from your competitors?

## No pain, no gain

One method is to fully understand your customer's workflow; know their 'pain points' and, in so doing, how your solution can be applied to enhance, speed or simplify their workflow.

Such gains might accrue from adopting new products or services, but in many cases they are but temporary as technology has a cycle of advance and catch-up. A much more sustainable gain can be achieved with a fully customer-specific solution.

Effecting a change in strategy from offering products and services or 'bundled' hardware and software, to becoming a 'solution provider' is only possible if you not only fully understand your customer's workflow, but also your customer's customer workflow.

## Take your partners

So how best can we tailor a solution to be 'customer specific'? The obvious path is to develop customised software to suit each individual customer application. While this could be beyond the in-house development capability of many smaller companies, establishing a partnership with a software development provider can be a sure way to achieve this goal. You can then evolve from a supplier to a true 'partner'; it is this relationship that we should strive to achieve and it is more easily said than done!

Here at KOREC we have an in-house software development team, K-MATIC, that recently responded to a large number of requests for streamlining workflows covering a variety of applications. For example, in 2014 we worked closely with Capita to provide a solution for a cross-country pipeline survey that saw us develop a method that integrated an RD8000 underground utility locator with a Trimble Geo7 handheld GNSS and customised K-Mobile data collection software.

## Fishy business

This successful application stemmed from its ability to drive a recording from an external event, something we were able to repeat in a recent project for the Marine Institute in Ireland. Here, the organisation was embarking on fish sampling surveys as part of an ecosystem approach to fisheries management.

A system was required aboard a commercial fishing vessel that would enable the in-situ recording of each fish's measurements and gender. This harsh environment imposed its own particular set of challenges for electronic surveying, not least sea water spray and a highly unstable platform! These two factors immediately ruled out anything but the toughest data capture devices. Additionally, the



A customised solution developed for Capita that uses Bluetooth to link an underground cable locator with a hand-held GNSS and data capture software

task of measuring the fish meant that it would not be feasible to physically operate the device, even with just one hand, so a customised solution based on K-Mobile data capture software was required.

The Institute selected a variety of handheld GNSS devices on which to run this application, all of which delivered the required accuracy and were sufficiently rugged to withstand the harsh operating conditions.

Following detailed discussions with the customer, we devised a method of inputting data to K-Mobile software that recorded the location, time, gender and length of fish without touching the device at all. All these recordings are driven from a Bluetooth caliper device with a single 'transmit' button. The workflow couldn't be simpler:

- Magmount the GNSS device on a suitable surface on the trawler
- Switch on

That's it!

Once you fully understand how your customer uses data, and what benefits derive from it, you can then adapt this enhanced solution for other potential customers in the same market segment. You are then not only closer to your original customer, but have also developed a targeted solution that you can take to your now expanded customer base, effectively increasing your market potential for very little extra investment.