

A CRUCIAL YET OVERLOOKED ELEMENT IN BUSINESS SUCCESS

Rethinking service in the surveying industry



Looking for a recipe for business success in surveying? Don't underestimate the importance of innovative surveying services, says Moritz Lauwiner.

The latest measurement sensors and software, decades of collective experience and expertise, and a track record of quality work and professionalism... To most people, this reads like a complete recipe for business success in surveying.

However, one crucial yet often overlooked element is missing from this assumption: innovative surveying services.

Surveyors are proud professionals who know the value of their expertise. Shaping that expertise into services forms the core of a successful surveying firm. However, the barriers and risks surrounding innovation mean that the importance of service development is frequently ignored. Despite uncertainties, it is essential to innovate your services. Strategic planning and partnerships can help you to overcome challenges and find the motivation to do more than just survive; they can put you on a path to serving and thriving.

Embracing innovation

To prevent stagnation and even decline, innovation should be a central part of everyday culture across all layers of any business, and surveying firms are no exception. While companies like Hexagon put industry-disrupting hardware and software solutions on the market, the surveyor's innovation journey should lead them to unique service offerings that leverage those cutting-edge technologies.

ISGroup, a geospatial business in Australia, is one example of a company that has fostered growth by incorporating emerging technologies to create fit-for-purpose, innovative solutions for its clients. "Technology is a great enabler of geospatial data – not only the sensors we use to capture data, but also software and visualization tools – so it's a big part of what we do as our business," explains Bruce Baker, CEO at [ISGroup](#). "Being an early adopter comes with risks, but success is about identifying how technology can solve problems for clients. Getting the relationship right between technology and solutions will create the opportunity." By supplying reliable, specialized sensors and software, Hexagon helps ISGroup develop and expand its strengths in technology-driven services so that clients benefit from high-quality deliverables. A reciprocal relationship between technology suppliers and surveying service providers drives progress.

The essence of services

Services only exist in the moment they are consumed. This intangible nature creates timing and capacity challenges for surveying service providers, who must remain available and capable of delivering services on demand without precisely knowing where and when. Technology that collects, processes and shares data faster and more accessibly offers a way to mitigate these challenges. For example, Hexagon's cloud services portal, HxGN GeoCloud powered by HxDR, allows access to data whenever it is needed. Additionally, innovations like the Leica AP20 AutoPole speed up robotic total station surveying workflows, freeing up resources to enhance capacity.

However, service innovation is more than the adoption of new technology. Accurate sensors and intelligent software are merely ingredients in a business, not the full recipe for successful services. Innovating at the service level should be based on a deep understanding of client needs and the company's own resources: the magic web of people, processes and technology.



Moving the surveying industry forward requires service innovation as well as tech innovation.

A competitive advantage

The reality capture arena shows this principle clearly. As innovative laser scanning technologies democratize opportunity by becoming more affordable and intuitive, the distinguishing factor becomes how surveyors deploy that technology in the service of their clients. It is not only about capturing and processing high-accuracy data faster with limited and less specialized personnel, but also about innovating services to deliver that data to clients in a format that helps them solve their problems. That's how surveying firms can demonstrate value and create a competitive advantage.

3DS Technologies, a North American company working with high-resolution 3D laser scanning, has expanded into new sectors by connecting its clients with more accessible reality capture experiences. "We want to bring 3D scanning to everybody – architects, engineers, contractors – so they don't have to make huge investments," says Travis Sachs, COO of 3DS Technologies. "With the way things are evolving now, and with the software becoming more and more user-friendly, we're finding that it's easier to help teams onboard their 3D scanning departments and divisions." Accessible reports mean that 3DS Technologies does not have to translate the data for its customers. Instead, they can look at the visual data and see immediately, e.g. in a heat map, if any issues require further investigation. "Software provides instant visualization in the field that's critical for project success," Sachs continues. "Customers are really impressed when you can show them what you've captured while you're still on site."

Strategies for creating unique services

The stony path to value creation is subject to strong forces of change. Therefore, to create resilient, unique services, you must continually rethink the way you serve your clients. A range of strategies and approaches can help you do so. Start by going to the source to learn what your clients need, expand perspectives on how you can provide a solution, and make a plan to clearly communicate this value to clients.

The case of Derek Twente, an innovative geospatial manager at the US firm TWM, provides a clear example of these principles in action. When first incorporating reality capture technology at the engineering-focused firm, Twente found that customers could not work with the datasets, which diminished the usability and perceived value of the point cloud deliverables. To solve this problem, he and his colleagues helped clients learn to use processing software for their project needs. As a result, clients clearly understood the value of the services, ultimately contributing to exponential business growth. To ensure their capacity could meet this growing demand, Twente and his team invested in and integrated Hexagon's mobile mapping technology, enabling them to successfully scale up their innovative services.

Navigating risk with courage and optimism

The history of surveyors has always been intertwined with innovation to serve clients, communities and the planet. Yet despite careful research, planning and investments, innovating unavoidably comes with some risk of failure. Nevertheless, when this vulnerable position is approached with courage and optimism – grounded in preparation, realism, determination and domain expertise – the spark of creativity and force of innovation can emerge and provide a transformative path forward.

Above all, remember you are not alone in this mission to innovate. Technology providers are partners in the surveying industry ready to support surveyors in this undertaking. They bring tradition, experience, strength and resilience to help surveyors face uncertainty and mitigate risks. By working collectively, the entire ecosystem pushes progress forward, innovating for a better future and contributing to a better world through advancement in surveying practices and technologies.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/rethinking-service-in-the-surveying-industry>
