

Adding value

Adding value to acquired geo-data will become the hottest topic for the business over coming years. The act of flying a country, province or other stretch of land to acquire and then process and deliver geo-data has become almost a commodity in itself. In a big country like Germany there are more than twenty companies offering to 'fly the whole country' and provide the client with data.

So it is no longer enough just to be able to fly the country. The big question nowadays is what can be added to the raw data. Businesses who find an answer to this are 'in business'. Those that don't will be 'out of business'. Everyone is able to deliver commodities at not dramatically divergent prices, and it is an economic fact of life that these prices are under plenty of pressure thanks to a fiercely competitive marketplace. Maybe not yet in every part of the world, but certainly in those where twenty companies can do exactly the same thing in exactly the same amount of time and meeting exactly the same remit. If a company wants to stick its neck out and justify charging a higher price, it has, once again, to add value to the data.

In the case of aerial-mapping companies, for instance, one could imagine that local authorities might be very grateful for a package including acquired data of the surrounds of football stadiums in Austria and Switzerland, where the European Football Championship 2008 are being held, together with advice on security risks. This example would seem even more appropriate as applied to the venues for the World Football Championship 2010 in South Africa and their vicinities; now, when Euro 2008 is about to get underway and South Africa still has time to plug any possible gaps in security. This example from the sport and events world might be abstracted to all other fields, such as disaster management or traffic and logistics. And in this example we're talking about new information; imagine the vast quantities of recently acquired data that could be reused, now accompanied by advice.

I know... that's not our business. I can hear it ringing in my ears already. Businesses are changing, is my response. And once the acquiring and processing is done, analysis and advice is the next and natural step. True, it's a step currently pursued by clients, while it is often not their core business either. They offer it as an extra that will be embraced because it's proactive and relieves the client of work and they like that. In fact, it's what they will be looking for in the future. And they'll be willing to pay for it, too!