

Combination

Success often depends on the right combination of factors. Companies are therefore always looking for the right combination to sell their products and make money. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes they don't. Look at the producers of integrated televisions and computers, so-called media centres. It seemed like such a logical step in developing computers or televisions: bring them together in one device. But no one reckoned with the consumer. The average consumer wants to lie on his couch watching television. Working with the computer or surfing the web is mostly and preferably done sitting at a desk. (Question: Who actually holds a laptop on the lap, other than in the train or in the garden? As soon as there's a table around to put it on, that's what we all do.) And often families like to have several places in the house where one person can surf the web while others watch their favourite soap or the news. Conclusion: the media centre turns out not to be the Big Sell the producers held it for when they developed the thing.

But it's different in geomatics. Let's take a look at surveying, for example. Surveyors like working devices to be as handy as possible, because day-to-day work is hard enough taking into account stress factor number one. Producers of surveying equipment recognised that the surveyor's daily work would be made easier with implementation in a total station of new techniques like Bluetooth: technology that makes possible data interchange via internet or cell phone. Before this there was the innovation of digital imaging, making it possible to see all measured points simultaneously on a little screen at the work-site. Even GPS came to be implemented in that good old total station. Simple but revolutionary, the total station itself became control point. And what do you think of the new total stations with reflectorless phase measurements? Many producers worked hard on these inventions and have taken due credit for them.

Naturally, in the course of time revolutionary ideas are taken over by competitors; surveying professionals are getting more and more used to new and combined techniques and time gets shorter by the working day. But all these small and less small inventions and their successful integration with somewhat older techniques give a good sense of where the bigger producers in the industry stand. And this is at a very high level of technological development, with the right feel for their markets and their professional consumer – the surveying practitioner.