Next Killer App

The time is right. We can use a new and next killer app in our field. The techniques are on hand, the level of professionalism is way up there, and the entrepreneurial spirit has to join the same high ranks. Now is the moment to transpose those killer techniques in geomatics (they really are) into a killer app. That will at once project geo-information into the spotlight as one of the coolest, most up-to-date sectors to work in. It will also provide fresh new impetus in the field for further development. In short, it will trigger an overall upswing in the geospatial business.

'Hang on a second,' I can hear a few of you saying, '"killer app"?' Well, the definition of a killer app would be a software program that is so desirable or necessary that it stirs up sales of the hardware it runs on, for instance computers, cell phones or pdas. To which others of you will respond, 'Oh, but we already have a killer app, and it's called the paperless map.'

That is true. The paperless map has increased sales of the hardware that carries navigation programmes. And companies selling the essential element of these navigation charts, the producers of the map material by photogrammetry, remote-sensing and other satellite-imagery companies, plus the first processors of this material, are being bought out by Nokia, Microsoft and their likes for immense sums of money. Location-based services are hot! It's all about where we are, sometimes even more, who we are.

The paperless map is shaking up the business and making life easier for a whole lot of consumers who had no previous inkling this solution was what they had all been waiting for. The American business magazine BusinessWeek in November 2007 also declared the paperless map a killer app, quoting an analyst from Nielsen Mobile who found that consumers spent nearly twice as much money on navigation in their cell phones as they did on media downloads to the same devices.

But what will be the next step, and thus the next killer app? Because it is not at all certain that the paperless map will also prove a killer solution for the geomatics business in terms of economic survival, for satellite-imagery producers for example. This all depends on the ability of the industry to step up and develop a helicopter view on these killer techniques and translate them into applications that will change the life of the consumer - and so, eventually, the geomatics business as well.

It's up to all of you to get out of those laboratories, IT rooms and offices and try to grasp the totally new ideas and wishes circulating amongst clients, consumers, and the prospects for them. Before Google and co. snap them up from under our noses.