

Q&A with Christian Sevcik, RIEGL



To gain real insight into today's geospatial business landscape, 'GIM International' decided to ask some of the sector's most influential companies for their opinions. This series of Q&As captures the current state of the industry from various perspectives, such as which technological and societal developments will have the most impact on the geomatics market, which market segments are the most promising and which areas offer the most substantial growth. The questions also explore the trend towards open data and open-source software. This time, Dr Christian Sevcik from RIEGL shares his views.

Which technological developments will affect your product/service portfolio the most in the coming years?

Some of the technological developments that will affect our product/service portfolio and business the most over the coming years are advances such as automation, robotics, driverless vehicles, the cloud, and the Internet of Things, to name but a few. While these may not affect our business with a direct impact, we do feel the effects of them in the industry and are watching them starting to shape how the industry works and new products that are being introduced to the market. We are seeing how these new pushes of technology are working their way into affecting new products and services that we may end up offering to the market, if they are needed.

Which societal developments will influence your share of the geomatics market the most in the coming years? How and why?

The societal development that will influence and shape our brand the most over the coming years is Lidar becoming more widely known and used throughout the world. As Lidar becomes more of a 'household name', so to speak, and people generally gain more knowledge of what it is, what it does, what it is capable of and how it affects their daily life, that will really give us a larger share and greater visibility in the geomatics market and in the public eye.

Which market segments are the most promising for your products/services?

There are multiple market segments that show great promise for RIEGL such as precision agriculture, wide-area mapping, transportation, surveying, mining and bathymetry, to name but a few. One of the largest areas where we are currently seeing great promise and potential is in unmanned applications worldwide. The need in this market has grown exponentially over the last few years alone and there continues to be great demand at this point in time. Unmanned sensors and systems offer users more flexibility and possibilities to get into hard-to-reach or even dangerous areas, which has opened up new fields and applications.

In which parts of the world do you envisage substantial growth in users of your products/services?

There is a constant need and demand for our products throughout the world and I feel that this trend will continue. Highly accurate Lidar data is needed worldwide for a multitude of applications and businesses. We have seen growth in all of our market segments in every area of the world and we believe that we will continue to see this type of growth happen through North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Australia and even Africa. The fact that we are seeing this type of substantial growth throughout the world shows immense promise and potential for our brand.

Open data is becoming increasingly available all over the world. How will this trend affect your business?

The increasing availability of open data will affect our business in the sense that some of the users of our sensors and systems may participate in the movement. With our users being involved in a number of fields and applications, there certainly may be some who feel that acquired data should be freely available to everyone to view and use as they wish, and there will be some who cannot provide data due to customer and governmental regulations. As for affecting our business directly, we may end up with new users who are aiming to acquire data for this sole purpose. Generally speaking, open data initiatives are very welcome as they are vital to raise public awareness about Lidar.

Will the tendency of increasing use of open-source software be a threat or an opportunity for your business?

The increasing use of open-source software (OSS) can be seen as both a threat and an opportunity for us and our business. As we have our own proprietary software for our sensors and systems, we would optimally want our users to utilise the software that we have specifically developed, hence the aspect of a 'threat'. Using our software, along with our hardware, guarantees the best results with our products. We see a lot of potential in some of the OSS being launched onto the market and a lot of fascinating applications, which could present some interesting opportunities to our business as well. Software processing is typically separated into two consecutive steps: firstly, the preparation of the Lidar data itself, hence the production of the point cloud, and secondly the processing of the point clouds to derive the information products. The first part requires a lot of hardware specifics, so open source is unlikely to prevail in this sector. Where we see the huge potential of OSS is in the second processing step, where the fundamental idea of open software – the wisdom of the crowd – emerges in very innovative approaches in open-source projects. On the whole, the increasing use of OSS is more of a benefit

than a threat.

Christian Sevcik

Christian Sevcik holds a master's degree in surveying and geoinformatics from Graz University of Technology, Austria. His involvement in the Lidar industry dates back to 1999, when he was working at the Institute of Digital Image Processing within Joanneum Research in Graz. In 2003 he became project manager for photogrammetry and laser scanning at GeoDATA Informationstechnologie with a focus on terrestrial laser scanning. In 2011 he joined RIEGL Laser Measurement Systems in the role of manager for strategic software alliances.

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