

Making Surveying a Profitable Part of Your Business – A Panel Discussion

Name	Firm	Position	Region
Tim Cawood	McKim & Creed	Principle Associate, VP Geomatics	Southeastern US (MD to FL)
Ed Garrigan	C.T. Male Associates	Vice President of land Information Services	Northeastern US (PA to MA)
Ken Brown	Leading Edge Surveying	President	Southeastern US (TN,GA,FL)
Bill Green	RBF Consulting	Sr. Vice President, Regional Manager	Southwestern US (CA,NV,AZ)



- Panel Introductions
- Organization and Accountability
- Relationships and Respect (Working Within)
- Invest in Technology
- Work your Strengths
- Panel Discussion and Shared Practices



- “Never get all the information”
- “They’re always over budget”
- “They never get me the info on time”
- “We could get Billy-Bob to do it cheaper”
- “Spend a fortune on equipment”
- “They have super expensive turnover”
- “And the track mud through the office!”
- “Our own engineers are our toughest clients”

Surveyors...got to love em



Preface

This presentation is geared toward the AE Firm that has surveying as a part of it's business. The ideas presented here seem to be commonalities for successful survey units within a larger firm, based on this panels limited knowledge of such firms.

There is no magical standard recipe to guarantee success of any group. So much depends on the individuals within the group. Every successful unit must have good people, a champion or two, and must "do the right thing". Assuming the your firm has these virtues we feel that the ideas presented here will help propel your surveying business to new high levels of performance.



Organization & Accountability

Give em wings (and make them accountable)

- Make your survey group it's own entity
 - profit center or division / group /organization
 - own staff, overhead cost and structure
 - let them go after their own projects and clients
 - let them set their own fees, and schedule
 - create and monitor general performance goals (revenue, profit, AR's)
 - create annual budgets



Organization & Accountability


Give em tools (and make them accountable)

- Provide Project Management and Accounting Tools
- Provide training opportunities (not necessarily the same as for Eng)
- Allow for investment in Technology
 - Request a proposal as to why this purchase will add to bottom line
 - Create means of measuring value of technology
- Provide work share incentives for multiple offices
- Provide regular financial (P&L or other) and booking reports




Relationships and Respect
(working within)
Treat one another like external clients

- Require Formal Proposals with detailed scope, a budget and a schedule or
- As a minimal- email w/scope, budget, schedule
- Document changes in scope
- Invite Eng/Survey PM to project and client meetings
- Provide progress reports to other




Relationships and Respect
(working within)
Treat one another like external clients

- **Scope**
 - To be determined by Eng. and Surveyor.
 - Be clear as to what the purpose of the survey and accuracies required. What are the OBJECTIVES
 - What's critical and what's not.
 - Have Eng/Survey staff make a field trip and walk the project.
 - Let the surveyor refine the scope and present it to Eng PM in proposal format.



Relationships and Respect
(working within)
Treat one another like external clients

- **Budget**
 - To be determined Engineer and Surveyor only
 - Negotiate? (win-win)
 - Value price technology and responsiveness
- **Schedule**
 - Usually determined by client
 - Don't use "Can't do" use "if.....then"



Invest in Survey Technology

- Invest in technology for the right reason. To add to the bottom line.
- Value price...3.5 to 4.0 effective multipliers are possible
- Must have champions
- Must educate internal and external clients
- Must educate sales / marketing staff



Invest in Survey Technology (examples)

- Laser scanning
- Subsurface Utility Engineering (SUE)
- Hydrographic Surveying
- GPS w/ Virtual Reference Networks (VRN)
- Wireless field to office data transfer
- GIS
- Vehicle tracking and navigation
- Photogrammetry and Lidar



Work Your Strengths & Find your Niches

- Track your performance on different types of work and find out what you do well and do well at (profitable) and pursue heavily.
- We don't do lot surveys
- Find niche work that few firms do. Value price.
- True niche work may allow you to get on survey teams with others to provide services regionally or nationally.
- Use your resources. Find and develop your champions for different services.



Panel Discussion and Shared Practices

Points of discussion:

- Overhead
- Cost of Technology
- Turnover
- Why do you go over budget?