GEO Informatics

Magazine for Surveying, Mapping & GIS Professionals

5
July/August
2013
Volume 16

- Surveying Leaders Interview
- Esri International Rail Summit
- HxGN LIVE
- CAD, BIM and Geospatial Solutions

CMedia

Article

Autodesk and Pitney Bowes Partnership

Bridging the Gap ... Meeting the Challenge

Dr. Ahmed Abukhater, Global Director of Product Management at Pitney Bowes talks about the recent partnership between Autodesk and Pitney Bowes, as well the choice of solutions for various stages of the project lifecycle.

By Eric van Rees

In the last issue of GeoInformatics, the recent partnership between Autodesk and Pitney Bowes was briefly introduced. This partnership is described as a framework for both companies to provide resources, services and solutions to help architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) organizations make more informed decisions. Dr. Ahmed Abukhater, Global Director of product management at Pitney Bowes, explains all about the partnership - its goals and intended audience, using both companies' software through the whole project lifecycle.

GIS meets BIM ... Analysis meets Design

Last year Pitney Bowes and Autodesk announced a strategic alliance and since then they invested heavily in streamlining their products. Dr. Abukhater explains that this partnership was formed to respond to state and local government agencies needs in expediting infrastructure development projects. Planning and implementation of these projects can take many years which can prove costly and resource intense, bringing the development to a crawl. This is especially true as communities struggle to engage and involve all stakeholders in the development process due to the long and sometimes tedious permitting and approval process and the incompatibility of data and technology stacks used in various stages of the project lifecycle (including planning, design, building and asset management). Dr. Abukhater contends that in today's industry there are two breeds of customers with different workflows: "one group of customers is focused on planning and analysis using GIS and location intelligence. The other consists primarily of designers, people who use BIM (Building Information Modeling). These two software solutions were not connected. We wanted to bridge that gap."

"For this reason, we spent a lot of time and resources in terms of data integration; ensuring that the products work together and that there's a seamless data flow between different platforms. All components of the project lifecycle are now supported, to eliminate redundancy of effort, duplication of data, and departmental silos, allowing more collaboration and organizational efficiency," he adds.
Dr. Abukhater explains that this partnership has made it possible for Pitney Bowes and Autodesk to offer comprehensive solutions that complement and talk to each other. For example, customers can support the planning phase of the project including data management, generating and evaluating various planning

Ahmed Abukhater

scenarios and conducting analysis to understand spatial patterns, utilizing state-of-the art analytical and computational capabilities of Pitney Bowes MapInfo. This may include suitability analysis to identify best locations for a proposed development and understand its social, economic, and environmental impacts. Once these planning options are identified and evaluated, the project then moves into the design phase. With Autodesk BIM technology, designers can now create and communicate intent using 2D and 3D models. Users can zoom into a specific area to see if it's a suitable location for a particular development and visualize the facility in its actual environment. These BIM solutions are suited for publishing and sharing the design with other stakeholders, including officials and citizens. This way the community is informed and involved in the decision making process and public feedback can be obtained and accounted for.

For building, the operational technology of Autodesk can be used to streamline and optimize the construction of the project. Once the project is constructed it enters into the management stage. The powerful Pitney Bowes analytical capabilities are used here to gage project performance and impact on the surrounding community; in terms of employment, crime rates, sensitive areas, different land uses, traffic behavior and much more. This is where GIS and BIM meet; and where analysis and design converge.

"With enhanced interoperability, state and local government agencies and community development professionals now have a common end-to-end solution that will enable them to effectively and efficiently support the entire project lifecycle, which will significantly shorten the overall development time saving serious resources," Dr. Abukhater explains.

The changing nature of GIS

Dr. Abukhater discusses the changing nature of GIS: "GIS in the past has been viewed as a specialty technology, limiting the numbers of users in an organization and compartmentalizing the GIS knowledge. Now it is moving away from this and becoming a mainstream technology, where it is no longer viewed as information technology but rather operational technology that needs to be integrated into the organizational and business ecosystem. This is because it really touches all aspects of the organization, from data management, supporting operational awareness to business workflows that are crucial to the success of the organization."
GIS is slowly moving towards an integrated technology as part and parcel of the larger workflows and business operations of any company. This means that employees and partners will have ubiquitous access to critical data and information that will drive demonstrable value and measurable business impacts, with location at the core of everything they do. "With this emerging trend, GIS knowledge is being exposed to the rest of the organization and location based services are being extended and utilized in all departments, putting the power of GIS in the hands of the business users, who need it the most in making decisions in a collaborative fashion where multiple users can access and view critical information and formulate a 360° view on how to support their business needs," Dr. Abukhater says.
Having worked in various state and local government agencies, Dr. Abukhater sees this partnership as a game changer that will benefit the AEC industry. "This groundbreaking partnership is a reflection of this operational intelligence approach and a commitment to the success of our customers in this space. This is good news for the industry and we are excited to be the first to offer these comprehensive sets of capabilities," Dr. Abukhater concludes.

For more information, have a look at www.mapinfo.com