

“Further Strengthen Our Expertise” Two Partners Join the Group

Since the Management Buy Out a few years ago, 1Spatial has grown profitably through self-funding. In little over three years the company has made three acquisitions in Europe and firmly established itself as a leader in spatial database management. Graham Stickler, 1Spatial’s Product and Marketing Director, talks about the company’s future direction, the role of the 1Spatial Community and how the spatial industry is moving forward.

By Job van Haaften



Alan Douglas (left), former MD of IME now MD of 1Spatial Scotland, Crispin Hoult formerly of IME now 1Spatial Ireland, Peter Bullock and Duncan Guthrie both 1Spatial.

A re-brand, a high profile conference, and now two acquisitions. It’s been an exciting and busy year for 1Spatial. What has been your thinking behind these changes?

These changes were not taken lightly, the company has evolved over time and with that become a world leader in spatial database management, as opposed to GIS applications, with a focus on spatial data quality control. The name change was planned over two years ago,

our mission had changed over the years and we wanted the name to reflect that. This then culminated in the 1Spatial Conference in May 2007, with the theme ‘Fit for Purpose’, which raised the profile of spatial data management and quality control across the industry.

Spatial data have been collected over a long period of time and used extensively for analysis, planning and decision making; valuable and massive benefits can be obtained through their re-use. The modern era is demanding the

unconstrained sharing of spatial data between systems, business areas, organisations and the public. There is little point in providing widespread access and sharing of data that are not fit for purpose and of which there is little or no quality measures.

We are always looking to further strengthen our existing expertise and the acquisitions of IME and Proteus, two companies we have had strong relationships with in the past, have allowed us to do this. We believe this merging of knowledge will ensure that as organisations look to make more use from their spatial databases, share data and build common frameworks and spatial data infrastructures (SDI), 1Spatial will possess the wide range of skills necessary to manage, repurpose and distribute spatial data.

Joining forces strengthens all three parties’ abilities to deliver spatial data infrastructures and data quality products throughout the UK, Ireland and beyond. It also firmly establishes 1Spatial’s local presence in both Ireland and Scotland to complement existing offices in Cambridge, England and Kongsberg, Norway.

1Spatial is known to have a very strong partnering ethic. How will the acquisitions affect your Partner Community?

If anything it strengthens the partner network. We have built our partner network over the last five years as we developed the Radius Programme, i.e. made 1Spatial technology available in an Oracle environment. Both IME and Proteus have experience in this area where other partners can benefit. For example, IME has an Oracle Spatial Checking Utility that complements other tools available from 1Spatial across the Group.

There are also other synergies with partners worldwide, such as Open Spatial in Australia, Credent Technology in Singapore, Geodan in the Netherlands, Spatial Technology in Sweden and Geofoto in Croatia. 1Spatial and all these international partners have complementary skills and solutions based on Autodesk, Bentley, ESRI, Intergraph or PB MapInfo software.

IME and Proteus both belonged to the 1Spatial Community prior to the acquisitions so they have also helped shape our partner network. It has developed into a group of like-minded organisations committed to redefining spatial

data through quality, standards and interoperability. Nothing should change from that perspective, now we will work even closer as part of the same organisation.

Probably the most exciting thing about this development, apart from providing local support in Ireland and Scotland, is the fact that we now have additional expertise within the Group regarding CAD to GIS migrations and spatial data integration. Again this is expertise that other members of the 1Spatial Community, such as system integrators, will be able to exploit.

1Spatial won the AGI award for Innovation & Best Practice (Private Sector) with Proteus and IME for the combined effort on the Property Registration Authority in Ireland. Clearly this must have been a major factor in the acquisitions?

Yes, we have successfully worked with IME and Proteus on a number of projects over the last two to three years and always had a good relationship. It was fantastic to gain recognition from the AGI for the combined effort that went into the Property Registration Authority in Ireland project. This project was an upgrade to the Digital Mapping System. The DMapS is a web-based, system for recording and accessing spatial information relating to Land Title in Ireland. The project added value, improved levels of service and reduced costs, which all contributed to a satisfied customer.

All three companies brought different skills to the project, Proteus, as an Autodesk partner, built the application, whereas IME, with its technical expertise, was able to develop the web-based viewing system. 1Spatial designed and implemented the system.

Working together enabled us to recognise how Proteus and IME have the same company philosophy as the staff at 1Spatial when it came to teamwork. We, at 1Spatial are passionate about the concept of working together; in fact it is part of the company ethos and reflected in our partnering strategy. Proteus and IME clearly share these values.

In the future this merger, and therefore influx of skills within the 1Spatial Group, will give us an added strength to go after bigger European SDI projects.

How do you see the Spatial Industry changing and moving forward? And what role do you see the new 1Spatial Group playing in this market?

We see the Industry continuing to change rapidly as spatial data is increasingly adopted within mainstream IT. Oracle and Google have seen to that. With this change will be an



Seamus Gilroy former MD of Proteus and now MD of 1Spatial Ireland (left) and Mike Sanderson CEO 1Spatial (right).

increasing awareness of the issue of managing the spatial data, separated from the use of the data in what we have traditionally called GIS. Engineering in the form of CAD and surveying will become an increasing source of high quality data, some of which will be new to us, such as 3D city landscapes. Integrating these new data with the existing, and rapidly growing, 'traditional' spatial data and then allowing for meaningful sharing of these data is a management challenge. We firmly believe that one of the key aspects will be the management and communication of the quality. This is reflected by our involvement with ePSIplus around Information Management Quality and Standards, the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) as Chair of the Data Quality Working Group and by our research work on 3D spatial data.

We have changed over the past few years to position ourselves firmly in this spatial data management space, away from the traditional (GIS/CAD) applications; the re-brand and acquisitions are steps along this path. We firmly see 1Spatial as being the key player in the management of spatial data and providing guidance and leadership this area.

Currently the market has many small players both in Europe and across the world, and with the recent acquisitions we now have added strength and an ability to increase our visibility, especially in Europe. Europe is our key focus at the moment, that is not to say we don't do significant business in other parts of the world, but currently we want to focus on supporting INSPIRE and the impact that will have as part of a wider SDI philosophy. To do this we are

looking at the opportunities available for underlying technology to re-engineer and re-use existing data collected across Europe.

In terms of where we plan to go in the future, in the short-term it's quite simple really, IME and Proteus will become 1Spatial Ireland and 1Spatial Scotland. In addition, our acquisition of Sysdeco a few years ago is now established as 1Spatial Norway. This means we are starting to increase our coverage with local offices in control of their regions so that when local opportunities occur they can respond. A good example of this is the current opportunity for a planning portal in Scotland with the Scottish Executive. IME were already a lead integrator on a bid but now feel hugely strengthened as they are backed by a much larger entity. Across Europe and globally, the 1Spatial Group is now even more capable of bringing together all the relevant expertise to address the spatial data management issues. These are issues that organisations face on a daily basis as they attempt to make best use of spatial data for whatever their businesses demand. As a company we feel we are now more 'Fit for Purpose' and we believe this will bring about new opportunities for everyone involved with the 1Spatial Group.

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