

FIG Changing the game

How to sustain a fast developing profession: Lessons from Kuala Lumpur

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THE SURVEYING AND MAPPING PROFESSION in Malaysia has recently held a series of public private consultations. The move stems from a number of factors including:

- Surveying is facing multiple challenges, including an ever-accelerating rate of change.
- Surveying is focusing on crisis management instead of planning how to strategically respond to present and future challenges.
- The emphasis on rebranding and marketing is becoming a do-or-die necessity because of increasing complexity of the global marketplace.
- The critical need to create and maintain a viable and sustainable industry.

Public private consultation

As part of the government's commitment to 'Malaysia Inc', central government agencies were advised to establish consultative panels that brought together relevant stakeholders. The Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia established such a panel at the turn of the millennium, comprising representatives from the department, the Land Surveyors Board and the Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia.

During its early years, the panel established a select strategic planning committee to answer three questions:

- What does the surveying and mapping industry stand for?
- What kind of industry should the surveying and mapping profession seek to be over the longer term?
- What short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives will help the profession fulfil its role?

Core purposes

One outcome of the consultation was the realisation of the profession's core purposes:

- Ensuring surveying's relevance in national development.
- Maintaining an invaluable presence in the marketplace.
- Advancing its influence in policy decisions and advocacy on matters that impact the profession.

This led to a vision for the future of:

- A cohesive community of professionals with clarity of purpose, direction and accountability, unified in its agreement on strategic initiatives and priorities, armed with an unfailing discipline to follow through.
- Professionals who demonstrate increasing ability to anticipate and adapt effectively to the future.
- An innovation-driven infrastructure that enhances access to comprehensive information through a wide range of technology and facilities.

The mission

The underlying philosophy about surveying's existence is that it is 'mission-based'. To enhance the relevancy of surveying, it is necessary to meet buyer expectations. Surveying service providers can be categorised into four types; vendors, specialists, total solution providers and game changers. Surveyors need to identify which quadrant of service provider category they belong to; the following characteristics relate to buyer expectations:

Vendors

Because of their low potential value, customers buying offerings from vendors do not normally want to spend much time or energy in the purchasing process

– all they want is an offering of acceptable quality, one that is easy to buy and at a low price. All things being seen as equal, the lowest price always wins.

Specialists

Because the specialist has unique capabilities, the customer expects best-in-class services. Since there are very few providers of these services, the customer is always wary of being taken advantage of. Customers do not mind paying a premium for these services (they have to have them), but they are always concerned about not having the services available when they need them. Hence, the customer is always looking for other options to meet their specific needs.

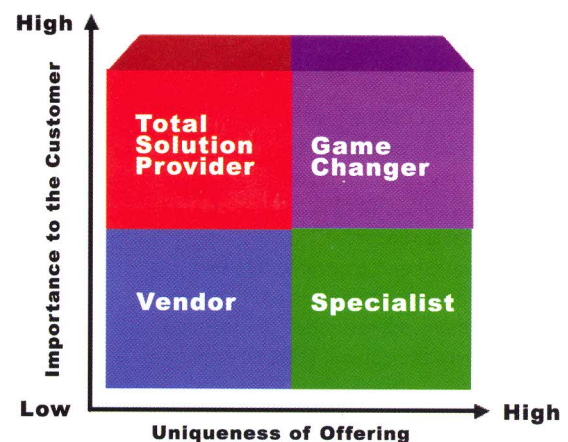
Total solution provider

When buying from a total solution provider, the purchase is high visibility (and high risk to the backers of the selected services provider). First on the list of expectations is reliability – the sign of assurance that the services will be provided, followed by the fact that the client would want the solution to work. However (and although they will seldom admit it) clients are not looking for the very best answers, otherwise they would have handpicked a team of diverse specialists required to do the job.

Game changers

Customers expect only one thing from game changers; innovative answers that positively impact business performance. These service providers can do what they say they will do.

A client's (be it the government, multinational corporation or individual) philosophy on their approach to purchasing, is also dependent on the service provider.



The four types of service providers.

