Handheld technology at the pole

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The primary benefit of adopting standards was identified as improved customer satisfaction and service. Users also gave high ratings to coordination with partners, reduced operating costs, improved productivity, market expansion and competitive advantage highly. The providers rated market expansion, competitive advantage, reaching new markets and reduced development costs.

The costs of adoption were seen as higher or a greater barrier by users than by providers. Employee training was rated by both as the greatest cost. Users also rated organisational changes, integration costs, security & privacy, and implementation costs as significant. Providers also rated integration costs, implementation costs and organisational changes.

These results are subjective assessments; they are useful in pointing to potential costs and benefits but can only be a start in seeking to justify standards adoption. These findings, on their own, are unlikely to convince a board of directors that this is an area worth investment.

Three quarters of respondents, both users and providers, agreed that OGC should provide a certification service for clients, i.e. an independent certification that an application conforms to the relevant OGC standard or standards. The top four listed as requiring certification were WMS, WFS, GML and WCS (Web Coverage Service).

The survey also looked at standards participation and promotion. Technology providers participated more in OGC activities than users although both users and providers claimed to actively promote standards whether members of OGC or not.
Still a way to go  So what can be concluded from this survey? It could not be described as a random survey. Over 300 organisations participated globally so the results should not be dismissed lightly. Of these, 86% had already adopted some OGC standards but often over a narrow spectrum. Amongst users there was the perception that acceptance of OGC standards was only moderate with providers expressing a slightly higher perception of acceptance. There is still some way to go to acceptance and adoption of these standards – especially if the biased nature of this survey is taken into account. The top four standards should not come as a major surprise: they would probably be top of most GI interoperability lists. The user and provider perceptions about costs and benefits are useful indicators but also point to the need for objective i.e. financial measures of costs and benefits from case studies.

The BVC are doing valuable work in a neglected area. They should be praised for taking the initiative in launching this survey and for making the findings available. This now needs following up with more detailed work, particularly the development of case studies to provide greater objectivity and input to business cases justifying the adoption of standards.

References:
1) Unfortunately there is no generally agreed definition of “open standards” but in general we are referring here to standards that have been adopted and maintained by a not-for-profit organization, have an open decision-making process available to all interested parties, and are available freely or at a nominal charge with no constraints on re-use.

The views represented here are those of the author and should not be taken as representative of AGI or of the Standards Committee.

About the author
Les Rackham is one of the directors of ConsultingWhere, a business consultancy specialising in location information, and he is also a member of the Association for Geographic Information (AGI) Standards Committee.

For more information, contact:

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Tel: +44 (0)1438 352617
Email: editor@pvpubs.demon.co.uk
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