

BYERS NEWS BYTE

In this issue:

PRODUCT NEWS:

Byers Introduces Planning Software ... Below

USER PROFILE:

Qwest Regulated Services ... Inside

REFERENCE FILE:

Byers Support & AM/FM Conference Recap ... Inside

BYERS INTRODUCES PLANNING SOFTWARE

Planning serves an important function within telecommunications and utility companies. Planners need to propose new facilities and expensive network upgrades over an extended time-frame. Companies who practice strong integration of planning as a reference for detail engineering have reported a savings of 15-20 percent of outside plant capital expenditures.

Unfortunately, it's a time consuming challenge for planners to gather all the information they need to do their jobs. Byers is helping to solve this problem with a new software tool called Byers Planner™.

Answering the User's Needs

Working together, Sprint Corporation and Byers developed the software's requirements and built the application in just a few weeks using Byers configuration tools.

"Planning the evolution of our network to exceed the needs of our customers is critically important to our continuing success as a service provider. Additionally, the ability to document, maintain, and effectively communicate these plans is a key factor in achieving this success," said Jim Prince, Manager of Mechanized Engineering for Sprint Mid-Atlantic.

We examined the planners' workflow and found they need to compile information from various systems, navigate the geographic area, analyze facility networks and customer demand, propose new equipment and routes, estimate costs, print maps and reports, and distribute plans for review.

Considering this, we designed a productive software environment that makes it easy for users to perform planning tasks.

According to Prince, "A tool or application used for these tasks must be programmatically sound, utilize available data, and be intuitive to use. The final requirement of this environment is to produce a plan which is not only sent to the design engineers for review, but one which becomes a constant

part of the informational resources used in their decision-making process."


About 100 planners throughout Sprint's five regions need to develop migration plans for upgrading the company's switching technology. The Mid-Atlantic region is the first to use the software; they generate five-year plans to install fiber optic network backbone routes and remote digital switching equipment. Planners can quickly layout boundaries for carrier service areas where remote electronic devices will be installed. Data from various company systems—including AM/FM, assignment, customer information, central office equipment management, and external demographic data—can be integrated into their plans.

Helps Leverage AM/FM Investment

As Sprint has discovered, an AM/FM system maintains a geographic facility model that can be useful for both strategic and capacity planning. However, the level of detail and map scales needs to be altered for use by planners. Planner was designed to depict a generalized, uncluttered view of the network with scaled text and symbology, and produce a planning data model that can be used for "what if" scenarios. It filters out unwanted map details and presents a high-level view of the road network, fiber and feeder cables, and remote switches.

Planner builds a file that can be viewed as an overlay on the detail engineering model such that all work orders are designed with knowledge of future directions. The overlay can be used to engineer details of the plan and make them a reality.

Other important features of the software include the following:

- Keeps a record of the competitive intelligence
- Allows for phased planning
- Displays geo-coded data from your CIS or assignment system
- Generates scaled prints and plots 

QUESTAR REGULATED SERVICES SAVES WITH BYERS MAP VIEWER

Questar Regulated Services (QRS), the parent company of Questar Pipeline and Mountain Fuel Supply, is located in Salt Lake City, UT. Questar Pipeline is an interstate natural gas transmission and storage service company. Mountain Fuel Supply is a natural gas utility serving almost all of Utah, southwestern Wyoming, and a small segment of southeastern Idaho. The Utah area, specifically Salt Lake City, has been experiencing rapid development.

As a result of this development, QRS's field locators have been overrun with locate orders. Their locate ticket volume is 330% over what it was ten years ago. QRS field locators would normally spend a half hour or more every morning looking up mapping information in the office before they could get out into the field.


In an attempt to reduce time and expense, QRS moved away from producing aperture cards and began providing 11 x 17" map books for their locators. While this was an improvement, the books were rather awkward to use and still had to be updated manually on a semi-annual basis.

QRS began looking for an electronic mapping solution. They were looking for software that would enable them to quickly access their maps and to input corrections, thus reducing the amount of time their locators had to spend in the office each morning.

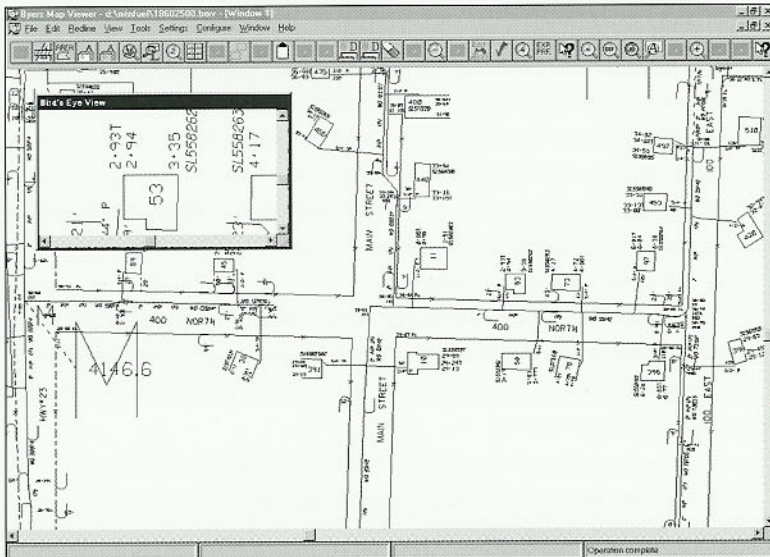
QRS chose Byers Map Viewer as their solution at Mountain Fuel Supply. "Byers [Map Viewer] fit very well with our current system," said Mark Warner, Technical System Support Supervisor with QRS. The

company originally used Map Viewer exclusively with the OS/2 platform on desktop PCs and now primarily runs the software in Windows 95 and NT on notebook computers. QRS has approximately 100 Map Viewer users, which includes the recent launch of 90 notebook computers for the field.

The integration of Map Viewer into QRS's information systems infrastructure is handled using Byers Data Bridge. Current mapping data is periodically extracted from the AM/FM system using Data Bridge and loaded onto LAN servers for the various regions. Field crews come into the office, hook up their machines, and download the data to their notebooks by simply clicking an icon on the screen. Users at QRS are very happy with the performance of Map Viewer, and in addition to saving time and labor, the utility has significantly reduced the duplication of paper maps.

According to Mr. Warner, possible future uses of Map Viewer at QRS include gathering more types of data in the field, redlining, and communicating changes back to drafting. 

... in addition to saving time and labor, the utility has significantly reduced the duplication of paper maps.



The Bird's Eye View feature of Byers Map Viewer, illustrated at left, is a helpful tool for displaying a specific area on a map.



Byers' exhibit helped launch the SpatialAge.


SpatialAge Unveiled at AM/FM International Conference XX

The SpatialAge AM/FM/GIS System will provide a variety of usable functions and "highly productive user applications," Byers Engineering Company announced at AM/FM International Conference XX.

A core group was formed in 1993 to create reusable core components to render/display graphics, access database information, provide messaging services and event handling, and also develop reusable functional requirements—"user objects"—for locating, redlining, filtering, and feature placement.

SpatialAge represents the implementation of these objectives. "We like to think we


can address the needs of all AM/FM/GIS users," said Stewart Asbury, Vice President of Byers' Information Systems division.

Map Viewer 7.0 is our first software release based on the new SpatialAge core technology. Companies can select and combine optional software components to create highly specialized applications for specific users, such as engineers or planners. A Form Designer component enables users to create and customize on-line forms for work flow applications and field data collection. Other optional components include network connectivity analysis and work print generation. 

SOFTWARE SUPPORT TEAM HAS IMPORTANT ROLE

Byers' support team does a lot more than just answer questions from software users. We organized this group to assure software quality and optimum end-user productivity. Working closely with our development staff, they perform the following functions:

- Product certification: test products before they are released to the customers and ensure that quality assurance requirements are fulfilled.
- Training and documentation: teach product training courses for customers and also write all software documentation.
- Technical support: receive product-related questions from customers and maintain a log of calls. If the problem is determined to be a bug in the software, the technical support analysts create a reproducible trouble report for the software development staff.
- Technical Services: assist customers with set up and configuration. Also provide on-site troubleshooting and software use evaluations.

At Byers, we're always happy to help you with any questions you might have. So don't hesitate to give us a call. After all, our job is all about making your job easier! 



Front row (l-r): Kim Gallagher, Hilton Keith, Bridget Peroni, Joe Fu, Tracy Steele; Middle row: Bill Dunbar, Jan Shearer, Susan Rodriguez, Nancy Condon, Kim McClure, Victor Williams; Back row: Jeff Jones, Eric Glenn, David Harper, Norm Young, Clinton Biggers, James Mann, Terry Sehler. Not pictured: Dennis Derouen.

"We have always received excellent customer service."

—Greg Fry, Tinker Air Force Base

"Byers provides great technical support."

***—David Huckaby,
United Cities Gas Company***



Tom Strickland Appointed Chair of OpenGIS™ Telecommunications Subcommittee

The Open GIS Consortium, Inc. (OGC) has appointed Tom Strickland, Futurist and Information Technologist with Byers, Chair of the new OGC Telecommunications Domain Working Group. This working group is to represent utility and telecommunications issues by specifying the spatial requirements of telecommunications information system processes using work flows and object models.

"The obvious conclusion or result of object technology is component objects. Our charter is to define the objects which best meet current and future needs of AM/FM/GIS," said Strickland.

OGC is a nonprofit membership organization dedicated

to the development of interoperability standards for the geoprocessing community. OGC envisions the full integration of geospatial data and geoprocessing resources into mainstream computing and the widespread use of interoperable geoprocessing software and geospatial data products throughout the information infrastructure.

For more information about OpenGIS and the telecommunications working group, call Byers or visit <http://www.opengis.org>. You may also request *Telecommunications Problem Domain*, written by Strickland, by returning the attached reply card. This paper discusses the need for OpenGIS™ in the industry.



Tom Strickland

Please submit a change of address or request regarding our mailing list using the attached reply card.

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