



editorial



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Measurement Experts

You might scratch your head at Jason Foose's article about using a smart phone to measure pavement roughness, but I was attracted to it because it's just another form of measurement. I also found it cool that the guy who wrote about the importance of evidence in boundary surveying in our March issue is also writing about measuring ride roughness. I call that a wide spectrum.

I spoke to Jason about it, and here's what he said: "I find that a surveyor's greatest professional detriment is self-imposed limitations on the use of their skill set. Back when I was self-employed I solicited my measuring skills to general contractors for such tasks as interior wall layout on a tenant shell refinish. The contractor was happy to simply have someone read the plans and mark the wall locations on the floors. It was cheaper to hire me than pay an overly skilled carpenter crew the extra time for the task. It required nothing more than a 25' tape measure (inches) and common sense to know that a carpenter's pride will address any minor discrepancies. It was simply another source of income from providing a service. Our ilk wastes a lot of opportunity by self-imposed limitations."

Jason went on to say, "I get tired of hearing the trifecta "I don't do construction...but I can't compete with those low-ballers...I need to give my work away in order to pay bills." I assure you per hour I was the highest paid tradesmen on those shell refinish jobs. I didn't waste the contractor's time chasing hundredths and proving the plan set wrong. That wasn't my job or my employer's expectation. Having a steady income also provided the means for me to avoid the low ball boundary scenario and charge a honest professional fee for those (boundary) types of services...but who am I to tell a boundary surveyor how to make money? After all their measurements are right and they will fix every misgiving through precision and double proportion!"

I recently read an article in *Smithsonian* magazine about a researcher in California who has turned a smart phone into a high-quality microscope, not by virtue of its low-end camera lens, but by software that looks for differences, examines shadows cast by individual cells, and other techniques. All made possible by the computing power of a smart phone. Before, expensive microscopes and lengthy laboratory tests were needed. Now, these devices can count thousands of red and white blood cells in seconds, spot diseases and viruses, and even test water for the presence of bacteria, parasites or toxins. Obviously, these will be useful as a diagnostic tool in developing countries.

Along the lines of applying technology in new ways, also of note in this issue is an article by Joe Stokes, the city surveyor for Orlando. How many of you enjoy climbing down in sanitary sewer manholes? Back in the day when I was still doing this, and before we even knew that you could possibly die in these structures without a breathing apparatus, without a doubt it was my least favorite task. I suspect Joe's surveyors are very happy with the new method of obtaining this downhole information.

My point in all this is that—given the lack of land development work—we are going to have to look for ways to parlay our measurement and positioning expertise into other areas. People are still looking for assurance in measurements. Why should we allow technology to steal this away from us? As I have written, there's a visible future for those who know how and where to look. Many of you experienced what handheld calculators did for our industry, and we can see what smart phones are doing for our planet. Our task is to look for ways to fit in. ■