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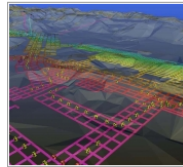
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Australia still a leader in software business

Richard Roberts, 31 March 2010



Australian miners buying software locally. Image: Ventsim

MARCH 29: *HIGHGRADE'S* inaugural annual mining software user survey has highlighted the popularity of Australian developed products in the Australasian market.

More than 230 responses to a survey completed over six weeks from the start of February to mid-March this year put acQuire ahead of Maxwell GeoServices' DataShed as the leading geological database management (GIS) software on the market, while Maptek Vulcan (and MineSuite), Micromine PITRAM, Gemcom Surpac, ASX-listed QMASTOR's Pit to Port, Mincom Ellipse and Ventsim are other Australian-developed products rated highly by Australasian-based mining, exploration, consulting and contracting company executives, managers, engineers and geologists.

The Datamine/GijimaAST-sold Mine 2-4D was also partly developed in Australia.

If there was an overall winner in the survey it was South Australian-based Maptek, which was judged a clear leader in the general mine planning software fields of resource/reserve modelling and surface mine design/planning, and had the second most popular underground GMP software.

The MineSuite mine production reporting system is another popular Maptek product and the company is enjoying considerable success with it in North America as well as Australasia.

The Western Australian-based acQuire and its namesake, flagship product have been around for 14 years, with the company claiming to have a presence at about 400 sites worldwide. A good number of these are in its backyard.

PITRAM has been through a strong domestic and international sales growth phase in recent years, while the Pit to Port supply chain management product has won over major Australian bulk mining companies and is now spearheading QMASTOR's drive into the American and African markets.

The popular Surpac software suite was a major attraction for Canada's Gemcom when it bought Australian-based Surpac four years ago. Similarly, Mincom's marquee EAM solution, Ellipse, helped make it a target for US-based private equity firm Francisco Partners in 2007.

Craig Stewart, a mining engineer and former part-time designer of underground-mine ventilation modelling software, now has multiple distributors of his Ventsim product, which continues to win accolades as an advanced niche design tool which is helping to save mine operators a lot of money.

GoCAD 3D modelling software, described by one survey respondent as a "really powerful tool for helping [us] to understand the 3D architecture of geology", was developed by a consortium of 18 mainly global oil and gas companies and more than 120 universities, and commercialised by a Cayman Islands-registered company called Paradigm Geophysical.

It is licensed to, and is being further developed for the minerals sector in Australia, by the likes of Perth-based Jigsaw Geoscience.

Just over half the respondents nominated software in all categories, while most tabled products in four or more categories.

Popular nominations not listed below include Runge's Talpac mine haulage evaluation software and XPAC mine scheduler; Cube Consulting's GCX grade estimation and reporting product; and Gemcom MineSched.

More on the winners in next week's edition.

HighGrade 2010 Australasian mining software survey summary

Best geological database/geoscientific information management, software.

1. acQuire. 2. DataShed

Best resource/reserve modelling software

1. Maptek Vulcan. 2. Gemcom Surpac

Best mine design/planning software (surface)

1. Maptek Vulcan. 2. Mintec Minesight

Best mine design/planning software (underground)

1. Datamine/GMSI Mine 2-4D/Datamine EPS. 2. Maptek Vulcan

Best production management system/software

1. Micromine PITRAM. 2. Modular Mining DISPATCH

Best surveying/mapping software

1. Gemcom Surpac. 2. Adam Technology 3DM

Best enterprise level management software/tools

1. QMASTOR Pit to Port. 2. Mincom Ellipse

Best niche product

1. Ventsim. 2. GoCAD

Survey respondents: 41% Western Australia; 29% Queensland; 16% New South Wales; 6% Victoria; 2% Indonesia/Papua New Guinea; 2% South Australia; 2% New Zealand; 1% Tasmania; 1% Northern Territory.* 42% Mining companies; 18% exploration companies; 28% mining/development companies; 7% consulting firms; 3% contract mining companies; 2% 'independent experts'.

*Where companies are based. Includes companies working in other offshore locations.



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