

12d Synergy V3 – Responding to Customer Needs



12d Synergy is 12d Solutions' data management and collaboration software that serves as a central repository for project files created through geospatial design and modelling applications. Designed to be used by all staff – including technical teams, such as surveyors and engineers, as well as administration, marketing and support departments – 12d Synergy enhances productivity for all users, whether they are in the office, at remote sites, or travelling.

With a focus on quickly integrating customer feedback, 12d Solutions releases updates to 12d Synergy customers each calendar quarter, with major releases launched every two years. The next major release is 12d Synergy V3, which will be unveiled at the 12d International Users Conference on July 24 to 26, 2016, in Brisbane for a global release.

"Our customers range from small offices of one to four users, to multi-national companies with hundreds of staff," said Joel Gregory, General Manager, 12d Solutions. "Since our inception, we have differentiated ourselves by encouraging feedback from our customers so we can better understand their business requirements. V3 is testament to that – it contains enhancements to existing function such as master file edit control, version control and advanced search, and introduces new capabilities for surveying companies, contractors and consultants."

For multi-office organisations, 12d Synergy V3 will include a new File Replication Server to provide support for remote sites by storing previously-requested documents locally. This will accelerate access to project files and reduce traffic between the central server and remote sites, therefore reducing bandwidth requirements. V3 will also have optimisation for faster searches and general browsing.

To simplify day-to-day operation for system administrators, 12d Solutions has designed V3 to auto-upgrade, ensuring all users have the most up-to-date version installed. It will also offer flexible permission management, and allow the ability to force user subscription for notifications.

For the user, workflow enhancements include: watch folders to allow submission of documents from external sources, such as scanners and digital cameras; web file drop to allow external users to submit files through a browser environment; integration with external productivity tools such as Workflow Max; and a prompter ('nag screen') for users to check-in data before exiting the software.

12d Synergy also contains a new attribute type, dependent Attribute, which provides a picklist dependent on the value of another picklist; this is akin to having an attribute with a matrix of possible values. Other new features include email conversation tracking and automatic file conversion to automatically convert file formats after check-in.

"With 12d Synergy V3, we continue to address the major challenges faced by surveying businesses, whether they are small businesses or large operations," said Gregory. "The new version will manage the process of storage and retrieval of data, be it in the office or in a remote location with poor connectivity, using the new File Replication Server. It will also provide easy data exchange with third parties over a standard web browser, using the publishing and web drop functionalities. Additionally, V3 will connect to popular software packages such as Abtrac and WorkflowMax."

Scott Williams, Managing Director of Mainland Surveying has been using 12d Synergy since 2013. Scott's experience with the software is documented in the interview below.

Interviewee:
Scott Williams,
Managing Director,
Mainland Surveying

Why did you select 12d Synergy to support Mainland Surveying's document management?

Scott Williams (SW): We discovered 12d Synergy when we were forming



Scott Williams

the company in 2013. We knew we had to implement a document management system, but hadn't quite worked out what exactly we needed from it. After considering a variety of options, we evaluated a beta version of 12d Synergy.

Even in its early days, it ticked all the boxes. The key thing was the centralised system. It was able to handle the heavy-duty software we use, including 12d Model, a multi-file piece of software through which we produce a lot of data related to topographical maps, plans, subdivisions and building and infrastructure development. It was also able to deal with email recording, something that I had experienced in previous businesses and considered critical.

How has 12d Synergy impacted the way Mainland operates?

SW: We're a small dynamic business (currently a team of six) and an early adopter of technology and innovation. We use technology to maintain a strategic advantage against our competitors, many of which are much larger companies. 12d Synergy provides a central repository for our reference material, survey data and project documentation, all of which is integrated into the platform.

Using 12d Synergy, all of the project information is captured in the one location. We can check our jobs in and out very easily, enabling a level of transparency across the business, and providing an insight into who is doing what and the status of each project. Having this information readily-available allows us to quickly respond to new client requests and action or update items accurately. Projects are no longer inhibited when someone is travelling, on leave, or attending back-to-back meetings as we can access the full job file with the latest information from anywhere.

12d Synergy has also instilled mobility into our operation. Before the implementation, we were forced to download files onto a portable hard drive and take that with us. We'd have to think about what we needed and wanted, then move those files back and forth between computers. There was the risk of losing the latest version and overwriting more recent files. Then there's the time factor – 12d Model files can be quite large, so shifting those around jeopardised productivity.

What features do you find the most beneficial and why?

SW: The most beneficial feature, from a day-to-day perspective, has been the email recording link. Each day I receive up to 50 project related emails. 12d Synergy allows us to file those emails very quickly within project folders so they aren't lost and are accessible to everyone working on the project. Once we've made that initial filing, all subsequent sent and received emails are automatically managed and categorised by the software.

We've also experienced reduced pressure on our network since implementing 12d Synergy. It has freed up significant bandwidth. We run a cut down server, so as our business continues to expand, 12d Synergy will future-proof our network once the amount of data flowing through it increases.

As Mainland expands, how do you plan to expand your usage of 12d Synergy?

SW: The 12d Synergy platform is quite comprehensive and there are a number of functionalities of which we intend to take advantage. We're eager to begin using the in-house Dropbox-like function so that our clients can access and pick up selected large data files rather than having to wait for us to send them. We're also starting to implement pre-populated templates, task management and the issue sets. What we've learned in our time using 12d Model is that 12d Solutions is constantly looking to maximise the value we receive from the solution, and similarly, they've closely guided us in our implementation of 12d Synergy to ensure we capitalise on all its features.

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