

# ● Playing With The Big Boys

## Zokero's SeisWare Success Based On Old-Fashioned Virtues

**CHUCK CURTIS** is a geophysical consultant. For the last 25 years, he has worked exploration plays in India, South America, Ontario and the Western Canadian Sedimentary Basin. "I've used the full gamut of geophysical software programs, and this one is a dynamite system. For me, there's not a moment of looking back."

"It has a lot more features than most of the PC-based programs, and it's a lot cheaper for small companies to use than the big packages," adds Trevor Shortt, a consulting geophysicist currently interpreting seismic prospects in northeast British Columbia. "It's reliable and doesn't crash all the time."

The object of Curtis and Shortt's enthusiasm is SeisWare, a seismic interpretation software tool. The brainchild of Calgary-based Zokero Inc., SeisWare sales have doubled annually since 1999, to the point now where one-quarter of all professional geophysicists in Calgary use it as their primary interpretation tool — a success in a service where the big service companies would seem to have all the advantages.

"There are about 850 potential users in Calgary, and we now have 211 seats," says Kerry Befus, business development manager for Zokero. "By the end of 2004, we would like to have 30-40% of the market."

The success of SeisWare is based upon sound business practice — listening to the customer, and then giving them what they want at a good price.

Back in the mid-1990s, Ed VanWieren was a programmer at Photon Systems Ltd., the developer of SeisX. After leaving Photon, VanWieren and Shayne Stogrin decided to develop a new PC-based seismic interpretation package.

"There was a hole to be filled," says VanWieren. "We wanted to write a package that would run on Windows NT, XP and 2000 on a PC."

Since VanWieren and Stogrin were developers, they went to geophysicists like Curtis and asked what they wanted. "Users dictate where the program is going, not the pro-

grammers," says Curtis. "With many programs, there's no communication between the writer/developer and the user, but here, you have it. It's unique."

The first versions were primitive, but the duo refined the software until, by 1999, they had a viable product. "I first started using SeisWare after seeing it at a geophysical convention a few years ago," says Shortt. "It was pretty basic when it first came out, but it's grown. That's one of the things I like about it — if you have a problem, they will address your concerns in the next release."

Training and support is operated by Blue Castle. Because SeisWare is based upon a Windows interface, it generally only requires one hour upfront to learn the basics, and another few hours spread over several weeks to address questions as they arise. "It's a very intuitive program," says Curtis. "Some programs you can muddle along for three weeks, but not this one. I bring it along on my laptop to my clients, and some of them will use it and say, 'There's something wrong — it's too easy.'"

Zokero made the decision to lease their product at an affordable \$9,000 per year. "Other companies have an upfront fee and an annual maintenance fee," says Befus. "A new client can be worth five times what an existing client is worth, so they're always chasing new clients, which can be detrimental to existing clients. With us, it doesn't matter if they're new or old, they're both just as important."

In 1999, Zokero sold only 15 seats, but sales quickly grew due to good word-of-mouth from satisfied users. Over the next few years, most of its business came from Mom & Pop shops that couldn't afford the fancier, more expensive packages. In the last year, however, larger firms have been swayed by the program's low cost of IT and maintenance. "There's been a general acceptance of a PC platform versus a mainframe," says Befus. "A PC is easier to buy and maintain, so IT groups have come onboard."

In January, Zokero released SeisWare 6. In

the newest version, the use of colour has been expanded to include time, depth and amplitude response. "You can colour-contour, which is the way I like to see it," says Shortt.

Curtis is pleased with the new interactive frequency slider in the mistie, which allows the user to interactively filter to a common frequency. "You say to yourself, I wonder what would happen if I filtered it right here? Instead of wondering, you can just do it with a slide bar, and find the limits of tolerance. You can immediately put a number to it."

The ability to specify the projection system for converting latitude and longitude into rectangles has been expanded internationally. GeoTiff (airborne or satellite images), can be imported directly onto the base map to show geographic and infrastructure features.

Horizon/fault contacts can now be shown on the base map, and automatic mistie analysis allows the use of different vintages of data. Well log curve signatures can be posted on the map. As well, there is now a well log editor.

In addition, cross-plotting allows correlation of data; 3-D data can be tied to wells using a pseudo cross-section selector; and a pie-selection technique allows the user to examine seismic data along deviated wells.

Where does Zokero see its product evolving in the future? "There are two areas our clients talk about, the ability to generate 3-D images in an immersive environment, and geology," says VanWieren. "We hope to have it in version 8 or 9."

"The geology is harder to develop than 3-D visualization. Right now, we can use AccuMap, but we'll add it, perhaps by version 8. When we do it, it will be from a geophysicist's point of view, not a geologist's."

**ntm**

— Gordon Cope

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