

Vesa Koivula  
Service Manager  
Vaisala  
Helsinki, Finland

## Column

# A New Look at Synoptic Data Harvesting

What options might the future hold?  
Is it possible to operate upper-air networks more efficiently?

About twenty years ago, many national meteorological services began to look at their synoptic data harvesting activities in a new way. They started to call for automated sounding systems that would allow their skilled personnel to reduce the time devoted to the routine, manual tasks of upper-air sounding. Vaisala answered the call by introducing successive generations of sounding systems that offered increasingly sophisticated automated functions. Today, Vaisala customers have considerable flexibility when they investigate ways to build sounding automation into an upper-air network.

This flexibility extends to the services that Vaisala offers in support of our sounding systems. In recent years, we have strengthened our service offering by creating a number of “service products” that are grouped under the umbrella of the Vaisala Service Contract. These service products have been well-received: some 15 national meteorological services are now Vaisala Service Contract customers. We will continue to improve our current portfolio of services but we are also keen to explore entirely new ways of serving you better.

### Core versus context

At the 4th Annual Meeting of the European Meteorological Society (EMS), held in Nice, France, I gave a presentation to a room full of national meteorological service representatives. My presentation asked the basic question: “Are there other ways

to harvest synoptic observation data?” The background to this question is the fact that in every area of business today, companies are taking a complete inventory of their business activities. They are defining their “core activities” (activities critical to business success) and “context” activities (activities that are not critical to business success). Once their context activities are defined, companies are improving their bottom-line efficiency by outsourcing these activities to

subcontractor partners that are better equipped to carry them out.

During my EMS presentation, I asked the audience whether they thought it was possible to operate their upper-air networks more efficiently in future. I now ask the same question of you: are you attempting to define the core activities related to operating your upper-air network? Are you attempting to define the context activities? What is the balance between the

two? Is it possible to look at the whole area of synoptic data harvesting in terms of core activity vs. context activity?

I have asked a lot of questions and the only way to answer them is to begin a discussion with you about the future of synoptic data harvesting. If you are interested in such a discussion, please contact me ([vesa.koivula@vaisala.com](mailto:vesa.koivula@vaisala.com)). You will find that Vaisala has a lot of knowledge, expertise and interest to contribute. ●

*Vesa Koivula is Service Manager for Vaisala Measurement Systems. He joined Vaisala in 1988. During the last four years Vesa has steadily improved the services that Vaisala offers in support of its sounding systems.*

