

Surveyors Buying More New Gear

By Perry A. Trunick

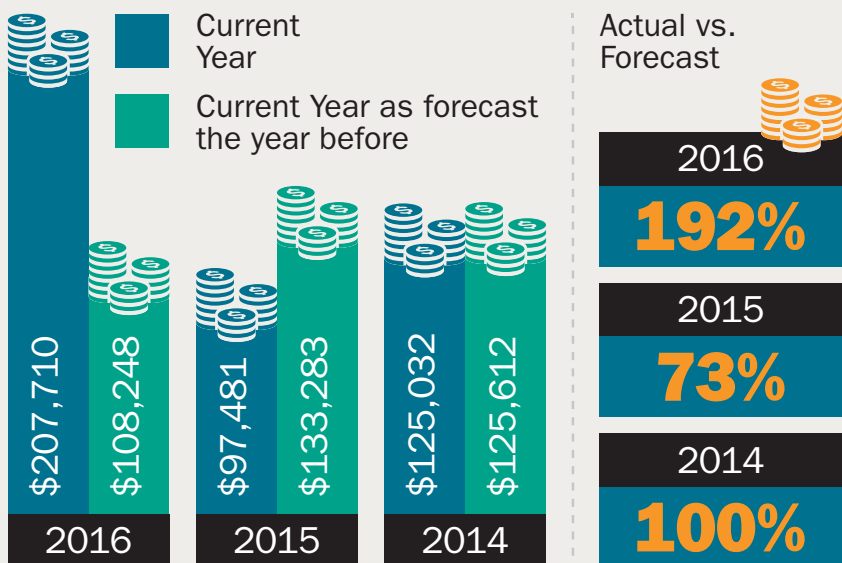
Each year, *POB* asks land surveyors and geospatial professionals about their current and expected capital spending. Based on 2016 actual spending and projected spending for 2017, respondents are coming off a year of high equipment and software acquisition

expecting to continue strong spending. While many report they are replacing outdated equipment or upgrading, there is also some significant technology gain in first-time purchases.

Here's a quick view of the "2013-2016 *Point of Beginning* Capital Investment Study" conducted by BNP Market Research at the end of September 2016.

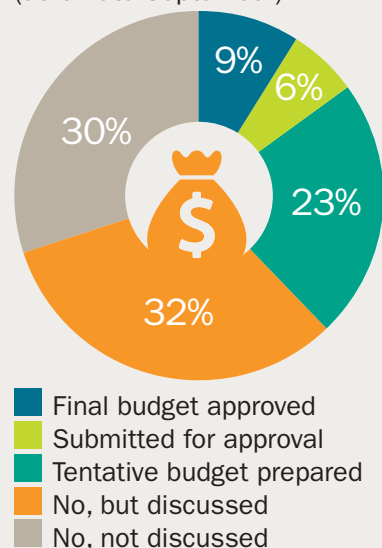


OVERALL BUDGET VS. EXPECTED BUDGET



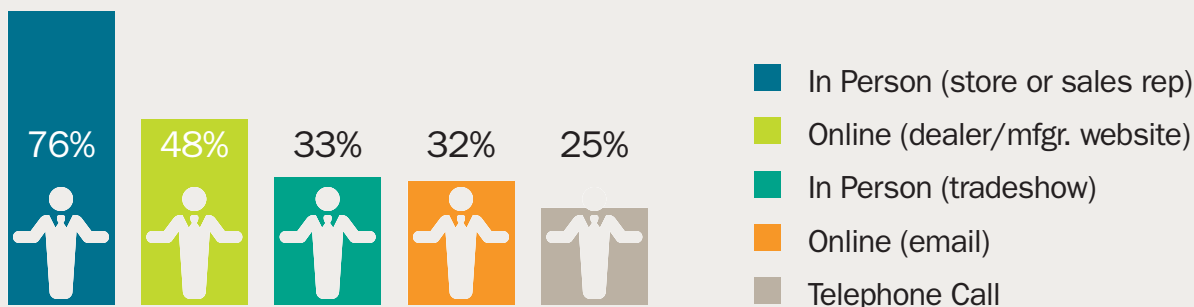
APPROVED BUDGET

(as of late September)



Respondents to the 2016 study expect to spend an average of \$187,222 in 2017. This is on top of a year where they spent well ahead of expectations. Actual spending in 2016 was an average of \$207,710, 192% of the 2016 budget projections they reported in late 2015.

PREFERRED CONTACT FOR PURCHASES

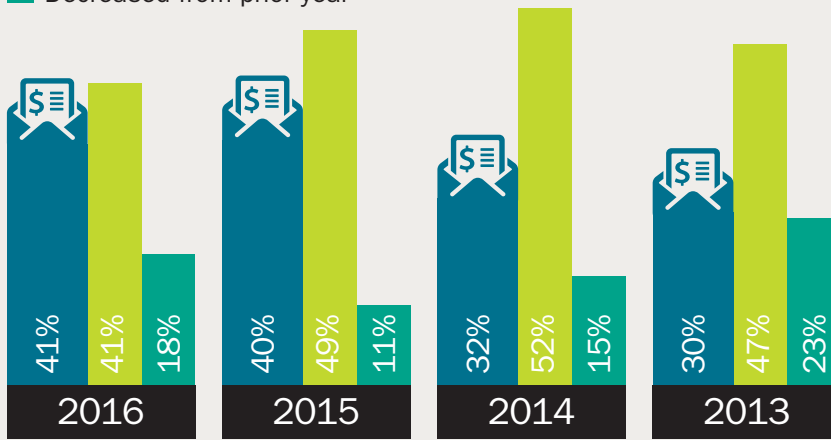


Purchasing continues to involve personal contact. Asked for the top three ways respondents want to communicate with suppliers during their review and purchasing process, one-on-one contact – either in person or by phone – dominate their preferences.

OBSERVED CHANGE IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET

(refers to budget for upcoming fiscal year)

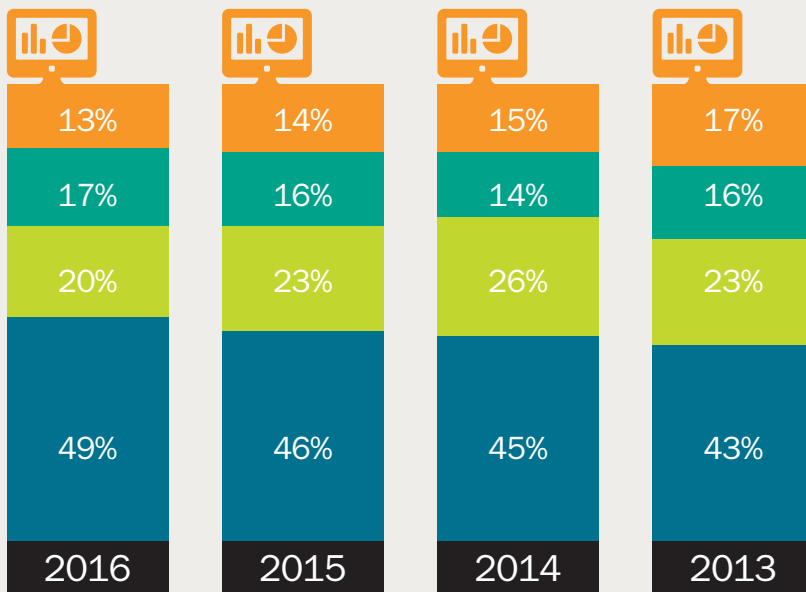
- Increase vs. prior year
- About the same as prior year
- Decreased from prior year



Only about 15 percent of respondents had budgets for the coming fiscal year approved or submitted for approval, but the majority were at least engaged in the budgeting/approval process when questionnaires were distributed. The vast majority expected budgets to increase or remain the same compared with the prior year. This is consistent over the last four years.

BUDGET ALLOCATION

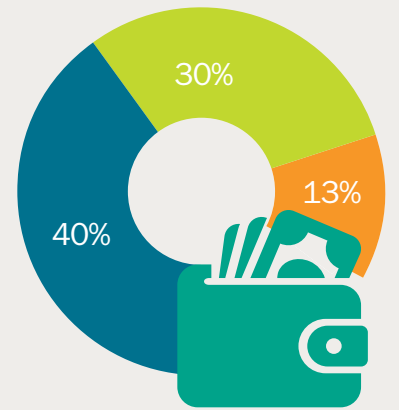
- Equipment
- Software
- Training/Support
- Add-ons/Accessories



Planned equipment purchases continue to dominate budgets, but spending on training and support has been on the rise over the last four years.

Right: Upgrades are reflected in how equipment budgets are being allocated. UAVs were added to the questionnaire in 2015, and the percentage of the equipment budget allocated for UAVs has remained consistent, but the dollar investment is double based on the increased size of the equipment budget for 2017.

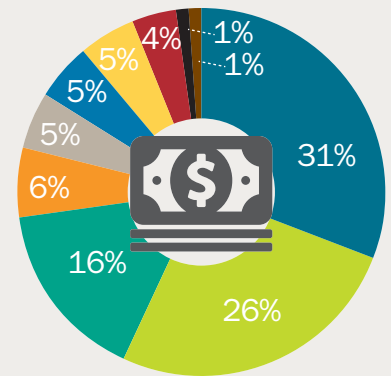
REASON FOR PURCHASES



- Replace outdated equipment
- Increase productivity
- Improve ability to land business/enter new markets

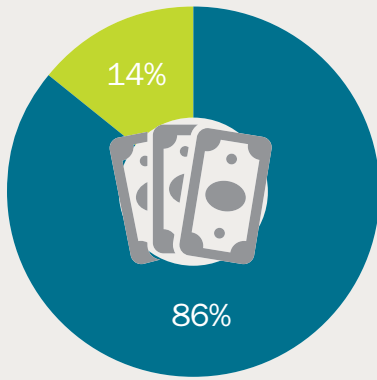
With technology advances, it's not surprising that the leading reason for capital investment continues to be upgrading/updating equipment.

EQUIPMENT BUDGET



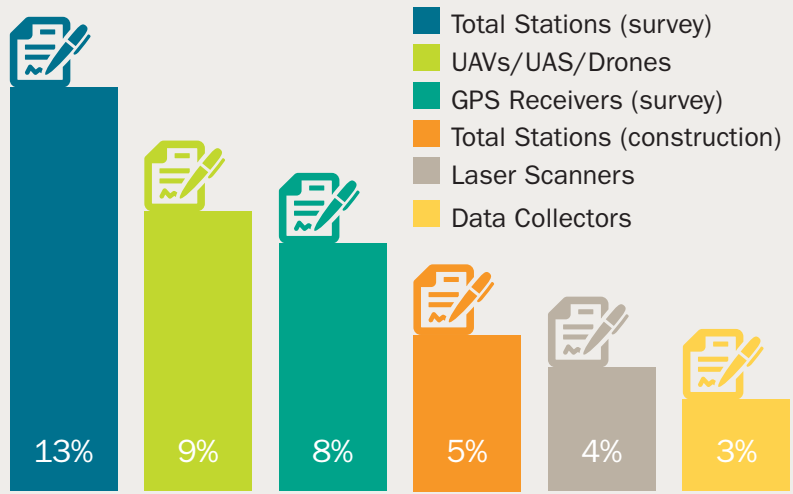
- GPS Receivers (survey)
- Total Stations (survey)
- Data Collectors
- UAVs/UAS/Drones
- Digital Data and Imagery
- Laser Scanners
- GPS Receivers (mapping)
- Total Stations (construction)
- Aerial Cameras
- Digitizers

TYPE OF PURCHASE



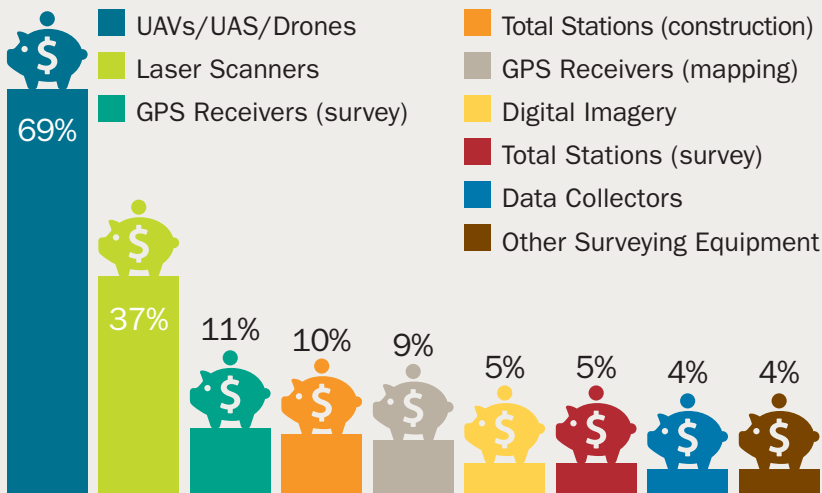
- New Equipment
- Used Equipment

MOST COMMONLY LEASED EQUIPMENT



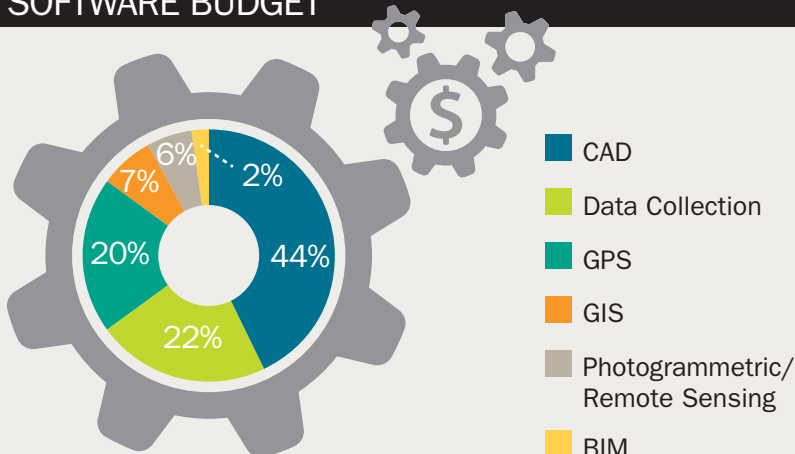
Most respondents prefer to purchase equipment over leasing it, and they show a decided preference for new equipment. When they do lease, UAVs are among the equipment that is more commonly leased, topped only by survey-grade total stations.

FIRST-TIME PURCHASES



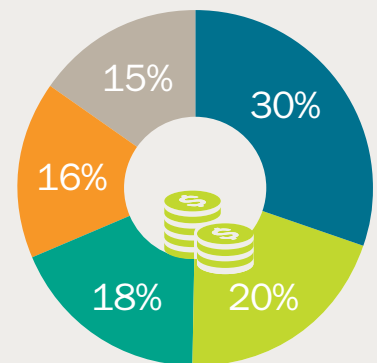
Left: With the barriers to entry coming down for UAVs, it's not surprising to see UAVs topping the list of planned first-time purchases. UAVs may still be a small part of the budget allocation, but between the planned purchases and leases, respondents are moving pretty quickly into this newer technology.

SOFTWARE BUDGET



Software budgets are reflecting some of the shift to laser scanning and aerial collection (UAV) with CAD leading the spending.

TRAINING BUDGET



- Third-Party Training
- Web-based Training
- Manufacturer's Training
- Books/Manuals
- Ongoing Support

Training is an important part of gaining and maintaining a professional land surveying license, and half of training budgets are being allocated to third-party and Web-based training.