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Regardless of where I travel in the world, rail industry organisations, suppliers, customers and individuals alike are all seeking to 'stay one step ahead' by creating, expanding and stretching the accepted boundaries of established capabilities and technology. So where is the change driven from?

In Australia, and in North and South America, customers are currently looking to the rail industry to develop solutions which enable the removal of wayside equipment and take advantage of satellite technology. This will soon also be the case in the Eastern European and South African markets and follows a similar path to that of Europe with the application of ERTMS and CBTC.

Australian operators are seeking to better manage both 'light and dark territory' to ensure safety without 'production compromise' and to reduce expensive wayside costs from remote sites. In the USA operators are seeking a solution to ensure the safety of their extensive and often remote interstate rail networks, while in South Africa there is wide recognition that security of equipment can be dramatically improved when it sits on board the train.

In almost every case a tailored solution is required and in almost every case it is different. It follows that regardless of the rail industry's attempts to influence, and in spite of the efforts of consultants to develop 'one size fits all' design solutions, the customers' needs will always play a determining part in the process. It is up to Industry to adapt and evolve and stay a step ahead.....complete harmony!

Craig Southward, Ansaldo STS

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