



A Perspective of the GI Industry and the Future

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Having transitioned from the 'government' side of the business to the commercial, or 'contractor' as my former colleagues call me, my view is that on both sides of the divide the geospatial dimension or perhaps more topically, location, is at the cusp of its development, of becoming an influential business enabler, at the same time as becoming a matter of routine. Most people with access to a computer, users of mobile telephony, and vehicle drivers with sat nav are increasingly familiar with location. Once cannot watch the various television news programmes without one or many items being supported or led by images of location whether it may be mapping or imagery itself. Location and the use of geospatial information are becoming all pervasive.

However, for those of us in the geospatial domain this pervasiveness needs channelling and developing so that users and consumers can understand the power of location and how it can empower the citizen, help government, big and small, local and regional as well as deliver to industry and commerce operational outputs and outcomes in a more economic and efficient manner. Of how value added services and information can deliver capabilities that both we as providers and recipients i.e. customers, didn't realise existed before: the potential to develop new markets with new capabilities that harness the power of location and take it to another level.

A number of key points that if addressed along the way will help with this development:

- The business needs champions whether the business is finance, commerce, heavy industry, utilities, academia, government departments or whatever. These champions ideally are at board/director level and not from the geospatial profession and better still, with no functional responsibility for the capability. Yet they understand its value, see the strategic benefits its engagement brings to a business and are prepared to champion it.
- As an industry we have to engage with others in their respective domains in a language that they understand, often both operationally as well as financially. Too often we complain that one entity or another just "doesn't get it!" when actually the fact that we have not explained what we are about is closer to the truth. We pretend that we are listening to a company's business needs, that we understand their cash flow problems etc but then almost within a heartbeat convert the conversation and requirements into a need for this or that type of GIS capability
- We need to move from a business that 'sells' software solutions and even perhaps to be more up to date, capability, to offering 'services' which includes capability but also is about a joint

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partnership in acquiring, hosting and managing their data, of analysing their data not just from a geospatial perspective but also using collateral information and analysis, of looking at their business from a through life care and maintenance view point. Of embedding full time employed staff within their organisations and helping them develop their technology road-maps; to share and own their risk with them.

- To view 'location' at the enterprise level of any business and organisation and not some back office solution run by the IT department, thus being accessible across a range of business functions and definitely not as maps on screens or dots on maps.
- To truly share information within a business from one domain to another and from business to another business is an essential factor in the successful deployment of any geospatial service or capability. It is the development of this 'good behaviour' which I believe is central to the success of the Location Strategy within the United Kingdom.

Fine words etc that hopefully nobody would disagree with but "what about implementation and the way ahead?" There is no doubt in my mind that one has to personally believe in this stuff with a single-mindedness bordering on the obsessive and a commitment to making things and change happen. In doing so there is a need to:

- Develop an engagement strategy that in seeks out the key individuals within domains at various levels and then seeks to appraise them of the benefits of putting location at the heart of their entity. This should be delivered in a variety of different ways from thought leadership sessions, to industry days, through capability reviews and so on.
- In a likewise manner develop an engagement strategy with key business partners that are also seeking to better enable government and commerce and that together a synergistic effect is offered that provides increased revenues to the partners and better value for money to the customers. The aim is to make the large industry 'players' aware of location such that it becomes embedded in any potential offering.
- I wholeheartedly believe that in driving through the UK Location Strategy that it will not only enable the benefits of good behaviour amongst the geospatial community but more importantly, amongst the wider community that uses or seeks to use geospatial information. Clearly this is linked to the UK's adoption and delivery of INSPIRE.
- Develop propositions with potential customers/domains that seek to maximise business benefits, outcomes and outputs and to not even mention at the outset the 'power of GIS'.

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