

## **Capitalising on the 'Where Factor'**

**Mark Bishop, Product Marketing Manager EMEA, Pitney Bowes**  
**Business Insight**

Location is ubiquitous. Location influences most, if not all, business behaviour and outcomes – yet a lack of location awareness is an analytical blind spot for many organisations today.

According to Ovum, 80% of enterprise data contains geospatial co-ordinates that can be visualised on a map as points, lines or areas<sup>1</sup>. However, this location component of data is not being capitalised on by many organisations and IT systems. Traditional Business Intelligence systems have looked at 'who', 'what' and 'why', but have ignored the core analytical dimension of 'where'.

When we think of 'location-centric' IT, we typically think of GIS systems. But technology has evolved far beyond the days of basic mapping tools. Increasing use of mobile devices and the growing adoption of GPS and RFID have made it easier to identify the location of people and things. The popularity of consumer mapping applications such as Bing and Google Maps has also created a consumer demand for, and familiarity with, the ability to manipulate spatial data to answer routine queries, in a way that simply didn't exist a few years ago.

As a result, an increasingly location-centric Web 2.0 world is raising expectations among business users of what their IT systems could provide in terms of location enhanced data, and of how a visual mapping interface could act as a primary front end for knowledge acquisition and decision-making.

The public sector is perhaps the most advanced in its adoption of location aware technologies, driven by challenges such as shifting population patterns, increasing immigration, CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets, resource shortages, increasing requests for planning permission, plus terrorist and security threats. Many local authorities are deploying location-based systems to help improve their planning capabilities in the areas of disaster forecasting, pandemics and emergency preparedness, carbon footprint management, and enhancing citizen self-service capabilities.

However, the private sector is catching up. By making user-friendly location aware technology available to frontline staff, rather than treating it as the sole preserve of specialist GIS teams, companies can improve and accelerate business efficiency and performance, particularly in customer-centric processes. For example, a location aware solution integrated with an existing customer database enables an organisation to visually identify its most

valuable customers, better assess risk scenarios, see how demographics correlate with specific objectives or revenue goals, and target new customers with similar demographic characteristics.

Incorporating location-based data with CRM systems and processes can create a particularly powerful application. Location aware CRM solutions enable organisations to access spatial information (eg. flood risk data), cleanse and validate the underlying data, integrate and enrich it with internal systems and processes, analyse and visualise it as needed (eg. check flood risk potential against selected post codes), and then communicate the results both internally and with specific customers or citizens. This gives organisations the ability to locate, connect and communicate from a location aware data platform.

As the market matures, and organisations get savvier with location as a lead component of their reports and analyses, we will see demand for geospatial 'what if' scenario modelling increasing. Location awareness enables organisations to get closer to their customers and citizens. By extending CRM systems at the front end and adding the 'Where Factor' of geography, postcodes and location intelligence, organisations can unlock their data assets and produce deeper business insights that improve competitiveness and business performance. If you haven't considered the 'Where Factor' in your own organisation's systems, you're leaving a significant amount of data intelligence unexploited.