

THREE D'S™ DRIVE GOVERNMENT

Using Location Intelligence to Drive Digital Engagement



Government organisations are using location intelligence to drive digital engagement, argues James Brayshaw, to drive down costs and engage with citizens. But there is still room for more transparency and raising public awareness through a multi-channel approach.

As government organisations are facing wider and more complex pressures than ever before, the 'three Ds' are tasked with driving its transformation: Decentralisation, Digital, and Data.

Decentralisation is pushing increasing power back into the hands of local government agencies, who need to ensure they have the capacity and capabilities to deliver. Digital By

Default means providing a multi-channel service to citizens with limited budgets. Data is the intelligence on which timely, accurate decision making and financial planning must depend. Further challenges faced by local government include:

- Retaining skilled, motivated staff in the face of pay freezes and staff cuts
- The need to constantly drive down costs and generate savings, and managing public concerns about cutbacks
- Adopting new ways of working such as agile and mobile working
- Coping with changing demographics
- The need to improve collaboration with partners in public service agencies such as police, fire and health services

Underpinning these challenges is a requirement for clear leadership with confident, relevant, informed decision-making at its heart. This is where data, the third of the three Ds comes into play, and has the capacity to make a success of decentralisation and digital.

Precise, accurate data drives decision-making and ensures strategies and plans are founded on facts as trends are analysed, accurate forecasts produced and budgets appropriately allocated. Contrary to this, inaccurate 'bad' data behaves like a virus, infecting and negatively impacting an organisation across many functions. In local government, there is a shifting focus onto achieving outcomes, which implies a more holistic approach to budget allocation and results, rather than pure service delivery and box ticking. Data is the key to achieving these outcomes.

Local governments are rolling out software platforms which enable them to:

- Enrich traditional data with enhanced contextual information such as a location, including the name of a specific place, or demographics
- Analyse data more effectively with advanced spatial analysis that drives informed, insight-driven business decisions
- Visualise key data on maps to make deep analysis and insight-sharing easier and more effective than ever before

Until fairly recently, geographic and related data has either been used in silos across an organisation or kept within a GIS department. Now it is being adopted across an organisation, moving into the mainstream with departments collaborating, sharing and analysing the data together. This kind of data addresses the 'Where?' element in the decision-making process, and is used across many local governments to drive transformation. It has quite literally, a far-reaching effect on enabling outcomes and improving citizen services. They are using this powerful insight to bring local information to fuel greater citizen services such as such as "Where's my nearest...?", to report a fault, infrastructure asset management, optimised vehicle use, maintaining a single customer view and crime location analysis. For example, rather than making decisions based on data from broad geographic regions, local governments are using location intelligence to help analyze crime statistics at street level, enabling accurate deployment of police resource.

Location Intelligence in Practice

Torfaen County Borough Council in Wales implemented a location intelligence and data management platform to help drive its transformation. The 'software-as-a-service', cloud-based approach generated significant cost savings. The data also enabled improved citizen services and citizen engagement across the borough through new web-mapping services. Local citizens can visit the council website and use the mapping system to find out information specific to their exact location on topics such as refuse collections, school catchment areas, local nature reserves and nearest leisure activities. It enriches the website, reduces pressure on the council's service support team and improves the citizen experience.

Barnsley Council in the North of England is using a location intelligence platform in a similar way, enabling it to generate savings whilst providing enhanced, interactive services to its citizens. The Council created MyProperty, an online tool in which local citizens can enter their postcode and access useful information about their area. Citizens can also access Barnsley Council Interactive Maps, a digital interactive mapping services which enables them to activate overlays on top of a detailed map on the area: for example, clicking on 'Car parks' highlights the relevant areas on the map. Other overlay options include 'waste recycling sites', 'police stations', 'highway closure diversions' and 'pedestrian areas'. Local residents can also access area photography and historical mapping of the region.

As well as delivering improved services to citizens, the Council uses software for mapping and geographic analysis and to build, maintain and manage centralised catalogues of spatial data. As it is a cloud-based service, it can share data within and outside the Council. The platform acts as a toolkit, providing flexibility by enabling the Council to select the data solutions it requires at a certain point in time. Over five years, the software-as-a-service solution delivered a 38% saving over an in-house option as well as a 99.9% guaranteed availability over a secure and controlled network.

Transparency is Key

Councils are using geographic data to deliver an improved digital experience, but research shows they still have a way to go before their communities believe they are really maximising the digital revolution. Whilst 70% of council leaders believe their organisation is embracing the opportunities new technology has to offer, only 28% of the public agree.

Whilst the councils are using geographic data and advanced software platforms, citizens may be unaware of some of this activity and could benefit from hearing more about transformation programmes. And whilst citizens are happily using interactive mapping services, they may not necessarily think of the power behind these platforms, nor consider them as being advanced digital services. Councils need to bridge this gap with transparency, sharing information on transformation programmes with their citizens. And they need to do this using physical and digital communications, offering a breadth of multi-channel options to their citizens.

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