

How to Increase the Significance of your GIS

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How to Increase the Significance of your GIS

- Is this important?
- Worth doing?
- What are the risks of not doing it?



Friday Reflections by J. Cook, Copyright Analisa Enterprises, LLC

Chopping trees:

- Data maintenance
- Supporting ad hoc mapping/data requests
 - Analyzing data
 - Creating standards
- And other daily GIS work tasks, etc.



Friday Reflections by J. Cook, Copyright Analisa Enterprises, LLC

Sharpening the axe:

- Building relevancy
 - Proving value

Challenges of the GIS Manager:

What to do and how to prioritize.....

Data maintenance

Ad hoc mapping/data requests

Analyzing data

Creating standards

Developing applications

Making data more accessible

Business system integration

Supporting field data collection

Adding maps to the web

Telling stories with spatial data

Increasing transparency

Facilitating collaboration with maps

Trying new GIS functionality

Situational awareness apps

Automating spatial or business tasks

Organizing organizational data

Hiring more staff

Take GIS training

Manage consultants

Drafting the GIS budget

Ordering supplies

Read trade journals

Build new data sets

Work on meta data

Manage ArcGIS Online

Meet with anyone

Conduct staff performance reviews

Converting shapefiles into GDB

Working with aerial imagery

Working with GPS data

Data modeling

Designing your system architecture

Addressing networking issues

Working with outside data

Preparing map books

Documenting GIS workflows

Replace IIS with Apache

Figure out data forms

Explain the difference between GIS and geology

Engage your constituents with maps

Call your mother

Learn Python

Tell your mother python is important

Call Esri customer service just to say "hi"

Review Esri's Scope of Use

Experiment with your fuzzy tolerance settings

Use maps to direct staff to the restaurant of choice

I know there is more....but I just can't go there right now.

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How will you continue to learn what's really important to your organization?

Suggested GIS Practice No. 1:

To gain organizational awareness:

Ask for GIS participation at leadership meetings

Getting there:

- Explain that you can bring relevant information to bear
- You have tools that can help to visualize spatial issues
- GIS can help the leadership's decision-making process
- You believe GIS can do more for the organization

Once there:

- Listen for spatial information opportunities
- Identify business limitations
- Contribute – don't be a fly on the wall
- Prioritize GIS effort that addresses leadership issues
- Look for quick wins that prove GIS relevancy
- Demonstrate that GIS is not just an IT support function

Suggested GIS Practice No. 2:

To gain organizational relevancy:

Dedicate time to discover program/division priorities

Engage with Program Managers:

- Ask probing questions about operational challenges
- What would they change if they could – are they open to change?
- Identify the need behind the need
- Have managers prioritize meaningful GIS solutions you come up with

Dedicate 10-15% of your time to build relevancy:

- Close the gaps between high-impact opportunities and GIS solutions
- Convert program needs into organizational currency – GIS value
- Commit to change GIS staff behavior in this regard

Suggested GIS Practice No. 3:

To prove GIS value:

Document the results of GIS solutions

Create a simple form to capture ROI and benefits:

- Engage your finance people to help create valid and meaningful metrics
- Determine cost of doing business before and after a GIS solution
- Identify cost to create the GIS solution
- Quantitative and qualitative benefits, inside/outside the organization
- Make this documentation personally beneficial to staff

Set expectations that model desired GIS staff behavior:

- Grow initiative to find meaningful projects to work on
- Expand abilities to learn operational challenges and apply GIS solutions
- Not enough time? – delegate workload and reprioritize
- Commit to change GIS staff behavior in this regard
- All career advancement is about proving your value

What one resource, if you had more of it, would dramatically increase GIS significance?

Management Attention

The significance of your GIS program is...

...not determined by the deployment of the latest software release or wiz-bang product

...heavily dependent on your leadership's awareness of GIS-based solutions

...influenced by your staff's ability to find organizational priorities and apply meaningful GIS problem solving

...proven by your GIS program's documentation of results, benefits and value