The smart guide to selecting a location platform

10 key considerations to help your business navigate location technology providers

What can you expect to get from this guide?

If you are searching for ways to improve business outcomes by infusing your operations with location intelligence, it's easy to get lost.

Perhaps you're trying to understand what data, tools and services are the right fit for your company, or which vendors will help you differentiate your products and accelerate your time to market. And, all the while, total cost is a constant concern.

These considerations are important, along with the dozens of questions you might have around implementation barriers for location technology, application and cloud platform integration, data accuracy and regulatory compliance.

With the right knowledge, you can avoid solutions that don't scale, harm your data integrity or require skills your organization doesn't have.

This guide features ten areas every innovator and executive should consider before selecting a location solution.

1 Assess your needs for location intelligence

Many organizations respond to problems and drive short-term ROI by focusing their investments and resources on mature technologies such as cloud, applications that automate tasks and analytics.

Understanding data has never been more important yet, for many, location data remains an untapped reservoir. Adding the context of location shines a spotlight on areas you couldn't see before, enabling process efficiencies, enhancing employee satisfaction and improving customer experiences. Location-based data and services can also be used to connect and supply context to disparate data sets and tackle common business challenges.

Depending on the industry and the business problem at hand, a location technology platform needs to give access to the right level of tools for data or service consumption.

There are a tremendous number of potential use cases for location data. First, you must determine which business challenges you're looking to solve. If you're still experimenting with location data, focus on established use cases.

A fundamental objective of a location technology platform is to "shift right" the focus of customers. This means when you solve location-related problems, you unlock new insights that allow you to overcome larger business problems down the line.

Location technology can address a wide range of pressing business challenges, including:

Reducing the risk of a data privacy breach for users when sharing location data

Creating richer customer experiences

Improving operational efficiency

Enhancing business models through cloud platform capabilities

Breaking down data silos

Improving data quality

Accelerating innovation and development of location-centric products

Gaining actionable insights from your data

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

2 Completeness, flexibility and scalability

Taking location intelligence to the next level requires increasing both the volume of data and the types of tools that you have available for data analysis. But, sourcing accurate and up-to-date location data with enough depth, detail and geographical coverage to scale can be difficult.

Buying teams need to carefully assess the completeness of the location data needed to enable a use case or meet the project requirements. For enterprises that want to differentiate their products and services, flexibility is needed for the design and deployment of maps, services and applications.

A one-size-fits-all or a take-it-or-leave-it offering for software developers will not suffice. Instead, you must look for a platform that enables easy access to external data for users and allows maps, algorithms and services to be customized to fit specific business needs.

Last but not least, scalability is crucial. Why? Because scale is important for expanding the applicability and geographical reach of a product or service along with advanced analytics and machine learning.

"Our vendor provides a platform with scale that gives us access to new types of information that we can use to improve the weather forecast. The combined technologies of the platform and the GWC RoadWX, offers customers a solution that scales to meet their global requirements for accurate road weather forecast data."

Mark Flolid, CEO, Global Weather Corporation

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

3 Data and service quality

Ensuring data quality is undeniably fundamental. Bad data leads to poor decision-making which can then diminish brand value and customer trust.

Gartner's Magic Quadrant customer reference survey shows that organizations estimate the average cost of poor data quality at $12.9 million every year. This number is likely to rise as business environments become increasingly digitized and complex. As data quality is seen as a mandatory aspect of every business, data quality solutions are in greater demand and are often embedded into critical business applications such as CRM and ERP.[1]

As organizations start to make sense of data from connected devices, the accuracy and reliability of location services is critical. Big data presents an opportunity, but only for organizations with the capacity to aggregate, understand and leverage it.

For location data in particular, the notion of quality is multi-dimensional. A few things to ponder:

1. How accurate is my location-centric data? Is this object on the map at the right location in reality? Does it possess sub-meter accuracy?

2. What variables, such as who, where, and when, need the most accurate information? How accurate is your current data? Does the data originate from a source you can trust?

3. What is the specification of the location-centric data sets? If location data is coded against a standard specification then it is more user-friendly. By using a good quality data set, users can bypass the issue of low accuracy and inconsistent coverage.

4. Events such as weather or traffic may impact the movement, behavior or functioning of a person or device over time. For this reason, it is important to assess how often the data is updated and if the location-based services meet enterprise-grade service level requirements.

86%
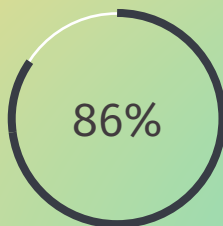
86% of executive believe that within three years using external data will be a critical competency for any enterprise.[2]

[1] Gartner: Magic Quadrant for Data Quality Solutions, July 2020

[2] IDC, Data as a Service Survey, 2019

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

Data privacy, security and compliance

Ensuring data security, privacy and regulatory compliance is paramount, but how do you know that you're doing it effectively?

Regulatory compliance isn't only about GDPR and CCPA. Data sources and ecosystem partners are central to an organization's data governance. Location data should come from a vendor you trust and the data or services should meet legal and regulatory requirements.

Select a vendor that adheres to "privacy-by-design" principles and proves that their data and services can be trusted. Capabilities such as anonymization, consent management, data privacy and risk quantification should be integral elements of any location platform offering.

For organizations that don't get it right, the consequences of privacy breaches go beyond monetary fines to reputation damage and a loss of customer trust.

Vendors elevating their trust credentials can use this to differentiate. Give enterprises and consumers more control over their data, whether or not regulations require it. Transparency and simplicity are key – navigating data privacy should not be a labyrinth for customers.[3]

[3] Omdia, 2020 Location Platform Index

**Want to talk?** We do, too. Get in touch here.

Data exchange and monetization through a marketplace

As digital transformation fuels the demand for data across industries and ecosystems, business leaders are seizing the opportunity to commercialize or monetize their data. Conversely, for organizations that are seeking to acquire data to augment or enrich their own data sets, the breadth and depth of Data as a Service (DaaS) offerings have never been this vast.

Without a common denominator such as location, these data sets may lack contextual relevance and cannot easily be merged or mashed with other data. This is especially relevant for organizations where location is key.

Business leaders need to move quickly to form, or at least participate in, ecosystems to monetize their data. To begin, organizations need to establish the right tools, processes, architectures and governance to ensure quality, usability and IP management.

To save time, resources and investments, you can leverage the tools, capabilities and market reach of an already established location data-centric marketplace.

51%
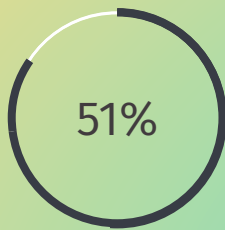
In 2019, 51% of global data and analytics business decision-makers reported selling or sharing their data, up from 32% in 2016.[4]

[4] Forrester, Data Commercialization: A CIO's Guide To Taking Data To Market, March 2020

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

6
Ease of use and deployment

Usability is different for every company. Therefore, businesses should thoroughly assess their team's level of knowledge and expertise. Developers of all kinds – from novices to experts – require different solutions for success.

Businesses should aim to use a location platform that can solve their specific location challenges easily and provide the collaboration tools required to help facilitate processes, streamline workflows and improve user performance.

A platform's ease of use wouldn't be complete without considering its availability to open source components such as Python, Apache Spark, Jupyter notebooks and more. The advantages with open source components are undisputable; from lower costs, to access, to innovation and a culture of collaboration. But perhaps one of the most important benefits is extensive customization. Through open sourced software, developers can easily customize the software, add extra functionalities or remove unnecessary parts to meet specific business requirements.

"The infrastructure provided through the location platform is a big part of the value we deliver as a partner. The platform saved us a lot of time, effort and resources we'd otherwise have to expend developing everything ourselves.

On the security side, things like the integrity of the data and the monitoring of the computational resources, are definitely not our core competence. We depend on our partner for that."

Predrag Pucar, CEO, NIRA Dynamics

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

Total cost of ownership

When it comes to location technology platforms, there are many ways to reduce your total cost of ownership. Streamlining your development efforts is one of the most impactful ways to reduce costs.

Most current development approaches are fragmented and time consuming and customers need multiple vendors to get what they need. Accessing diverse data sets and services through one unified platform can reduce the application's development costs significantly.

Examples of location-centric capabilities in this context include data enrichment, development, mapping, data analytics, data visualization, service and application creation, monetization, data privacy and security.

The total cost of ownership can also be kept in check when teams continuously work with open source tools and components within the location platform. Examples include open source programming languages (e.g. Python), notebooks (e.g. Jupyter), data management platforms (e.g. Apache Spark) and frameworks (e.g. SparkML).

Another option is the monetization of data and services. Many businesses are shifting from a "build from scratch" to an "off the shelf" mentality when analyzing revenue margins and looking to minimize development costs.

70%
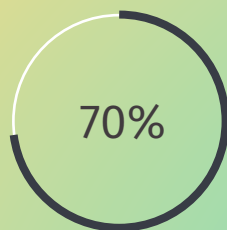
By 2023, 70% of G2000 companies will have metrics in place to evaluate value realized from data, enabling them to optimize internal resource allocation decisions across the enterprise.[5]

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

Talent, skills and expertise

Because location data is useful across a broad range of use cases, your stakeholders may include a wide scope of users.

The amount of talent and expertise across your organization may vary, so assessing your internal users and tools can help guide you to a platform that meets your needs.

A quality location platform should provide tools and self-service features that cater to different levels of technical and location expertise.

A location platform needs to enable the launch of location-based data products and services in months — not years — without location experts. All the while, it must provide access to training, user guides and other resources so new users can be onboarded fast.

Even with many of the necessary skills in-house, the coordination of the entire ecosystem is still a complex operation, which is why organizations increasingly rely on technology partnerships.

"We can't work as separate businesses. We have to leverage each other's knowledge and data because telematics data by itself means nothing.

With location context, we can deliver value, and that's why we partner."

Ivan Shornikov, CEO, Raxel Telematics

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

Cloud, Multi-Cloud, Hybrid and On-Premise

Each industry has vastly different needs from an architectural solution perspective, therefore a location platform that enables a simplified and speedy deployment of applications is an important proposition.

Enterprises have almost entirely embraced multi-cloud, with 93% of enterprises deploying a multi-cloud strategy today, of which 87% of enterprises taking a hybrid approach, combining the use of both public and private clouds.[6]

By choosing multiple cloud providers, you can take advantage of the best parts of each providers' services, mixing and matching to suit your needs. Multi-cloud may be ideal for multinational organizations that have different regional needs.

While most location-based services are provided from the public cloud, there are several reasons why enterprises would want to use an on-premise deployment. The principal motives are data security, regulatory compliance, cost containment and assured performance.

While on-premise may have additional hardware and software requirements, it's ideal for use cases such as geocoding and reverse geocoding. On-premise or hybrid clouds can address the needs of enterprises in multiple sectors, helping to improve customer experiences and protect valuable assets.

To maximize the benefits of a location platform, be sure to evaluate your current architecture and prioritize the features that are most important.

"The location intelligence that we receive from our vendor is really powerful for us.

In combination with the data that we derive from our own services, as well as other data from other partners in the ecosystem, we can deliver a higher level of service, a higher level of insight, and a higher level of impact to our customers."

Michael Phillippi, VP of Technology at Lytx

[6] Flexera 2020 State of the Cloud report

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

10

Performance and service-level agreements (SLA)

When we talk about cloud performance it's crucial to determine the platform SLAs. Not all providers are equal and performance may depend on a business' unique needs and geographic regions of interest. This makes certain players more attractive when they provide data centers strategically positioned in key regions while assuring low latency levels. It becomes crucial for those customers developing critical applications in need to minimize risks associated with delays in data transfer and speed of performance for last mile.

Ideally, a location platform should leverage a global infrastructure to allow widespread deployment, especially when serving international customers.

A customer should be able to choose their "high performant" features, as well as create flexible configurations. Depending on the SLA, flexible configurations could range from acceptable to high performant levels, such as 99.9%. This means different SLAs should be offered for different application needs at various costs.

For example, for emergency services or driver safety applications the continuous availability of services is critical, followed by the need for high performance services. A travel application, on the other hand, that provides travelers with an enhanced sightseeing experience would benefit from reduced costs associated with a more standard SLA.

SLAs with any location platform should contain 5 major components:

Service access and availability

Usually uptime as a percentage 99.9%

Response time

How quickly information can be retrieved from the platform, read and query SLA equates to 99.5% standard and 99.9% premium

Service capacity

Clear guidelines on how the services are able to scale globally to meet the need of the customer's business standard 98.5%, premium 99.9%

Remediation policies and penalties/incentives

How issues should be resolved and in what time period, what compensation is available, the process for logging and claiming, etc.

Exclusions and caveats

Listing terms that clearly define the scope of the SLA

Want to talk? We do, too. Get in touch here.

At HERE, we believe location moves the world forward.

That's why we're committed to helping you navigate your selection journey. With these considerations you'll be able to make the most informed decision for your company's needs.

Transform your business, avoid common pain points and maximize the value of your data with location technology.

Ready to become a location-enabled enterprise? Start your journey.

Discover why industry analysts named us as a location platform provider for the third year running.

→ **Counterpoint**, Location Platforms Effectiveness Evaluation Scorecard, April 2020

→ **Strategy Analytics**, Location Platform Benchmark Scores, January 2020

→ **Omdia Location Platform Index**, June 2020
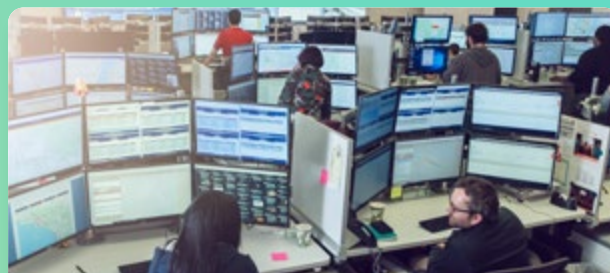
Contact us directly and talk with one of our location technology experts to help you map out your course.

Contact HERE