



**ANTHONY VILLANTI**  
Managing Director and Founder, GapMaps

## What is the uniqueness, potential and challenges of cloud-mapping software?

Cloud-native mapping platform models are dominating the delivery of geospatial data and functions. They are easy to use, allow for faster decision-making and are cost-effective infrastructure for running sophisticated analysis. One of the biggest benefits of cloud-based, location intelligence software like GapMaps Live is that it enables brands that have physical stores in multiple countries to have one log-in to manage all their locations. Customers can also ingest their own large datasets into GapMaps Live and visualise it through thematic layers and show comparisons with available data in GapMaps Live. Most businesses now use some form of APIs to connect to real-time data sources and moving to the cloud meant we could establish a best-of-breed partner program with leading data providers like Near so brands could easily access their data in GapMaps Live using a single platform. As the business continues to mature and the ever-increasing challenge of cyber risk threats to cloud based software, our



## TO BE ON THE CUSTOMER'S RADAR – ONE NEEDS A GOOD MAP

*Cartographers have discovered continents and Silk-routes in the past. But today Cloud-mapping can be a great tool for businesses – specially for real-time data, marketing levers, visitation data, asset management and store performance. Anthony Villanti, Managing Director and Founder, GapMaps sketches a picture and shows how.*

**ANY DATA THAT IS BROUGHT INTO THE GAPMAPS ENVIRONMENT IS SUBJECT TO THE HIGHEST SECURITY— AT AN INFRASTRUCTURE LEVEL, AT A CODE LEVEL, AND AT A DATA LEVEL. THROUGH LOCATION-VERSIONING WE ALLOW USERS TO INTERACT, CONTRIBUTE AND ACCESS CONSISTENT DATA THREADS WITHOUT LOSING DATA INTEGRITY.**

position is to ensure we have strong security posture in place and compliant to SOC 2, ISO27001, and GDPR.

**Can you share any examples of proven results from India?**

The growth opportunity in India is significant for GapMaps. Whilst today India represents about seven per cent of our business from both domestic and global brands, in 2023 we expect it to increase to 25 per cent, and then by as much as 40 per cent at the end of 2024. Anytime Fitness, which operates 110 fitness clubs across India, has used GapMaps Live to enable greater precision in its decision-making when opening new locations.

**What verticals or brand-needs does this kind of solution address more strongly? Does this technology hint towards a strong re-birth of OOH advertising?**

The key industry sectors for GapMaps in India include fast-food and quick-service restaurants, cafés, fitness and wellbeing, supermarket, and grocery stores. Brands in these industry sectors are making important physical locations decisions each and every day, and require a platform like GapMaps Live, to help them in their decision making process. With many of the larger cities in India now at full capacity, the significant growth opportunity for brands is in the tier 2 and 3 cities, with affordability of the consuming classes shifting into these locations. Examples of these growth cities include Udaipur, Prunja and Hazaribagh which have grown five per cent or above per year since 2011. As a result, there is greater demand for strong data in these cities for brands to help inform their physical location planning and decisions. We are also operating in sectors like childcare and medical in other markets.

**You are also empowering home delivery brands?**

Home delivery is expanding fast! What started pre-Covid

has boomed in more recent times as we've all spent more time at home with restricted mobility. Not surprisingly, the demand for home delivered retail services has boomed. Retailers are investing in their products and packaging to improve the quality of the product when it reaches the customer. Many retailers are carefully considering the delivery processes to get the right blend of aggregator and company delivery services that provides the optimal customer experience taking into account price, speed, quality and control.

**Exactly how?**

The role for location intelligence services is critical— what is the size of the catchment with 5mins, 7 mins, 10 mins? How does the 'accessible catchment' vary by time of day and day of week with the changing traffic patterns? Is there a role for the 'delivery only' stores? There's no simple or single answer to these questions, but access to the right data and insight is the starting point.

**How do you navigate the balance between privacy of individuals and data-based insights for brands? Any challenges on data sovereignty, clean data, data standardisation?**

GapMaps harvests, validates and maintains public data repositories that are not reliant on any personal data. If a customer decides to use some of their own private data it is protected because we don't actually handle any of their data as we provide the tools for them to bring such data into the platform to interrogate without the need for any third party handling. Any data that is brought into the GapMaps environment is subject to the highest security— at an infrastructure level, at a code level, and at a data level. Through location-versioning we allow users to interact, contribute and access consistent data threads without losing data integrity.



**GAPMAPS ALREADY HAS 20 DEVELOPERS BASED IN INDIA (PUNE) AND WILL BE CONTINUING TO INVEST IN BUILDING THIS TEAM BY 30% IN 2023.**

**What's the prospect of first-party data apps, decentralised marketplaces and liquid AI in this field?**

We already work with a number of third-party vendors who sell products directly into the GapMaps platform and the next avenue for growth is removing the technical integration requirements so a vendor can create, curate and distribute spatial data directly.

There are a number of challenges to overcome in such a marketplace, specifically around ensuring that data made available is of the highest quality and validated to an acceptable level, as well as the technical components of customising the look and feel of the data product in the application.

With an abundance of active first-party data distributors it is important that these providers differentiate themselves in how this data is consumed. Providing an API endpoint and documentation is no longer sufficient—as integration with the end user system requires technical expertise and time.

This is where GapMaps provides a great point of difference for first-party data—where the data can be easily mapped, summarised or analysed in a human readable, easily consumable format like a thematic mapping layer or a supply/demand insight.

**Is it easy to achieve precision and real-time strength in current technologies for cloud-mapping?**

It is getting easier, however, there are always variances that cannot be accounted for—such as the hardware or internet connection of the end user. GapMaps engineering on the application focuses on reducing the impact of these variances—using low level data structures and

modern lightweight mapping technologies to ensure that our services are doing as much of the heavy lifting as possible.

This means that even an end user who is having a very poor Internet connection is still able to load and interact with huge datasets—and our testing has shown that we are able to load hundreds of thousands of pins in a cloud based environment even faster than local dedicated software.

**How else can brands tap mapping data—in a new way?**

Visitation data is a new module available on GapMaps Live that provides any brand that operates a franchise or multiple bricks and mortar stores with powerful insights on real-time customer travel patterns using authorised location data collected from mobile phones. Visitation data can help brands better understand who their customers are, how far they travel to visit their locations, how long they visit, what are the nearby generators like schools or shopping centres that drive customers to their locations. Then there is the facet of managing store assets/maintenance – brands can get an accurate view of the assets being used across all their locations and record important details such as age, make/model and serial numbers to easily identify when upgrades or maintenance visits are required. Brands can also use intel collected from GapMaps Connect to help make decisions on when internal and external enhancements are needed to improve store performance by gaining a better understanding of each store's existing attributes. <sup>103</sup>