

GEOMATICS WORLD INTERVIEWS MUNIR ISMET, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF GEOSPATIAL SOLUTIONS AT ORDNANCE SURVEY

The Importance of Promoting the Value of Location



Ordnance Survey (OS) has seen important changes during the past year. Steve Blair was appointed as CEO and he has now been in charge for a year. In March, Munir Ismet was appointed Managing Director of Geospatial Solutions and he explains his role and the direction in which OS is heading in the interview below. OS has secured the new Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA)

which Steve Blair sees as the most significant achievement of the year. In early 2020, OS launched a new five-year strategy; its new vision is to be recognised as a world leader in geospatial services, to create location insight for positive impact. In addition, OS has been faced with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Over the next five years, the OS strategy will focus on five elements. These are the building blocks to deliver growth.

- **International** - Become the partner of choice for international governments seeking geospatial data production and land administration managed services.
- **Geospatial Services** - Establish new value-added geospatial services.
- **Consumer** - Help more people (globally), get outside, more often.
- **Commercial Data** - Grow the value of commercial data with our partners.
- **PSGA** - Deliver maximum value for the UK Government under the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA).

Steve Blair is focussed on delivering on the PSGA to drive commercial growth. The other building blocks are an evolution of the foundations on which Ordnance Survey has developed.

Geomatics World: What was your initial impression of OS and its reputation?

Munir Ismet: In the past, OS might not have been considered a customer-centric organisation, but what I expected to see and what I found were completely different. My first impression of OS came from Steve (Blair) – our CEO. When I first met him, I saw the energy, desire and focus to take OS from where it is to the next phase of growth. I always knew that OS had excellent technical people who understand the industry and realise solutions, but what I hadn't appreciated was the drive and ambition that the organisation now has as we move forward.

I accepted the job the day before lockdown started, so I faced interesting challenges in getting to know the team and workings of OS. What I found were excellent people with a real feeling of high energy and commitment to work as a team which is what you normally find in the best of Silicon Valley companies. This was a nice surprise.

I have also been impressed with Ordnance Survey's role in helping Britain deal with the pandemic. We have supported over 200 customers, including the NHS, local authorities, and OS Partners, to deliver insights and help with critical decision-making. From protecting shielded communities to route optimisation, OS is helping, and trusted location data is making a positive impact on the response.

GW: Please explain why you think that geospatial is important.

MI: I have been overwhelmed by the vital role that geospatial data is playing both in the UK and across the globe. My eyes have been opened by the number of sectors and diverse range of public services, products and customers, which rely on location data. Whether it be policy-making on a national level or starting a new innovative service, the need for trusted and authoritative location is really important for making those decisions. Government spending on Geospatial Information is a high-impact investment in a nation's long-term economic health, with benefits often outweighing the costs.

The importance of geospatial is also highlighted in the vital role it plays in linking and sharing data, creating valuable insight and improving vital decisions. I have heard people describe location as the 'golden thread' connecting data, and I now fully understand what they mean.

GW: How will OS contribute to the development of Smart Cities?

MI: Smart city projects are very high on the agenda of many countries. Governments across the world are asking – 'How do we make our cities smarter by collecting the right data? How do we provide the right information to our citizens?' and so on.

I see the major role OS can play in these projects because we have the infrastructure, we have the data, and we have experience in smart city projects. Our work over the last few years in Manchester and Singapore reinforces the vital role that location data has. It is location that supports smart cities to structure and make sense of the torrents of data produced every hour. Without this structure and ability to connect people to technology, smart cities would be an empty shell.

Location data helps customers, including local government and service providers, to incorporate additional data to gain insight and ultimately help them make better decisions. Smart cities will continue to be an area of focus for OS; however, for smart city projects to deliver effectively, a collaborative approach is needed. I look forward to building new partnerships across the world with government entities as well as commercial operators where OS can contribute as part of a consortium for solutions.

GW: Please expand on how you will be working with users of geospatial data, and particularly organisations which want to add value to OS data.



Munir Ismet, Managing Director of Geospatial Solutions at OS.

MI: I'm quite a hands-on leader and like to be customer facing and work with my team. My view is that if I don't understand the problems that my customers have, how can we then direct our teams to develop the right solutions and address the requirements and outcomes our customers are looking for?

One of my priorities is to build new partnerships and to grow OS through greater collaboration. We have some excellent customers from UK utility and infrastructure companies to international platform providers. What I have quickly observed is that these customers want to work with OS; they want to collaborate on new innovations to tackle the challenges which they are facing.

A great example is the National Underground Asset Register, initiated by The Geospatial Commission, which has just completed a pilot project in the northeast of England. The project is tackling a problem which hundreds of countries are facing - the huge impact of not having an accurate map of underground assets. It is a challenge for utility companies, but can also affect citizens with disruption to services and transport.

GW: It is clear that OS will be continuing with an international role. Please expand on this.

MI: OS is very well positioned to take a global leadership position of providing data and solutions to the international markets. What gives me the greatest satisfaction is to help other nations and governments develop geospatial strategies and begin to realise the huge societal, economic and environmental benefits which location can deliver.

As governments around the world look to modernise themselves, they may need to skip a generation of technology to get to what OS is doing today. For me it is vital that nations have strong geo-production processes and generate data which can enable good decision-making, encourage growth and underpin vital public services. Trusted and authoritative data has never been as essential as it is today.

We have a number of propositions to support our customers across the globe, including Landscape Monitoring (detection and reporting of change in the natural and built environment) and Land Administration Transformation (upgrade and modernisation of a Land Authority).â€

If we look at land administration, it is clear that having a robust national process can deliver very positive impact. Land is becoming the drive for economic growth for many countries we are dealing with and we want to help nations through these big transformation projects. Studies have shown that Land Administration is the catalyst to a country's economic development; securing land rights for citizens helps countries improve education, housing quality, attract international investment and unlock credit.

GW: Do you have a new direction for OS? Are there areas which OS needs to move into? Are there areas that OS should NOT be involved in?

MI: One of the things that has really impressed me about [OS](#) is what we are doing today to help our customers and also the vision for the future - the innovation engine.

Our strategy is very focussed and everyone at OS understands how they can contribute to its success. The strategy takes OS strengths and experiences and puts the customer at the core. If you look at some of the projects that we are currently working on such as the National Underground Assets Register or Roadside Asset Data Services, both are innovative solutions that deliver value to our customers by improving asset management above and below the ground. I am looking forward to co-creating services with our customers and partners to deliver positive impact.

Another example of change at OS is the recent launch of the OS Data Hub, delivered as part of a new national agreement for public sector mapping in Great Britain (PSGA). This new platform is transforming the way users access, work and share OS data. Through the new APIs and open data products, public sector customers and developers can access premium products, including OS MasterMap, for the

first time. What is really pleasing is that the OS Data Hub is attracting new customers to OS data and I am looking forward to seeing a fresh wave of services, applications and innovation as a result.

GW: Do you have plans to promote awareness of geospatial data within government and the general public? Will you promote the idea of using geospatial data to develop joined-up government?

MI: Recognition of the importance of geospatial may be at an all-time high, but more can still be done. It is vital that the whole geospatial industry promotes the value which location can deliver to bring valuable insight for government, business and individuals. We see ourselves taking a lead role in helping our customers see a better place and realise the full potential of geospatial in their organisation, government or nation.

In the UK, it is great we have the new Geospatial Data Strategy and at OS we look forward to supporting the delivery of it. Through the PSGA, we have the platform to further grow the use of geospatial across government; there really isn't a department or area of public service delivery that wouldn't benefit. In addition to increasing the use of data, we also need to ensure that geospatial skills and expertise are nurtured so the UK can continue to be a world-leading geospatial nation.

Other nations across the globe are at different stages of their geospatial journeys. What I want to get across are strong examples of how accurate, trusted and authoritative geospatial data can deliver positive impact – economical, societal and environmental. It really can transform lives and help tackle global, regional and local challenges. I am excited about what the future holds; working together with customers and partners to make the world a better place.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/the-importance-of-promoting-the-value-of-location>
