

From Geographical Aspects of Business to Geoinformation Technologies in Business



In a recent article called 'How Can We Attract Students to Geomatics?', Ian Brown raised the question of the [role of geomatics](#) in modern education and how we can rouse interest in students to become part of the GIS expert community. In this column, Andrey Pirogov from [Racurs](#) takes the discussion a step further.

While speaking at the Business Day during the conference for Russian Esri users a few weeks ago, I asked the audience who actually makes the decision about introducing GIS into the IT structure of companies and determines which business processes will use the capabilities of GIS.

Has the world started talking more about geospatial over the past ten years? Yes, definitely. Have professional managers become more aware of the advantages of geospatial? Yes, they have, but they are primarily aware that using Google Maps on their website has become much more expensive.

In my opinion, we still do not really know how GIS penetrates into businesses that are not directly related to geodesy and cartography. We can all count, because everyone has studied mathematics – first at school and then possibly also at university. But who else apart from geographers knows about geospatial analysis? Unlike mathematics, geography lessons at school are often far from ideal.

The huge markets of retail, real estate, insurance and banking services are continuously looking for analysts and marketing managers, but very rarely for geographers. How will GIS technology be able to penetrate these markets if geographers prefer field work over sitting in an office?

The possibilities of GIS for marketing, advertising and management

Since 2011, I have been giving an optional course called 'Geoinformation Technologies in Business' as a visiting lecturer for the bachelor of management degree at the Lomonosov Moscow State University Business School. Over the years, I have realised that managers are very similar to geographers if we consider the structure of their knowledge. Their training covers a wide variety of disciplines, from sociology to taxation. They are capable of building interdisciplinary communication and are open to the knowledge of the real world, with its huge diversity of processes. And these are the very people who will decide which technologies should be introduced into business processes. Unfortunately, most textbooks on marketing, advertising and management do not even mention the possibilities of GIS.



Geospatial analysis encompasses many marketing, advertising and management opportunities.

Back in 2011, the course was called 'Geographical Aspects of Business' and was largely dedicated to how geographical conditions affect certain aspects of business. In 2013, after we installed the geoinformation system and began to conduct some of the classes using GIS, we called the course 'Geoinformation Aspects of Business'. Over time, we increasingly plunged into the world of geotechnologies, our case studies began to be based on real data and tasks of university partners. In 2017, the course became known as 'Geoinformation Technologies in Business'. I probably would not have changed the name of the course so often if I'd been teaching geologists or biologists.

Geospatial business intelligence

I am very sorry that the focus on geography has become less and less every year. Unfortunately, the course cannot be expanded, because other disciplines are equally important. Now, students are immersed in classic management-related topics such as geomarketing and logistics. But we also tackle educational cases on the most pressing issues for modern business: online and offline connectivity, web-based geomarketing.

To make the classes more attractive, we invite business representatives (large retailer X5, the Russian division of HERE, the geomarketing startup Geomatrix), who talk about how GIS is used in their organisation and the real effect of its implementation. After such sessions students often ask questions, such as how they can get a job in the company and what the salary is. I believe that these questions indicate an interest in geomatics.

The course selects 25 to 30 students per year, which means that so far more than 200 professional managers know about GIS and are ready to implement geospatial business intelligence.

I call this path for GIS technologies the path 'from above' and I believe that, someday, whole chapters in the textbooks on management, marketing, advertising and analytics will be dedicated to GIS analysis and every business school will be offering a course in 'GIS in Business'.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/blog/from-geographical-aspects-of-business-to-geoinformation-technologies-in-business>
