



Hosting a Successful GIS Day Event

Hosting a Successful GIS Day Event

Contents	Page
Goal and Purpose of Event	1
Target Audience.....	1
Event Types	1
Open House.....	2
School Presentation/Demonstration.....	2
Map Gallery	3
User Group Meeting	3
Organizational Meeting	3
Media Event.....	4
Suggestions for All GIS Day Events	4
Interactive Activity Ideas.....	4
Get the Word Out.....	6
Registration.....	6
Follow Up after Event.....	6

Hosting a Successful GIS Day Event

Goal and Purpose of Event

The goal and purpose of GIS Day is to educate children and adults about how geography and geographic information system (GIS) technology make a difference in their lives while highlighting your company or organization's GIS contributions to the community.

Geography Matters! That's the message of your event. You, as a user of GIS technology, have invested a great deal of effort in your GIS. Now is the time to showcase your work with an event that will educate others on the significant contribution GIS technology is making in their communities and lives.

Target Audience

An important step in planning your event is deciding who your audience will be. This will help you develop your event and decide which activities you will present. Here are a few questions that will assist you with your decision:

- What age group will be attending your event?

You want to ensure that the content of your event is appropriate and interesting for all age groups present. If you are planning a presentation for both children and adults, you should be prepared to present examples and demonstrations appropriate to both groups.

- Is this an internal event for your company, or will the public be invited?

Remember that it may not be possible to show proprietary data to the public.

- Will you invite prospective and/or current clients?

If so, you may want to treat GIS Day as both an educational event and an awareness-building event.

- What is the GIS knowledge of the audience?

If your audience is new to GIS, you do not want to use "GIS speak." Conversely, if your event takes place at a user group meeting where all present are knowledgeable about GIS, you do not want to present an event that is too elementary. Make sure your event, activities, and materials are all geared toward your audience's level of GIS knowledge.

Event Types

Once you have decided who your target audience will be, you can decide what type of event you will hold. Following are a few suggestions for different types of events. Feel free to mix and match activities to customize your own special event. For example, you may want to combine an open house with a radio station remote broadcast.

The most successful events will be the ones that are interactive and involve the audience. Once you have decided what type of event you would like to host, refer to Interactive Activity Ideas on page 4 for more information.

Note: The materials referenced throughout this white paper (and more) are available on the GIS Day Web site (www.gisday.com).

Open House

This is a great way for people to see GIS in action at your organization. It also saves you the time and effort of transporting equipment to a different location. Some activities you may present at your open house follow:

- Give a short introduction by using one of the sample PowerPoint presentations or one of your own.
- Demonstrate how your organization uses GIS and how it impacts the participants, or give the demonstration "A Day in Your Life with Geography and GIS." Supplement this demonstration with your own local data.
- Give a tour of your facility; introduce employees involved in GIS activities.
- Display maps created with your GIS.
- Present GIS materials and posters/brochures or other materials from your company.

School Presentation/ Demonstration

The goal of this event is to educate schoolchildren about how geography, through the technology of GIS, affects their everyday lives.

- Submit the sample proposal entitled "Sample School Proposal Letter" and the "Sample School Presentation" agenda, describing your classroom presentation, to the school for approval. Contact the school administrator and ask to give a presentation/demonstration at a staff meeting to educate the teachers about GIS technology, GIS Day, and what you are proposing to do in their classrooms. Try to schedule this meeting at least four weeks prior to GIS Day to give the teachers enough time to work it into their lesson plans.
- Demonstrate how your organization uses GIS and how it impacts the students or give the demonstration "A Day in Your Life with Geography and GIS." Supplement this demonstration with your own local data.
- Present a short lecture/demonstration of how to create a map.
- Talk about/Demonstrate how your organization uses GIS.
- Use any of the [classroom exercises](#) on the Web site. These activities are broken down by grade level and computer- and noncomputer-related exercises. There are also links to other GIS and geography-related exercises that are found on the Web.
- Another great resource is the [ESRI Education Community](#) portal. This Web portal provides a variety of instructional materials to help support your GIS Day event.

- Conduct a hands-on demonstration using free software available from ESRI:

[ArcGIS Explorer](#) is a free, powerful tool for data exploration in a 2D or 3D environment. ArcGIS Explorer is available for Windows XP and above and generally uses data from the Internet and free services from ESRI. It allows users to explore data and take advantage of vast data resources and server power on the Internet.

[ArcExplorer—Java Edition for Education](#) is a lightweight GIS package. It is an excellent introduction to GIS and can be installed for free on any number of Windows or Mac OS X computers. There is a variety of lessons for ArcExplorer—Java Edition for Education on the [ArcLessons](#) site; use the Advanced Search function to search for ArcExplorer/ArcExplorer—Java Edition for Education.

Map Gallery

Team up with other organizations in your area and invite the public to a map gallery, displaying maps created with each organization's GIS. This event would be similar to an art exhibit. The map gallery could be held at your organization, a local library, a school, or another public facility.

- Have software demonstrations running next to each map display.
- Ask attendees to explain what analysis or problem is being answered with your map. Give small prizes, such as buttons and T-shirts, to those who answer correctly.
- Have attendees vote for their favorite map (e.g., most informative, most artistic, most relevant to the community).

User Group Meeting

Hold your next user group meeting on GIS Day.

- Ask each user group member to bring at least one nonuser/nonmember to the meeting.
- Dedicate the meeting to educating newcomers about GIS and how the group members use it.
- Display your maps.
- Demonstrate how your organization uses GIS and how it impacts the participants, or give the demonstration "A Day in Your Life with Geography and GIS." Supplement this demonstration with your own local data.

Organizational Meeting

An organizational meeting could be for a town, chamber of commerce, Junior Achievement group, scout club, Lions Club, Kiwanis meeting, and so forth.

- Make "GIS/Geography and How It Makes a Difference" a topic on the meeting agenda.
- Display your maps.

Media Event

- Demonstrate how your organization uses GIS and how it impacts the participants or give the demonstration "A Day in Your Life with Geography and GIS." Supplement this demonstration with your own local data.
- Invite a radio station or local TV station to broadcast remote from your event—many radio stations will broadcast from your site for a small fee, and some will do it for free if they think there's enough public interest to warrant it. Local cable stations are always looking for local interest stories for their broadcasts, so be sure to invite them to your event as well.
- Local newspapers also like to showcase community events, so an invitation should be extended to your area newspapers. Contact the news, business, or human interest editors and pitch your event to them. The press release template makes it easy to write something about your event.
- Refer to the Media Guide for more ideas.

Suggestions for All GIS Day Events

- Obtain the proper approvals for all events, including at schools, organizational meetings, and so forth.
- Display maps.
- Always make time during or at the end of your event for questions and answers.
- Ensure that your presentation is easy to understand for those who are unfamiliar with GIS. Ask someone with little or no GIS knowledge to review your presentation/materials beforehand, as it is sometimes very different to speak in non-GIS language when you have been proficient in GIS for a period of time.
- Make your presentation as fun as it is interesting and interactive, especially if there are children present. Ask questions and give away small prizes to those who answer correctly.
- Test all equipment to ensure it is working properly and will broadcast effectively for the number of people you are expecting. Audiovisual equipment can be sensitive, and you never know when you might blow a projection bulb.
- Run through your presentation/demonstration the evening before.

Interactive Activity Ideas

- How does your organization use GIS?
 - Circulate maps made with your GIS applications showing individual layers of data you use in your work.
 - Ask the participants to identify what information/data is being displayed in each map and what kind of problems you could solve using that information/data.
 - Once all the participants have identified the data and the potential questions/problems to be solved using each data layer, ask each participant what types of

questions/problems they think could be solved if all data layers were used together.

- Now demonstrate how your organization uses the datasets together and what types of questions/problems you solve.

This activity highlights your organization's use of GIS while engaging the participants in an interactive exercise highlighting the GIS concept of layering data to solve problems.

■ Make a map.

- Display a GIS project or map with local data layers.
- Let the visitors choose the layers they want to print out on a small map with the GIS Day logo on it for them to take home.
- If you have local street data, you could geocode your location (or theirs) on the map, and if you have a digital camera, you may want to take a picture of them and include it in the printout.

■ Make it hands-on.

- Let them try creating a map with GIS software. Note: You should either have a written tutorial or guide them through these activities yourself.
- If you have a few computers available, load an introductory GIS software program, such as [ArcGIS Explorer](#), and let them try adding their own data and asking questions of the map.

You can also find free data for ArcGIS users, geographic data portals, and downloadable data at www.esri.com/freedata.

- Play a geographic "Jeopardy" game—What state in the United States has the largest population? How many states have a city named Orange? What state has the highest percentage of males? What country spends the most money per student on education? Ask students to answer these questions, and any others you think are interesting, using GIS and their knowledge of geography. You can access free data to use in this activity from www.esri.com/freedata.
- You be the city manager—Has your community had a recent local planning issue such as siting a new landfill or fire station? Use it as the basis for a debate/game using GIS for determining where to locate the facility.
- Explain pattern recognition—Display maps showing patterns and ask the audience to tell you what the pattern is or what problem/question is being solved/answered. Give prizes for the correct answers.
- Make a city/town sandwich—Stacking data in a GIS is similar to making a city/town sandwich—a layer of this, a slice of that. Sandwiches can also be made to suit

individual needs. Ask the participants to create their own city/town sandwich by having them offer suggestions about the sorts of data they would use if they were building a GIS for their city or town.

Get the Word Out

- Invitations should be sent out one month prior to your event. Any earlier and people tend to forget. Any later and most invitees will have schedule conflicts. To save time and expense, you have the option of using the editable invitation template. If you mail your invitations, you may also follow up with a reminder e-mail three to four days before your event with accompanying directions.
- Mail, e-mail, or fax your invitations.
- Run newspaper or Web page announcements. Schedule them in a timely manner to help advertise your event.
- Solicit media coverage. Refer to the Media Guide for ideas.
- Pitch your event to a local newspaper, magazine, or broadcast reporter and invite them to your event.
- Notify GIS and geography organizations of your event so they may direct interested parties to you.
- Register the event on the GIS Day Web site at www.gisday.com. Web site visitors will be able to search for an event in their local area.

Registration

You will want to be properly prepared to receive your guests. Registration is not mandatory but is highly recommended, especially if you will be hosting an open house and have limited space. The most effective ways to accomplish this are by

- Mail or fax—Design your invitation to include a registration fill-in area at the bottom. Have guests return that portion to you via mail or fax (be sure to include your address and fax number).
- Phone—Have your phone number and name on the invitation for invitees to call for questions and registration.
- E-mail—Have your e-mail address on the invitation for invitees to send their registration electronically.
- Web page—Allow people to register online.

At the very least, you will probably want your attendees to submit their name and contact information. Asking for their profession and title is also helpful in customizing your activities/demonstrations. After they have registered, it is nice to follow up with a confirmation of their registration and directions to the event. Confirmation can also be done by any of the ways listed above.

Follow Up after Event

It is very important to thank your guests and encourage future interaction with them.

- Letters and/or phone calls are a great way to obtain useful feedback on the event as well as feedback about your organization.

J-j8757

- Comments could be solicited simply by asking the attendees to fill out a quick survey sheet rating the event or by taking a simple poll in the room asking if the event was satisfactory to them and if they would return for a future event and/or recommend it to others.
- Use the electronic postcards to thank guests for attending. You can customize them with your contact information and a personal message.
- Request feedback on the materials supplied to invitees by the GIS Day team so that we can improve them next year. Ask whether they were useful, appropriate, visual enough, and so forth.