

## The value of location intelligence for BPL deployments

by Christopher Cherry, strategic industry manager-communications at MapInfo

Electric utility providers face a challenging set of location factors. From managing complex distribution network schemas to simply managing customer addresses -- location is ingrained in almost every operation and opportunity.

Additionally, as electric utility providers look to create new revenue sources, trials and commercial deployments of services such as broadband over power lines (BPL) are on the rise. While BPL represents a significant revenue opportunity for the electric utility provider, BPL providers need to know which markets to roll out to first, which potential customers are most likely to become actual broadband customers, where the competitors are, and how to manage a broadband network. Along with the predicted potential for BPL success comes substantial risk. Adding complexities to the network could end up taxing resources, decreasing customer satisfaction and ultimately reducing profits.

One way to capitalize on this opportunity, yet mitigate the risk, is to develop a strategic approach that incorporates location intelligence. This enables carriers to make decisions about new markets and offer new services by taking a close look at all the location factors that come into play prior to a costly commitment.

A comprehensive location intelligence approach can help in the following areas:

### Network expansion

The added functionality offered by location analysis brings a new dimension to key areas such as market driven build-out and product and service strategies. Electric utility providers are now able to intelligently design all aspects of a broadband network. From constructing fiber routes to internet POP connectivity, location analysis is a critical tool in network planning and development.

### Competitive analysis

As electric utility providers look to enter the broadband market, location intelligence can help them identify areas within their network coverage that are not being served by other broadband providers. By analyzing the coverage areas of cable, DSL, FTTH, and wireless broadband competitors, the electric utility provider can determine the areas where the competitive situation is most favorable.

### Sales and marketing

When considering the deployment of BPL, electric utility providers must consider where their potential customers are. By incorporating the analysis of consumer and business demographics, the provider can identify the areas that represent the highest potential. Providers who incorporate a launch strategy that includes residential demographics, business demographics, customer profiling, propensity modeling and cluster analysis have the clearest vision of their potential customer base, and typically also have the quickest ROI on their network investment.

### Address standardization, cleansing and validation

"Address Standardization" is a process in which input ad-

resses are matched against a database of valid street names and postal attributes. With address standardization, cleansing and validation, electric utility providers that offer BPL can ensure that the most precise customer data is available for network planning, maintenance and optimization; the customer service team can accurately identify service availability; the sales team can identify opportunities for up-selling and cross-selling; and can respond to customer inquiries quickly and effectively. Electric utility providers can also maximize the efficiency of their field force by utilizing work force automation solutions that require accurate standardized customer locations.

### Voice over IP & 911

BPL providers that offer Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) can also use location analysis to provide accurate handling of 911 traffic. By geocoding an address, that is, attaching latitude and longitude coordinates, a carrier can determine the correct public safety answering point (PSAP) and all of the necessary routing information, ensuring that when the VoIP customer dials 911, the call will reach the correct PSAP.

### Customer service

Adding spatial analysis to CRM applications allows operators to view the location of all callers and correlate trouble tickets with real time network events. Location enhanced trouble tickets can also be analyzed and correlated with historical trouble data, allowing engineers to see where recurring network failures might pose serious threats, and to decide how best to resolve network difficulties. In addition, location based ticketing allows dispatch crews to use logistical algorithms to speed repair times and shorten customer response windows.

Ultimately, location intelligence solutions combine software, data and services to help organizations measure, compare, visualize and analyze data in unique and powerful new ways. By adding location as a critical dimension in the decision-making process, electric utility providers can compete, save, serve and grow in today's increasingly competitive marketplace.

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