

TOP 10

Tips for Communicating GIS

1. **GIS is powerful, be a trusted messenger.**

GIS communicates information in a way charts, spreadsheets, and text alone often cannot. But just as we have always heard in Spider-Man “With great power comes great responsibility”. Be an excellent steward of data!

2. **Know your audience and tailor your delivery.**

Different audiences care about, and respond to, different things. Understanding your audience, their interests, their beliefs, and their essential needs or primary challenges will make your message more effective.

3. **Avoid technical jargon.**

To many people, GIS is inherently complex. Speak in terms that resonate and are understood by your audience. You won't alienate a more technical audience. However, if you speak above a less technical audience, you will lose them immediately.

4. **Identify shared goals.**

How do your mission and initiatives align with the goals and interests of others? Focus on what's most important to both you and the audience.

5. **Use the power of storytelling.**

To communicate in a way that changes behavior, you must go beyond simply sharing information. It is scientifically proven that stories resonate better with audiences and activate numerous parts of the brain. GIS has the innate ability to tell stories through maps and data. Remember with GIS, it is show and tell!

6. **Just because you can, doesn't mean you should.**

With the ability to create diverse applications or resources, it feels like GIS practitioners have the world at their fingertips (You didn't think we could make this without putting one GIS cliché in here did you?). Although these applications have seemingly infinite capabilities, always defer to the simplest, least complex, and most user-friendly solution. Your audience is generally not a GIS expert.

7. **Less is more.**

Often audiences can get lost in the complexities or overwhelming amounts of data presented in a map or application. Direct, concise, and simple are principles that resonate with everyone.

8. **Don't assume your audience is interpreting the information as intended.**

We often hear cartography is an art. Similar to art, we know that audiences may have differing interpretations of spatial data. As GIS practitioners we must communicate essential information to be effective.

9. **Strive to be a Swiss Army Knife: Long gone are the days where a GIS professional just makes maps.**

You are often the go to IT person, database manager, and geospatial communicator. Acquiring and developing the skills to be an interdisciplinary resource will help you carry your message further in more diverse venues while identifying additional advantageous uses for your data.

10. **Be confident. Be passionate. Be honest. Be prepared. But most importantly, be compelling.**

Attitude is contagious and the way you present or communicate the data in person is as much, if not more important, than the data itself.