



12 Questions Every Buyer Should Ask about Location Data

A buyer's guide to having an informed discussion about Mobile
Location Data

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This document has been developed by the IAB Mobile Location Data Working Group, part of the IAB's Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence.

About the IAB's Mobile Location Data Working Group: The Mobile Location Data Working Group was formed to discuss best practices, standards, data, innovation, reporting and all issues related to utilizing location data for Mobile and Cross-Platform advertising. Representing members from all parts of the Mobile advertising ecosystem, the mission of the Working Group is to promote the adoption and use of location data for superior advertising solutions. A full list of committee member companies can be found at http://www.iab.net/Mobile_Location_Data_Working_Group

About the IAB's Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence: The IAB Mobile Marketing Center of Excellence, an independently funded and staffed unit inside the IAB, is charged with driving the growth of the mobile marketing, advertising and media marketplace. The Mobile Center devotes resources to market and consumer research, mobile advertising case studies, executive training and education, supply chain standardization, creative showcases and best practice identification in the burgeoning field of mobile media and marketing. Our agenda focuses on building profitable revenue growth for companies engaged in mobile marketing, communications and advertising, and helping publishers, marketers and agency professionals understand and leverage interactive tools and technologies in order to reach and influence the consumer. More information can be found at: <http://www.iab.net/mobile>

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Overview

This set of questions is provided as a guide to empower buyers with a framework and tools to engage in meaningful conversations with their media, technology and service providers about mobile location data and its use. It is meant to be used as a tool to enable constructive dialogue and highlight important areas of focus. As a high-level discussion guide, other important location data considerations, such as privacy and attribution, are not addressed here – but will be addressed in future output’s from the IAB Mobile Center’s [Mobile Location Data Working Group](#). The scope of this work is solely to provide a set of questions that are important to the success of campaigns using location data – for which any provider should be able to clearly and thoroughly answer for their buying partners and agencies.

Intended Audience

This guide is written for advertisers, agencies and marketers who have a general understanding of the different types of mobile location data available and how they may be used tactically for specific campaigns. More specifically this is written for buyers who seek a way to effectively assess and compare partners in regards to the specific data and capabilities they offer. There is a resource section following the guide of 12 questions for buyers who are new to mobile or unfamiliar with location data.

Introduction

Location data has quickly become the “holy grail” of mobile. From the ability for businesses to tie mobile campaigns to in-store visits and for brands of all kinds to learn more about the daily habits of their audience, including where and how best to reach them; location has helped open up hearts, minds and budgets to mobile marketing.

As location based targeting continues to become more sophisticated, effective, and prevalent, it’s increasingly important for marketers to be fluent in the language of location. The effectiveness of location based efforts are directly correlated with the quality of the underlying location data – both the data that describes where places are in the physical world (place data), and the data that describes where users are in the physical world (device data).

Businesses open, close, and move locations on a fluid basis and any targeting that depends on knowing what business a user has visited, or is currently visiting, is critically dependent on the quality of the underlying place data. Many location-based tactics require a detailed understanding of a user’s precise location, making it important to understand that not all mobile location data is created the same. Different sources and types of data come with different levels of accuracy, comprehensiveness, and precision. It’s critical for buyers to have an in-depth understanding of and discussion with any partner leveraging mobile location data.

The guide below represents a preliminary, high-level look at location data and gives general questions to guide a focused and productive conversation. While the answers will, of course, vary from vendor to vendor – these questions represent important focal points for running a successful campaign and can be used to compare vendors when deciding which provider best suits the needs of a particular campaign. Written for the semi-savvy buyer who already possesses an understanding of data types, terminology and strategies; resources are presented at the end of the guide for those who seek more information or education on the basics of location data including successful use cases.

Place Data

1. What is the source of your "place" information (i.e. data about what businesses, points of interest or addresses are found at specific lat/longs in the physical world)?
2. What is your overall share of 1st vs 3rd party place data (E.g. Do you have a proprietary mapping system/address data or utilize a 3rd party database)?
3. What is your approach to organizing places/place data (E.g. polygons, geo-fence radii, etc.)?
4. How precise is your place information (E.g. are you able to discern the location of a specific store in a mall versus the parking lot)?
5. How comprehensive is your place information (E.g. What percentage of business, addresses, or points of interest do you have place data for)?
6. How do you qualify and/or verify your place information? For example, how do you address the scenarios below:
 - a. How do you compensate for bad addresses?
 - b. Do you have a way to account for recent opening and closing of locations?

Device Data

7. What are your sources of device location data (i.e. data used to locate a device) and how do you receive that data?
 - a. E.g. 1st party (O&O properties/servers), direct 3rd party deal/relationship, impression/exchange data, etc.
8. What types of device location data do you use?
 - a. E.g. Device GPS, cell tower/triangulation, user-reported (check-in), user-reported (registration), Wi-Fi, IPS, beacons, low power Bluetooth, zip - local content, centroids, NFC, etc.
9. How do you identify and filter out the types of targetable location data that are not appropriately accurate for my campaign's needs?
10. How long is your location data stored/considered relevant?
 - a. Is your device data time stamped?
 - b. If you offer dwell times, how are these calculated?
11. How do you verify/substantiate that the device location data you are using is accurate?
12. What is the scale of your device location data?



Resources

Basic terminology/definitions:

- The 2012 IAB Local Committee's [Mobile Local Buyer's Guide](#) offers definitions on location technologies, and overview of the marketplace as well as case studies on for using location data.
- The 2013 [MMA terminology paper](#) is another resource for detailed location technology definitions and use cases.

Best practices/use cases/case studies

- The 2014 IAB Guide [Mobile Location Use Cases and Case Studies](#) provides best practices, use cases, and tangible case studies for brands successfully using location data in various ways.
- The 2014 BIA/Kelsey sponsored research on [Attribution: The Next Phase in the Age of Mobile Advertising](#) presents cases on how some companies are using location data for mobile attribution (available for download with free registration).