



Better Call Routing for Better Results

Applying GIS technology to phone calls can improve your business.

BY CHARLES AUSTIN



Running a company in which everyone reports to you is difficult enough. Running a franchise organization where stores throughout your regions are run as independent businesses is even more complex.

Sustained success and growth would be impossible without technology, in particular, the advanced call “geo-routing” and reporting capabilities available at our fingertips today. While the Internet receives most of the credit for generating leads and serving customers, the old reliable telephone is still how most people reach your franchisees. The telephone itself is changing substantially as cellular phones replace landlines, and smartphones put greater functionality at our fingertips, but it all still starts with a phone call. Telephone versus Internet is not an either/or proposition for building your business and connecting franchisees with current and prospective customers.

While the telephone call itself may seem rather mundane in a discussion of technology, many new technologies can be applied to telecommunications to make each customer phone call more valuable to your organization. Many franchisors are not taking full advantage of the available technology to improve operations, provide a better customer experience, or analyze results to make better decisions. In fact, they may not even realize the potential they’re missing to improve their business processes and identify problems within their organization that can easily be solved.

For example, ask yourself these questions:

- **What experience are you providing for current and prospective customers when they call?** Are customers’ calls routed properly? Do they talk to an automated prompt or are they automatically directed to a person assigned upon their location or other data you possess? What percentage of calls are handled appropriately, and how many are dropped or lost due to busy signals or frustration on the part of the customer?
- **Are you applying process-improvement techniques to your customer interface?** What analysis do you conduct on your prospective customers’ interface with franchisees? Do you review call data such as call length, repeat callers, unique callers or first-time callers to determine what is working and what isn’t in converting prospective customers into actual customers?
- **What return are you receiving from your advertising or marketing programs?** Many franchisees run local and regional advertising campaigns in various mediums. How do they track response rates? How closely are franchisor and franchisee actions linked and monitored? How can you determine which areas and offers are generating the best responses?
- **What would you do if you could view sales, demographic and other data integrated visually on a map?** Would it be helpful to instantly see where

(Continued on page 24)

(Continued from page 23)

your current or prospective customers are located, which areas may be ripe for additional franchise locations, or how franchise territories should be valued?

GIS captures and displays information geographically.

All of these things are possible with advanced call geo-routing and reporting. Applying geospatial information systems technology to telecommunications, supplemented with data mining and mapping-visualization tools, provides you with the ability to monitor and improve your business operations in ways that were inconceivable just a few years ago.

GIS is a form of mapping technology that captures and displays information geographically. It allows businesses to view and understand any information that is "geo-coded" with latitude and longitude

markers, so that relationships, patterns and trends can be quickly identified and acted upon. It also provides a basis for measurement to support quality control and process improvement initiatives.

When this mapping technology is applied to telecommunications, all incoming calls on toll-free lines or local lines can be routed according to customized geographic boundaries or almost any other criteria. It also allows call data to be captured and integrated in maps with other data, such as demographic or sales information, so that trends—both good and bad—can be instantly spotted and acted upon.

For franchisors, this incredible combination makes a number of things possible, such as:

Route calls by custom criteria.

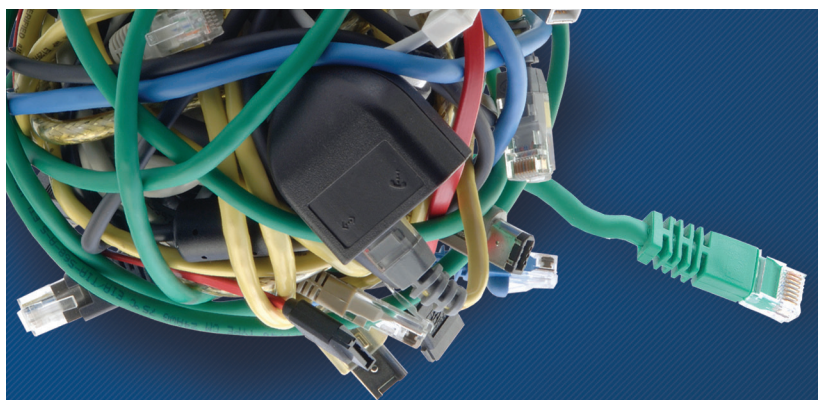
Incoming customer calls can be directed to the appropriate franchise based on any geographic boundaries you create, even if they don't match traditional ZIP codes, area codes or other standard boundary definitions. If you have hundreds of stores across the country, or even several stores within a small geographic area, chances are your franchise territories are fairly complicated, and call routing accuracy can greatly benefit from the application of GIS to some degree.

This will give you the ability to route calls instantly based upon caller and franchise proximity, time of day and day of week, customer input, first-time callers versus repeat customers, or any other criteria you define. Respecting franchisee boundaries is vitally important to any marketing efforts initiated or controlled by the franchisor.

Improve customer service by tracking information about each call.

This includes the customer's phone number, name and address, the time and disposition of the call, number of rings or hold time, the length of conversation and much more. Efforts to improve the customer experience by better handling peak calling periods, rerouting unanswered or busy calls, and even returning missed calls can provide immediate results for the bottom line.

Track results of advertising and marketing programs. Franchisors often use this level of call tracking to measure and improve their return on marketing investments. For example, a franchisor can establish a suite of toll-free numbers



Tangled up in misrouted calls?
Is it costing you customers?
Let us help.

We know tangled calls are frustrating for Zees. That's why franchisors love our advanced call routing and tracking solutions:

- Route calls by zip code or by franchise boundaries
- Responsive service from your personal AdGeo project manager
- Track and analyze results in real-time
- Mine your call data to generate meaningful metrics and improve your business

All at a significant value!

For a demonstration using your own data, visit
www.adgeo.com or email info@adgeo.com.

AdGeo
Advanced Geo-Routing ... Plus

www.adgeo.com
(888) 947.3100

that are associated with specific promotions, even for multiple store locations. As call data from each number is tracked, franchisors can immediately see what's working and what's not, so they can make any modifications to improve response rates or stop spending money on promotions in areas that aren't producing results.

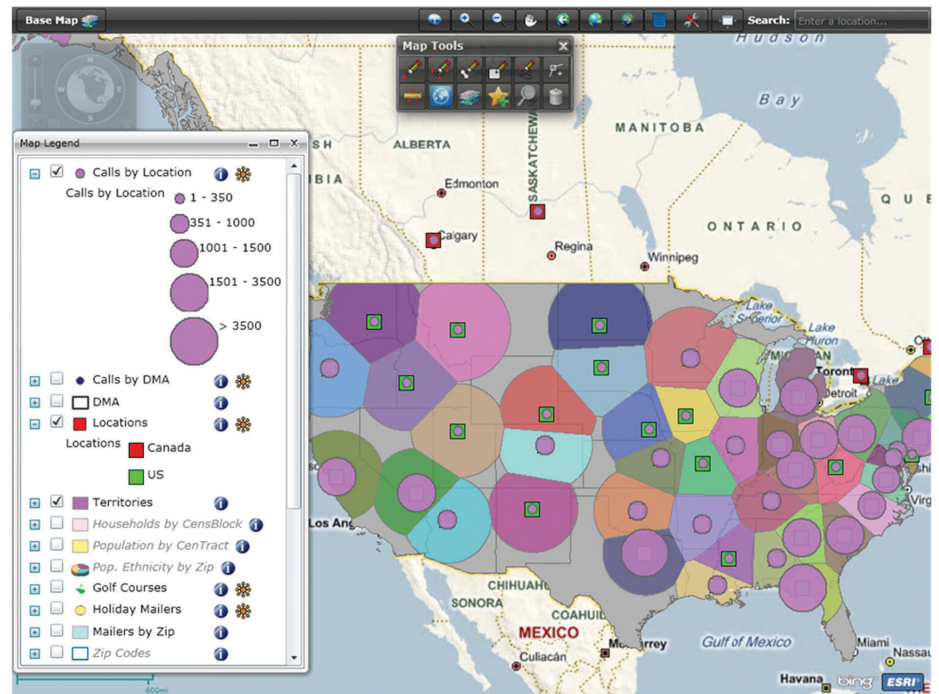
Visually map and analyze information to make better decisions. Once your call data is displayed visually on a map, you can layer it with other geographical data, such as results from advertising promotions, related marketing efforts (e.g. targeted mailings, mobile campaigns, etc.), demographic data, sales data, and franchise territories to see how these disparate, complex data sources interact and relate with each other.

The old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words underestimates the value of the mapping and visualization tools that make it possible for franchisors and franchisees to instantly see opportunities for expansion, for measuring and modifying marketing expenditures for better results, for identifying operational problems to address and much more.

For example, one International Franchise Association-member franchise organization immediately saw where new franchises needed to be established in a certain market area based upon the distances that customers were traveling to reach current franchise locations. This "Aha!" moment occurred when the organization plotted current locations and territories with incoming customer calls.

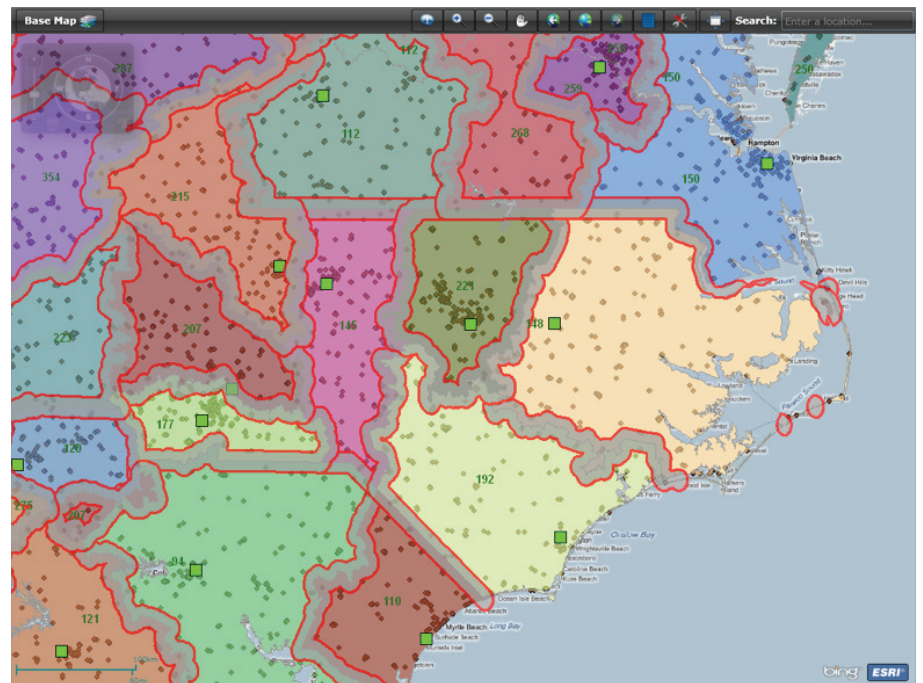
These technologies and the benefits franchisors and franchisees can realize are available now, with no investment in hardware or software. Almost everyone is familiar with GIS today in one form or another, and many franchisors are using GIS and data mining in some way today to help define and build their businesses. Applying these technologies to something often taken for granted, such as phone calls, can help improve your bottom line quickly with clear, demonstrable results. ■

Charles Austin is president of AdGeo, Inc., which provides geospatial and visualization solutions to franchises large and small. He can be reached at cwaustin@adgeo.com or 314-336-3202.



Mapping franchise locations and call response.

Franchise locations are in green, territories are defined in various colors, and call response is aggregated by location using purple graduated circles to instantly see response level. As you zoom in the response is clustered by ZIP code so you can see where you are receiving the best customer response.



Creating and mapping complex call routing.

Complex call routing strategies can be mapped and created. Notice a 5-mile buffer area in gray and outlined in red following franchisee territory boundaries. Ten-digit routing techniques discover latitude and longitude of callers so that the lead may be delivered to the correct franchisee even with locations marked in green that are close together.

Images courtesy of AdGeo