Open for Business

What it is like to earn a living with OpenStreetMap

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This is an updated version of a similar talk held at State of the Map 2009.
About Geofabrik

– started end of 2007
– sells consulting and other services
– two “full time employees” (owners)
– couple part time staff
Why this talk?

- commerce has discovered OSM
- responsible OSM “consumption”
- best if insiders act as a bridge
- encourage others to do what we do
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Geofabrik Business
Software Development

Often web site with some map interaction, database component, just a few simple pages – not always something specific to OSM.

Sometimes opportunity to have client pay for Open Source development.
Data Export

- mostly shape files
- fancy splitting
- language issues
- often requires tagging expertise and/or statistics
- sometimes algorithms ("residential areas")

- sometimes people ask for an export but it turns out they need something completely different
Server Installs

- tile servers
- Nominatim servers
- routing servers
- Overpass
- servers doing all of the above

- directions for all of this available online (and we tell people so!)
  however many prefer to pay someone.
- no two installs are the same.
Tile and WMS services

- very standardised “product”: we run servers and rent them out
- regular income
- but: requires server administration
- people often come asking for a WMS service because that's all they know but they need something completely different.
Consulting

- people have a project in mind and want to know their options with OSM
- or have very concrete issues like fixing a broken setup
- sometimes difficult to separate from “sales call”
And the other half of the time...

- community interaction
- flyers, posters
- telephone calls from random people
- download server & similar
it's a nice job but...

- context switching uses up time/energy
- paperwork (offers, tenders etc)
- SLAs
- explaining why “small” things are difficult
- hurts to be expensive
Products vs Services

Geofabrik is essentially a service company - means we won't “get rich quick”, attract VC, or get bought out by Google.

However, having at least some “product” or a standardised service makes things easier.

Even if the product is free, potential clients can use it to start a conversation.
Business Ethics in OSM

- don't “shield” customers from OSM
- be clear about the license
- credit whom credit is due
Thank You

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now:

Andy Allan

(When this talk was held, Andy Allan continued with a couple of insights from his own OpenStreetMap business.)