

Maddyness interviews Ordnance Survey's new Head of Geovation

"Crisis creates opportunity", says Carly Morris, who's joined OS from the International Airlines Group. With a new cohort of startups onboarding now, Geovation - with Carly at the helm - looks set to continue spearheading innovation within startups using location and property data, despite stormy seas.

Temps de lecture : minute

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Geovation was launched ten years ago by national mapping agency for Great Britain, Ordnance Survey, and now runs two high-profile (geotech and proptech) accelerators in collaboration with HM Land Registry and Registers of Scotland. Carly Morris, who made headlines as a finalist in the 2020 Everywoman Transport and Logistics awards, talks to *Maddyness* about zero-carbon transport and cities, why location data is crucial to all number of industries, and joining a new organisation remotely.

[Maddyness] What are the most exciting things going on in the world of Geovation right now?

[Carly] We recently welcomed a new cohort of startups onto our accelerator programme, and with that has come a whole new host of ideas and opportunities to explore. It's always a fascinating time getting to know the founders and their businesses, so that we can deliver a programme that suits their needs.

The programme is running virtually this year, which has given us an opportunity to innovate – finding new ways of working, building online communities and even hosting online social events! The power of our network has come into its own and we're working hard to deliver an amazing experience for our startups.

We are also preparing for our next callout for startups to join the accelerator programme, which will go live in January. We propel pre-seed or seed stage startups using location or property data to the next level, and urge interested entrepreneurs to keep an eye on our [website](#) or email us for further details.

How has your background and previous business experience prepared you for this role?

I came to Geovation from International Airlines Group, where I was Head of Innovation, leading emerging technology trials within their logistics business, as well as their Hangar 51 Accelerator Programme.

The experience of taking a problem from industry or society and working with startups to solve those problems, helping all parties involved to grow and learn in the process, is something I am taking into Geovation.

The transport and logistics industry that I have moved from is a huge user of location data, but the big difference with Geovation (and the big opportunity) is that location data is used and needed in so many other

industries and businesses. Geovation is important whether you're in utilities, healthcare or construction - everything happens somewhere, and I'm looking forward to working with and helping industry innovators to change the world using location data.

Why is Geovation's assistance so invaluable and important for startups?

Geovation gives startups everything they need for the best possible chance of success. We share experiences from fellow entrepreneurs to help them avoid mistakes; we help them create amazing technology with our in-house development team, and we connect them to our networks of industry partners and customers.



We have the backing of three major government departments: Ordnance Survey, HM Land Registry and Registers of Scotland, as well as the data and networks that come with that. With the intense level of support we

give, our startups go on to achieve things that once might have felt impossible.

How can we incorporate sustainability and the need for zero carbon solutions into how we think about transport and cities? Is this a key concern for you as an innovation lead?

It is a key concern, but it represents a major opportunity. I love to see entrepreneurs with new ideas solving problems that industries and governments have been pondering for years, and environmental sustainability is a subject that affects us all.

Geovation was built on the mantra of 'Think globally, Act locally, Scale sustainably', and over the last decade Geovation has developed and supported startups that are tackling some of these very same problems.

The UK Government has just announced a £12B investment in this area, and the national development agendas, global development agendas and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are major drivers for us. Location data has an important role to play in all of this and we are in the prime position to facilitate that.

The quickest route to achieving sustainable development goals is through sharing expertise, technology and financial resources, and Geovation can be a big part of this.

What has it been like starting a new role during such a turbulent time?

There's no doubt that starting a new role remotely can be daunting, but this feeling soon disappears once you roll up yourselves and get stuck in, particularly if you join a team as welcoming as Geovation.

They're an incredibly motivated group all geared up to help businesses thrive for the greater good of society; whether that be creating new jobs, reducing plastic waste, improving the quality of the air we breathe or reducing homelessness. Things may be different right now, the future might be uncertain, but this presents the opportunity to try new things, to adapt and to grow.



What does the future of innovation look like post-COVID; are there any particular areas you'll be focusing on?

Crisis creates opportunity, and if the past year has shown us anything, it's that innovation is catapulted forward in this environment. Where people may have sadly lost their jobs, they have started new businesses and where innovation projects may have taken months, they now take weeks.

The financial crisis of 2009 saw the emergence of startups that became companies we now couldn't imagine life without: Uber, WhatsApp, Airbnb, (and even Geovation started in 2009!). I expect to see the same surge of entrepreneurship emerging from this crisis, which Geovation is perfectly positioned to support, and I intend to focus on identifying and helping that talent coming through.

In the coming weeks I will also be continuing to work closely with our partners, our community and our teams to develop the future vision for Geovation and our areas of focus. All I can say is watch this space for now.

Article by Carly Morris