

Session Abstracts

How to get your organization to buy into GIS: tips and tricks

Presented by Ethan McGhee, City of San Luis Obispo

Description: Getting an organization to embrace GIS is rarely just a technical challenge, it's a people challenge. This session draws on personal experiences and real success stories from working with everyone in an organization, from field staff to top leadership, to make GIS a core part of their daily workflows. Learn practical strategies for breaking down resistance, demonstrating value, and finally escaping the spreadsheet madness that holds so many organizations back. Whether you're just starting the conversation or looking to deepen GIS adoption across your team, this session will leave you with actionable tips you can bring back to your organization immediately.

Keywords: *Leadership, Adoption, Organizational Change, Buy-In, Value, Sales*

GIS vs. the Organization

Presented by Carmi Neiger, DePaul University

Description: Understanding the hidden dynamics of your workplace is key to making your GIS implementation as successful as it can be. To be effective, GIS practitioners can't afford to ignore organizational politics. This session will help you identify the players, motivations, and interactions behind management decisions, and provide tactics for navigating this complex landscape. For both early-career and seasoned practitioners.

Keywords: *GIS Management, Career Development, Leadership*

Maps Don't Speak for Themselves: Storytelling for GIS Professionals

Presented by Holly Kluever, dymaptic

Description: Project documentation serves a purpose: to explain the work that was done and how to maintain it. But that documentation doesn't work when you need to describe your GIS work to a non-technical audience — a city council, a department head, or the public. They need a story about people.

Consider the difference between “this ArcGIS platform was built with Survey123, Field Maps, and Experience Builder to automate customer communications, enhance efficiency, provide data visibility, and generate reports” and “this platform helps us proactively protect people's homes during fire season.” Same project. Completely different story.

In this session, we'll explore GIS storytelling with a simple framework for reframing your work around human impact. Learn how to lead with the problem people were having, not the tools you used to solve it. We'll also look at how AI tools can help you draft, refine, and translate technical work into language that lands with any audience.

Keywords: *Storytelling, Communication, GIS*