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[CloudMade's OpenStreetMap Surges On Wikipedia-Like User Passion](#)
by [Michael Arrington](#) on Apr 17, 2010

Many people describe [CloudMade's](#) OpenStreetMap project as "Wikipedia for maps," and they aren't far off. The project allows anyone to add and edit map data around the globe, and the project is now a viable open and free source of mapping data for third party developers.

In some parts of the world, OpenStreetMap's data is far more detailed than the data provided by TeleAtlas to Google and Navteq to Microsoft and Yahoo, for their respective mapping applications.

The number of contributors to OpenStreetMap has grown steadily over the years. A year ago 110,000 individuals had added or edited data. Today it's up to 245,000 individual mappers. An average of 7,000 edits an hour are made to the data.

The project only started in 2004, and most of the data has been added over the last couple of years. Perhaps the most stunning case study is Germany. In 2007 it was a blank canvas. Today, the level of detail goes far beyond what any other service provides. It includes all major points of interest (even trees are now being added by users), the entire road network and turn by turn navigation:

Third party developers eat this stuff up. There are few alternatives – Google, Microsoft and Yahoo will allow developers to embed maps into applications but there's no deep dive into the data. CloudMade has allowed entire new classes of applications to be possible. In Germany 150,000 people have paid to download skobbler , which is based on data from OpenStreetMap. Countless other apps also use the data. One notably creative one – a gay cities app that shows the gay areas of cities around the world, with points of interest.

CloudMade adds paid services on top of the OpenStreetMap data that developers can choose to take or leave. And they've recently launched a location based advertising product that actually bring revenue to developers, too.

OpenStreetMaps is a triumph of properly channeled crowd passion. Most people add data for the love of the project, and together all those hundreds of thousands of people are bringing decent mapping data to places that the big guys won't be focusing on for a long, long time.

If you're an iPhone user (and who isn't these days, you lemmings) and want to participate in the project, start here .

Update: see my comment below   .

CloudMade

get widget   minimize

Website: cloudmade.com

Location: London, United Kingdom

Founded: January 1, 2007

Funding: €2.5M

CloudMade, co-founded by OpenStreetMap creater Steve Coast and long-time OSM contributor Nick Black, has been established to ensure OSM geo data integrity and to package the data for third-party use. Utilizing geographic datasets from OSM, CloudMade... Learn More

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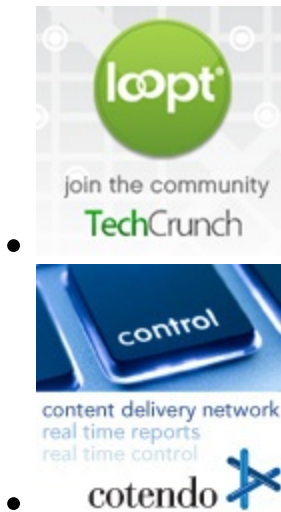
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- Dev Khare - April 17th, 2010 at 4:55 pm UTC

  Great to see the progress and how 245,000 contributors overwhelms the

few thousand vans that Navteq/TA have in the market. The usage of OpenStreetMap in the Haiti crisis was also an example of how the ability to immediately change the map can provide a ton of value.

- Scott Gatz - April 17th, 2010 at 6:04 pm UTC

Thanks Mike for the mention of GayCities, we're one of the most popular apps for the glbt community and we love OSM and Cloudmade. The flexibility and features of Cloudmade paired with OSM's ever improving maps is a great alternative to the high license cost for bing maps and the licenses for google and others.

- Jonathan Frederickson - April 17th, 2010 at 6:31 pm UTC

I would consider it if there were an Android app.

  - Richard - April 18th, 2010 at 3:00 am UTC

    I would consider it if it ran on an Atari 800XL.

  - amm - April 18th, 2010 at 5:43 am UTC

    If you look at the actual website of OpenStreetMap (http://www.openstreetmap.org) and it's wiki and not CloudMade's website (an entirely different company who just happen to use OpenStreetMap data) you will see, that a lot of different platforms including Garmin, Android, Windows Mobile, j2me and many others are "supported" by independent projects using OpenStreetMap data. Unfortunately I don't think Atari 800XL is amongst them, but that could change if an Atari developer felt passionate about it, given that the data is free and open.

    Here are some links to find various apps for mobiles http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/Software/Mobilephones http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/OSM_Map_On_Garmin

  - wim wauters - April 18th, 2010 at 1:01 pm UTC

    You can use openstreetmap on the andriod with andnav2

- Charles - April 17th, 2010 at 7:32 pm UTC

This article is highly misleading. OpenStreetMap is not the property or creation of CloudMade. There is no such thing as "CloudMade's OpenStreetmap project". CloudMade offers services on top of OSM data, that all. I have passion for OSM; not CloudMade.

- jipido - April 17th, 2010 at 7:44 pm UTC

  OpenStreetMap is not a "cloudmade project", it's an independent project.

  - Juha Christensen - April 17th, 2010 at 8:46 pm UTC

    Correct, OSM is a UK non-profit entity, separate from CloudMade. The two are independently governed.

    - Charles - April 17th, 2010 at 10:13 pm UTC

      Yeah, funny how reporters keep making that mistake after talking to CloudMade.

    - amm - April 18th, 2010 at 6:00 am UTC

      It would be nice if CloudMade's press department would do a better job at quality control and ensure that the relationship between CloudMade and OpenStreetMap is accurately described, which it isn't in this article.

      CloudMade has some pretty neat products of its own to help make OSM data usable to end users and other developers. It doesn't need to hide behind OpenStreetMap or even try and "own" OpenStreetMap by allowing misleading articles. Please don't damage your reputation in the community this way.

- Leszek Pawlowicz - April 17th, 2010 at 8:41 pm UTC

  OpenStreetMap is not a Cloudmade project; it preceded the existence of Cloudmade, and exists as an independent project outside of Cloudmade. Cloudmade does good things with OpenStreetMap data, but even they wouldn't claim credit or ownership of OpenStreetMap. Get your facts straight.

- Mikel Maron - April 18th, 2010 at 2:29 am UTC

  I hope TechCrunch and CloudMade take responsibility to clear up the very large misconception reported here about the relationship between OSM and CM.

  If you want to continue the Wikipedia analogy, then it's not too far off to call CloudMade the Wikia of maps.

- Ragi Burhum - April 18th, 2010 at 7:38 am UTC

  Many years before Cloudmade there was OpenStreetMap. And I have a

feeling that many years *after* Cloudmade, there will be OpenStreeMap.

- Uthfull   - April 18th, 2010 at 8:25 am UTC

  Have never tried openstreemap but Wikimapia is kind of the same albeit with lots of spam.

- Ravi - April 18th, 2010 at 10:01 am UTC

  OpenStreetmap aka OSM is indeed founded by one of the founders of Cloudmade.

  An excerpt directly pasted from Cloudmade's about page below.

  "CloudMade was founded by Steve Coast and Nick Black in 2007 to provide professional services around open map data. Steve founded OpenStreetMap in 2004 after becoming frustrated by the lack of freely available maps in the UK. A leading figure in the open geodata movement, Steve has driven OpenStreetMap from a bedroom project to a 216,000+ member Foundation, with active contributors in over 30 countries across the world. Nick began working with OpenStreetMap in 2006 whilst studying for a Masters in Geographic Information Science at University College London. The Founders' prominence within the emerging discipline of neo-geography and their pioneering role in the open geodata movement give them a unique insight into the world of free, community made maps.

  CloudMade's Executive, Management and Engineering teams are made up of some of the leading members of the OpenStreetMap community who help keep us close to our roots. Our deep involvement with open source and community based projects is complemented by a significant amount experience within the mobile and internet industries, drawing upon the expertise of our Chairman & CEO, Juha Christensen and CTO, James Brown, together with our Senior Director of Product Management, Cragg Nilson as well as the backing of our investors, Sunstone Capital represented by Jorgen Smidt."

- Meades Ranch - April 18th, 2010 at 10:17 am UTC

  You're way off Michael. Waaaay off. Eh, we all make mistakes.

  "Cloudmade's OpenStreetMap project" yah that's a laugh.

- Pierre-Alain Dorange - April 18th, 2010 at 10:54 am UTC

  Please correct your mistake : OSM is an independant project. CloudMade

is a compagny that use OSM data (the OSM licence is OK wih that).
OSM is a non profit organisation.
The contributors that create the data for OSM do not works for
CloudMade, they work for OSM non profit and leave they author right to
the community.
Your article has a big bias, please make this more clear for your readers...

- Michael Arrington - April 18th, 2010 at 11:50 am UTC

I fully understand the relationship between Cloudmade and
openstreetmap. And I also understand that people deep in the geo
community want a fuller explanation. But for the vast majority of our
readers it just isn't relevant. CM clearly controls the OSM project, just as
wordpress controls the wordpress.org project, etc. What's exciting here is
that you, the community, are doing great things. Bicker amongst
yourselves if you like, but this isn't the forum for it.

Also, I didn't talk with CM about this post. It came out of a random
discussion I had with someone about how they are doing. And by "they" I
mean the combination of CM with OSM.

  - Alan Glennon - April 18th, 2010 at 12:09 pm UTC

  "CM (Cloudmade) clearly controls the OSM (OpenStreetMap)
  project" – Michael Arrington

  That statement is simply false. OpenStreetMap is controlled by the
  independent OpenStreetMap Foundation:
  http://www.osmfoundation.org

  Your attribution is similar to improper characterizations like
  "Redhat's Linux" or "Wikia's Wikipedia". Diligence in documenting
  such distinctions are important not just to open source developers ,
  but the entire technology community.

  Alan Glennon
  Department of Geography
  University of California, Santa Barbara

    - Michael Arrington - April 18th, 2010 at 12:19 pm UTC

    again, I think you guys are trying to drag me into your battles.
    it's quite clear who controls the project.

      - Tim Waters   - April 18th, 2010 at 12:38 pm UTC

Michael,

I think it's quite clear that Cloudmade does not control the project.

Really not that difficult.

- Tim Waters - April 18th, 2010 at 12:45 pm UTC

  Sorry for having to reply to my own comment – but I think it's very important to point out that there *is no* battle between OpenStreetMap and Cloudmade.

  There is no evidence for any such conflict, battle or disagreement. Thought you might like to know.

  In actuality, Cloudmade is one company that supports OSM, they create nice tools – OpenStreetMap members like the company. They've done nothing wrong and no one has a bad word to say about them. They as a company have as much say as the next group of people. Steve Coast, who works for Cloudmade has more of a say, but he is not the company, and the company is not him, and either way, there still is no battle! Hehe.

- Robert - April 18th, 2010 at 4:12 pm UTC

  If CloudMade controlled OpenStreetMap, we would all be using CloudMade's MapZen to edit it. As it is, very few people are doing so.

- Pierre-Alain Dorange - April 18th, 2010 at 10:00 pm UTC

  How can you saif things like that ? What analysis brings your to that statement ?

  It's not the truth, it's perhaps your 'vision' but without clues it's false.

  CloudeMade use OSM data, as some other compagny ; in fact anybody (or company) can use OSM data, as far as they respect the licence : they not own, they use…

- Charles II - April 18th, 2010 at 5:22 pm UTC

"Also, I didn't talk with CM about this post."

Course you didn't. The CM PR image that you used just magically appeared in your inbox. Goddamn spam, just can't stop it from coming.

- Andrii V. Mishkovskyi - April 18th, 2010 at 10:08 pm UTC

Ehm, Michael, as one of CloudMade's employees I can assure you that CM DOES NOT OWN OpenStreetMap. And no, CM DOES NOT CONTROL OpenStreetMap. And yes, CM did a lot of good for OSM in the past years, but that doesn't change the status of OpenStreetMap as an open and independent project.
Please, accept the fact that you've made a mistake and correct it.

- Michael Arrington - April 18th, 2010 at 10:53 pm UTC

oh, wow. ok, a cloudmade employee has spoken. glad we got that cleared up.

- Wynne - April 18th, 2010 at 11:54 am UTC

It's strange that I've never heard of these guys until now?

- tonique - April 18th, 2010 at 1:37 pm UTC

Not everyone can hear about anyone immediately…

- Ted - April 18th, 2010 at 12:32 pm UTC

OSM isn't strictly owned by Cloudmade – but it is really.

OSM was started by by Steve Coast, who got fed up of not making any money from it, so he set up a company called Cloudmade to cash in. The problem was he (and his 'foundation' chums) had picked a CC-BY-SA license for OSM, really meant for music and artistic work, you have to share any work built upon OSM with the same license – doesn't really make for a healthy business model! DOH.

So they set up Cloudmade and set about changing the license so they could make some money – the problem with the CC license is it's irrevocable.

So one day, Cloudmade and their customers may end up with a big legal bill and OSM may just survive, perhaps as art.

- Alex Leverington - April 18th, 2010 at 1:59 pm UTC

I would be cautious building an app on this product until there is an "open" fashion of accessing the data. Right now it's a very expensive service when you compare it to equivalent APIs and consider the data is often from unverified sources.

As much as we'd all like an "open" database for location data, I think that's the wrong approach. I think there should be an open system which integrates multiple location data sources and provides a system for grading the data. The only thing I'd ask of the providers is that the data be "free". All the data is bound by a common identifier anyways, so, it's going to be real difficult for one source to be proprietary.

- Robert - <u>April 18th, 2010 at 4:16 pm UTC</u>

  "...data is often from unverified sources."

  There is no such thing as a verified source.

  You learn that when you have dealt with as much commercial data as I have.

- <u>Shaun McDonald</u> - <u>April 18th, 2010 at 4:18 pm UTC</u>

  There is already an open way to access the OpenStreetMap data. Head over to <u>http://planet.openstreetmap.org/</u> and download all of the OSM data, it's several gigabytes though, and needs some processing.

  I use OpenStreetMap data for navigation at lot. For example today, I was using it to follow the National Cycle Network Route 1 in Kent, UK, with a group of 30 other cyclists, and proved invaluable.

  Can you tell me where I can get cycle route data from other official sources? You'll find that you can't get me that data in a useable form.

  If I spot an error in the data, compared to what's on the ground, would I be able to fix it? Or would I have to wait months or maybe even years for the official data source to be updated?

  You'll find that the verification is by other people going out and using the data, spotting errors and going and fixing it.

- Steve Coast - <u>April 18th, 2010 at 3:02 pm UTC</u>

OpenStreetMap is owned by CloudMade. Period.

- Jeff Enderwick - April 18th, 2010 at 5:37 pm UTC

  "There is no evidence for any such conflict, battle or disagreement ..."

  Only evidence of lazy reporting.

  - Michael Arrington - April 18th, 2010 at 6:22 pm UTC

    no, it's cutting through the bs and getting to the core issues.

    - The OSM Long Tail - April 18th, 2010 at 10:22 pm UTC

      That would be "cutting through the bs" as in "writing utter bs", would it?

- ansonlee - April 18th, 2010 at 6:43 pm UTC

  Very interesting discussion thread here.

  The CEO, Juha Christensen stated above:
  'Correct, OSM is a UK non-profit entity, separate from CloudMade. The two are independently governed.'

  Whereas the founder, Steve Coast states:
  'OpenStreetMap is owned by CloudMade. Period'

  Maybe these 2 guys should talk? Glad that i am not the investor in this one, even if they succeed it will next to impossible to get any money out if the key people in the company cant agree on such as basic question.

  - Andrii V. Mishkovskyi - April 18th, 2010 at 10:50 pm UTC

    Oh dear, your irony-meter is way off. Or you think that every joke on the internet should be marked with smiley. ;)

- Kieran Fleming - April 18th, 2010 at 8:20 pm UTC

  Michael Arrington: "Everyone's wrong but me!"

- Michael Arrington - April 18th, 2010 at 10:43 pm UTC

  so if everyone's in agreement, event the guy from cloudmade, why do you guys care so much at an apparently ignorant outsider thinks otherwise? lot of grumbling going on here.

  If even 1% of our readers gave a damn I'd write a post explaining how projects like these are able to stay on track, and why there is always just

one for profit company guiding it. There are exceptions, but there aren't many. And this isn't one of them. The founder of CM is the Chairman and founder of OSM. Anyone who think OSM isn't run by CM simply doesn't understand how these projects work.

- Russell Nelson - [April 18th, 2010 at 11:28 pm UTC](#)

  The thing that has really surprised me is how many ex-Cloudmade employees are still dedicated OSM contributors. THAT is what really tells me that Cloudmade is just another corporate contributor to OSM, and not its backbone.

  - Michael Arrington - [April 19th, 2010 at 12:03 am UTC](#)

    what amazes me is how nasty this community is. and with that, comments are closed. CM and OSM, you're on your own. **Good luck battling Google**.
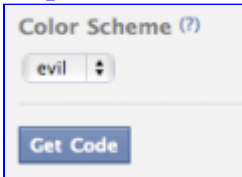
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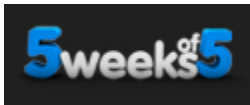- **Senior Product Manager**
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