

WELCOME TO THE OOC!

Swing by the clubhouse for your complementary Hummer!

After the dour news that brought about **the New Austerity**, you're probably ready for a 2009 trend that's a bit more uplifting. Something shiny and sun-drenched, even if it seems superficial on the surface. Well whaddya know – it's happening right in front of your eyes, taking the form of **the convergence of the online and offline worlds!** If we were a trend-tracking firm, we'd name this something cheesy like On/Off-Line or COnOffGence or **Blended Reality** (actually, that's a good one). But we're totally above that – we'll call it "**The OOC**" instead. Sweet, dude! Killer! Sick, brah! Names aside, we've been trying to reconcile the two worlds for years, but it couldn't happen until mobile phones got smart. Through the inclusion of **GPS services, interactive maps, mobile web access**, and thousands of **apps**, your phone is now a handheld "mouse" for a world that's hyperlinked the f@#& over.



STARRING: LOCATION AWARENESS – Enhancing real world experiences through practical simplicity

Damnnnn, did **geotagging** get some work done? Cuz it's all grown up and lookin' goood! Now that we've filled our maps with interactive, location-based data, GPS-enabled devices are bringing the benefits of the virtual world into our distinctly non-virtual lives. A basic example: Who wants to drive around looking for new apartments when you can pull up the Street View on [Google Maps for Mobile](#) and check out the new hood? (Note that this is unnecessary for the *actual* OC, since every neighborhood looks exactly the same anyway.) It's easy to see why Street View succeeds: it makes the existing service (Google Maps) **more practical** by adding portable location data, and it makes this service **extremely simple** to use. These new technologies make users infinitely more efficient, but do the heavy lifting behind-the-scenes (and **automatically!**). This is evident in technologies like digital cameras that geotag photos as they're shot and offer wireless uploading, but it's the location-enhanced smartphone apps that are *really* delivering practical and simple solutions:

Make the most of your location to help get you through the day! [Locale](#) triggers predetermined functions when you enter certain areas (i.e. silent mode when you arrive at work, Twitter when you arrive at the bar), while [iNap](#) allows you to doze on public transit by sounding an alarm as your stop approaches (will someone define "public transit" for the OCers?).

Found yourself in unfamiliar surroundings? [GasBag](#) looks up nearby gas stations *and* prices to help you get out that hellhole as quickly as possible. Wanna stay a while? [iWant](#) finds the nearest restaurants, movies, banks, bars and more, to keep you occupied while trapped in that hellhole.

Don't forget about crowdsourcing, which encourages your consumers to bond with each other *and* extends the reach of your app. Consider [Trapster](#), in which users pinpoint speed traps, red light cameras, and other police bait, and the system alerts you as you're racing towards them at horribly unsafe speeds.

Where can you find *more* examples, including [a guerilla party starter](#)? A clue: it rhymes with "blossom flog."

ALSO STARRING: MOBILE SOCIAL NETWORKS – Online communities facilitate offline interactions

Admittedly, "practical" and "simple" aren't the first words to come to mind when talking about social networks. But when these services are augmented with location-aware data, they become highly efficient tools for organizing events, enhancing your social life, and finding local recommendations and insights (ahem, **regional team**). A slew of these mobile social nets are emerging (Loopt, Where.com, and others), but formerly *online*-only communities are also using their extensive networks to organize face-to-face meetings. [Flickr Meetups](#) encourage photographers to converge on an event and post their pics in a common album, while [LTHforum.com](#) brings Chicago foodies together at local restaurants to debate weighty issues such as "Mr. Beef vs. Portillo's." (Lou's got the definitive answer to that one.) For those OCers who love tennis but can't find partners due to their total lack of personality, [Mesh Tennis](#) finds other local players at equivalent skill levels. Then there's [Meetup](#), whose explicit purpose is facilitating meetings for *offline* clubs in local communities. (Their mission of "**using the Internet to get off the Internet**" literally sums up this posting.)



Y'know, maybe we should've gone with "blended reality" after all.

In summary: the OC is full of terrible, terrible people, but **The OOC** is full of your wonderful, wonderful consumers! By connecting their needs to a location, you can build your brand by providing simple, practical solutions. But don't start from scratch; if there's anything we've learned from the OC, it's the power of a facelift! Extend your existing programs into whichever world they haven't tapped. For any service that your brand offers online, make it portable and accessible in the "offline" world. For any real-world connections or benefits you've provided for your consumers, use the endless reach of virtual resources for faster and wider transmission. Now if you'll excuse us, we've got to get back to lifting our trucks to unreasonable heights.

the hotspot for haute thought is the pot at upshotSM

Those links above? They're actually clickable at [theawesomeblog.tumblr.com](#)