

# Location Intelligence

An Interview with Jeff Glueck,  
Chief Executive Officer, Foursquare

**EDITORS' NOTE** Jeff Glueck became CEO of Foursquare in January 2016, after 18 months as COO. He has grown Foursquare into an industry-leading location intelligence company, with a suite of B2B products in addition to its consumer apps. Prior to his current position, he was CEO of Skyfire Labs. He co-founded site59.com, an online travel company that grew to over \$100 million in sales in two years, and was acquired by Travelocity. In the following seven years, he served as chief marketing officer at Travelocity.



Jeff Glueck

Previously, he was a strategy consultant at Monitor Company and served as a White House Fellow in the Clinton Administration. Glueck holds a master's degree from Oxford as a Marshall Scholar and a bachelor's degree from Harvard University.

**COMPANY BRIEF** Foursquare (enterprise.foursquare.com) is a technology company that enriches consumer experiences and informs business decisions through a deep understanding of location intelligence. Every month, more than 50 million people use the Foursquare City Guide app, Foursquare Swarm check-in app, and websites to discover new places, explore the world, and check in. Foursquare's Places API powers location data for Apple, Samsung, Microsoft, Twitter, Uber, and 100,000 other developers. Foursquare's business solutions also include Pinpoint, Attribution, Pilgrim SDK, and Foursquare Analytics. Foursquare has more than 200 employees based in its New York headquarters and offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, London, and Singapore.

## What is Foursquare's history and how has the company evolved to where it is today?

Foursquare was born in New York City. We launched in 2009 and the company invented its famous "check-in" app as smartphone use was spreading.

The company has evolved a lot since then, and it's now a location powerhouse. Most of the fast-growing revenue at the company is around our B2B lines that support developers with location tools, analysts via our understanding of foot traffic, and marketers with products that target audiences based on where they go in the real world.

The business is growing very fast, and it's centered around being a technology company that is pioneering location intelligence.

## As the company has grown, how critical has it been to maintain your entrepreneurial edge?

This company has about 240 employees so it's incredible that we have pioneered so many things. We are still scrappy and a challenger, so I think the company acts very much like a startup.

We have been able to go up against other tech platforms like Google and Facebook, and leading companies have chosen to build their location platforms around our technology and data, like

Twitter, Uber, Snapchat, and Microsoft. Hundreds of thousands of users utilize our technology every day.

We're certainly punching above our weight. Our founder, Dennis Crowley, wanted to invent a check-in that would automatically happen as one's phone entered a place without having to take the phone out of their pocket. As we have perfected that, based on being able to test it with real first-party consumers, it has allowed us to have a machine learning training set.

## How challenging is it to stay on top of the technology with the speed of change today?

Leaders in business have to constantly reinvent themselves and their businesses. We have to innovate and adapt at a really fast pace.

We started out solving one problem for a narrow group. Our founder created apps that could map the world and allow people to lifelog all of their travel experiences, and get recommendations from the community on the best places to go in more than 160 countries.

The technology that makes that possible now solves many other bigger problems. We're constantly finding broader applications for our business.

## When the opportunity was presented to you to come to Foursquare, was it the evolution of the firm that excited you?

When I met Dennis, I was captivated by his vision for where we could go, but I also immediately felt that Foursquare was sitting on a goldmine of technology that had broader impact for the world.

On the enterprise side, I had a feeling there was a lot to focus on, so I spent my initial time working on building that out and it just exploded.

## Will future growth come from clients that you already have or from bringing new solutions and technology to the market?

The product we have will carry us far, and we have just begun to scratch the surface of that.

Attribution is a product we launched last year that involves the ability to continuously measure advertising for brick-and-mortar brands. It is growing like crazy and beginning to move forward.

The Pilgrim SDK was just launched this year, and it is growing very fast as well. This is about Foursquare opening up contextual awareness to other apps as a tool set to build experiences we haven't even imagined. We're growing across a number of avenues, and we're accomplishing much more than the average 240-person company should be able to.

## What is the vision around your international partnerships and what they will bring to Foursquare?

We are a global location service and our community of editors ("superusers") covers more than 160 countries. Many of the leading Asian companies that make global products have come to us to partner as they grow. Samsung uses Foursquare technology to make Bixby intelligence assistance smarter. This allows one to point their camera at landmarks around the world and, from just the camera image, it recognizes the place and pulls up information about it.

Tencent, which owns WeChat, uses Foursquare technology for its location tagging outside of mainland China in countries around the world and we host that in our U.S. data centers.

## Foursquare has placed a major emphasis on diversity. Does hiring the best talent automatically lead to a diverse workforce?

We spend a lot of time thinking about the tech industry and how diversity and inclusion are so important to its future. We have been working hard to make sure we have a culture that is inclusive and respectful internally and that we are recruiting and retaining diverse talent.

We're also involved in trying to shape the future of STEM education and career opportunities for people who are underrepresented in tech today, especially in engineering roles.

We partner with the NYC Tech Talent Pipeline, and our Foursquare engineers work on a curriculum called Beyond Coding that is in use across the Pipeline. This helps people who are getting trained in engineering at city colleges and technical schools to be best prepared for the workplace.

As an industry, we're just in the first inning and not yet where we need to be, so we are committed to getting better. ●