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Asylum Develops District 3D Using the Google Earth API

Company

Asylum (**www.asylum.fr.**) is a graphic design and Internet solution agency founded in 1995. It provides computer graphics, 3D animation, and interactive virtual models. Asylum supports urban planners, architects, developers, engineering and design agencies, construction companies, and communities. It has offered its District 3D product since April 2011. This solution lets customers view, share, and edit an urban project online in 3D using Google Earth.

Problem

Asylum wanted to let customers centralize the 3D data of an urban project online, share it, and modify it. This solution had to allow them to present a project to the public very simply via Google Earth. Asylum needed software that was powerful, easy to use, and universally known and recognized.

Solution

Asylum used Google Earth to develop District 3D. "Using Google Earth was the obvious choice, due to its capability to display large-scale 3D models in a web browser. It is easy to use and its format (SketchUp) is universal. Google's reputation also supported our choice," says Asylum Chief Executive Officer Christophe Bertrand.

The company used Google 3D tools such as SketchUp and Google Earth for several years for preparing computer graphics and aerial photos. Asylum wanted to extend its services by developing the District 3D solution to display an urban project on a website in 3D in real time.

"The Google Earth API lets us integrate Google Earth's 3D viewer on a project website and add commands to display and download the 3D content," Bertrand states. "Our urban projects overlap with Google Earth's existing environment."

"Our customers particularly appreciate the ease of use, the graphics performance, and the universality of Google Earth."
*—Christophe Bertrand, Asylum Chief Executive Officer*

Navigation controls let users zoom in and out, change orientation, and move about. The users can walk around freely in the 3D model and view it on a website in its environment. "The 3D model of a real estate project is fixed in a traditional communication. There may be pictures or a video that follows a pre-set tour, but the viewer can't move about within the project. In addition, the existing environment is often obscured and the project is not presented in real time. The advantage of District 3D is that you have a 3D model in real time. Users can go where they want, as in a video game," Bertrand continues.

At a Glance

What they wanted to do

- Let customers centralize the 3D data of an urban project online, share it, and modify it.
- Allow customers to present a project to the public very simply via Google Earth
- Create this solution in a format that was easily exchangeable

What they did

- Chose the Google Earth API for its ease of use, the universality of the SketchUp format, and its graphics performance in a web browser

What they accomplished

- Provided an effective solution for virtual online tours of real estate project, in 3D and in real time

About the Google Earth API

Google Earth is a true 3D digital globe. The Google Earth Plug-in and its JavaScript API let users embed Google Earth into web pages. The API lets users draw markers and lines, drape images over terrain, add 3D models, or load KML files to build sophisticated 3D map applications. Users can also 3D-enable a page on an existing Maps API site with as little as one line of code.

For more information visit
www.google.com/enterprise/earthmaps/maps-apis.html
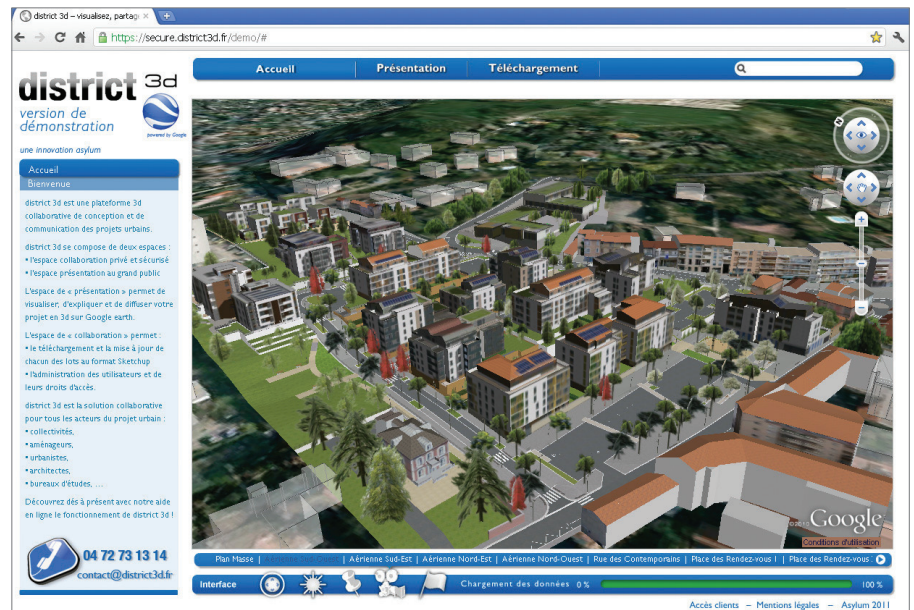
With Google Earth, District 3D is a highly innovative, easy-to-use solution. Users need only to download the Google Earth plug-in to view a public 3D project on the Internet.

Bertrand says getting started with the Google Earth API was easy. "Google supported and believed in our project. We worked with a web developer to perfect the features that make it possible to share 3D using the Google API from a District 3D website," Bertrand adds.

Results

Thanks to Google Earth, Asylum has provided customers with the District 3D design and communication platform for urban projects on the Internet since April 2011. Customers access a private area secured by a username and password. There they modify the components of an urban project by downloading them in the SketchUp format. They also distribute their 3D model to the public from the corporate website.

"We particularly like the 'guided tour' features that store various views and pathways. Users can put together educational virtual tours of projects. We also can link the 3D model to a range of multimedia data," Bertrand says.

The economic impact is already very positive. "We have good customer feedback based on the universality and simplicity of our technological choices. We are solidifying our role supporting our clients in the design and marketing of public projects with District 3D. Google contributes to building our market share in this area and lets us strengthen our technological expertise. This is important when competition is ever more aggressive," continues Bertrand.

"Our goal is to generate 30 percent of our sales with this new solution in the first year," Bertrand adds.

District 3D is just Asylum's first step in developing Internet solutions for architecture and real estate. "Our goal is to move on to version 2.0 of the District 3D collaborative platform. We are also working on a new offering using Google tools. This time it will be a virtual tour of a building, not just a district," Bertrand concludes.

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