

# SIMPLIFYING NAVIGATION BY BREAKING DOWN THE WORLD INTO THREE-BY-THREE METRE-SIZED SQUARES

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

In an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu*, Chris Sheldrick, CEO and Co-founder of what3words, shares the company's expansion plans and how its technology is unique compared to other navigation apps | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

In June, Mahindra partnered with what3words to bring Alexa-enabled navigation to its Scorpio-N. Now, the location technology provider is foraying into e-commerce and logistics segment to simplify navigation in offline and online modes. In an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu*, Chris Sheldrick, CEO and Co-founder of what3words, shares the company's expansion plans and how its technology is unique compared to other navigation apps. Edited excerpts:

**Chris Sheldrick:** The idea for what3words came to me during my time in the music industry when we would often face problems in trying to find a given address. It always seemed like the Satnav (satellite navigation) or smartphone apps with maps were unable to find the right place. So, I tried getting people to use the latitude and longitudes to find the correct place, this, however, was very fiddly and complicated for people. That is where the idea came from; how can we simplify latitude and longitude into something much more human friendly?

what3words cuts the world into three-by-three metre squares; that's 57 trillion squares. We named each square with three words from the dictionary. And to me, that just seemed so much simpler than trying to use latitudes and longitudes for navigation.

**CS:** Google Maps and Apple Maps are mapping apps. We don't do any mapping. They also offer turn-by-turn navigation, which we don't do. So, we don't compete with either of those apps. We are simply a different way to define a location. what3words gives people a way of typing three words and then displaying it on a map; it's very different to what Google Maps and Apple Maps do.

**CS:** Absolutely! We have integrated with Tata motors, Mahindra, Jaguar, Land Rover and Mercedes, and many other passenger car brands. In fact, our next phase is to get into commercial vehicles. We have signed up with a new EV company called Volt that builds trucks. It is an exciting new company in the commercial vehicles industry. We also have plans to tie up with companies in the ride-hailing sector.

what3words is going to work for basically any car, any device; therefore anything, where you're putting a destination, is what we see our target market.

**CS:** We won't make our own new technology in the what3words app. On our website, you will see a Street View feature that actually comes through from Google. We didn't want to reinvent the wheel or compete with any of the companies doing anything around maps; they do it very well these days. We're just happy and comfortable doing our own one product and we don't want to make any other products.

**CS:** For that, you would have to use it in parallel with an offline navigation app on your phone. There are different ways of doing this. In the what3words apps you can press navigate and then

you can go into Google Maps or Apple Maps.

For offline use in Google Maps users can use it in tandem with downloaded offline areas of a city. You can have a fully offline experience by using apps in conjunction with what3words. There are plenty of ways to have a fully offline navigation experience.

**CS:** The good thing for us is that we don't have to update. It doesn't matter whether there is a piece of farmland within a three-meter square, and even if tomorrow somebody builds a skyscraper on it, the square will always be called the same. It will never change.

As far as our tech is concerned, we've just named every three-metre square in the world with three words, and that's it. It's done! It's done for English and other versions in different languages like Hindi.

**CS:** We've done 12 Indian languages. We have taken the approach to make sure that we have at least one official language per state in India. But I think across those 12 languages we have probably 12 of the most commonly spoken ones in India, however, I think we can definitely add more languages across India.

India has a huge volume of languages, but I think with the 12, we have a great way for us to enter the market.

**CS:** One thing we did when we made the system is that we spaced similar sounding three word addresses as far as possible. The idea being that you can actually be quite a lazy typer, you can make typos in each word and the what3words will be able to detect what you actually meant and it's something I would encourage users to try. I bet you the app will be able to correct them. So, it's a real positive of the system. Even if you do make mistakes when inputting the words, it will become really obvious that you made a mistake because the area might come up in another country or different part of the globe.

Users do not have to be super good at spelling , you can be approximate and what3words will still get it right.

### [Our code of editorial values](#)

**END**

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com