

Jillian Switzer Thinks Droning On Is an Exciting Prospect



Jillian Switzer (AirMap, Head of Marketing), Photos © John Livzey, 2016

New frontiers are not exactly easy to find. But drones and their potential fit the bill perfectly. And in that regard, AirMap's Head of Marketing, Jillian Switzer, believes that we are at the beginning of something big.

"Amazon.com has reported that 85% of their deliveries weigh less than 5 pounds. If that's true, consider the tremendous amount of resources that are used to deliver so many small packages and how much could be saved with drone delivery. And if a drone can deliver a package, it can also deliver a person. And now we're talking about possibility of flying cars in our not-so-distant future. Drones are the next generation of innovation in transportation. But right now, low-altitude airspace is a bit like the Wild West."

Enter AirMap. According to *Wired*,

"AirMap gathers real-time aerospace data and provides a communication pipeline between drone pilots, airline pilots, and airports." Switzer compares the technology to building the driving lanes, streetlights, and road signs for the sky.



"The FAA just made it a whole lot easier to fly a drone for commercial purposes (Unmanned Aircraft Systems Rule 107). Amazon won't start drone delivery just yet, but we're getting there. And the commercial applications for drones are limitless. If you want to inspect the wing of an airplane or the top of a building, a drone is a perfect tool. Public sector entities can use it for search and rescue, cinematographers for aerial footage. We've really only just scratched the surface of what this technology is capable of. But that means that soon there are going to be a lot more drones in the sky. So we need to create traffic standards and protocols for their use.

"For example, right now, by law, a recreational drone operator must give an airport notice if he or she is operating within five miles of an airport. So if you're flying your drone on Manhattan Beach, you've got to call LAX and let them know. Most people don't know they're supposed to do this, but if everyone did, what would LAX do with that info? How is all of this being managed? AirMap takes care of that. It can also

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notify users if an airspace is restricted for any reason. So right now my job is to drive awareness about what AirMap can do so that we can constantly improve the capabilities of our airspace management infrastructure.”

Though new to the drone space herself, Switzer is most passionate about it. She’s also new to Los Angeles, specifically Silicon Beach.

“When I worked at Google in New York, I became very passionate about civic technology and started looking for jobs in that space. That’s what took me to AirMap and to LA. There’s something very interesting happening in LA, in Silicon Beach. The startup scene is relatively new here, but it’s expanding rapidly. There’s also a long history of aviation and aerospace innovation in Southern California. That’s exciting to me. AirMap is at the right place at the right time. I’m thrilled to be tackling a big transportation challenge with a huge opportunity for improving our everyday lives.

“When I told my friends I was moving to LA, one of them introduced me to a mutual friend who had just moved to LA to work in transportation as well, Marla Westervelt. We became fast friends and she introduced me to WTS-LA. I joined a couple of months ago, and I’m very interested in getting more involved. My work brings me to the chapter naturally, but I also practice what I preach. I think I’m the only person in West LA who takes the bus to work! I look to WTS-LA as a great opportunity to expand my network and find my place in the transportation industry here.”