

**COMMISSION ON PEACE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING**

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CLASS TEN**

**PLANNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POLICE  
AND LOCAL NEWS MEDIA BY THE YEAR 2000**

**BY**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This study examines past, present, and future issues associated with the relationship between police and local news media. Findings indicate that tension and mistrust exist beyond that necessary for a healthy relationship in a democratic society. It also revealed that technology may create issues that can be the source of further conflict. A strategy was developed to optimize the relationship between the two entities.

Professionals associated with the subject assisted in identifying and evaluating trends and potential events affecting the topic issue.

The trends were identified as follows: 1) High speed, instantaneous, mass communications, i.e. fax, electronic mail, teleconferences, etc. 2) Accountability of local government, 3) Public demand for information, 4) Concern for privacy, 5) Police efforts to enhance image.

The following events were forecasted: 1) 25% of Police Departments become "paperless"; 2) Court-ordered immediate public access to all non-withholdable information in police files; 3) Dispatchers transmit calls to field units via secure electronic message system; 4) U.S. enters another "Vietnam," prompting 60's-style mass protests; 5) "Hacker" breaks into police record system and provides news media with information.

Through the use of a cross-impact model, the interrelationships between the trends and events were analyzed to determine their impact on police-local news media relations. It was determined that all projected events had an impact on the other events and trends. Additionally, all events, except number 4 (mass protests) and all trends were affected by each projected event.

One of the future scenarios was chosen as both desirable and attainable if policies developed through strategic planning were implemented to facilitate its occurrence.

Strategic planning techniques were employed to determine police strengths and weaknesses and analyze stakeholders in an agency described for operational considerations. A final strategy consisting of the following policies was ultimately developed: 1)

Use of computer software to distinguish and disperse information according to programmed categories of releasability; 2) facilitate modem access to police computer bulletin boards; 3) conduct joint media relations training for local government officials; 4) conduct scheduled problem-solving meetings between public safety and local news media.

Stakeholders were identified. They include various government officials, member of the press, legal system and private enterprise. Their positions are analyzed and strategic plans are offered to move them to positions that will facilitate successful implementation of the aforementioned policies.

This study concludes by emphasizing the need for utilizing technology for mutual gain as well as understanding roles and responsibilities through training and communication.