

MEASURING LAW ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Article

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Community policing has a profound impact on what defines quality policing and how it is measured. Determining public agency performance is already difficult due to the nature of public agency politics, fiscal constraints, priority setting, and public manager relationships with legislative bodies. Social pressures, technological advances, and social science research provide methods for supplying answers on how to evaluate police agency performance.

Police agencies are under significant social and political pressure to find ways to better serve the public during a period where the level of trust in public agencies, specifically the police, is low. Scandals like the New York Police Department's Abner Louima case and the Los Angeles Rampart corruption scandal along with high profile shootings and uses of force, such as Rodney King, and Riverside's Tyisha Miller, add to the distrust (Davis 1999, 4).

In addition, the reinvention of government movement is establishing a foothold in local governments. An International City Manager's Association survey revealed, from a sample of 800 U.S. cities responding, that 51 percent participated in some form of performance measurement for substantial number of programs (Kravchuk 1996, 348). The reason some public agencies implement performance measures varies from trying to correct their own poor performance, economic conditions, or to shatter dysfunctional organizational rigidities (Van Wart 1995, 430).

In 1990, Long Beach Police Department was rated as the least effective police agency in California in solving criminal cases. In 1995, Long Beach Police Department implemented a series of performance measures to improve police performance and the public's perception of their services. Surveys were used to capture non-traditional

measures such as the perceptions of fear of crime, public opinion of service quality, along with statistical evaluation of traditional measures such as crime rates, response times and gang related crimes (Thomson 1995, 8).

It is important to understand the difference between the professional model and community policing to understand how to measure police performance in the future. In the professional model, law enforcement agencies intentionally remain at arm's length from public politics in order to maintain the image of corruption free police departments. This increased the public's confidence that the police were free to protect the community without political influence. In 1924, the International Association of Chiefs of Police successfully lobbied for the creation of uniform crime reporting. The information contained within uniform crime reporting was intended to give police managers a method to objectively make decisions and manage efficient operations (Banas & Trojeanoqicz 1985, 5). The professional model focused on the quantity of police inputs and outputs. Measurements of performance such as calls for service, response times, and crime rates reflected the scientific management movement of the nineteenth century. This was the first attempt by federal government to measure crime across the nation. Later, another model of management, management by objectives, attempted to create police performance measures that were linked to city goals. Unfortunately, the focus of these measures frequently ended up being concerned with the quantity and manipulation of goals was common. Police managers set the benchmark for these measures too low, ensuring a high performing rate of success. When the linkage between objectives and expectations are weak, performance measurement fails to bring about agency

performance improvement (Swiss 1991, 85). Besides low standards, these measures failed to evaluate the quality of performance.

The focus of community policing is significantly different from the professional model; therefore, the measures of effectiveness are vastly different. Community policing is primarily based on the participative model of government sharing qualities with Total Quality Management because of its focus on customer demands (Skagon 1999, 4). This model recognizes that the police depend on the citizen as the co-producer of safe communities' crime prevention. To be effective, law enforcement agencies create partnerships with neighborhoods, businesses, and private agencies in order to not just apprehend suspects and issue citations, but to reduce both crime and the fear of crime. This model encourages a strong linkage between community expectations and police priorities (Alpert & Moore 1988, 37). In order to establish this model, decentralized decision-making is important. Bureaucratic and rigid structures are inconsistent with the community-policing model. In addition, non-traditional approaches are encouraged to find solutions to problems. Typically, qualitative measures are used in defining the success of community policing. The quality of partnerships, the amount of trust between police and community, and the quality of life in neighborhoods are significant measures in comparison to the numbers of arrests, citations, and crime rate.

Police agencies are significantly different from private agencies and even slightly different from other public agencies. First, the goals of police agencies are multi-faceted and contradictory (Dilulio 1993, 2). Reducing crime through the apprehension of suspects is a common goal of police agencies. In addition, police agencies are interested in reducing the fear of crime. Promoting crime prevention through the use of the media

is a delicate situation, because public awareness can also increase the fear of crime. Further, because equity is an important value in administering justice, the police must always measure their crime apprehension methods against the fairness and objectivity of their crime prevention methods.

Police agencies face many of the same constraints as other public agencies. The measurement of public agency effectiveness is complex. Public agencies have multiple missions and they also do not produce a single product such as profits. It must be determined whether to measure inputs, outputs, or outcomes; this can be very problematic when trying to determine the effectiveness of a police agency. Police inputs are frequently defined as calls for service, crimes reported to the police, and police officer staffing. Outputs are arrests, reports taken, and citations issued. Yet, measuring how these outputs and inputs relate to outcomes can be difficult. Outcomes are the intended result of police action. Lower crime rates, reduced civil disorder, and healthy communities are a few examples. Long periods may exist between the time of arrest and prosecution and punishment.

In addition, police agencies are faced with moral hazards. A moral hazard is an incentive to act wrongly (Wilson, 1989, 117). When measures such as crime rates are emphasized, the police are placed in moral hazard, which sets a higher threshold for documenting crimes reported. Police departments who are thorough about reporting all crimes end up with higher crime rates than those that are less responsible about their reporting. The ultimate result is that the statistics become less valid.

Police are also faced with determining who defines what is excellent performance. Does a part of the community represent the whole? Typical measures do not account for

race, class, and gender (Scheingold 1995, 189). When one segment of the community wants one kind of police action at the expense of another, police performance is often subjective. These issues become difficult challenges in assessing police performance.

Public agencies are constrained by these complex, contradictory and confusing goals. The battle between responsiveness, accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency restricts police agencies from reaching full potential. Another reason police performance is difficult to measure is because crime is highly under-reported. Typically, only 65 percent of crimes are reported to the police (Bayley 1996, 41). When both the police and the media focus attention on a crime issue, public awareness is increased resulting in increased crime reporting and a higher crime rate. Lastly, police agencies have a significant amount of technology to gather information about calls received, response times, and crime rates. This plethora of data becomes noise, disguising measures which are truly indicative of the overall performance. The lack of clarity produces an opportunity for public managers to use data when it serves their purposes without really reflecting on the agency's true performance.

If understanding the complexities of measuring performance in a community policing setting is so difficult, why should police managers bother? First, there are several benefits to measuring police performance. One is to enable police managers and public officials to make effective decisions about the quality of programs. Managing public agencies is complex and requires a greater level of information. Public managers want and need tools to enhance decision-making. Given limited time to devote to receiving feedback on agency performance objectives, managers focus their energies on preprogrammed feedback (Kravchuk 1996, 356). A second benefit is to ensure the

linkage between the community's priorities and needs, and public agencies' strategies. A third and very important reason to measure police performance is to increase public confidence. Lastly, it is important to measure police performance in order to give the full value of the public's cost to citizen, community, and the employees of a public agency (Olsen & Epstein 1997, 2).

The question is what to measure. In a National Institute of Justice report Measuring What Matters, one possible combination of measuring was identified. These measures include important elements which fit the necessary relationship to the community policing model combining customer satisfaction, honesty, community fit, quantity and quality of partnerships, the impact on crime, and organizational health as the major elements to be measured. Methods to gather information on these areas could include the use of statistics in measuring the crime rate. Fear of crime would be determined by the use of surveys, measuring perceptions about use of force by comparing statistics on use of force by officers, measuring organizational health by use of statistics and employee surveys, and assessing partnerships by survey and interview (Langworthy 1995, 8).

An important element of measuring agency performance is data collection and analysis. Technical support, software, and development of systems to collect data is critical. An example is the case with New York City's efforts to change organizational effectiveness. New databases were needed to collect information and to share the information (Silverman 1999, 236). James Q. Wilson's view is that citywide measures are doomed to failure. Instead, neighborhood health should be the focus. By focusing on

the micro-level, police departments can measure pre-intervention and post-intervention to determine successes (Wilson 1995, 79).

With all of the benefits of measuring police performance, why has it not happened until now? In the past, police chiefs, city managers, and city councils have not emphasized creating new ways of measuring the performance of employees. There is no significant government body that has the influence to impose standard measures on police agencies other than the state and federal governments. Both the federal and state governments are highly unlikely to impose these standards on local law enforcement because they view police priorities as being a local concern. Cities are very protective of the local control issue involving their rights to set priorities that fit their communities.

The agent-principal theory is helpful in understanding how police managers approach performance standards. Local law enforcement managers have little to gain by objective police measures. Police managers typically take credit for reducing crime rates and warning of future crime problems to justify increase in police budgets (Klockars 1995, 200). Police managers may possess the technical knowledge about police performance that city councils do not have, but they are also able to provide measures that suit their purposes. City councils have the power of the budget to control police managers and focus police action on areas of greatest concern to them.

Police managers use knowledge and expertise to win “slack” in police budgets, and city councils use the budget to control police manager loyalty (Wilson 1984, 239). Slack is the difference between the cost the agency incurs and the resources available. Slack provides police managers the ability to respond to a changing crime problem, a city priority, or support police department goals. Police managers are able to hide slack in

their budgets from city councils because they are more aware of the agency's true performance. The implications of an objective standard for police performance would tip the scale in favor of city councils. City councils armed with this information could make city to city comparisons, evaluate the cost benefit of police actions, and ultimately hold police managers accountable. Knowing this, police managers are unlikely to be the initiators of objective performance standards.

Allison's bureaucratic politics decision model is useful in explaining the reason that objective measures are not a high priority to police chiefs. Allison provided three models for decision making: the rational actor model, the organizational process model, and the governmental politics model. In the rational actor model, decision-makers use goals and objectives as a guide to decision-making. Choices are considered on how they effect the achievement of these objectives. The choice that provides the highest value is chosen.

The second model is the organizational process model. In this model, organizations develop routines which restrict the decision-maker's options in decision making. Standard operating procedures become the way to make decisions. Choice is a question of what has been done in the past to solve the problem. The last model, the governmental politics model, states that the role people play in an organization, their power, and the structure of the political environment affect the decisions made. The environment preselects whether a decision-maker will be involved and what power the player will have in the decision.

Understanding the context in which police managers work helps to understand how information is used. Chiefs primarily deal with institutional partners such as

department heads, city managers, city councils and selected members of the community (Hunt 1993, 25). Chiefs are dependent on the other players for cooperation. The positions of the players and their power influence what they do (Allison 1971, 165); consequently, the majority of police chiefs feel political pressure to change enforcement strategies. The environments that police chiefs live in require the use of political decision making instead of the rational actor model. In one study, it showed that fifty percent of chiefs are forced out of office by politicians (Tunnell & Gaines 1990, 10). Bargaining becomes the most successful way to achieve results. Although information of agency performance could be available to a police chief, it would not necessarily change the strategy, structure, or focus of the department. This is because the decision is the product of the governmental politics models not the rational actor model. The qualities of community policing, which tend to be less quantitative, only aggravate this situation. Absent the benefits of quantitative information to counter political influences, police chiefs are unlikely to use goals and objectives to achieve agency performance. With little power to restructure and refocus the resources of the department, police chiefs will be unwilling to invest in complex performance measure research.

Indications are that public managers are concerned about the expense of data collection, and place little emphasis on performance data in decision making. When they do use performance measurement it is usually in measuring organizational efficiency, and that performance measurement provides little assistance in comparing one organization to another (Ammons 1995, 37).

Community policing and performance measurement share similarities in that they both attempt to increase police agency performance and improve accountability. These

two philosophical views of policing differ in significant ways. The future of how police agencies measure organizational effectiveness will be affected by both community policing and performance measurement philosophy.

The focus of community policing is the relationship between the police and the community. The role of the citizen is one of partner, not customer. Community policing is decentralized. Police priorities are different depending on the composition and values of the community or the area of the community served. Police performance is qualitative in nature, subjective, and difficult to measure. Measures of police success are broad, extending beyond agency borders. Accountability is placed on the officer and community partners for enhancing community health.

In contrast, performance measurement views the citizen as customer. Performance measurement is centralized, requiring a set of agreed upon criteria for measurement, systems for data collection, and reporting of results. Police priorities are likely to be based upon benchmarking of similar agency performance or a set of measures that the community may have had some involvement in developing. Police performance is both qualitative and quantitative. These measures of police performance are likely to include external measures, such as customer satisfaction and quality of the relationship between the police and citizen. Internal measures include financial factors such as the cost/benefit of programs, internal perspective measures such as the speed of task accomplishment, and learning/growth measures such as the number of people qualified for key positions (Kaplan 1996, 30).

The social, economic, political, and technological change that occurred in the 1990's is helpful in considering the future of police performance measurement. The

impacts of the economic downturn during the nineties created a context where government, including police departments, were under significant pressure to reduce costs while maintaining public services. Economic issues are likely to be critical in how police department performance is viewed. In a period of good economic times, the public is less likely to demand performance measurement. However, as was the case in the nineties, when public resources become scarce the public will have a greater expectation of police performance. The impact of economic downturns on crime rates is likely to increase demands of more effective police performance.

A second critical factor in the future in how police departments measure performance will depend on the technologies available to collect performance data. The advent of personal computers, computer aided dispatch and record management systems, and other technologies has improved the volume and quality of performance data available to police managers. The cost of collection and accuracy of this data will be an important factor in determining how police agencies measure performance.

Technological developments will increase the likelihood of a greater number of police agencies using data to measure agency success because the costs to collect the information will be reduced. In the future, the ability to measure differences in officer performance will be increased because technologies will provide the means to determine minute details about the officer's performance such as the quality of citizen contacts through live video and digital recordings. Technology will also provide tools to enforce laws without citizen/officer contact, reducing the human element. This will have an affect on how police define performance. Citizens will form opinions about performance based upon the quality of technologies such as on-line forms, web sites, and automation.

Police departments that build support structures to provide information on performance and build analytical units to turn information into knowledge will increase their perceived effectiveness. The cost of these technologies will require medium agencies to pool their resources. To reduce costs, agencies will create regional GIS and data analysis units or outsource these duties to private agencies.

A third factor is the political environment. As it was in the nineties, the political environment helped create an environment where COPPS and performance measurement were able to grow in public agencies. The economic downturn led to political efforts to reduce the size of government. Performance measurement in the federal government was welcomed by Congress and the Clinton administration because these efforts reflected the public's dissatisfaction with the performance of government in general. Community Oriented Policing also grew in popularity as the Clinton administration encouraged police agencies to make the change by providing financial incentives to do so.

Policing is conducted in a political environment even though the political environment does not always lead to decisions that help police agencies perform to their capabilities. Police managers must operate in an environment that is political and rational. Performance measurement provides the police manager with tools to deal with the political nature of local government by providing information about the success of the police agency, the value the public places on police programs, and providing methods to conduct cost benefit analysis of police efforts. The more turbulent the political environment, the more likely police agencies will depend on analytical and statistical tools to prove the benefits of police programs.

Policing is both political and rational. As Simon identified, management is often about the best acceptable solution, not the best solution; as is policing (Simon 1946, 32). Police agencies can be more effective; however, improvements may come at the cost of public support, political power, and budgetary resistance. How police agencies measure performance is likely to be part political and part rational. As with New York City's Commander Statistics and Los Angeles Fast Trac, data analysis is important in understanding how well the agency is performing. Community input and community support are still important, yet data analysis allows greater accuracy in deploying services where they are needed, crafting specific responses to problems, and holding police managers accountable.

Agency performance in the future will likely consist of a more balanced set of criteria. Traditional measures such as the crime rate, response times, and numbers of inputs such as calls for service will be measured. Community policing will continue to place a greater emphasis on qualitative measures. Also important are outcome measures such as the overall economic and social health of the community and the perception of trust the community places in the police. Organizational efficiency will also continue to be important to both the citizenry and police managers. The bottom line must not circumvent criteria of performance such as attentiveness, reliability, responsive service, competence, fairness, and good customer care (Mastrofski 1999, 1-11).

Performance measurement may continue to be a local agency issue. Statewide performance measurement will have to be the product of city manager leadership or state government legislature absent changes in the way budgets are formed, the manner in which public officials make decisions, and the security of police chiefs. Future trends

and events could require city managers to focus efforts to develop statewide performance standards. Public pressure and loss of public trust could create a ground swell for statewide performance systems such as those within California's public schools (Henry & Dickey 1993, 203). A statewide system of external audits is another possibility. These audits would be conducted by an independent agency to measure the performance of the police department (Mastrofski 1999, 10).

There are still many unanswered questions that will need an answer in the future. How will public survey results affect officer performance? What process is best for narrowing the overwhelming numbers of performance criteria to a workable number? How will performance systems affect police managers in setting priorities? What roles will unions play in the development of performance measurement planning?

The costs of pursuing performance measurement can be evaluated in tangible and intangible ways. The staffing needed to develop and prepare surveys, the time to conduct public meetings and the technologies used to collect data and systems to report the results are all costs, which must be considered. For example, a geographical information system for a small city can cost \$50,000. The implementation of a computer-aided dispatch and record management system can cost \$700,000. A survey conducted four times a year would cost roughly \$5,000 in staffing, mailing costs, and materials. Intangible costs include the loss of trust between employee and management, loss of control on what is measured and how the results affect the agency, and the stress generated by change on individuals who make up the organization. The costs of performance measurement is insignificant compared to the loss of productivity, failure in performance, liability exposure, and cost in human capabilities not realized due to poorly managed

organizations, misaligned structures, and incongruent organizational values (Osborne 1993, 13). The cost of supervision, internal investigations, and legal counsel must be considered in weighing the cost of performance measurement and the risk of not doing it or not doing it well.

The benefits of performance systems are greater knowledge about the impact of programs and policies along with increased organizational responsiveness, equity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Accountability will likely be increased and if the process is inclusive, political support for the agency's goals will increase, budget support will increase, and employees will have greater confidence in their work. A secondary benefit, but one of great significance, is that implementing better performance systems will increase the need to change the way work is done, power is shared, and the way workers view their relationship with the customer. Lastly, an important benefit of performance systems is the higher level of trust between the police and the community.

Leadership is needed at the city legislative level in order for police managers to use performance measurement in great numbers. Unless public officials use performance measurement information in decision making, the costs to implement it and the impact on the organization will outweigh the benefits. The legislature must do more to strengthen the positions of police chiefs so they are encouraged to develop objective systems. Unless police chiefs have greater job security, they will not risk their positions, credibility, or success on performance systems. The at-will nature of police chief positions, political environment, and interdependence with other players make implementing a performance a risk without significant support from the city manager, city council, and residents.

Leadership is needed on the part of police managers also. The future is likely to challenge many of the assumptions that are held about police performance. The changes in technology will demand greater change in the structure of police departments. These changes will likely be unwelcome by the rank and file who see performance measurement a threat to staffing levels and to norms, which define excellent police performance. In the future police agencies will be expected to be more similar to private firms than they are today. The customer of the future will expect police departments to have the customer service of Nordstrom, the technological advancements of Amazon.com, the responsiveness of Dell Computer, and the tactical skill of U.S. Special Forces. The future customer will be better educated, and this will result in higher expectations for individual and organizational performance. Demographic changes will likely change how police performance is viewed. Race is and will continue to be an issue. A non-white majority will shape community expectations and change police priorities depending on their view of police performance.

Considering the context in which police agencies exist today, the future will demand a more sophisticated police manager who has tools available to make informed decisions. Officers and other staff will increasingly depend on information to address community needs. The rate in which these developments occur depends in part on the energy, knowledge, and skill of police managers. External forces including a lower crime rate, competition with other departments, and increasing public scrutiny demand that police agencies have quantitative measurements to justify their programs and agency costs. The choice is to what extent should the performance system be implemented. Agency performance, economic conditions, technological, and political conditions must

be considered in the development of a system that fits the agency's circumstances. The challenges of the process will provide greater insight into the capabilities of the police, increased understanding between officer and citizen, and improved information to decision makers.

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