WHERE'S JOHNNY NOW? GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS AND THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY OF THE FUTURE.

Article

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Law enforcement pulls out all the stops when investigating missing persons cases, and global positions systems (GPS) certainly can be an aid in those investigations. Imagine using a piece of equipment that will allow its operator to locate a specific spot, even one that is miles away, to within a margin of error of less than two centimeters. What a breakthrough it will be when a global positioning system has the ability to pinpoint the location of a missing child, or an elderly person who suffers from Alzheimer's and has wandered away from home. In order to prepare for this emerging technology, law enforcement must change the way it views technology and change.

There are several approaches law enforcement agencies can take to address these changes. Typically, law enforcement has been unprepared for out of the ordinary, but fairly predictable, occurrences. In his book Leadership and Futuring, John Hoyle suggests, "We are often tied to a successful past, and when trouble strikes, we are unprepared to make changes in time to avoid running around."[1] A look into imaginary Detective Skip Miller's current assignment depicts this lack of preparation.

Detective Skip Miller has just been transferred into the Sex Offender Supervision Unit which is a task force of municipal and state law enforcement officers who monitor the location of all serious and high risk sex offenders as designated by the Megan's Law legislation of the mid-1990s. Skip is a forty-eight-year-old investigator with twenty-five years of experience, most of it spent in the Warrant Fugitive Detail. Skip was a real go-getter in his day and earned his way into the Warrant Detail by his aggressive and tenacious work style. With his retirement at age 50 on the horizon, Skip went into the slow-down mode a few years back and began using the out of state extraditions as a way to build up frequent flyer miles and to help him decide where he wanted to relocate

after retirement. Skip had no desire to work on this task force, as most of the members from other agencies were young and motivated, and knew lots about computers and this global positioning system tracking method. Skip was told that he'd need to learn how to use this system and that he would be the Officer of the Day on a rotating basis once he was trained on the computer system. "Come on," Skip lamented, "those car computers were hard enough to figure out; now they want me to master this complicated tracking system. I wanted someplace where I could coast the rest of my career."

Two months into this assignment, Skip is assisting as the Officer of the Day. The system tracks the movement of all twelve hundred of his jurisdiction's sex offenders. By switching to another database, Skip can see where sex offenders in other jurisdictions are. Pretty cool tool.

Just after lunch, Skip is handling the system when he receives an alarm with which he is unfamiliar. A beeping tone is coming from one of the monitors, and Skip's trainer has taken the afternoon off. He had told Skip about these alarms, and Skip knew they meant something about a violator being too close to a school. Skip thought, which school is it? And more important right now, how do I shut off this obnoxious noise? Skip tries to call his trainer on his satellite phone, without luck. "More evidence of how this technology stuff doesn't work, especially when you need it most," muses Skip.

Finally, Skip hits the right combination of commands and learns that the offender is near the school where his granddaughter attends. Skip could have simply used the

voice commands to activate these features, but Skip told his trainer that he didn't believe in that voice recognition stuff and he'd never need it anyway.

Using some of his police experience wisely, Skip calls the school and the Watch Commander on the phone, alerting both to his findings. Unfortunately, Skip didn't care to learn about the direct alert feature of the system either, because he could have made these notifications via the technology within the tracking program. Alas, Skip reaches the Vice-Principal and tells him to keep the students in class. Skip also calls the Communications Center and they in turn immediately notify units that are assigned as school liaisons at the Junior High next door.

Eventually, the sex offender is located and the system is again revered as a success. If only the public knew the real story.

Resistance to Change

Fortunately, the outcome in this scenario was positive, no thanks to the preparation on the part of Detective Miller. Why don't agencies properly prepare themselves and their employees for change? Why, as Hoyle asks, are we typically unprepared for change to the point that we resist it with our internal and external actions? Max DePree, in his book Leadership Is An Art, said, "…we cannot become what we need to be by remaining what we are."[2] Culture is one of several factors that inhibit change. Another is the resistance of agencies to fully train their staffs with clear expectations outlined. Typically, a select few officers are designated as the technology experts and while they may be very adept at what they do, their focus is on technology, not training. Assignments to these high tech or specialty positions are typically made based on seniority. The Gen X'ers and Nexters of the agency are likely to be very

qualified for these positions, but traditionally would not receive consideration because of their lack of tenure. In order to accomplish change, agencies need to overcome these cultural blind spots.

Sharing Information

The open sharing of information with other agencies, even other law enforcement agencies, has been continually met with opposition. This is another cultural blind spot that must be corrected. Agencies are moving toward a concept called information warehousing, where several agencies contribute information from their arrest and records databases to a central warehouse that can be accessed by all participating agencies. Law enforcement leaders need to endorse this concept and work to institute these information-sharing systems. Agencies have typically been reluctant to share information because of fears of confidentiality breaches or agency or individual selfishness. Agency leaders need to put aside this desire for exclusive control to help fulfill one of the missions of any agency, the protection of life and property.

Partnerships

In the same spirit of cooperation, agencies need to endorse and seek additional partnerships with key groups that can help the agency be successful. In terms of global positioning systems and monitoring, partnerships with missing children foundations, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Mental Health and Alzheimer's Associations could all be beneficial. Movement toward these partnerships and negotiating agreements requires agency leaders to stretch themselves and their departments.

For a look at someone who works for an agency that has broken down some of these cultural walls, let us visit fictional Officer Shawn Towles.

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Officer Shawn Towles has just been given a great opportunity. As a result of a rotation agreement between the Chief of Police and the Police Officers Association, officers with as little as eighteen months on the department can transfer to any detail they wish. The department also recognizes the importance of their officers' personal and family lives, thus they can also job share or work out of their homes. Officer Towles has opted for the work-at-home duty and will be capable of handling his new assignment as the department’s liaison to the county-wide Sex Offenders Supervision Unit. After all, Towles has a degree from the University of Phoenix in computer science and he is always pushing the envelope for more automation.

Within a few days, Towles has the GPS Monitoring System mastered, and at the first teleconference between the participating members of the Task Force, establishes himself as a knowledgeable and credible member.

Prior to employment with the police department, Shawn was a lobbyist in Sacramento for AARP. Shawn is actually almost sixty years old, but because of his healthy lifestyle which includes a vegetarian diet, exercise five days a week, and his self-hypnosis sleep patterns, he looks and acts half his age. Shawn is a trusted advisor to the baby boomers, because of his contacts and experience in Sacramento. He is keenly aware of the issues facing the elderly, especially the increase of dementia cases.

Shawn talks regularly with the chief and other city leaders about technology and the needs of the aging. Shawn convinces the chief that they should create a partnership with Adult Protective Services (APS) and then market monitoring services to the aged. The monitoring device could be a bracelet or an implant and would contain identifying information, medical history and conditions, and emergency contact information. Shawn would be able to monitor the elder caseload by simply adding another layer to his geographic information system program.

The chief and Adult Protective Services enter into an agreement for the department to provide around-the-clock monitoring services in exchange for payment of half of Officer Towles' salary and some additional money for technological enhancements to the system. Officer Towles successfully trains the APS staff on the system application and on their responsibilities.

The success of the elderly monitoring and the sex offender programs leads to notoriety for the department and Officer Towles. Along with this success come lucrative employment offers for Officer Towles from corporate security firms. These offers exceed over one hundred thousand dollars, almost doubling his current salary. Officer Towles decides to accept one of the offers and leaves the department for a new challenge, taking with him all the city-paid training that prepared him for his technology position at the department.

Analysis

Officer Towles' department has gone against the grain on several fronts. The department has made the choice to break tradition and instituted several changes that

will benefit the agency. There is no question that there were difficulties instituting these changes.

In this scenario, seniority with the department was discounted as a consideration factor for assignments. After eighteen months as an employee of the agency, Officer Towles was assigned to a detail that has traditionally been filled by a more seasoned officer, probably a detective. Officer Towles works out of his home and probably handles much of his work using a variety of electronic devices: television with internet access, a personal digital assistant, and a cellular or satellite telephone that remotely accesses all the databases Officer Towles uses. Officer Towles is adept at using these tools and because of his department's commitment to keeping technology current, other officers have been trained and are ready to fill his position if he leaves.

Planning For The Future

In order to prepare for what the future holds, law enforcement executives must set the course by strategically guiding their agency. In order to best accomplish this, the agency must conduct self-examination. Police executives involved in visionary leadership must view the complete horizon. They must be committed to modify the practices of the agency in order to grow and thrive, not just exist.[3] To take advantage of GPS technology and use it to benefit the agency, the agency needs to follow a strategic plan. Steps in the plan include:

- Establishing a clear mission for the agency
- Defining the values and goals of the agency
- Adopting, instituting, adhering to and referring to polices that are reflective of the mission, values, and goals

- Assigning the best people to assignments that have significant impact
- Identifying key stakeholders. If they are outside the organization, establishing a partnership with them
- Proactively speaking out on the advantages of a GPS based tracking system for convicted sex offenders

Stakeholders

The recognition and identification of key stakeholders is a critical component of this process. Global positioning systems and locating missing persons will potentially involve the following stakeholders:

- The state legislature
- Local governing bodies - City Council, Board of Supervisors
- State parole agency
- County probation agencies
- California Department of Corrections
- Department of Justice
- State Department of Mental Health
- County and Local Mental Health Departments
- Office of Aging Services
- State law enforcement agencies
- Local law enforcement agencies
- Civil liberties unions
- Individual citizens through Neighborhood Watch, et cetera
- Child care and safety groups

- Law enforcement officers
- California Department of Transportation
- Unites States military
- Local school Board of Education
- District attorneys
- The Defense Bar

Stakeholders views and opinions must be considered during the planning process. While some may be integral to the implementation process, others must be considered only for the resistance they may offer. By identifying the stakeholders early in the process, strategies can be developed for implementation and what protection or cover is needed to avoid or overcome conflict that will thwart progress.

Conclusion

The ability to monitor individuals and property through the use of a global positioning system is here and is becoming a significant issue to law enforcement. Agencies can take the lead with this technology and look for ways to enhance its effectiveness. Conversely, they may take the approach of many agencies and let someone else make the decisions for them. This technology is exciting and offers great advantages of protection. It will take effective and trusted law enforcement administrations and staffs to overcome the obstacles that will be encountered on this technology adventure. The cultural and internal opposition will pose the largest challenge and a healthy, viable organization will be better prepared for these challenges.

NOTES

1. John R. Hoyle, Leadership and Futuring, (Corwin Press, 1995), p. 19.

2. Max DePree, Leadership Is An Art, p. 100.

3. Donald G. Hanna, Police Executive Leadership, (Stipes Publishing Co., 1990), p. 10

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