NEW YORK CITY GLOBAL PARTNERS

Best Practice: Real Time Crime Center: Centralized Crime Data System

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CITY: NEW YORK CITY   POLICY AREA: SAFETY AND SECURITY

BEST PRACTICE

The **Real Time Crime Center** (RTCC) of the New York City Police Department is a centralized data hub that rapidly mines information from multiple crime databases and disseminates that information to officers in the field.

ISSUE

On a daily basis, officers and detectives in the field encounter criminals, victims, witnesses, and complainants in various settings. Each individual and each place has a relevant history; for example, individuals may have previous arrests and outstanding warrants, and geographic areas have unique crime rates and trends. This data is stored in multiple city, state and federal databases that require significant time to sift through and gather the data. Without immediate access to this information, police personnel are hard pressed to make the quick connections and deductions necessary for effective policing; the Real Time Crime Center provides officers in the field with pertinent information nearly instantaneously.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Real Time Crime Center's goal is to give police officers and detectives current, comprehensive information in order to improve policing. In developing the Real Time Crime Center, New York City Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly sought to consolidate the Department's intelligence resources and data in order to help identify patterns and stop emerging crime. He recognized that the Department's size, which was an invaluable asset in gathering information, also mitigated the speed that information could be disseminated. Fast, coordinated information sharing would require a centralized data hub, and to this end the Commissioner developed the concept of the RTCC.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Real Time Crime Center occupies physical office space in several rooms at the NYPD Headquarters in New York City. Staffed 24-hours a day by more than 40 detectives and civilian analysts, the Crime Center's core is a room with a two-story video wall and 15 work stations. The RTCC utilizes databases and software produced with the oversight of IT provider Dimension Data. Tools such as the IBM Crime Information Warehouse allow officers to sift through billions of records with a single Web-based interface. In some instances, new databases were created. In other instances, software was produced to scan a multitude of existing NYPD databases. In a matter of minutes, RTCC personnel can provide officers in the field with information mined from:
- More than 5 million New York State criminal records, parole, and probation files
- More than 20 million NYC criminal complaints, emergency calls, and summonses
- More than 31 million national crime records
- More than 33 billion public records

The RTCC also utilizes Link Analysis Capacity's satellite imaging and mapping technologies to track geographic crime trends and to direct officers to all of a suspect's known addresses, as well as locations to which the suspect might flee.

COST

The Crime Center was built at a cost of approximately $11 million. Additional expenses included those involved in staffing the RTCC and in providing 175 officers with laptop computers that enable them to access RTCC databases from the field.

Best Practice: Centralizing Crime Data to Enhance Security

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

The Real Time Crime Center has proven to be an effective crime-fighting tool that facilitates proactive policing. Whereas officers once had to return from the field to sift through pages and pages of records to find information related to an investigation, the RTCC now provides them with information pertaining to their assignments before they even make it to the scene. More than 1,600 requests for information were processed through the RTCC in its first year, contributing to the closure of approximately three-quarters of reported homicides in 2005.

The RTCC received a "Best of New York" award from the Center for Digital Government and Government Technology. It was also a finalist for the IBM Innovations Award in Transforming Government, a program sponsored by IBM and the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg touted the RTCC as "an invaluable crime-fighting tool… in ensuring that New York remains the safest big city in the nation."

TIMELINE

The planning and implementation process for the Real Time Crime Center was a year-long process, beginning with focus groups and culminating in the Center's opening in July 2005. Initially, the Center focused only on shootings and homicides, but since has expanded to include all serious crime.

LESSONS LEARNED

Because the Real Time Crime Center changed the way that crime is investigated, it altered the existing routines, knowledge, and habits of field personnel and created initial challenges in the area of training. Over time, training facilitated acceptance and incorporation of the new technology and methods.

TRANSFERABILITY

Acknowledging the success of the first-of-its-kind Real Time Crime Center in New York, big cities across the country—including Memphis, Tennessee, and Houston, Texas—have begun similar operations in their police departments. Commissioner Kelly believes that this innovative program can and should be implemented in any and all large departments where intra-organization information sharing is hampered by the given agency's size.

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