

Listen up! 



Moving the conversation on...

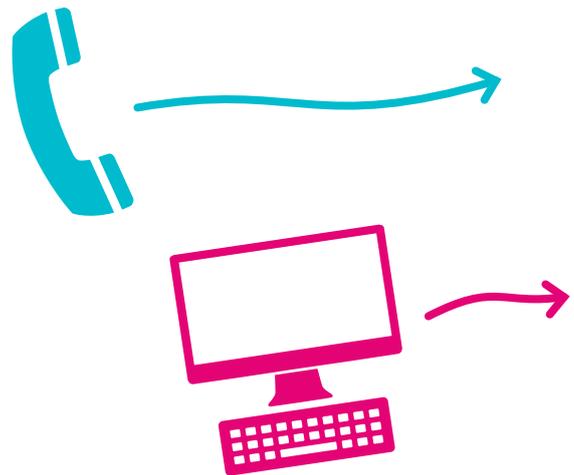
Adapting to the 21st Century communication challenge



All change?

In today's complex world where technological advances are altering the way people talk, think, work and live, the Police must be ready to cope with the changing needs and expectations of the public. They need to be receptive to taking on truly transformational technologies that will deliver major operational and efficiency benefits despite the restrictions of reducing budgets whilst maintaining the service they deliver to the public. This paper looks at where and how such technology is being adopted and offers some suggestions to achieve successful change.

New developments in the control room have made the way that the Police respond to the public significantly more efficient and effective. Digital contact management systems ensure that callers don't waste time repeating information because it can now be shared between different systems. Accurate, topical information collected efficiently by the control room and delivered quickly to officers enables them to make insightful decisions at the scene and deliver a better public service. Deploying the right technology has the capacity to change the way the Police operate and empower them to work in ever more efficient and effective ways to better manage their demand and control costs. The challenge is to ensure that this technology really does deliver on its promise by creating a better more 'joined up' service from a public perspective.



Voice v data - who's winning the race?

For many of us 'voice' communication is now rather out-dated. We bank, shop, book our holidays and source information online without the need to speak to a single person. We also expect to be able to interact with our key service providers when, where or how we want and to get the answers we need at the touch of a button. Should the Police be any different? At the moment, if the public need the Police they dial 999 (or 101) and speak to an operator for help. But could response be initiated by other means? What about an online message requesting help, a tweet, a text, snapchat, video or even an online chat? There is already limited use of texts via emergency SMS for individuals who require assistance but are hard of hearing or speech impaired but this isn't broadly publicised. Is the phone really going to stay the primary way to report a crime or to ask for assistance? And if not - are today's Police really set up to handle this brave new communications world?



Change is speeding up – not slowing down

There has been more change in the technology world in the past 5 years than in the previous 50 and there will undoubtedly be more in the next 2 than in the previous 5. The explosion in the number of smartphones supported by ever-higher bandwidth and connectivity is only set to continue. The expectation from an increasing percentage of the population is that they should be able to interact efficiently and effectively with all public services via this channel (in the same way that they now can with the private sector). So what will our world look like in 1 year or even 5 years hence? It's certainly the case that whatever we think is cutting edge now will be consigned to the past. But are we missing the point with all this 'progression'? Social media channels will certainly continue to increase and diversify. Forces will need to react quickly to this rapid change in order to stay connected to their community. We must learn to live with this 'always on, always contactable' culture and develop ways to exploit it.



Are there any lessons we can take on board from the private sector? Most commercial organisations are actively reorganising and resetting their processes to adapt to the increased rate of change and incorporate new technologies and methods of communication. These 'omnichannel' experts are focusing on offering a seamless customer service, in store, on line and via mobile. Retail organisations lead the way and have developed innovative shopping experiences including 'click and collect' and even 'virtual mirror' technology so customers can try on garments before they buy. Best practice for customer service delivery is changing and those that master the 'omnichannel' approach will almost certainly come out on top.

Yet perhaps the question we should be asking is whether we, as organisations (and individuals), are actually gaining from all these advancements? Or are we simply adopting the latest technology because it's there?

The social media generation and SOCMINT

The advent of social media is one of the biggest changes of the 21st century. Its massive growth and adoption by mainstream society is both a huge threat and a colossal opportunity for all public service organisations. Twitter (at the time of writing) has more than 56 million users worldwide and nearly 6,000 tweets are sent every second. Facebook, Instagram and Google have billions of active users between them but new channels are constantly being developed that become popular with different stratas of society. It's important to appreciate that the most vulnerable or marginalised in society make use of the less public channels, so all public service providers need to ensure that they interact with their most critical constituents in the optimum way that meets their needs.



Social media intelligence (SOCMINT) is already being used by many Forces to request information and help from the community. Almost every Police Force is moving ahead in incorporating SOCMINT in a variety of ways. Recent figures indicate that 98% of Police Forces in the UK have an active Twitter account, 96% have Facebook accounts and 94% have YouTube accounts (with more than 3,600 videos uploaded). Images from CCTV cameras now regularly feature on Police Twitter feeds with the Police asking the public for help identifying criminals. Some Police Forces also hold regular 'Q&A' sessions on Twitter so that the public can find out what's happening in their area or tweet live from the control room for 24 hours to give the public a flavour of the work involved and the incidents that they respond to.

Managing the SOCMINT challenge

North Yorkshire Police are currently researching the development of an App to manage the large volume of social media inputs that occur during a crisis. Avon & Somerset is also piloting an App in conjunction with the local Council to create a 'one stop shop' for the public to access both Council and Police services. This interagency approach is potentially ground breaking and will enable the community to quickly and simply obtain information across a broad range of issues at the touch of a button. Other advances empower members of the public to report crime (using still or moving images) directly to the Police. The challenge for Police and the leading IT organisations is to develop effective ways to collect, collate and respond to information and upload it into a live incident report. IT systems need to be able record and store this data so it can be accessed quickly and easily and referenced for current and future cases. The current goal is to enable technology to adapt to incorporate social media and ensure it forms a key part of the chain of evidence. Most importantly, these new streams need to be integrated in the control room with existing data to develop a more comprehensive information repository that is available to all.

Many IT organisations are developing systems that promise to deliver a total contact solution. However, it's vital to ensure that any new solution truly meets the specific needs of individual Police Forces and the investment in the latest technology is not being made simply because it exists. It is important that the Police are not driven too hard towards change before they are ready and able to adapt to totally new technologies and ways of working. Too much technology, too soon can be self-limiting.



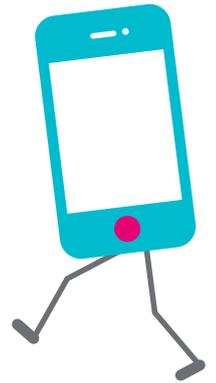
Ensuring technology serves the Officer (and not the other way around)

A vital but little discussed challenge for the Police today is to ensure that officers on the frontline are kept up to speed with change and new technologies are incorporated into their daily routine when and where applicable. New technological advances have the potential to transform their day-to-day operational life and ensure he or she receives information directly to a mobile device at the beginning of a shift, even potentially removing the need for an initial briefing visit to the station. This can save considerable time and money and enable a more visible and comprehensive service to be delivered to citizens.

But many officers report finding the standard issue Police PDAs difficult to operate. The advent of the smartphone with bigger screens and clearer functionality will hopefully encourage the Police to use this technology more effectively and discourage officers from carrying modern personal mobile phones. Ensuring a high 'usability' factor is key for all Police IT departments as the way new devices are introduced (and the training given) is vital to a successful outcome. If an officer's first experience of a new technology isn't positive it is unlikely that he or she will be willing to incorporate it into their daily routine. Clearly as younger officers enter the workforce who are digital natives and early adopters of technologies, the Police will be able to tap into this enhanced capability. The challenge for IT organisations is to ensure all devices are easy and intuitive to use as technology continues to evolve, ensuring that officers are always connected and always 'on'.

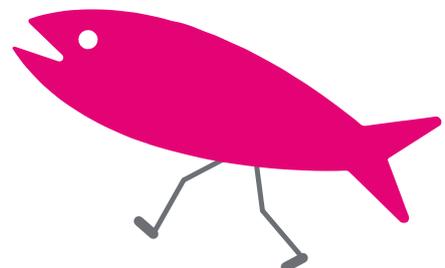
Game changing technology is key

There is no doubt that technological advances have transformed the Police Service and made it much more efficient and effective. A quick look in any control room will prove this is the case. And as technology continues to advance, the Holy Grail for today's Police Force is to find something that provides a step change in the way they operate so they need significantly fewer resources and can save time, money and effort. A big issue for both the Police and IT organisations right now is to spot which of the vast array of new and emerging technologies really is truly ground breaking and which will simply make them a bit more efficient and effective. Today's Police need comprehensive solutions that deliver significant year on year operational efficiency savings to enable them to meet stringent budgets. Evolutionary changes that deliver small efficiency gains are no longer enough. Clearly thinking 'big' can increase the risks but working with a knowledgeable and trusted IT partner who understands the innovative ways that information can be managed and shared across multiple systems is key. Perhaps the question to ask is does any technology exist that can actually transform the day-to-day working life of the Police?



A history of transformation – evolution or revolution?

One thing's for sure – there have certainly been some 'game changing' moments in the history of the Police. One the biggest ever developments was the advent of radios in Police cars. This enabled the Police to cover larger patrol areas and changed their entire way of protecting the community. Next came the development of the hand held radio, which mobilised them even further and enabled them to stay in constant contact with the station but, importantly as times changed, got them out of the cars and back on the beat. Since then, further advances to radio technology including TETRA have enhanced communication methods, particularly with regard to call clarity and the use of short data messages, but did TETRA actually change operational policing? And what about ESN (Emergency Services Network), the replacement for TETRA? Is this a revolutionary technology that will 'disrupt' modern policing and change all the rules or simply an evolutionary advance? Certainly ESN offers enhanced functionality, but is this enough to transform the Police to the streamlined force that today's budget holders are looking for?





Steps to success

So just how do the Police spot revolutionary, disruptive technologies that will transform their operations? Even more importantly, how do they prevent being distracted by incremental, evolutionary ones that cannot deliver the major operational gains that are so needed? At Capita, our extensive experience of working with the Emergency Services over the last three decades has given us some insight about how to manage transformation and implement successful change. Here are a few suggestions based on our knowledge and learnings, which we hope you will find useful and beneficial.

Step 1

Don't be intimidated by technology or feel you need to adopt a solution simply because it is either new or an upgrade to an existing solution. Just because a new technology exists doesn't mean you need to invest in it. It's important to weigh up the real business benefits (and the on-going maintenance costs) before making an investment.

Step 2

Don't view technologies in isolation. The combination of new and old technologies can create something truly transformational. Although there is no 'silver bullet' technology, the collaboration between different solutions can sometimes generate a unique result. For example Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) was around for quite a while before the Ambulance and Fire Services adopted it but it needed advances in the control room to take place before it could be usefully integrated into mainstream operations. A further example is CCTV. It has been an incredibly valuable resource for years but one that took considerable time, money and effort to utilise. Originally, Police officers had to wade through hours of film to locate a suspect. Now modern analysis techniques ensure that CCTV can be utilised more intelligently to quickly obtain desired results. Image quality and reliability is enhanced and aligned technology enables the raw image to be recognised and acted upon.

Step 3

Don't go it alone. Choosing the right partner is one of the most important decisions you will make. They need to be at the forefront of technology innovation with a proven track record within the sector. This will ensure they have the experience and understanding of the issues and priorities you face whilst appreciating the very real complexities and challenges of transformation. Most importantly, pick a company that you like and trust with similar values to your own. It's crucial to be able to work openly and productively as a team so you are confident about making the right decisions.

At Capita, we believe that we have the knowledge, skills and technologies to help the Police meet these challenges. Our 30 years experience of working with all the Emergency Services and our continued investment in existing and new products ensures that our clients are confident they are receiving transformative solutions that deliver operational excellence and lasting change.

We hope you have found the content of this paper interesting, informative and provocative. If you would like to talk to us further, please contact Robert Leach, Director Police, Crime and Justice at robert.leach@capita.co.uk or Nick Oliver, Strategy Manager at nick.oliver@capita.co.uk

Alternatively to find out more information about how Capita can help you to achieve lasting transformation, please visit www.capitajusticeandtechnologysolutions.co.uk or email us at jss.info@capita.co.uk

