

Case Study: Inconsistent Incident Data

Existing Environment:

Police Department in a city in Arizona with 60 sworn officers using a proprietary CAD/RMS with paper incident reporting.

Problem:

The overall problem that the agency needed to fix was inconsistent incident data. The handwritten incident report was sometimes illegible, did not present a professional image to peers and colleagues, did not represent the agency to its citizens and the community as technologically up to date, and increased the workload in the records department. The data required for statutory reporting was inconsistent and sometimes missing. Incident data from the handwritten paper reports had to be re-typed manually into a proprietary RMS.

A related problem that the agency needed to fix was that it was very time-consuming to shuffle paper back and forth between the officers and the sergeants for approval as well as with the records staff for gathering missing or incorrect data. Reports sometimes got lost, and corrections sometimes were not made. The paper-based incident reporting process exacerbated the time delays disseminating the information to those who needed it.

Project Objective:

Find a paperless incident-reporting software application that interfaces to the existing proprietary CAD/RMS, is in keeping with professional law enforcement practices and policies, and moves the Police Department into the 21st century technologically. Must-haves were in-field and in-car wireless access, time savings, and incident report forms data entry with a focus on an officer-friendly reporting system that provides consistent and complete incident data.

Project Goals:

Ensure that supervisors review officers' reports and can be held accountable. Eliminate duplicate data entry from handwritten reports to the RMS by records

personnel. Use agency forms in the system to accelerate user adoption and reduce training time.

Selection Process:

Internal meetings were held with all of the personnel involved in the incident reporting process – officers, supervisors, commanders, records, information technology (IT). Vendor references were thoroughly checked.

The decision was made to select the Presynct Report Network forms-based incident reporting software. References were checked. All of Presynct's references confirmed that the incident-reporting software delivered was exactly what was promised, i.e., there was no vaporware or empty promises.

Benefits Achieved:

- The Police Department's **public image** has been vastly improved. Responses to public records requests now reflect positively on the Police Department. A well-written, consistent, thorough report is provided instead of the handwritten, sometimes illegible copy formerly provided from the paper-based process. The built-in spellchecker takes care of misspelled words.
- The image among **peers and colleagues** is professional. Report copies that are provided to other law enforcement agencies and district attorneys are now processed faster and distributed electronically.
- There is an ongoing **reduction** in indirect costs for paper, envelopes, postage, copier supplies, printer supplies, etc.
- Overall report **turnaround time** is significantly improved. Complete and consistent incident data gets into the hands of officers in the field within hours instead of days or sometimes weeks.
- Incident report **flow and availability** are greatly improved. There has been a significant shortening in the time gaps between the creation, approval-rejection processing, distribution, and statutory (UCR/AIBRS) reporting.

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- The **auto-populate** feature in the forms eliminates repetitive data entry and reduces errors. Demographic information automatically flows to other pages in the report where it is required. The flow is both backwards and forwards, so that if a correction is made on any page, the correction flows to all pages.
- An incident **report in progress** can't get lost or misplaced, unlike paper incident report forms. Before Presynct, approval and processing of the paper-based incident report was slow and lacked accountability.
- Officers can write **reports in the field** or in the office. Supervisors can review and approve reports in the car, in the field, or in the department. Supervisors can confirm that a report has been started within a reasonable period of time after an incident and that the report is timely completed.
- Supervisors especially like the **approval-rejection process**. As soon as the officer writes a report, it goes into the supervisor's queue for approval. The supervisor can either approve the report or reject it and send comments with the rejection to the officer. If rejected, the report immediately goes back into the officer's queue for correction. Upon final approval, the incident report is available for search and retrieval by any authorized user.
- Incident data on reports in progress is **available** as needed. As soon as a user hits the "Save" button on a report, that data is immediately available to authorized users. If an officer starts a report and is interrupted to take a call, the data and the report in progress are not held up because the report has not yet been approved.
- The approval-rejection process is **configurable** in the system. Apache Junction chose to route the supervisor-approved report to records for final review, auto-upload into the existing RMS, and UCR reporting.

Lessons Learned:

- Everyone involved in the incident-reporting process must participate in the selection and implementation planning process for success.
- Existing processes and flow should be analyzed thoroughly prior to final selection to ensure that the system will meet the agency's needs and provide the desired benefits.
- Early involvement by the Administrative and Patrol Commanders is essential.
- Go-Live should closely follow training.
- Consideration should be given to refresher training after Go-Live.
- User group training should include an overview of how the entire system works.

User Feedback:

- **Patrol Officer**, *"I read all the HELP files last night instead of writing reports...and discovered the problem I was having using the system wasn't a system problem."*
- **Supervisory Sergeant**, *"It's so much simpler to look at reports. I really like the queues and knowing a report is started."*
- **Records Supervisor**, *"We once had an officer put a paper report in the Sergeant's tray, and it fell out landing between the desk and a printer. That can't happen with Presynct."*
- **Detective**, *"I love it!"*
- **Administrative Commander**, *"We wanted a professional-looking, paperless system that would be easy to use and save time. And that's what we got!"*



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