Key Leadership Strategies to Enhance Communication

Major Cities Chiefs Association

COPS

Key Leadership Strategies to Enhance Communication

Major Cities Chiefs Association

September 2010

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than $12 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.

- By the end of FY 2008, the COPS Office had funded approximately 117,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.

- Nearly 500,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

- As of 2009, the COPS Office has distributed more than 2 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.

Contents

Chapter 1: Project Introduction

As this scenario illustrates, incidents taken out of context can often lead to varying conclusions. In an age when our world is dominated by a constant media stream, it is hard to predict what information will be shared by the public or how it will be interpreted. While police have mechanisms in place regarding the release of information to the public, the public does not. Citizens can circulate information on their own accord without the same onus of responsibility or accuracy. This publication provides strategic approaches to improve communications between the police and the public as the information landscape continually evolves with the advent of Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking technology.

This publication is based on the belief that improving communication and outreach improves relations with people and organizations, builds trust and respect, increases transparency, and fosters greater community engagement. It is also based on the belief that law enforcement agencies must expand their efforts to market from within. This white paper provides suggestions to law enforcement executives on ways to develop a strategy to maintain a comprehensive public relations, communications, and outreach effort, regardless of the size or type of the law enforcement agency they lead.

Scenario

In August, five patrol officers and state troopers responded to a serious collision on an interstate highway. As the scene was being cleared, a trooper and officer began a casual conversation. One leaned against the trunk of his patrol car and loosened his collar as the other smoked a cigarette. A teenager looking on used his cell phone to video the two and forwarded it to his father, a council member critical of the police department's budget. Three hours later, the video was on the evening news, supporting a story entitled "Do we have too many police officers?"

Goals

Three goals set the tone for the project, which includes focus group sessions, information collection, analysis, and recommendations.

1. Develop a research framework to identify how mass media is changing, how the public accesses news and the emerging methods being used by the citizens to gain news/information related to public safety.

2. Prepare a "white paper" that provides law enforcement executives with key information, trends, methods, changes, and use of technology relevant to how the public accesses news and other community information.

3. Develop recommendations for "next steps" to broaden and expand this project to include in-depth research, tools to assist law enforcement chief executive officers, and training to implement best practices related to improving communications between law enforcement agencies and the public.

> The major problem with communication is the illusion that it has occurred.
> — George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Seven Emerging Issues

Working in partnership with public information officers, law enforcement executives, academics, and media specialists, Major Cities Chiefs identified seven emerging issues that are discussed throughout this document. A summary of these issues is as follows:

1. There is no substitute for quality service and communication by practitioners on the front line of law enforcement. There is no substitute for connecting the delivery of law enforcement services to the viability and sustainability of neighborhoods and communities. No public information or marketing effort can make up for deficiencies in these areas.

2. Law enforcement agencies must advance beyond the basic communications functions of releasing police information and responding to inquiries and embrace full-scale marketing and branding activities.

3. A police-related incident once considered local and isolated may evolve into national and international headlines in a matter of hours as in the scenario on the previous page.

4. Every law enforcement agency should develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy.

5. Methods of communication have changed dramatically and will continue to change. Print and television news sources have given way to digital communication such as web sources, e-mail, Facebook, texting, instant messaging, and Twitter.

6. The release of police information is no longer controlled by the agency. Everyone with access to cell technology has the capability of photographing, video recording, and writing about a police action and forwarding it to innumerable recipients.

7. The role of the Public Information Officer (PIO) is changing from "caretaker" of police information to a public affairs, marketing, and digital communications authority. An effective PIO must be a "knowledge specialist."

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As part of this project, a literature review was conducted of research, popular media, and government publications. Over 200 articles and texts were reviewed, of which 60 were found to be relevant to the project goals. Literature on communications strategy in law enforcement is slight. Some of the best literature is dated, published between the 1970s and 1990s. There is more popular and professional literature (magazine articles, book chapters) than research or traditional academic literature. Very little of the literature on police communications and police media relations has been written by practitioners. The lack of literature suggests that the opportunity exists to establish a theoretically and practically sound and empirically grounded discipline focused on police public information and marketing.

The literature review identified several key changes in law enforcement communications. First, the role of PIO has changed, especially since September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina, with many playing more of a role in crisis communication and critical incident planning. Second, vehicles for outreach have changed, with the fastest growing segments being social networks, cable-based media, and print media targeting special populations (cultural, ethnic, racial, foreign language). Other changes effecting outreach include video captures, video blogs, instant messaging, and SnapMail. Third, agency need has changed, from managing flow of information to the media to relationship building, marketing from within, and developing and protecting the agency brand.

The review of the literature resulted in nine primary findings:

1. Few agencies, regardless of size, have communications strategies in place. All should have them.

2. It is difficult to discuss ways to improve communication and establish strategies if purpose and intended outcomes are unclear or nonexistent.

3. All agencies should follow structured processes to develop and implement communications strategies, drawing on the body of knowledge from the private sector, health community, and nonprofit community.

4. The role of the PIO is ill-defined and the duties vary considerably. They range from processor of information to the media to chief marketing officer, and from lead spokesperson to influential member of the command staff. Many fill all of these roles and more.

5. Turnover in the public information function inhibits media relations, marketing and image building efforts. The literature supports that it can take years to develop trusted relationships with the media, community leaders, and internal leaders. Turnover among public information personnel, due to retirement, promotion, and transfer, inhibits this trust building.

6. More agencies, particularly larger ones, are hiring professionals with a background in news media and public relations to lead public information.

7. Few agencies consider issues such as marketing, branding, and relationship building as structured processes and part of an overall communications strategy. Rather, they see these as things that happen naturally as a by-product of public information and community interaction.

8. Where they exist, few communications strategies in law enforcement engage employees at every level. Rather, they reflect the input of one or two players and are unknown to most members of the agency.

9. Current emphasis in the literature is on relationship building, marketing, developing and sustaining long-term connections to people, communities, and organizations. It has significant applicability to law enforcement.

Chapter 3: Law Enforcement Media Relations

Law enforcement agencies have an obligation to provide quality information to the people they serve. Quality information is based on completeness, transparency, timing, dependability, and other factors.

Members of the community have a high expectation that their local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies will provide information on criminal activity, major events, threats to the community, traffic and transit data, prevention techniques, and more. They expect information provided by law enforcement officials to be accurate and timely. They expect their law enforcement agencies to operate transparently. Their perception, attitudes, beliefs, and values about safety and the community will be influenced by the information they receive—or fail to receive—from their law enforcement agency.[1]

Law enforcement agencies have traditionally relied on electronic and print media to provide information on events, crimes, policies, and practices. In the past, most of the information released to the public was initiated by the law enforcement agency. Other information was requested by reporters and others (victims, witnesses, special interest groups) outside the agency. Law enforcement agencies had a significant degree of control over the security of data and the type of information released. They used this control to formulate messages in the best interest of the community and agency, as perceived by organization leaders.[2]

Today, much of the information on police matters is conveyed through social networking, often eliminating both the law enforcement agency and conventional news media from the communication chain. With the advent of social networking, law enforcement agencies have less control than ever before over accuracy and timeliness of information disseminated to the community. Agency control over sensitive information, such as crime scene photos and names of victims, has waned.

The nature of messaging has changed. Social networking has changed the delivery of messages. Time spent receiving the message has also changed. People who once took the time to read newspaper articles or sit through a local television news show may spend only a few seconds scanning a web site, text message, or blog. If they find something of interest, they may spend only a few more moments reviewing the message "in depth."

> The Seattle Police Department believes a responsible and effective partnership with the media is vital to our mission. We depend on that partnership—as well as community trust and confidence—in carrying out our responsibilities.
>
> *— Seattle PD Web Site (Seattle.gov), 2009*

For decades, reporting of police incidents was reactive. Information was released by a PIO at a scene or only after incident reports were screened. Once the information was released to the media or others requesting data, law enforcement agencies had little influence over how that data was delivered. They had negligible control over the timeliness and accuracy of information that made its way to the people. They also had minimal ability to target information to specific audiences through the news media. Proactive and feature reporting of law enforcement activities was quite limited.

PIOs and other official spokespersons designated by the chief of police or sheriff continue to have primary responsibility to coordinate the release of data to reporters and news organizations. However, unlike their predecessors, they must interact with new and expanding news outlets (cable, Internet) and address information distributed rapidly by anyone with a cell phone or laptop computer. Information conveyed through digital sources such as Facebook and Twitter is rarely screened to ensure privacy or security.

In addition, law enforcement spokespersons must interact with a new type of news reporter. In the past, a "police reporter" was someone knowledgeable in the workings of the law enforcement agency. He or she may have been assigned to the "police beat" for an extended period of time and covering law enforcement agencies was his or her only assignment. With the rapid decline in print media and rapid increase in the number of news sources, reporters have multiple assignments. In many markets, experienced police reporters have retired or been terminated and replaced by novices who will not have the opportunity to specialize or spend time getting to know the culture and needs of the particular agency.

Today, allegations of wrongdoing and mistakes by law enforcement officers, and conclusions about them, are conveyed throughout communities and to various media prior to any internal review or investigation and without regard to due process. Information on incidents such as police-involved shootings is often relayed before criminal investigators arrive at the scene. The long-standing agency position that details of an incident will not be released due to the "ongoing investigation" no longer prevents information from being prematurely circulated.

While there have always been differences in how law enforcement agencies and major media sources handle police information, the disparities have grown. New sources of information, and access to the information, have challenged traditional notions of accuracy, objectivity, and information security.

Concepts such as "reliable source," "verified source," and "official statement" have given way to fast words, fast footage, and fast delivery through a media source or network. For many media sources, getting the information out has become more important than getting it right. The following chart reflects some of the differences in handling of information by law enforcement agencies and the new media.

Whether law enforcement related information is positive, negative, routine, or exceptional, agency leaders must re-think how it is managed, assessed, and conveyed. The concept of a PIO maintaining a tight grip on police information is gone. To communicate successfully, new approaches to outreach, marketing, and branding must be sought and built into the agency culture.

Differences in Conveying Law Enforcement Information

Law Enforcement Agency	Media/Public
Information screened prior to release	Free flow of unscreened information
Time required to gather information	Rapid release, often from scene
Official voice	Anyone can comment/no official voice
Legal constraint	Limited or no legal constraint
Focus on fact	Focus on opinion and belief
Protection of people paramount	Limited regard for people
Evidentiary protection and constraints	Little regard for evidentiary issues
Indirect sources for quotes (PIO)	Direct quotes from victims and witnesses
Limited release of photos/videos	Unlimited use of photos/videos
Constrained use of technology	Unconstrained use of technology

Improving Communication

Improving communication requires that the agency undertake ten core tasks:

1. Establish agency vision, mission, and core themes to drive outreach strategy

2. Set a high standard for agency outreach and communication

3. Distinguish internal, external, and political audiences and subsets, summarizing the intended relationship with each

4. Assess current communications strategy, marketing efforts, image, and brand

5. Set agency-level communication and marketing objectives, to include action steps, timelines, personnel assignments, ongoing reports, and measurable performance indicators (benchmarks against which the effort will be judged)

6. Engage personnel at various levels of the organization

7. Engage community, business, political, religious, media, and other leaders and stakeholders

8. Identify key players, define their roles, and the process each is to follow

9. Allocate appropriate resources (people, equipment, budget) to manage communication with respect to issues, the characteristics of the community, volume of activity, new and traditional media sources, and access to technology

10. Educate all personnel to the communications strategy and provide them with opportunities to engage

There is no "one size fits all" message. Law enforcement executives communicate routinely with three distinct audiences: external, internal, and political. Each has its own needs, expectations, and "language" relevant to the agency's communication and outreach efforts. The message given to one may have little value to the others. They have little interest in organizational structure, work shifts, salary scales, or any other matter unless it affects police visibility and response where they live, work, and play.

External Public

The external audience includes the people and the community. Within this group there are a number of subsets, including neighborhoods, businesses, special interest groups, the faith and nonprofit communities, tourist and transient populations, and the news media. Subsets also may be based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, and geographic location within the jurisdiction.[3] Each warrants special consideration when conveying messages and each has unique and considerable influence over how the message is received and distributed to others.

The six primary factors that influence the strength and acceptance of an agency's message to its external public(s) follows:

1. Trust

2. Consistency

3. Connection to individual and community well being

4. Accuracy

5. Timeliness

6. Follow through

Missing any of these elements from an agency's external communication will weaken public confidence and acceptance of the message. By contrast, focusing on these factors will reinforce and bolster trust, connection, and partnership.

Internal Public

The internal public includes sworn and civilian personnel, labor organizations, and fraternal organizations. It includes volunteers, foundations, professional associations, and organizations established to support law enforcement personnel. It may also include other government agencies, especially those closely aligned with public safety.

Effective internal communication can improve organizational efficiency, enhance individual productivity and problem solving, and lessen employee frustration. Internal communication may involve policy matters, agency direction, changes in the community, new mandates, explanation of action taken, assessment, and more. The internal public should be made aware of messages conveyed to the external and political publics, but should not be expected to "buy in" in the same manner as others. For example, a press release on the agency's quarterly crime

statistics should be provided to all constituents. Sharing the information has merit. However, for it to have value internally, employees should be provided with an explanation on how the statistics equate to outcomes in the community and future operational activity.

Many of the current generation of officers, deputies, troopers, and civilian staff are well-versed in technological real-time methods of information sharing. They expect information quickly and leaders need to accommodate this expectation. Employees become frustrated with delays associated with documents that move slowly through channels. When internal information provided to employees is haphazard, slow, or incomplete, they will seek to fill the "information gap" on their own. They will rely on the "rumor mill," speculation, and gossip instead of reliable sources of information.

Internal scandal also makes up a part of standard or crisis communication within an agency. Unlike high profile criminal events, incidents involving internal misconduct or corruption require a form of strategic communication. They are all too common in police business and call into question the very reputation of the organization and its leadership. It is therefore more appropriate for an agency to get out in front of the scandal and not "duck and cover." The importance of crafting a message and directing the media circus that can occur during the unfolding of an event like this needs to be at the forefront of the Chief Executive's mind. A Chief Executive must understand the potentialities and convene a crisis communications management team immediately as the facts present themselves.

Some mention of this complex—and often time-crucial process—and some suggestions on a measured and appropriate response including managing outside review processes would be very helpful.

Political Public

The political public involves elected officials, both at the executive and legislative levels, as well as appointed senior executives. It also includes boards and commissions that focus on, or have a vested interest in, law enforcement issues. The judiciary is also included in the political public.

Most appointed and elected officials recognize the importance of quality law enforcement communication. They draw on feedback from their constituents about law enforcement services to make policy and budgetary decisions. Political leaders and their staffers routinely read blogs, e-mails, and texts from people in the community praising and criticizing the police. It is critical that law enforcement executives establish and sustain credible communication with these officials to ensure that the agency's values, perspective, approaches, and successes are showcased.

In addition, agency leaders must create a system to provide rapid response to inquiry by political officials who must respond to constituents and the media. Delays and poorly worded or incomplete responses worsen the situation and weaken the agency's credibility and reliability. Poor communication to elected officials lessens the agency's "political capital."

In 1966, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department, O. W. Wilson, released *On This We Stand*, a summary of the agency's operating policies presented "for the information of members of the Department and general public." The document addressed almost every function of the agency, from criminal investigation and crime prevention to inspections and protecting civil rights. The policy on "informing the public" read as follows:

> *It is the policy of the Department to cooperate with all news media unless such cooperation would hamper a criminal investigation. In all administrative matters, it is the policy of the Department to be completely frank and honest in the release of information to the press.*[4]

Law enforcement agencies and news media share mutual goals, but respond to them differently. Both inform people on matters of importance. Both tend to the community's well being. Both recognize the people's right to know. Both know the importance of time in releasing information.

The different missions and approaches of the media and law enforcement create occasional conflict and adversarial situations. These situations do not negate the importance of working collaboratively. In an article in *Police Chief Magazine*, Gerald W. Garner, Chief of the Greeley, Colorado Police Department stated:

> *As successful leaders in both law enforcement and journalism can relate, both sides can win in the police–media relationship. Getting along is much more rewarding than fighting. Each field of work has a lot to offer the other. Reporters often view law enforcement agencies as the best sources for the type of news in which the public is interested.…Simply put, a good relationship with local agencies can make reporters' jobs much easier. Nurturing a positive working relationship with the media can prove equally beneficial to law enforcement leaders. Through the press, they can tell the public of the good work done by their personnel. With a positive police–press relationship in place, agencies can educate their communities' residents to protect themselves and can warn them of imminent danger.…*
>
> *Police leaders and reporters have a lot to offer each other. Each can help the other succeed. Together, they can really achieve that rarest of scenarios: a win-win situation. But best of all, the taxpayers benefit, from learning about the threats to public safety and what their law enforcement officers are doing about those threats. The ensuing free flow of information benefits all involved.*[5]

Building and maintaining a relationship with the media requires a well thought-out strategy and consistent effort. It is a daily process that requires work and occasional compromise. The primary characteristics of a successful relationship between a law enforcement agency and the news media are:

1. Reliability

2. Shared responsibility

3. Accountability

4. Communication

5. Mutual interest

These elements of a quality relationship with the media evolve over time. They form the foundation for protecting victims and witnesses, interacting during a crisis, temporarily withholding information to foster an investigation, and conveying important messages. They must be invested in, and established on, an ongoing basis. Efforts to create and sustain a positive working relationship with the media will result in support and a willingness to cooperate when the need exists.

Chapter 4: Communicating beyond Mainstream Media— The Age of Digital Technology

Until recently, release of information to the people about crime, safety, and agency activities was "media-centric," focusing primarily on print and television exposure.[6] Despite the people's focus on online news delivery, some agencies cling to the traditional sources. A 2007 study on the use and credibility of online journalism, showed that:

◆   32 percent of the respondents go online for their local news

◆   37 percent use newspaper web sites

◆   28 percent use television web sites

◆   26 percent use independent web sites (MSN, Yahoo, Google)

◆   6 percent use other sites

When asked to rate their trust in online information using a 7-point scale (with 7 being "very trustworthy"), the respondents rated their trust level at 5.6. By comparison, newspaper editors rated their trust level at 6.6 in the same survey. Survey respondents stated that their expectation of online "reporters" is that they verify information, get the facts right, correct mistakes quickly, and are accurate and fair.

Law enforcement leaders need to respond to the people's rapidly expanding use of, and trust in, online and social network news sources. They must embrace the new technology as a primary, rather than secondary, means of sharing information and marketing the agency. They need to strike a balance between traditional sources and new ways of networking. They must educate their personnel to the changes in approach, recognizing that many of them routinely engage in social networking. They must recognize safeguards to control access, prevent inappropriate use, and minimize mistakes. They also must choose which digital media outlets are appropriate and generate the most value to the agency and community.

Approximately 39 percent of Internet users—about 59 million people—regularly read blogs. By the end of 2008, approximately 94.1 million people had read at least one blog. Approximately 8 percent of Internet users—12 million people—create and maintain blogs. More than half of the bloggers are under age 30 and are evenly divided between men and women. People in the community routinely exchange information through these and other social networking sites. Neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, PTAs, and other organizations and associations in the community establish their own blogs, web sites, and Facebook networks.

Journalists and Pseudo-Journalists

One of the by-products of expanded social networking and access to the Internet is a rapidly emerging group of people who "report the news" with no journalism education, focus on fact, or concern about effect or outcome. They advance information because they can; they are angry or frustrated; there is financial reward; or because it is easy and fun. There is no attempt at journalistic excellence, as exists among professionals in the field. As Scott Gant, Constitutional Law Attorney, stated in the Los Angeles Times:

> Not long ago, the boundaries between journalists and the rest of us were relatively clear. If you worked for a TV or radio station's news division, a newspaper or a magazine— then you were a journalist. Everyone else was not. Those days are gone. The line distinguishing professional journalists from others who disseminate information, ideas, and opinions to a wide audience has blurred, perhaps beyond recognition.[7]

From the U.S. Supreme Court, which issues media credentials to bloggers to cover oral arguments, to political campaigns that include them in their press corps, these new "journalists" are being legitimized and placed in the same collective with professional journalists. Many of the bloggers and personal web site journalists obtain press credentials legitimately and are afforded the same considerations as the pros.

In the age of digital media, there are no traditional news deadlines. There is a never-ending 24/7 news cycle. Cable news stations operate 24 hours. A reporter on vacation can receive information by cell phone, write an article, and e-mail it to the web master, television station, or newspaper without leaving his or her locale. There is no media downtime.

Reliance on digital media has adversely affected the nation's print media, which has been the mainstay of police public information. As many as 120 newspapers in the United States have shut down since January 2008. More than 21,000 jobs at 67 newspapers were eliminated in the same year.[8] A Pew Research Center report found that only one-third of the Americans polled would miss their print newspaper if it no longer existed. Only 32 percent of the American public views nightly news programs on television. The gap left by the loss of traditional news media outlets has significant implications for law enforcement public information and public affairs personnel. Addressing this gap warrants immediate, strategic, and creative thought and attention by law enforcement executives. This was a driving issue throughout this project.

Along with the decline in print media, reliance on television and radio news declined by 25 percent between 1994 and 2006. At the same time, there has been increased reliance on online information sources. A Nielsen study showed that 78 percent of all households in the United States have high-speed Internet access. Approximately 70 percent of the American public trusts online information offered by company web sites and 90 percent trust information from people they know.[9] The use of blogs and real-time networking and information sharing has catapulted the communications industry into one of the fastest growing in the nation, approaching $1 trillion in 2008.

The new media defines its function, in part, as serving as "watchdog" to keep government honest and free from corruption. As newspapers disappear from the media landscape and reduce staff, the traditional role of "watchdog" is being filled by others. News, feature articles, editorials, and critical assessment of law enforcement agencies are being "created" by millions of people without oversight or challenge.

Situations once relegated to local news coverage, now gain national and international exposure on YouTube and other digital media. Polk County deputies being videotaped while playing a Wii bowling game during a search of a residence and a Baltimore police officer angrily reprimanding a skateboarder are two examples of situations that quickly became global news stories. The story of the Baltimore police officer had three million "hits" on YouTube. The video was recorded by a citizen who posted it. The Polk County video had over 100,000 hits. That video was recorded on a hidden home video camera.

The police agencies' vehicle-mounted video cameras have also become a new source of information for law enforcement agencies, professional journalists, amateurs, critics, and others. In one instance, scenes from a Dallas police officer's interaction with a man made national news almost instantly. On the news, video footage showed a vehicle stop in a hospital parking lot and the officer pulling his gun. Within minutes the stopped individual, an NFL running back, became frustrated. He explained that all he wanted to do was go inside the hospital to see his critically ill mother-in-law. The story showed how the officer delayed the man from entering the hospital and that the mother-in-law passed away just before he could make it in. However, information that didn't make the news was also important—including the fact that the man ran a red light, putting others' lives in danger. He drove several blocks before finally pulling over. At that point, the officer had no idea what to expect. When the man did pull over, he and his wife jumped out of the car startling the officer. The wife was allowed to go inside, but her husband was detained. His frustration was visible. Obviously, there are several things that both parties could have done to improve this interaction. However, within hours of the video release and due to the public's outcry, the agency held a new conference where Chief David Kunkle stated, "I am embarrassed and disappointed by the behavior of one of our police officers. His behavior, in my opinion, did not exhibit the common sense, discretion, the compassion that we expect our officers to exhibit."[10] The Chief's rapid response to the video lessened the impact of the scenes on the public. Dialogue about officer safety and community safety were trumped by the 24-hour news cycle. Later, the officer resigned.

Chapter 5: Evaluating Agency Communications Strategy

An agency striving to improve its communications process should establish benchmarks as part of its plan. This assists leaders in determining how well they are communicating their message. Without benchmarks or evaluative measures, agencies can only assume or guess that their efforts are successful. More likely, they will measure success based almost solely on the absence of problems.

The agency should establish an internal advisory team to assist in planning and evaluating the communications effort. The team should represent a cross-section of employee work groups and should give input into every aspect of the plan and its implementation. Members of the advisory team should be compelled to obtain feedback on the agency's effort from their peers.

A key to evaluating any public information, marketing, or outreach effort is documentation. Everything about the plan, from inception to assessment, should be documented. Particular attention should be placed on documenting activities early in the implementation process to help identify weaknesses and make needed changes. Officials should be identified to capture the information. Activities such as logbooks, focus groups, individual and group meetings with community leaders, and meetings with media representatives may prove helpful.

Research should be an integral part of the communications process. If in-house expertise does not exist to conduct the research, agency leaders might seek expertise available at local colleges and universities.

Problem solving activities and problem resolution should be tracked to determine if the outreach effort accomplished its intended purpose relevant to a specific neighborhood concern or problem area. Officers involved in patrolling the area and working cases should be involved in the process.

Many agencies rely heavily on surveys to assess community perceptions and the quality of their services and outreach efforts. There are numerous ways to deliver, retrieve, and tally surveys. Some agencies use traditional methods of mailing survey instruments or including them in local newspapers. Others distribute them via e-mail. Whatever the means, survey results are limited to the responses of the select group of people who have the time and interest to respond. Surveys used by law enforcement agencies rarely succeed in gaining perspectives from the community as a whole. A department blog or e-mail address can be effective in obtaining feedback from the community. Some agencies opt to make random contact with people who have had contact with officers.

They randomly contact victims, witnesses, people who received traffic citations, business owners, community leaders, and people in neighborhoods. This approach has been used for over two decades by the Madison, WI, Police Department.

Making people aware that they can provide input and convincing them that the agency is genuinely interested in what they have to offer is more difficult than establishing the electronic means to capture the information. People need to know the intent of the survey and the results it generates. A survey simply to gather opinions on how well the department is doing has little value to the people.

Public Information Officer

Most law enforcement executives rely on a Public Information Officer (PIO) to screen information, respond to scenes that draw media attention, and provide briefings to media representatives. In small agencies, the position of PIO does not exist and the responsibility falls to the agency's law enforcement executive.

The PIO is the "face and voice" of the agency, representing the chief of police or sheriff and speaking with authority before the media. He or she simultaneously represents the rank and file and must be a leader in explaining their responses, intervention, and other actions. He or she is expected to bring logic and rationale to incidents and situations that, at times, seem illogical and questionable.

In many agencies, the PIO is part of the agency's leadership team. He or she is "at the table" for discussion on events, crimes, agency plans, and most other matters. This is the most desired and effective role, according to participants in project focus groups. However, in some agencies, the PIO is distanced from command and spends much of his or her time learning about briefings and agency plans after the fact.

A PIO develops and maintains positive working relationships with media representatives, establishing trust and setting up processes for sharing information. The PIO gathers information on cases or issues, meets with investigators, screens the information, schedules interviews, and prepares press releases. A good PIO sets parameters and suggests limits for media representatives on how police information should be used to protect victims, witnesses, and ongoing investigations.

The PIO is at the forefront in conveying and protecting the department's image and, if one exists, its brand. He or she must write well, speak well, articulate basic and complex public safety issues effectively, and build lasting positive relationships with varied audiences. Emerging technologies require that the PIO have new skill sets that include managing the web, producing and sharing video content, and maintaining list serves, blogs, Facebook, and more.

The PIO must have rapid access to interpreters in order to convey information and obtain feedback from foreign speaking people. He or she must have a thorough working knowledge of the various cultures that make up the community, know the "hot buttons" that exist in various neighborhoods, and should be aware of community development efforts and how the agency supports them.

The PIO must know the organization's policies and procedures and be able to address them comfortably when speaking with the media and community organizations. The chief of police or sheriff should keep the PIO apprised of major decisions, organizational changes, and plans so that media inquiries may be addressed quickly and intelligently.

Staffing the PIO Office (Selecting the PIO)

For decades, some large agencies have employed experts from print and visual media to serve as PIO. Others have continued to rely on assigning sworn officers to the role. Both approaches are successful based on the commitment, skill, and credibility of the individual(s) assigned. PIO offices in large and medium-sized agencies often are staffed by both civilians with expertise in media relations and sworn officers. This approach provides the office with balanced expertise and experience and has proven highly effective.

As with many specialty assignments, employees who have the best potential to succeed may not want to serve, while those with the least potential lobby aggressively for the position. Executives must choose carefully, based on needed attributes. They should seek out employees who have these attributes and challenge them to assume the role. Executives should provide clear expectations relevant to the PIO's scope of authority, support, budget, and engagement (or lack thereof) as a member of the command team. Most importantly, the executive should define needed outcomes.

In most situations, the chief or sheriff cannot afford a "long learning curve." The PIO must function proficiently from the start. The primary trait of a successful PIO is the ability to lead. He or she must represent the agency, protect the brand, uphold policy, withstand criticism, interpret messages, convey ideas, teach others, achieve concrete outcomes, and project a positive image at all times. To minimize the learning curve, executives should seek personnel who have the following characteristics:

1. Desire to serve

2. Awareness of the time demands and willingness to be on call

3. Awareness of all aspects of the agency, especially operations

4. Positive attitude

5. Excellent writing skills

6. Excellent public speaking skills

7. Technologically proficient

8. Ability to assess and prioritize information quickly

Engagement, Orientation, and Training of Agency Personnel

No marketing or outreach effort will succeed without the engagement of front line personnel (e.g., officers, deputies, troopers, etc.). They routinely interact with neighborhood leaders, political leaders, media representatives, business people, and others, and can make or break the agency's outreach efforts.

Sworn and civilian employees play two distinct roles in an agency's communications strategy. As the "internal public," they represent a key audience or recipient of communication. They also serve as primary providers of the agency's message and protectors of the agency's brand.[11]

Employees at every level play a major role in upholding their organization's brand and reputation. The quality of service they provide, their approach and attitude, and the connection they make to community well being can make or break the organization's reputation. Recognizing this, corporate and nonprofit organizations frequently give their workers input to marketing and outreach efforts and engage them in the communication planning process.[12]

Generally, law enforcement agencies do not engage front line personnel in marketing and outreach. Some do peripherally. Most provide employees with policies and procedures for dealing with the media at crime or incident scenes and making referrals to the PIO. In recruit and in-service training, agencies provide cautions about what "not to do" when interacting with the media. Only a few agencies actively include front line personnel in their communications strategy.

Personnel who are not oriented to the agency's strategy tend to fill the communication void on their own. Most are well-intentioned and will attempt to provide what is needed to meet the communication needs of community leaders, groups, organizations, and business people. Some will base what they say on perception and conjecture, in lieu of fact. Others inadvertently may convey the wrong message. A few will use the lack of a structured communication plan as "carte blanche" to convey their own message, which may be rooted in frustration or cynicism.

Executives need to focus on several issues if employees are to engage successfully in communication and outreach activities.

Key Problems that need to be solved are:

1. There is no agency strategy or plan for sworn and civilian employees to embrace.

2. Employees are not oriented to the agency's communication and outreach plan by their supervisors, during in-service training, or through other means.

3. Employees question their role and see little value in marketing and outreach.

4. To most officers, marketing and outreach are synonymous with and limited to public information.

5. Officers attend and speak before community audiences with little or no preparation. The agency assumes they know the issues and what to convey. This is a flawed assumption.

6. Officers rarely receive key or timely "talking points" from their supervisor or executives prior to appearing before community organizations.

7. In most academy training programs, officers are oriented to policy relevant to traditional media relations—newspaper and television—and receive little or no training about the implications of social networking.

Executives should ask the following questions:

1. Is the agency's communications strategy easily understood so that front line employees can assume responsibility for its implementation and engage in achieving success?

2. How does the agency's communications strategy relate to sworn and civilian personnel on the front line and, by extension, to the viability and sustainability of the community?

3. Have employees had legitimate input to the agency's communications strategy?

4. What five key points should front line personnel make when interacting with people in the community or speaking before community organizations?

5. Are officers provided with adequate information on community issues and organizations before they present?

6. What role should employees play in social networking? What restrictions should be imposed?

7. Is training provided to employees on the communications strategy and its implementation relevant to their day-to-day functioning in the community? Are we going beyond theory and policy and giving them the "how to's?"

All personnel, sworn and civilian, should be trained and oriented to the agency's policies and practices relevant to working with the media. They should be well-versed in the goals and programs associated with the agency's marketing strategy. They should know their role in moving the agency forward, protecting its brand, and engaging in outreach efforts. They should be thoroughly familiar with the various news media serving the region and how they operate.

Regardless of the size or type of agency, particular attention should be given to educating command personnel in policy, practice, and legality related to media and public outreach. With the expansion of social networking and cable news, PIO's are no longer well-positioned to manage all media matters. In matters related to crime trends and serious incidents, the people want and need to hear from a command operations officer. It is a mistake to assume that command personnel know how to interact with the media, use social networks, and address the needs of the agency's various publics. Achieving command rank does not automatically guarantee media and marketing savvy. A well-prepared command staff can do much to gain the people's trust, reduce fear, put concerns in perspective, and reassure the community.

Front line officers, investigators, supervisors, and others who may interact with media representatives on crime and traffic scenes should be well-versed on policy and how to manage information in the absence of a PIO. Training should focus on overcoming distrust and minimizing adversarial perspectives toward the media. Officers should be taught that media interaction is among their responsibilities and offers the opportunity to provide facts and promote the agency.

Officers should be well-versed in the people's use of new technology to convey information and photographs. For example, they should be taught to expand the perimeter of certain crime scenes to protect victims, witnesses, undercover officers, and evidence from being photographed. They should be taught to turn victims and witnesses so that they are not facing a crowd of onlookers.

Instruction in media relations should go beyond policy and philosophy. Recruit, in-service, supervisory, and executive training should teach and reinforce the "how to's" of interacting with the media. Teaching the policy and role of the PIO, which is the extent of many agencies' training, is inadequate. Officers need guidance on what may occur in the field and how to deal with it. The following is a partial list of "how to's" for officers.

1. It is "OK" to refuse to speak to reporters

2. Select the location and time to interact

3. Provide and demand courtesy and respect

4. Give rationale for protecting victims, witnesses, children, and evidence

5. Keep victims, witnesses, and children out of view

6. Request that potentially offensive photographs not be used and that the PIO be contacted before considering publication

7. Anticipate the reporters' questions

8. Take time to craft one or more key messages before speaking

9. Avoid cynicism, sarcasm, and criticism

10. Stay on point—do not offer more than is asked

11. Be concise

12. Be professional (the officer on the scene is the lead representative of the agency)

13. Look sharp

14. Control the questioning—do not allow the reporter to deviate from the incident at hand

15. Be confident (the officer on the scene is the expert)

16. When in doubt, ask for press credentials—never assume someone else's authority

17. Carry a pocket recorder and record the interview—this verifies the conversation and may prevent inappropriate questioning

18. Know referral names and numbers in the PIO Office and provide them to reporters

19. Take nothing for granted—there are no private or "out of view" moments at a scene

20. Record reporters' names and organizations and report media interaction to the PIO[13]

PIO's should be engaged in every aspect of training on media relations and marketing. They should play a key role in developing the curriculum as well as selecting and preparing instructors. They should take the lead role in inviting reporters and other guests to participate in training programs.

Training for Public Information Officers is essential. Regardless of background and experience, it is important for members of the PIO's office, and anyone designated to serve as spokesperson, to be aware of trends, new dynamics in use of technology, and best practices.

Training Topics that should be made available to PIOs

1. Community development
2. Community demographics
3. Developing the core message
4. Marketing—external and internal
5. Branding
6. Politics of media relations
7. Showcasing value and success
8. Teaching technique
9. Web management and Internet practices

Chapter 6: Use of Technology

Two generations of people rely on technology and social networking as primary means of communication. Use of technology to support a law enforcement agency's outreach efforts is no longer an option, but a necessity.

Technology is critical to communicating with major segments of the community. Technology applied well can advance crime prevention, crime resolution, and service to special populations. It can assist in relaying information about laws, policies, programs, and events. It can be used in a crisis to relay information to all or geographically-specific areas of the community. It can be used to teach, foster partnerships, and calm people's fears.

Internet and Use of Web Sites

Law enforcement agencies nationwide have embraced the Internet. Most maintain web sites to provide information on organizational structure, services, and events. Some have sophisticated sites that provide real time crime data and opportunities for interaction with people in the community. Many link to other sites, including local and state government, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

Use of web sites has proven successful in urban, rural, large, and small law enforcement agencies. They are used extensively by campus and transit agencies. Some agencies spend considerable funds on web development and support, relying heavily on contractors. Others develop and manage sites completely in-house.

Agencies have had success using their web sites to share information on recruiting, crime prevention, sex offenders, traffic delays, and special events in the community. One of the fastest growing trends involves providing crime and call for service data through the agency's web site. Some agencies provide the information in real time. Others provide the information in a delayed format.

> We think the police department has an obligation to get information out to the community through whatever means or mechanisms we have at our disposal. Traditional media releases, expecting the local print media to pick it up and run it in the newspaper tomorrow, is 24-hours too late.
> —*Assistant Chief Bill LePere, Lakeland Police Department, Florida*

The Milwaukee and Los Angeles Police Departments are examples of agency success in use of the Internet as a primary means of outreach.

◆ The Milwaukee Police Department web site provides people with access to the City's crime mapping system to follow calls for service and incident trends. In addition, the Department's web page features daily news stories, provides contact information, offers links to local media, and provides messages from the chief of police. The Milwaukee site is maintained with a limited staff and the cost of operating the site is minimal.

◆ The Los Angeles Police Department's web site includes a blog that solicits feedback from both people in the community and LAPD employees. The site podcasts news conferences and broadcasts recruit graduations and other special events. Site visitors can view video content on LAPD-TV, which offers monthly messages from the chief of police, public service announcements, and episodes of the LAPD's public affairs program "Inside the LAPD." Video clips of crimes captured on surveillance cameras are shown to elicit help and information from citizens. In addition, the LAPD operates an internal web page entitled "Cop Talk," which offers weekly updates on issues of importance to members of the Department. The vehicle has helped to address and reduce rumors and is used to quickly convey facts to sworn and civilian personnel.

Video-Sharing and Social Networking

Law enforcement agencies are relying more routinely on social networking these days. They use common access networks such as MySpace, Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo, Twitter, and Nixle. They use these communication vehicles to convey facts, engage people, support recruiting efforts, reach new and younger audiences, and send messages about crimes, lookouts, and traffic hazards. They use social networking to counter the proliferation of information that other people convey that may be void of fact.

Nonprofit services such as Nixle, currently in use in over 3,000 agencies, allow information to be shared precisely and securely. It is geographically-specific and can be used to reach people in a specific building or neighborhood. Nixle is a rapidly-growing communication service available at no cost to law enforcement agencies. It is a secure system that allows agencies to connect with residents, in real time, over cell phones, email, and web. For example, Nixle was used in a California case in which a senior citizen was discovered missing. The Chula Vista Police Department issued immediate alerts to all residents within one-half mile of her home. When there was no result, the department expanded the alert to residents within a 2.5 mile zone. A citizen who received the message saw the woman and called the police. The woman was returned home quickly and unharmed.

YouTube and similar sites allow law enforcement agencies to share video content quickly and at little or no cost. Agencies can broadcast video in several forms, reaching people throughout the community, or in targeted neighborhoods, through their computers, cell phones, and other media.

◆ The Milwaukee Police Department uses YouTube to broadcast footage of crimes caught on videotape to seek the people's support in identifying suspects. In addition, Milwaukee PD places news conferences and information about agency events on YouTube. The agency also uses Twitter to encourage people to go to the web site to obtain details on matters of importance.

◆ The Vancouver Police Department (British Columbia) has a social media strategy that incorporates a Facebook page, YouTube channel, and a blog entitled "Behind the Blue Line."

◆ The Boca Raton Police Department implemented a branded crime-prevention program called The VIPER Project (Visibility, Intelligence, Partnerships, Education, Resources), which relies heavily on direct communication with people in the community.

◆ The Bellevue, Nebraska, Police Department relies on Twitter for people to communicate directly with police officers on patrol. The Bellevue PD also relies on Nixle for emergency alerts and has a Facebook page. The Bellevue PD K-9 Unit has a separate Facebook page and the Community Policing Unit has a blog for communicating with members of Neighborhood Watch.

Chapter 7: Branding

A law enforcement agency's brand symbolizes its commitment and achievement, and differentiates it from others. According to Tom Peters, author of *In Search of Excellence*, branding is shorthand for distinction. Representatives of the Major Cities Chiefs Association determined that branding involved "defining a department's reputation for a mass audience." Branding is defined commonly as *the process of creating a unique name and image for a good or service in the consumers' mind…branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence….*

The agency's brand is closely tied to its core values and how it "lives" these values every day.[14] It encompasses those things that are unique and noticeable about an agency. It is what the external, internal, and political stakeholders perceive when they think of the agency. The agency's brand is simultaneously functional, experiential, and symbolic.[15]

There are some long-standing "brands" within law enforcement. The name "U.S. Secret Service" evokes global recognition of unparalleled protective service. The white Stetson worn by the Texas Rangers, the LAPD badge, and the initials "FBI," "DEA," and "ATF" are enduring symbols associated with quality. The uniforms of the Maryland State Police, California Highway Patrol, and Illinois State Police are brands associated with a high expectation for performance. These brands, and others in the nation, have endured through changes in chief executives, redefined missions, agency restructuring, fiscal downturns, and headline grabbing situations. All of them are protected and showcased by agency leaders and rank and file personnel.

Branding is rapidly becoming a core component of organizational outreach and marketing. For law enforcement agency leaders, assessing their agency's brand and its value, and how it is perceived by the external, internal, and political public, is essential. In today's environment, establishing and sustaining an agency brand is more a matter of "how" and "when," than "if."[16]

Creating an agency brand requires a strategy. It requires establishing a vision for the agency that can be quickly and easily described. Answering several key questions is essential to this effort.

1. What are the agency's primary attributes? What value does the agency bring to the community? What sets it apart from other agencies?

2. Who are the agency's primary stakeholders or audiences? How do these stakeholders connect to the agency?

3. What are the symbols and other forms of recognition that agency stakeholders embrace?

4. Where is the agency headed? What will it look like in the immediate and long-term future?

5. What negatives or vulnerabilities exist regarding the agency's brand? How can they be changed or managed?

Once established, managing the agency brand requires commitment. All stakeholders must share a common purpose connected to the well-being of the community. They must agree on the purpose, even if they disagree on the processes used to achieve it. Incompatibility, lack of shared purpose and values, and competition among employees, units, divisions, bureaus, and agencies make establishing and showcasing an agency brand nearly impossible.[17]

In branding a law enforcement agency, there is no substitute for excellence in the delivery of service. Courteous point-of-entry contact, high visibility residential patrol, follow up to victims in criminal investigations, creative problem solving, and small business crime prevention draw people's attention and retain their support more than most "flavor of the day" and politically expedient "show and tell" programs. Employees must align their work and behavior to the agency's values and expectations and, ultimately, community viability and sustainability. Reputation and image are based on the quality of service employees provide to people and the commitment they demonstrate.[18]

Chapter 8: Marketing the Organization

Law enforcement leaders can and should market their brand and the personnel and successes it represents. They should establish and implement a marketing strategy to support and improve communication. They should turn to marketing as a means to generate and renew interest in the agency, create new partnerships, and resolve community problems.

The American Marketing Association established a working definition of marketing in 2004. According to the AMA definition, marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to consumers, and for managing relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders.

Police agencies nationwide have begun marketing. They have moved beyond the traditional management of public information to sharing data once held in confidence, to encouraging and acting on input from people in the community and employees, and operating transparently. Some agency leaders have hired consultants to guide their marketing strategy. Some have sought input from experts who reside or work in the community. Most have built their marketing strategy with in-house expertise.

A law enforcement agency's brand message must be:

1. Aligned with core values
2. Clear, engaging, and unique to the organization
3. Relevant to the well-being of the community
4. Demonstrated in all aspects of organizational functioning
5. Consistent in all messages transmitted to the external, internal, and political publics
6. Supported externally, internally, and politically
7. Reinforced internally so that employees consistently deliver what is promised, and do so with excellence
8. Echoed by all of the agency's partners
9. Adapted to meet critical change[20]

A well implemented marketing strategy reaps benefits far beyond awareness of or publicity for the agency. An effective marketing program benefits recruiting and retention, aids the agency in obtaining grants and resources, and supports neighborhood and community problem solving. Most importantly, it helps to build and sustain public trust and confidence.

Strategic marketing requires that the chief of police, sheriff, commissioner, or director define the agency's goals and activities in terms of what it does for the community. All marketing efforts should connect ultimately to the viability and sustainability of neighborhoods and the community as a whole. Since communities are dynamic and change constantly, the agency's marketing strategy should be flexible and subject to change.

Traditional media will continue to play a major role in marketing the agency. However, a good marketing strategy can no longer be based primarily on media support. Ultimately, an effective marketing strategy earns media support for the organization.[19]

A 20-step outline to developing a law enforcement marketing strategy was established by the Johns Hopkins University, Division of Public Safety Leadership. It draws on the advice of experts and accepted marketing strategy, and reflects input from focus group members participating in this project. Many of the law enforcement agencies that have successful communication and marketing strategies, such as Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Charlotte, have accomplished most or all of these steps.

1. Know the community

   ◆ Gather and assess demographics, needs, plans, community development activities, crises, and successes

   ◆ Go beyond crime and safety

   ◆ Assess how agency goals connect to the community's master plan

2. Set a clear vision of the anticipated end product of the marketing effort

   ◆ Define precise outcomes and connect them to the community, neighborhoods, city, county, state, etc.

3. Set a clear vision of neighborhood and community viability for front line personnel

   ◆ Give every employee a clear picture of what the community will look like if the agency is infinitely successful in doing its job

   ◆ Move all toward a common end product

4. Incorporate social networking

   ◆ Move beyond traditional focus of print and television media

5. Engage the right players

   ◆ Go beyond the command staff and the usual list of employees

   ◆ Draw on expertise in the community

   ◆ Invite employees' labor or fraternal organizations, special interest groups in the community, and other government agencies to the planning table

6. Establish advisory boards and solicit their input

   ◆ Call upon subject area authorities in the community to serve on an informal community outreach advisory board to advise the chief or sheriff, members of the command staff, the public information officer, and academy instructors

   ◆ Establish other informal advisory boards to assist in areas such as patrol, education and training, crime prevention, youth services, and small business. Solicit ideas from each to enhance the department's outreach activities.

7. Connect the marketing plan to agency objectives, operations, and budget

8. Market the routine and mastery of the basics

    ◆ Focus heavily on front line personnel, quality response to calls for service, and highly visible neighborhood patrols—they are what people need most

    ◆ Market specialty functions, "quick hit" grant programs, task forces, and other peripheral efforts as a secondary marketing priority

9. Build marketing into the agency's culture

    ◆ Give close attention to training, orientation of and by supervisors and command officers, and acceptance by rank-and-file personnel

10. Market as a shared responsibility

    ◆ Create agency-wide ownership of the marketing strategy

    ◆ Require command officers and supervisors to lead the effort

11. Connect marketing to pride in agency, performance, and results

    ◆ Use marketing to convey the agency's value to the community

    ◆ Talk in terms of value when presenting statistics, programs, grants, etc.

12. Create position statements on issues of importance

    ◆ Issue position statements on criminal enterprise, crime prevention, highway safety, residential patrol, point-of-entry contact, gangs, community development, small businesses, homeless people, etc.

    ◆ Let people know the agency's thinking and approach to key issues

13. Make use of existing, successful delivery methods

14. Use marketing as a tool to support community problem solving

    ◆ Include the public information or public affairs officer in operational planning relevant to specific neighborhood and community problems

    ◆ Leverage support of the media and social networks

    ◆ Use marketing to inform people about successes

15. Budget for marketing

16. Establish a marketing timeline

    ◆ Set a reasonable schedule for implementation

    ◆ Assign responsibility for meeting each deadline

    ◆ Allow time for initial steps to take place before rushing into advanced activities

17. Build on agency success

   - Focus first on marketing genuine, existing successes

   - Continue to build on what the agency does well

   - Focus less on using marketing to "fix things"

18. Coordinate marketing goals and strategy with other government agencies to ensure consistency

19. Continually test new approaches

20. Adjust the marketing plan occasionally to adapt to new and changing needs

Chapter 9: Creating Partnerships to Support Communication and Marketing

A partnership is the state or condition of being a partner. A partner is an associate or collaborator with whom a relationship is formed to accomplish a specific purpose. There are many myths and misperceptions about law enforcement partnerships that need to be overcome in order to achieve success.

There are limits on how many meaningful partnerships an agency can maintain. There are limits on the number of people willing to engage, give time, and do the work required of meaningful partnerships.

Political leaders often espouse law enforcement partnerships as a means to overcome serious crime problems. In a large East Coast city, in which the people are clamoring for relief from gang-related homicide, the mayor repeatedly exclaims, "We can't do it alone. We must partner with the community." The mayor failed to recognize that people do not want to engage in partnerships or situations in which they feel unsafe or may be threatened. The city and its police department must demonstrate leadership and success, achieving genuine results, before people will come forward to participate in genuine partnership. The outcome demonstrated by the police department will drive people's involvement. A mere call to "partner" with the police or city is fruitless.

Common misperceptions are:

1. We should engage in as many partnerships as possible.
2. If we show up, something good will happen.
3. All partnerships are good.
4. All partnerships work.
5. Partnership is the answer.
6. Attendance at community meetings or responding to a neighborhood association's request for action constitutes a partnership.
7. People want to engage with law enforcement.
8. If we are not doing partnerships, we failed at community policing.

Successful Partnerships

Some law enforcement agencies brag about the large number of partnerships they have with the community. They claim every speech given by an officer at a community meeting and every request by a neighborhood association as a partnership. They look at partnerships as a statistic, with little to no emphasis on quality or outcomes.

Other agencies have a long history of excellent partnerships. Their partnerships are formed to accomplish a purpose. Tasks are well-defined. Assessments are done and outcomes are measured. The following paragraphs provide an overview of several successful partnerships.

◆ As a part of its "Hiring in the Spirit of Service" initiative, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office established a partnership with a local advertising firm to develop a new marketing campaign. The campaign highlighted testimonials from deputies and showcased them to the community. Deputies were shown talking about the difference they make in people's lives and the satisfaction they draw from being part of the agency and law enforcement profession. The campaign gave a new perspective and "put a face" on the agency's efforts to emphasize service.

◆ The Fairfax County Police Department established a partnership with media that served the Asian community in the Northern Virginia region. The goal was to expand crime prevention initiatives in homes, apartment complexes, workplaces, and small businesses. As a by-product of this initiative, the Department gained new support from the community in recruiting Asian officers.

◆ The Virginia Attorney General's Office established a partnership entitled "Seniors and Law Enforcement Together" (SALT) in Fairfax County. County officials participated along with nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, and community senior centers. The interagency group successfully implemented safety, prevention, and transportation initiatives for seniors.

◆ A strong alliance with the clergy was established by the Houston Police Department. The Police Department's "Police and Clergy Team" (PACT) participated in a modified citizens' police academy and regular ride-alongs with officers. PACT members are available to be present 24/7 to major police incidents. Some of the participating faith-based institutions adopted crime-plagued or troubled neighborhoods and engaged congregants in working to achieve positive change. PACT members have been a strong resource in the wake of officer-involved shootings.

These are but a few examples of successful efforts to build relationships, accomplish meaningful work, and market law enforcement agencies within the communities they serve. All of the above partnerships had clear goals, involved the right players, and have been purposeful and endured over time.

Chapter 10: Concluding Comments and Recommendations

There is no substitute for excellent service and performance by officers, deputies, and troopers on the front line. No marketing strategy, relationship with media representatives or lead spokesperson will make up for mediocre performance, disrespect, or failure to connect to neighborhood well-being. No outreach or marketing strategy can make up for front line personnel who convey cynicism or send the wrong messages to people in the community.

Law enforcement executives face new challenges regarding communication and outreach. Information is conveyed faster than in any previous time, and with less accuracy. An entire generation has emerged that does not rely on traditional means of communication—newspapers, television, radio—as its primary source of information. Due to the nation's fiscal downturn, people are questioning the cost of public safety services. These, and other influences, compel agency leaders to focus on new and expanded ways of communicating with the people they serve.

Traditional approaches to communicating with external, internal, and political publics are giving way to rapid, technology-driven delivery methods. New methods of communicating— texting, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, among others—are fast, but not necessarily accurate. Information, photographs, and video on police incidents are relayed to the media in minutes by anyone who has access to social networking technology. Headlines emerge before an incident scene is cleared and chiefs of police and sheriffs are briefed on the facts.

The role of the law enforcement Public Information Officer has shifted. Today's PIO no longer sits in an office and screens incident reports to release to the press. Rather, he or she is a coordinator of public affairs and marketing, and a manager of social networking. Today's PIO is a primary champion of the agency's message, image, and brand.

Engaging fully in social networking and other modern means of communication is no longer an option for law enforcement. Agencies that fail to modernize and those that take a laissez-faire approach to communication will be written off by people, externally and internally. The people, in turn, will fill the "information void" by finding or creating networks and communicating among themselves about their police.

In addition to a high probability of inaccuracy or incompleteness, information conveyed by people through social networks is unfiltered. Information is shared that may put victims at risk, violate personal privacy, compromise officers, and jeopardize investigations. This further compels law enforcement agencies to engage in social networking.

Recommendations/Suggestions

Several recommendations emerged as a result of the meetings and discussions with representatives of agencies of the Major Cities Chiefs Association selected to participate in the Strategic Approaches to Improve Communications project.

1. Every law enforcement agency should undertake an assessment to define its strengths, successes, and vulnerabilities relevant to the public's trust. In addition to improving operations and overcoming weaknesses, communication and marketing efforts should seek to increase awareness of and expand successes.

2. Every law enforcement agency should develop several core messages or themes that drive all activity and set direction for the external, internal, and political publics. In developing core messages or themes, consideration should be given to the needs of diverse populations in the community.

3. Every agency should assess its current communication and outreach activities. This should include focus on the relationship of front line personnel to people in the community, the quality of response to calls for service, and direct and subtle messages conveyed to the people by front line personnel. It should assess response to both routine encounters and serious incidents.

4. Every law enforcement agency, regardless of size, locale, or specialization, should develop a communications strategy. It should define the intended purpose and audiences. It should include traditional means such as public information, liaison with newspapers and television stations, and press conferences. It should also include recognition of new communications technology, rapidly emerging "informal journalism," 24-hour cable news services, and use and rapid conveyance of video and digital photography by the police and people in the community.

5. Every agency should develop a marketing plan as a key component of its communications strategy. Every employee should be oriented to and participate in the marketing and outreach effort. The plan should focus on developing and sustaining the agency's brand.

6. In planning its outreach efforts, every agency should distinguish its external, internal, and political publics and develop a strategy to communicate effectively with each. The marketing plan should recognize that each of these publics has its own measures of agency success.

7. The Department of Justice should support agency outreach by providing an agency guide or toolkit and access to information and resources necessary to communicate and "market" more effectively. The guide should address ways to advance or transform outreach activities and provide promising outcomes and best practices.

Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people know you are doing the right thing.

—John D. Rockefeller, Capitalist and Philanthropist

Notes

1.	Radelet, L. (1986) *Police and the Community*, 4th ed. Macmillan Publishing, Riverside, NJ, pp. 1–45.

2.	Lovell, J., Kelling, G. (2000) *National Survey of Police-Media Relations, 2000.* Rutgers University, School of Criminal Justice, Newark, NJ.

3.	Weitzer, R., Tuch, S. (1999) "Race, Class, and Perceptions of Discrimination by the Police," *Crime & Delinquency* 45:4, 494–507.

4.	Wilson, O. W. (1966) On This We Stand: A compilation of operating policies formulated and approved by the command staff of the Chicago Police Department, pg.

5.	Garner, G. (2009) "Surviving the circus: How effective leaders work well with the media," *Police Chief* LXXVII:3.

6.	 Schlesinger, P., Tumber, H., Murdock, G. (1991) "The media politics of crime and criminal justice," *The British Journal of Sociology* 42:3.

7.	Gant, S. "Who's a journalist?" (Op-ed) *Los Angeles Times* July 28, 2008.

8.	UNITY Journalists of Color (2009) Job losses in the news industry significantly outpace losses in the overall economy. Taken from http://unityjournalists.org/news/2009/news091709layoffs.php on October 10, 2009.

9.	Nielsen Company. (2009) Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey. Nielsen Business Media.

10.	Thompson, S., Eiserer, T. (2009) "Dallas police chief apologizes for conduct of officer who drew gun on NFL player outside hospital," *Dallas Morning News* March 27, 2009.

11.	Forman, S. (2000) "Get close to the internal customers or keep your distance," In *Internal Marketing: Directions for Management*, ed. R. Varey and B. Lewis, Routledge, New York, pp. 127–128.

12.	Phelps, J., Harris, T., and Johnson E. (1996) "Exploring decision-making approaches and responsibility for developing marketing communications strategy," *Journal of Business Research* 37:3, 217–223.

13.	Greenberg, S. (2009) Mastery of Police Patrol. Presentation in Case Studies in Management and Leadership. Division of Public Safety Leadership, School of Education, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.

14.	Urde, M. (2003) "Core value-based corporate brand building," *European Journal of Marketing* 37:7/8, 1017–1040.

15.	Park, C., Jaworski, B., MacInnis, D. (1986) "Strategic brand concept-image marketing," *Journal of Marketing* 50:4, 135–145.

16.	Moore, R., Rattenburry, J. (2004) Ten Practical Questions about Branding. Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, Trusteeship, 12:2.

17.	Wood, L. (2000) "Brands and brand equity: definition and management," *Management Decision* 38/9, 662–669.

18.	de Chernatony, L. (1999) "Brand Management Through Narrowing the Gap Between Brand Identity and Brand Reputation," *Journal of Marketing Management* 15:1-3, 157–179.

19.	Jantsch, J. (2009) "Seven steps to the perfect marketing plan," *Entrepreneur Magazine*. Taken from http://www.entrepreneur.com/magazine/entrepreneur/2009/march/200176.html on September 22, 2009.