2020 GUARDIANS

THE STATE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN A NEW DECADE

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In the year 2020 at the start of a new decade, it can seem as if we're living in the future. Artificial Intelligence (AI) assistants, drones, facial recognition, environmental sensors, big data. But while technology moves at a breakneck pace, foundational public safety ideas such as community policing are a different story. In fact, the concept of community policing dates back to a different "twenties"—the 1820s. That's when Sir Robert Peel established the London Metropolitan Police Force with the founding principle that law enforcement must recognize "the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect." Fast forward almost 100 years to the present day and growing this respect and trust is more important than ever.

Law enforcement agencies, however, are faced with a "perfect storm" of technology and personnel-based challenges. Officer wellness and mental health is a growing concern, with depression and suicide rates higher than the average population.[1] Agencies today also face data overload from multimedia including videos, photos, and social media; outdated and siloed technology; and budgets that have remained static.

These technology issues exacerbate the personnel problems by adding additional stress and longer hours in the station, while creating a range of new challenges. A major US city may create 100TB of body-worn video per month, have 300 million police records in their databases, and pull from 10,000 public data sources. The sheer volume of accumulating data has made it difficult for agencies to store, access, and digest information. This is a significant problem because it means officers spend more time reporting and less time in the community.

Agencies are further hampered by outdated technology and legacy IT silos. In fact, according to a recent report, 40% of an agency's computers may be over seven years old and running decades old software.[2] Over the years, as technology has been extended to new platforms such as the cloud, siloes have remained in place, often making systems even more disjointed. The problem is so pervasive that 90% of PSAPs reported that they're actively looking for better product integration.[3] This antiquated and siloed technology infrastructure means that many aspects of public safety are not nearly as efficient as they could be. For example, in a recent industry study 96% of police officers said reporting, along with the documentation and information

collection it entails, keeps them from higher value tasks such as patrolling the community.[4] Antiquated and siloed technology also makes it more difficult to protect networks and increases the risk of a damaging cyber attack. While precise numbers are difficult to tally, industry estimates suggest cyber attacks cost billions of dollars each year, with individual agencies facing up to a million dollars or more in damages from each attack.[5]

At the same time, public safety budgets have remained static in recent decades and even slight increases in budget haven't kept up with community needs. Add in a rising epidemic of suicides among police officers and other wellness challenges and the list of issues facing public safety agencies seems daunting. If not properly addressed, these challenges can erode the very foundation of trust between public safety agencies and the communities they serve. By streamlining operations, creating efficiencies, and lowering stress, technology can help combat the root causes of these issues, as well as the impact they have on officers and communities.

As we enter the 2020's, agencies and cities across the country are grappling with fundamental questions that may help reshape how police work is done. How can law enforcement build lasting bonds with their communities in the coming decade? What is the proper role of technology in public safety? How do we ensure technology is best serving our communities? In 2020 and beyond, the answers to these questions will rely on further evolving a guardian mindset built on a 21st century partnership between community and law enforcement. At the core of that partnership is transparency and trust.

BUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST THROUGH A GUARDIAN MINDSET

The guardian mindset would be instantly recognizable to Sir Robert Peel generations ago and still resonates as the concept continues to evolve. Today, public-private partnerships between public safety agencies, private citizens, and businesses, along with the assistance of technology, are helping to bring the guardian mindset to life. From body-worn cameras, to community engagement software, situational awareness tools, and video security, technology can help law enforcement build bridges to communities, but only if it's responsibly executed in support of policy. That is, public safety agencies, elected leaders, and the community must work together to enact the right policies for their needs. Then, and only then, should technology be applied in service of those policies. As part of a virtuous cycle, technology such as data analytics can subsequently be used to inform new policies or revisions to existing policies. In short, policy must always drive technology. In addition, technology must always include a law enforcement professional in the decision-making process. As AI, analytics, and smart video solutions become more capable, this issue and the need for vigilance around it, will become even more pressing.
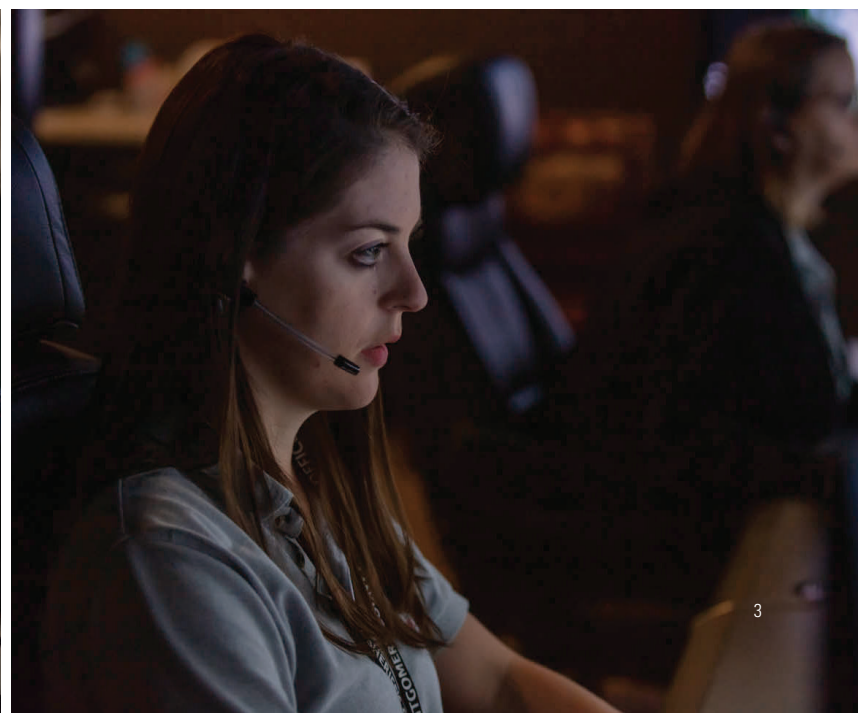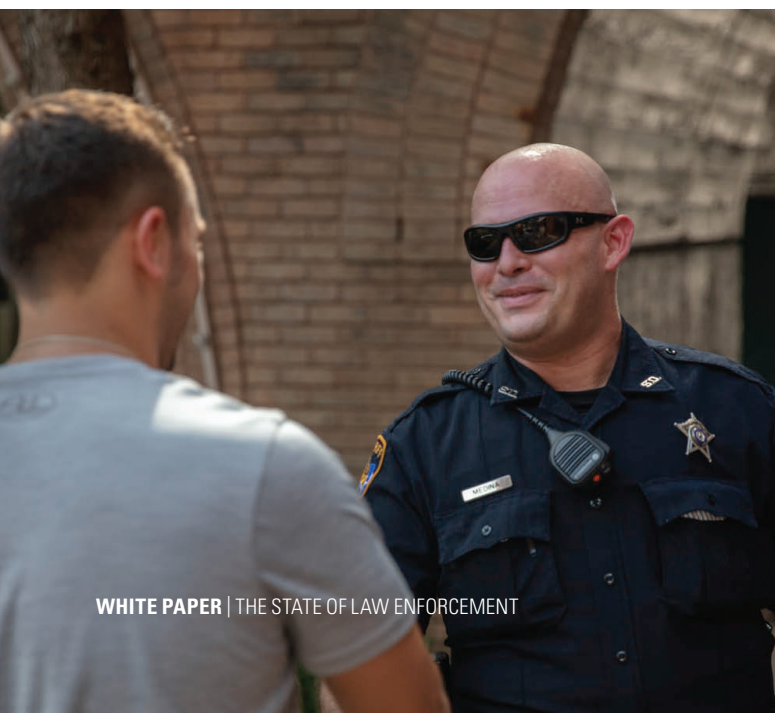
THREE PILLARS OF THE GUARDIAN MINDSET

We can think of the guardian mindset as supported by three core pillars.[6] Each works in tandem with the others to improve the lives of citizens and the officers who serve them. These pillars form the foundation of the guardian mindset, helping to build community trust and transparency, fortify policing capabilities, and protect officers' wellbeing.

THE THREE PILLARS OF THE GUARDIAN MINDSET

PILLAR 1: Informing Policy and Oversight Through Data Collection and Supervision

PILLAR 2: Collaborating with the Community to Co-Produce Public Safety

PILLAR 3: Protecting the Wellness and Safety of our Officers

PILLAR 1

INFORMING POLICY AND OVERSIGHT THROUGH DATA COLLECTION AND SUPERVISION

Data may be one of the most powerful tools in our public safety arsenal. But without the right technology to make sense of it, data alone is often overwhelming and of limited use. For officers, this is especially daunting. From the time they get information from dispatch, they often have to make instantaneous reactions to situations that they know will be scrutinized. Then, afterwards they have to report on what transpired, while ensuring all data from the situation is captured, stored and saved in the right place and under compliance. When multimedia evidence and records are securely collected, stored, shared, and processed by advanced technology, this burden is greatly reduced and we can connect data points faster and more precisely.

That's the promise of the Real Time Operations Center (RTOC) and transitioning data to the cloud. A RTOC acts as a nerve center, offering a complete operating picture that integrates critical real-time intelligence in a single display including video, CAD information, licence plate recognition alerts, and mapping data, as well as analytics, and data visualization. Using streamlined cloud solutions, that data is then packaged in a file for further investigation and fast, compliant transfer to prosecutors that maintains strict chain of custody.

With this unified data, the RTOC and investigations can react faster to the needs of the community, ensuring resources are being used in the most effective, efficient manner. In fact, with advances in machine learning and analytics, RTOCs can help go beyond gathering straightforward information to now providing valuable insights that help community leaders proactively address concerns.

Facial recognition is one promising example of how machine learning can positively impact the decision making process. When used properly and with a human always having the final say, it can quickly and accurately identify suspects against a finite watchlist. This ability is highly valuable both in real time and post-incident, during investigations.

The insights gained from emerging technologies like facial recognition and data analytics can not only help solve cold cases and bring suspects to justice faster, but also develop breakthrough policies and new strategies for deploying resources in neighborhoods disproportionately affected by crime. Through more effective citizen information sharing, these insights can also help establish a culture of law enforcement accountability with the community.

COLLABORATE WITH THE COMMUNITY TO CO-PRODUCE PUBLIC SAFETY

Consistent, meaningful collaboration can form an even stronger foundation of trust between public safety agencies and the community. Technology can play an important role in these public/private partnerships. Publicly accessible crime maps, platforms for anonymous citizen tips, and systems to connect private business cameras to law enforcement, all empower residents while informing community policing strategies.

For instance, when drug trafficking or hate crimes regularly occur in particular areas, communities often feel helpless to help combat it. With new anonymous tipping technology becoming more popular, they can proactively partner with law enforcement to make a difference by anonymously sending photos and video from their mobile device. Law enforcement officials are even able to exchange immediate two-way correspondence with tipsters to extract more information. This conversation protects the anonymity of the tipster while allowing investigators to ask more specific questions.

Communities are also partnering with law enforcement by registering and linking their private community-facing cameras to law enforcement RTOCs. For example, when shots from a weapon are detected, a RTOC can activate feeds or recordings from a particular area, helping to quickly catch the face of a potential suspect. This public/private partnership for deploying high-quality video sharing has a number of benefits. It allows business owners to directly contribute to catching suspects, ensuring that both businesses and law enforcement are invested in safety. It also gives law enforcement a much larger network of cameras to leverage while providing communities peace of mind that they're protected. By stitching together disparate video feeds, law enforcement can also provide enhanced operational support to officers in the field.

Public/private partnerships are also critical for crime analysts. With community-submitted data from tipping apps and calls along with CAD and RMS data, analysts can build and ensure more accurate heat mapping and trend analysis. In addition, they can use license plate recognition software to follow-up on community tips and calls. For example, responding to anonymous reports of the same car repeatedly participating in suspected drug dealing in a particular neighborhood.

During this decade, these types of community partnerships with law enforcement will continue to expand in size and importance. When communities and police have the policy and technology means to consistently and constructively work together it can dramatically increase transparency and trust, helping to reduce crime, and drive lasting economic development efforts. In 2020 and beyond, it's clear that keeping communities safe is everyone's job.

PROTECTING THE WELLNESS AND SAFETY OF OUR OFFICERS

Today, public safety guardians are under more scrutiny than ever before. Along with the intrinsic danger of the job, long hours, intense pressure, and other stress has led to a mental health epidemic among officers. In fact, suicide annually claims more officers' lives than violence in the line of duty.[7] In 2019 alone, at least 228 officers died by suicide.[8] This is simply unacceptable. Real change must come from the highest levels of law enforcement command, making wellness a top priority.

Fortunately, technology can play an important supporting role in officer wellness. The right technology, when properly implemented, can help provide a virtual lifeline to officers and a sense that dispatch has their back at all times, even when they're incapacited. It can also reduce the overall stress many officers feel by streamlining workflows, making time consuming tasks more efficient and enhancing training methods so they're less taxing on officers' mental and physical health.

With GPS-enabled communications and other situational awareness tools, departments can continuously monitor and support officers in the field in real time. For example, soon an officer may have access to a wide range of this type of technology, some available today and some on the near horizon. Here's just a sample of what's possible: GPS-equipped radio, body-worn cameras, 360-degree car-mounted cameras, video recording drones, biometric vests that track officers' vital signs, and smart holsters that indicate to an RTOC when their gun is pulled. Seamlessly communicating with each other and reporting back to the RTOC, these individual pieces of technology can combine to form a protective shield around the officer. Officers won't need to worry about calling into dispatch to report trouble. Dispatch will be right there with them, seeing what they see and hearing what they hear, saving precious seconds when there's danger and providing assistance in an emergency.

To achieve this "virtual shield," agencies must adopt a new approach to their foundational technology. Platforms that provide deep integration and flexibility among each individual component and corresponding data will be essential to this mission.

In addition, new advances in AI will soon allow officers to use AI assistants and mobile reporting options to reduce mundane and time-consuming tasks. For example, AI is ideally suited to tasks such as monitoring video feeds for specific items or people of interest. It can alert the RTOC to unusual motion, actions, or even unexpected packages. It can help complete repetitive information in reports and other administrative work. Having AI assist in these types of tasks can provide a number of important wellness benefits. By streamlining and offloading the repetitive and mundane tasks that negatively affect officers' midstate, agencies can greatly reduce their overall stress. Plus, the less time officers spend on administrative tasks, the more time they have to patrol the community and spend time with their families.

When it comes to officer wellness, the stakes are high and measured in lives, both those of officers and the communities they serve. Technology is not a cure-all. It's up to each agency to decide the right mix for their specific needs. But it's clear more must be done to address this crisis and the right technology can provide a powerful first step.

THE DECADE AHEAD:

TECHNOLOGY AND THE GUARDIAN MINDSET

Public safety technology has come a long way in the nearly 200 years since Sir Robert Peel's insights into community policing. In 2020 and beyond, technology will have an increasingly important role in policing. With the guardian mindset as a guide, it can help provide deep insights to inform policy. It can help bring together communities and law enforcement in a virtuous cycle of partnership based on transparency and trust. And it can play a key role in protecting the mental and physical wellness of officers.

This is not a one-size-fits-all approach. The challenges of each state, city, and neighborhood are highly unique. By implementing the three pillars of the Guardian Mindset agencies can be more efficient with their budgets, while tailoring effective programs based on specific community needs.

Today, we're experiencing a much-needed philosophical shift in how we view public safety. Ironically, in many ways it's a return to the thinking made popular a century ago. As Sir Robert Peel stated in 1829, "The police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence."

Indeed, public safety is all of our responsibility. Everyone, from community members, to business owners, to law enforcement can work together to build lasting community partnerships. In 2020 and in the coming decade, new technology, when responsibly implemented, can be an exciting and effective means to that end.

SOURCES

[1] AP News, 8-15-19

[2] Bloomberg Businessweek, 2-28-19

[3] 2019 Motorola Solutions PSAP Survey

[4] Nuance 2018 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report

[5] ABC News, 5-11-19

[6] Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015

[7] AP News, 8-15-19

[8] USA Today, 1-2-20

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