

KEEPING POLICE OFFICERS CONNECTED IN THE COMMUNITY



THE CHALLENGE

Police forces in the UK face a unique set of challenges: the demand for greater visibility on the streets; a need for more efficient administrative processes; and ever-more demanding budgets with which to deliver improved policing services. All forces face pressure to make the most efficient use of their officers' time, to ensure that they spend the most time where they are needed most – policing their communities.

This set of challenges has naturally led many forces to examine their processes, to investigate where they can use budgets more effectively and make better use of officers' time. Bedfordshire Police, for example, found that the radio network they used to connect officers on the beat to colleagues and information back at the station was an inefficient medium for non-emergency communication.

Officers performing their everyday duties were required to radio into the station to check information such as vehicle registrations and missing persons' information. The radio operator would then retrieve the information from the Police National Computer (PNC) and radio it back to the officer. As well as causing frequent delays for officers performing their duties in the community, this process was also accounting for an average of 70% of the force's radio network usage, usually with traffic enquiries and non-emergency communications.

To improve this scenario, Bedfordshire Police identified the need for a mobile data solution that could provide everyday police data from the PNC to officers in the community, without the need to occupy the radio network or take up the time of its operators. In order for this solution to win approval with officers on the beat, it needed to be secure, easy-to-use and robust enough to stand up to street policing. What's more, it needed to be quick to install and roll-out, and to integrate seamlessly with existing police technologies.

THE SOLUTION

Having reviewed the market for a wireless solution that matched these demanding requirements, Bedfordshire Police chose a BlackBerry® solution as the ideal way to make more efficient use of their officers' time by extending police data securely and cost-effectively to officers in the community.

Equipped with BlackBerry® smartphones, Bedfordshire Police officers now have secure and immediate access to data applications, including the PNC, which allows them to perform routine administrative duties and undertake standard reporting procedures whilst in the field. This ultimately enables every officer to spend more time actually policing in the community, rather than returning to base to retrieve, report and file information. With the easy-to-use, secure and robust BlackBerry smartphone, officers also have phone and email functionality on the same convenient device, giving them everything they need to stay connected to colleagues and systems wherever they go.

Compared with other devices, BlackBerry smartphones offer a highly intuitive user-interface – officers needed little training before being able to use them effectively. "The BlackBerry smartphones are so easy to use and we can train our officers on them in less than half a day, generating further time and cost savings" says Jim Hitch, mobile data project manager at Bedfordshire Police, and the man in charge of rolling out the devices. "The BlackBerry smartphone works pretty much straight out-of-the-box, and has already developed a loyal following amongst the police officers of Bedfordshire".

BENEFITS

**MORE TIME FOR
COMMUNITY POLICING**

**EASIER QUICKER
ADMINISTRATION**

**SECURE MOBILE ACCESS
TO POLICE APPLICATIONS**

**ROBUST DATA
& DEVICE SECURITY**

EASY-TO-USE

"Our main focus is to give BlackBerry smartphones to officers on the beat so that time spent using IT systems at the police station can be cut. Around 85 % of the cost of the police is manpower, and we want to use that more effectively."

Jim Hitch,
mobile data project manager at
Bedfordshire Police

The Bedfordshire Police force anticipates using the BlackBerry smartphones well into the future. "We used to rely on police boxes in the past and, believe it or not, there are still people in the force that remember this. Then we progressed to using radios, and soon no one could understand how on earth we coped without them. The next step on the evolutionary ladder in policing as far as I'm concerned is the BlackBerry smartphone. It's very important we start now and I am confident in five to ten years' time these will be an essential tool in policing" concluded Hitch.

THE BENEFITS

The robust security features that are built into the BlackBerry® Enterprise Solution have given Bedfordshire Police the reassurance and confidence needed to achieve approval and adoption of the solution. Lost smartphones can be locked and wiped remotely of all information, while data travelling to and from smartphones is protected by powerful encryption. Bedfordshire Police have also implemented a two minute lockout for idle devices, which then requires a password to reactivate the smartphone. "With the safeguards RIM has in place for its BlackBerry solution, it is more of a worry if an officer loses his notebook than his smartphone" says Jim Hitch.

Remote access to central police systems via the BlackBerry smartphone enables Bedfordshire Police officers to access and retrieve data automatically, and frees up the radio network to deal with emergencies.

Additionally the force has had two bespoke applications developed by Airpoint, a BlackBerry Alliance Partner, to help them make the most of their BlackBerry solution. The first application allows officers to be briefed while on their shift, enabling them to retrieve new intelligence, pictures of suspects or similar information whilst mobile. The user-friendly system uses a screen icon to inform officers of new information received on the device. The second application is a Crime Tasking solution which provides officers with a list of their daily tasks, a process which used to mean a visit to the police station but which now happens wirelessly. The solution provides officers with full access to crime reports and all relevant details, and enables them to also update the central system remotely when the task is complete.

Both of these applications enable Bedfordshire officers to perform their duties whilst in the community, and considerably reduce the administrative burden on the entire force.

For further information: www.blackberry.com/go/success

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