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MANAGING TECHNOLOGY IN THE

EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

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Summary

The Edmonton Police Service has formed a Technology Committee to monitor, coordinate, disseminate and recommend technological ideas of interest to the Service. A small budget has been assigned to assist the Committee in their work. This technical memo describes the makeup of the Committee, its responsibilities and current activities.

Résumé

Les Services policiers d'Edmonton ont créé un comité d'étude des technologies chargé de surveiller, de coordonner, de faire connaître et de recommander des projets technologiques d'intérêt pour les Services. Un petit budget a été accordé au Comité pour l'aider à s'acquitter de son mandat. La présente note décrit la composition du Comité, ses responsabilités et ses activités en cours.

INTRODUCTION

Funk & Wagnalls' definition of "technology" is, "The application of science and of technical advances in industry." The definition of "technocracy" is, "A theory of society and government that advocates control by an organized body of experts to achieve minimum waste and maximum efficiency." Tedium is often described as, "The inclusion of boring definitions in long articles."

In 1994 the Canadian Police Research Centre (CPRC) set up a Technology Partner Associate (TPA) network with over 35 Canadian police departments. Carol Wagar, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) TPA, has been an excellent partner for the CPRC. She has taken the initiative to make the EPS aware of the CPRC and the various technology issues which it offered in 1994. This technical memorandum describes how issues can be suitably handled in the police environment. One needs enthusiastic volunteers and a small dedicated budget to assist in addressing technology interests.

The Edmonton Police Service has long been recognized as a leader in forward thinking and innovation. Community based policing has been its watchword for several years and other police agencies have sought to implement Edmonton's model for this type of policing. Recently, the EPS decided to forge new methods of dealing with, and the efficient use of, technology.

Emerging technology is extremely difficult to manage due to the large amount of information and hardware being developed. Also impeding progress is an organization's natural aversion to change. One phrase, "Because we've always done it that way", is responsible for more screaming in washrooms than any other. A comfortable routine is always less threatening than implementing new ideas and new technologies with their associated risks.

The EPS realized a growing need to coordinate and share technology within the organization. There was no entrenched method of gathering and disseminating new information and ideas. Funding opportunities for the development of new technology were also identified.

EDMONTON POLICE SERVICE TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE - MANDATE

Edmonton's Executive Officers Committee put in place a Technology Committee with the following mandate:

1. To act as a central depository for technological ideas and to disseminate them, along with recommendations, to the appropriate areas of responsibility.
2. To monitor and follow up on these ideas.
3. To coordinate technological ideas with the appropriate people and organizations, including the Canadian Police Research Centre.
4. To update all EPS staff on the progress of such projects.

The responsibilities of the sitting members of this Committee were:

1. to actively represent their area of expertise by bringing forward information on technology that is currently being reviewed (either from within or external to the EPS) or technological ideas that would be useful but have not yet been developed.
2. to prepare written documentation and/or follow up on ideas, as requested by the Chairman.
3. to represent the Committee at other meetings, as requested by the Chairman.

MEMBERSHIP

The Committee is composed of volunteers from the following areas:

1. Office of the Chief of Police
2. Financial Planning Director
3. Communications
4. Systems Management
5. Quartermaster Stores
6. Forensic Identification
7. Tactical Unit
8. Traffic
9. Technical Support Unit
10. Officer Safety (training)
11. Organizational Studies
12. Manager Finance & Supply Services
13. Patrol
14. Volunteers from other areas.

The membership of the Committee included, by design, all ranks of sworn and non sworn members of the Edmonton Police Service. The Committee was able to develop as an efficient team working together for a common purpose. The common denominator among members of the team was an interest in new technology and how it could benefit the EPS.

WHY A TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE?

The timing of the Committee's formation was in conjunction with some severe funding cuts relating to the province of Alberta's goal of balancing the budget. Most civil and governmental agencies were in for some shocking surprises. The fat was being trimmed from budgets and, in most cases, the cuts were to the bone. Organizations in the province had to become "lean and mean". Efficient and effective were the new watchwords.

The EPS had to find new ways to provide quality service to the public. Embracing new technology seemed to be an attractive avenue. The Committee members realized that new technology and new ways of doing things were out there, but needed to be evaluated. The Technology Committee was assigned a small budget that would assist in the development and assessment of potential technology.

THE CPRC LINK

The Technology Committee examined the Canadian Police Research Centre's annual report and decided to get involved in three of the offerings. The Nooklooker was seen as a possible asset to our Bomb Unit. The Cyclop Camera was identified as a possible

aid to Technical Services Bureau, Street Crimes, the Mobile Command Post, Identification and Vice. The Auto Kill Switch was thought to have application in all service vehicles. The EPS is presently in the process of evaluating and reporting on these ideas.

The Committee has requested ideas from all EPS personnel through an internal newsletter. An article was published introducing the Committee, its members and its mandate. From feedback, it became apparent that the idea of a technology committee was generally accepted. Some submissions have been received as a result of the article and will be put forward at future meetings.

A FORUM FOR GENERATING TECHNOLOGY IDEAS AND ISSUES

The meetings are not formally structured in the strict sense, and discussion is allowed to go in several directions. Ideas that have surfaced so far are:

1. Getting involved with the University and Institutes of Technology to form working partnerships. Professors and instructors are always looking for projects and ideas in which to involve students. The EPS currently works with educational institutions in other areas and the technological sharing of problems and solutions was seen to be a logical direction in which to proceed.
2. Establishing relations with private industry. Problems are usually universal and solutions can also be universal in application. Obviously, private industry is profit oriented, but solutions to problems are easily marketed. It was thought that, in times of budget downturn, partnerships with industry could be financially beneficial to both parties.

It should be noted that, through the CPRC, the EPS Technology Committee has, as a resource, Mr. Paul Comwell, Industrial Technology Advisor from the National Research Council's Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC/IRAP), who assists them with their local industrial interactions.

Committee meetings, so far, have been spirited and discussions have wandered down several interesting paths. Some seemingly off-the-wall ideas, after further discussion, were found to have practical application and merited more in depth investigation.

CONCLUSION

Technology and new ideas can reshape with world, but they can also leave organizations floundering in uncertain times, if they are unprepared for change. New technology and information is arriving in vast quantities every minute of the day. An organization must be prepared to embrace new ideas, where practical, and also have the ability to recognize the impractical, if they are to flourish in difficult times. Technology can make an organization more effective and efficient, but only if it is recognized and the information is disseminated. A technology committee is one way of implementing and managing change from within.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The author, Detective Dave Johnston is presently serving in the Edmonton Police Service's Fraud and Commercial Crime unit. He has been involved with the design and implementation of the new EPS records and dispatch system over the last seven years. He currently serves as Chairman of the Technology Committee.