

# Recording an improvement

*Jamie Wilson, Marketing Manager of Public Safety, EMEA, at NICE Systems, believes that efficiency and productivity gains can be realised by looking at existing investments in processes, infrastructure and associated technology – if leveraged to their full potential.*



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*This report, published on 2 December 2009 by the Home Secretary, sets out a new programme of measures to help the police work smarter to fight crime, tackle anti-social behaviour and boost public confidence.*

inevitably, the state of the economy is prompting political debate and widespread concern around public sector budgets. Policing consumes approximately £17.5 billion of the public coffers each year and any cuts in frontline services will undoubtedly be met with political and public outcry. Also, with all forces recently committing to The Policing Pledge, the challenge will be to uphold these promises in the eyes of citizens who are expecting a more visible police presence on the streets.

There is often a common misconception in both public and private sector organisations that any major innovation or improvement needs to be matched with a similarly sized budget. This is not the case and to illustrate the point let's consider one example – incident information management.

Rather worryingly, a senior member of a UK police force confided during a conversation that it can take anything between 24 hours and seven days to get a voice recording made from a 999 emergency call, played back to an investigating officer. More disturbing was the suggestion that his police force was not the exception, but the rule.

He went on to explain that such lengthy timescales were considered acceptable five years ago, but he really thought it should be possible today to deliver this information within two or three minutes of the call taking place, especially as the first few hours of any investigation are always the most vital. To his surprise I explained that it is more than possible to consistently meet his target and in fact, it was likely he already had the fundamentals in place to make this and much more possible.

For the overwhelming majority of police forces that have invested in the upgrade of their command and control rooms in recent years, they will have much of the infrastructure already in place right now to dramatically speed up the time it takes to get relevant information to an investigating officer. However, the truth is that often they do not realise the additional benefits that their investment is capable of delivering.

At the heart of any incident management procedure is the information that feeds the investigation. Typically, the repository for this is the call recorder. Used by the command and control room and increasingly in custody suites, these recorders will capture and store all call taker/citizen interactions, as well as internal comms.

Historically these recorders were tape-based, making them expensive to run, with the need to continually purchase tapes and often a dedicated secure room to house the burgeoning tape library. Huge advances have been made and today these antiquated machines have – in the main – been replaced with digital recorders (otherwise known as loggers) that are more economical to run, offer greater resilience, high levels of security, reduce the risk of loss, provide higher quality recordings and negate the need for

further physical storage space.

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The benefits of digital recording have been widely acknowledged and proven to deliver intrinsic value in reducing the financial and resource burden associated with tape. Furthermore, search and retrieval of a specific call/s on a digital recorder, which has been tagged and stored, is going to be much quicker than manually trawling through hours of tape. So how is it possible to use this infrastructure to derive even greater value and time savings? The answer is to use the investment in digital recording as the foundation on which to begin to build an Incident Information Management (IIM) system.

The information associated with a single incident is typically numerous, stored in different places, with different processes for managing them. However, what investigating officers actually want is a single repository of the most up-to-date case information that they can quickly access.

An IIM system can be gradually built in a modular fashion, as the need, available budget and resource of the force dictates. Such a systems is able to rapidly consolidate information from traditional sources such as the call recorder, video footage and still images from surveillance cameras as well as body worn cameras and mobile devices (along with sms and mms information submitted), GIS information, call-taker CAD screens, incident reports, mugshots and emails.

With all of this information date and time stamped it is possible to search, retrieve and dispatch the right information to the right people at the right time, delivering a comprehensive account of an incident, along with any relevant case notes that have been appended by other third parties, not in days or hours but a matter of minutes. This information can also be used later for more in depth scenario reconstruction and disclosure of evidence if and when there is need for a prosecution.

Having a strategy for building an IIM system is also a positive step in light of the HMIC (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary) review of joint working, to identify how forces can collaborate more successfully to provide the best deal for the public in terms of preventing serious crime and reducing financial costs. By having a plan in place to fully utilise the infrastructure that already exists, at a rate that is achievable, it is possible to improve operational efficiency, empower officers to speed up investigation times, embrace new communication and multimedia channels and ultimately improve the provision of frontline services (and the perception of the quality of these services) to the citizen.