

PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING

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Prepared for
Police Executive Research Forum

by
Officer Bruce Harper

Description:

SCANNING:

How was the problem identified? A Patrol Officer was overheard complaining about the number of Petit Larceny calls he had to respond to and how they were a citizens arrest Why couldn't the citizen handle their own calls? The POP, Officer that overheard that thought, why not let the citizen handle the call.

What was the nature of the problem? Officers were responding to a call that facilitated an arrest for a citizen. Most of the time no one went to jail and a citation was issued.

Who identified the problem? For the most part patrol officers were voicing their frustrations on a system overloaded with calls for service.

ANALYSIS:

What data and information sources were used? Crime Analysis provided a calls for service list of all the Petit Larcenies for the last 6 months. The list showed, we responding to over 1,000 in custody Petit Larcenies a month in over 80% of these cases the officer issued a citation and cleared.

A list of these calls from dispatch showed officers were spending on an average of 2 hours per call which means over 2,000 man hours a month.

What harm resulted from the problem? Loss prevention officers at these department stores were holding suspects in-custody for up to 4 hours while they waited for an officer to show up. They were running the risk of a law suit for unlawful detention.

Was there an open discussion with the community about the problem? A meeting was set up with several of the major department stores. They all shared the frustration of being low on the priority list and having to wait for an officer. These crimes are cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars and it IS high on their priority list

A meeting was set up with a Deputy District Attorney to discuss the problem. **He advised us that it didn't matter to them who filled out the paperwork on these cases as long as an officer looked it over and approved it. Once the case came to his office they would do a final approval and issue a summons for the suspect to appear in court.**

A meeting with our records supervisor was arranged. She advised us there **wouldn't be a problem routing these cases to the D/A's office.**

We met with the Detective Sergeant who handles Larceny cases. His concern was to reduce his case load and not add more of a burden on his detectives.

How could we not send an officer to these calls and not increase the detectives case load and still prosecute these violators?

RESPONSE:

How did you develop a response as a result of your analysis? The D/A's office gave us the idea. **Why not have the Loss Prevention Officers fill out the same paperwork that a detective would in order to submit a case on an suspect. A POP officer at the sub-station would review the cases and forward them to the D/A's office.**

The question came up, what if the person was wanted? We have the Loss Prevention Officer call the sub-station and have the clerk run the subject for wants. If the person is wanted the call is transferred to dispatch and a patrol unit responds. If the person fits within the pre-set criteria the clerk gives the L/P officer an event number for his/her reports.

The criteria set up is the same for a subject being able to receive a citation from an officer in the field.

Now that we have checked the suspect and decided he/she fits the criteria the summons package is filled out and sent to a police sub-station. The POP Officer then reviews the package for probable cause and make sure all the elements are there. The package is then sent to records to be entered into our computer system. From there the package is sent on to the D/S's office for a final approval and a summons is issued for the suspect. At the present time approximately 98% of the cases are approved for summons.

The D/A's office **liked this idea** because under the old system if an officer issued a citation the suspect had to appear in court at least twice. With this system the D/A has the option to dismiss the case before court or send a summons to the subject.

The question came up in reference to juveniles, would this work with them? The answer was yes, in fact it was easier. The J? officer would check the juvenile for warrants and runaway status. They then fill a form that would schedule the juvenile and his/her parent(s) to see an hearing officer at Juvenile Court. From there it would be decided if the juvenile would go to court or handled with the parents. They liked that idea because a hearing officer could resolve many of these cases without adding to an already overloaded Juvenile Court calender.

What did you accomplish with your response? We wanted to reduce our calls for service without increasing the workload of others on our department We wanted to find a system that would work for all involved, Police, Records, Dispatch, D/A's (adult and juvenile) and the Loss Prevention Officers.

We provide training to the L/P officers along with the forms they will need. In many of the cases the L/P's had already been filling out this paperwork while they waited for an officer to arrive. It was a matter of showing them how to fill out the case submittal forms and sending these forms to the sub-station.

We did a control test of this plan for 3 months at a Smiths Food King, a K-Mart, and a Harrah Hotel. Each L/P officer was instructed and assisted throughout the test program. It gave us a good idea how the program would work and how well it was received by all involved.

ASSESSMENT:

What were the results? We average 25 Summons packages a week at this time. That translates to over 1,300 less calls for service a year. The more locations we get to come on board will reduces even more calls. If all the locations would used this instead of calling the police to have a citation issued we could save over 800 calls a month. That is the potential of this program.

Where there problems in implementing the response plan? Yes, getting everyone trained and through their first few packets. Once they did one it was easy. When a L/P officer would transfer or leave the job the training was not always getting to the replacement

What response goals were accomplished? We were able to reduce some calls for service in patrol. We are building a stronger partnership with the community. They feel apart of the process and not just an outsider looking in. We have expanded our team to get the job done.

Will your response require continue monitoring? The POP officers see all the reports that are generated and can tell if a store is not using the program. He/she can call the store and see if they need some additional training.

We are always dying to find ways to expand this program. One of our Area Commands is testing this program on all misdemeanors

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:

1) At what level was this problem-solving initiative adopted? It was tested at the Patroi level but adopted department wide. It is MOW in our policy manual and a directive to all officers.

2) Did officers or management receive any training in POP before this project began? The whole concept of POP was at its earliest stages when this problem was identified. However it was because of POP this problem was solved. Our department was just starting to let the line officers make more decisions and have some input This POP officer took the ball and ran with it.

3) Where additional incentives given to police officers who engaged in problem solving? They were allowed to report to the area captain instead of the field sergeant This way he had direct contact with the decision maker and got things done.

4) What resources and guidelines were used, if any, by the officer to help manage with problem-solving initiative? The area captain would assist with the staff reporting information to make sure all bases were covered. For the most part if it was legal and within department policy it was fair game.

5) What issues/problems were identified ? The normal problem of getting Patrol Officers to buy in was not an issue, because we took away their call which made them happy. The training of the UP officers was not a problem because once they found out about the program they were calling us for training. It benefited them as well as us.

6) What general resource commitments were made to this project, and of those resources, what went beyond the existing department budget? For the most part a few man hours and a lot of foot work went into this project. Many of the steps needed were already in place for other reasons. The most time and energy was spent telling the stores about the program and in training them. Now they are coming to us asking for the training. The forms involved are already in use and they make copies for their use.

7) project contact person.

Name: Officer Bruce Harper
Position/Rank: Problem Scanning Officer / Police Officer
Address: 400 E. Stewart, Las Vegas Nevada 89101
Phone: (702)229-3206
Fax: (702)229-3501