

# Chapter 86

## Police Knowledge Management Strategy

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### ABSTRACT

*Policing is heavily dependent on information, intelligence, and knowledge. The amount of information police officers come in contact with in the course of their work is often astounding. With a more proactive and preventive approach to crime reduction, police forces have increasingly relied on information and knowledge and associated information technology in terms of knowledge management systems to improve their performance. Accordingly, the management of knowledge is a crucial aspect of police work to promote knowledge development and sharing. This chapter covers key aspects of the police knowledge management strategy, including intelligence for knowledge, management approaches, knowledge integration, knowledge categories, organizational structure, and organizational culture for knowledge management.*

### INTRODUCTION

In policing, performance risk and execution risk reflect the knowledge deficits impeding process performance. Where knowledge deficits exist, incomplete information and know-how give rise to uncertainties that obscure prediction and execution. Performance risk and execution risk are lowered through knowledge transfer mechanisms developed to avoid and handle uncertainties. Such knowledge transfer permits knowledge reuse, and the recombination of existing knowledge is an important antecedent of uncertainty resolution (Mitchell, 2006).

Knowledge management strategy focuses on personnel resources, where the knowledge of each police officer as well as the combined knowledge in the police represents resources that are to be explored and exploited for better police work. The knowledge management strategy process includes developing a working definition of knowledge, developing a working definition of knowledge management, doing a knowledge audit, defining knowledge management objectives and strategy approaches, and implementing strategy with quality measures (Chaffey & White, 2011).

This chapter presents an overview of the literature on knowledge management paying particular

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attention to the management of knowledge in policing. Police officers have been referred to as knowledge workers. Indeed, police work such as intelligence and investigation largely revolves around obtaining, sorting and sharing information and knowledge in a meaningful way, so as to identify threats and to detain a suspect and ultimately gain a conviction. Knowledge management processes in policing are applied to ensure law enforcement personnel are more cognitively sophisticated by promoting the creation of new knowledge and the sharing of existing knowledge.

However, despite the opportunities presented by knowledge management, its integration to the policing sector has been somewhat troublesome. Even when the term knowledge management is applied in the police force, it often implies facts-based policing rather than knowledge-based policing. Facts-based policing ignores important aspects of knowledge-based policing, such as interpretation of facts by colleagues, reflection around facts by combining information pieces, and contextual factors that influence the meaning of facts. Too often, facts in terms of numbers and names represent only pieces of a reality that needs to be mapped into a complete picture of knowledge (Luen & Al-Hawamdeh, 2001).

Any discussion regarding the role of knowledge management within the context of policing must necessarily begin with an overview of the specific nature of the typical police force. Effective knowledge management is dependent on a knowledge-centered culture, which may or may not exist in different police organizations around the world. For knowledge management to thrive within the policing context, the organizational environment must be conducive to its success. If knowledge work is regarded as shuffling papers or attending formal meetings, it is little valued and carries no prestige within police organizations of that kind. Two significant factors that hinder the integration of knowledge management in the polic-

ing context seem to be the command structure and the competitive nature of the organization (Dean, Filstad & Gottschalk, 2006; Seba & Rowley, 2010; Seba, Rowley & Delbridge, 2011).

The issue of knowledge management in the police force is not a question of whether or not it might be useful. It is a question of how it can be implemented, which is the contingent approach to management. There is no universal knowledge management strategy. Rather, a strategy is based on the situation in the organization, such as the police.

## **BACKGROUND AND ISSUES**

### **Intelligence for Knowledge**

Luen and Al-Hawamdeh (2001) found that the amount of information that police officers come into contact within the course of their work is astounding. This and the vast knowledge that police officers need in order to perform their normal duties suggest the need for police officers to be proficient knowledge workers, being able to access, assimilate, and use knowledge effectively to discharge their duties.

In 2008, the office of the director of national intelligence in the USA published Vision 2015, which expands upon the notion of an intelligence enterprise, it was first introduced in the National Intelligence Strategy and later in the 100 and 500 Day Plans (ODNI, 2008). It charts a new path for a globally networked and integrated intelligence enterprise for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, founded on the principles of integration, collaboration, and innovation.

The vision is focused on knowledge management (ODNI, 2008, p. 15):

*By 2015, the focus should shift from information sharing (e.g., interoperable systems, informa-*

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