

NOW IS THE TIME TO GO MOBILE

It's apparent that the use of mobile technology is growing, and fast, we live in a world where more people have access to a mobile phone than running water¹, 35% of people use a smartphone app before getting out of bed², and UK Twitter users outnumber newspaper readers by one million³, – but what does this mean for policing?

Let's be clear – mobile technology isn't new. Policing has been using mobile technology for years; more visible examples include the police radio, devices for issuing traffic tickets, fingerprint identification devices, automated number plate recognition technology and terminals to query national databases. So, a level of effort and interest from policing is evident, and benefits have already been seen.

Most police officers use smartphones in their personal lives and have come to expect the same level of mobility and access to information when at work. Indeed it is hardly surprising that officers are now regularly using their own smart phones to help them do their job.

Importantly, the key point is not about giving the already-mobile officers access to information in the same format that they could get it in the station (i.e. an operator reading the results of a system search over the radio). It is about enabling the officer to do their job with greater ease and effectiveness, the seamless integration with other systems and not adding yet more kit to carry. This could be helping to send and receive the right information, regardless of format (e.g. photo, voice, text, video), quickly and intuitively or the use of built in "artificial intelligence" providing automatic analysis of information. Ultimately mobility can help redefine the way officers use information making them more effective; fighting crime and improving citizen satisfaction.

Accenture spoke with a range of officers across a number of countries to understand how mobile technology can transform:

- **There's no shortage of ambition:** Mobile technology projects, initiatives and strategies exist within police forces and there is a strong desire to improve effectiveness through use of mobile technology; the challenge exists in 'how' to do it.
- **Officers and innovative suppliers are key to the change:** Key to success is effective combination of the technological expertise and innovation from suppliers with practical experience and insight from officers.
- **It's not just about technology:** Policing needs to push boundaries with pioneering ideas, whilst retaining a practical focus; providing the capabilities officers need through devices that are intuitive and easy to use.
- **It's time to be brave:** Despite facing security, budget and technical constraints as well as procurement and other commercial restrictions, forces must recognise that now is the time to be brave, and that the benefits in officer satisfaction and productivity outweigh these short term challenges.

Police must also consider how they can use "policing apps" to engage with citizens. By deploying mobile apps, updates on case progression could be delivered to officer's mobile devices. The ability for citizens to submit photographs of suspicious behaviour or people via apps could be a valuable source of real-time intelligence. In a recent Accenture survey 79% of UK respondents said they wanted to see police use more digital channels to communicate but only 19% said their local police force were using digital platforms to engage. In the current financial climate and given the advances in available technology, the time is right to further explore and exploit mobility and seize upon the appetite of citizens for new ways of engaging with police.



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¹ <http://techland.time.com/2012/08/16/your-life-is-fully-mobile/>

² <http://mashable.com/2011/05/12/smartphone-apps-bed/>

³ <http://techcrunch.com/2012/07/27/ft-digital-subscribers-now-outnumber-print-for-first-time/>