

# SMARTER POLICING

Police forces globally are under increasing pressure to turn vast amounts of complex data into useful, crime-fighting insights and intelligence.

Forward-thinking police departments are now turning to analytics technologies to find quicker, smarter and more accurate means of analysing data to better assess, predict and prevent criminal activity. With predictive analytics, analysis of historical data trends is used to better inform daily operational decisions, enabling a step-change within policing.

The concept of intelligence-led policing is not new and many forces already make the most of proven techniques, such as hotspot and time series analysis. However, with the industrialisation, automation and full integration of data analytics into police operations, important insights can, for the first time, be generated without the need for large teams of intelligence analysts.

By deploying predictive techniques to analyse the data they hold, police forces can:

- Guard against the escalation of particular events by predicting which events are most likely to escalate
- Deploy personnel to where they are needed most, improving prevention capability and controlling costs
- Conduct and focus new investigations more efficiently
- Discover patterns in data that suggest areas for further investigation
- Explore security threats by studying the people, events, locations and organisations involved
- Deliver information to the field, where and when it is needed

While there have been significant technological advances, analytics remains only as powerful as the data it utilises. Police forces, therefore, face the challenge of consolidating and integrating the data available to them, much of it held in complex legacy systems, as well as leveraging data available through other sources, such as schools, health authorities and prisons.

Adding greater complexity to this challenge is the need to access enough information to be able to protect citizens while not accessing too much information that could infringe upon an individual's privacy. Targeting the right level of relevant information and being able to openly share it is a complex challenge, but one that is key to the success of initiatives such as integrated offender management.

Predictive analytics is already playing an increasingly significant role in policing around the world. The results accruing to those agencies that have deployed analytics are impressive. Examples include:

- In Santa Cruz, California, police have applied predictive analytics to burglary data in order to identify the streets at greatest risk – it resulted in a 19 per cent drop in property theft without the need for additional officers.
- The Memphis Police Department uses multi-variate analysis in crime mapping, utilising weather and school data to support deployment decisions – resulting in a 23 per cent reduction in violent crime and a 26 per cent decline in property crime.
- In Ireland, Accenture and the Department of Social Protection have used analytics to better direct their fraud detection and non-compliance activities among jobseekers – resulting in a 40 per cent increase in the number of successful investigations against their existing rules-based approach.

The power of analytics can be applied to all forms of data. In Singapore, authorities are undertaking an innovative 'Safe City' pilot programme that will integrate electronic vision technologies and predictive analytics into CCTV video feeds to detect street incidents that could pose concerns to public order or safety – from crowd and traffic movements to signs of flooding and other environmental threats. When public safety incidents are identified, alerts are sent instantly to the appropriate city authorities, including the police.

With increasing pressures on police forces, analytics will undoubtedly become a key crime-fighting tool and one that police forces can easily manage, subject to having centralised, interoperable systems and crime databases in place.

The challenge for police forces is to ensure that the required data is available and accessible and presented in a format officers can use. Most importantly, the outputs and corresponding interventions driven by analytics must be continuously reviewed and refreshed so that police interventions can evolve and adapt to eventually pre-empt and prevent criminal activity taking place.



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