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Policing gets smarter

By Ger Daly, Manuel Sánchez López and James W. Slessor

Law enforcement agencies worldwide are struggling to meet rapidly rising public expectations in an era of increasingly borderless crime and shrinking budgets. An integrated approach to service delivery, encompassing all stakeholders and driven by new technologies, is helping them become both more efficient and much more effective.

Keeping the peace, enforcing the law, protecting property.

The basic purpose and principles of policing haven't changed much since the 1829 creation of the London Metropolitan Police, which is widely considered to be the first professional police force of modern times. The environment in which the police operate, however, has changed beyond recognition.

Take crime itself. The ease of travel, more open borders and digital technologies have globalized criminality, making it far harder to contain and prosecute. Terrorism, of course, is notoriously borderless. But globalization has also massively expanded opportunities for organized crime. And technology, by spawning new kinds of crime while facilitating the traditional variety, is helping lawbreakers become ever bolder and more difficult to track down.

Indeed, drug and people trafficking, money laundering, counterfeiting and intellectual property theft are now, in effect, multinational industries, run by technologically sophisticated gangs operating across multiple jurisdictions.

Cybercrime, or crime committed using the Internet, can be particularly lucrative for its perpetrators—and deeply damaging for its victims. The theft of personal financial data online, for example, is estimated to cost the world's consumers a whopping $110 billion annually.

Citizens expect to be protected from these more modern crimes the same way they expect protection from such traditional offenses as burglary and assault. What's more, they want to be directly involved in the crime-fighting effort. In a world of 24-hour news, apps and social media, people now expect the sort of "always on, always aware" relationship with the police that they enjoy with other service providers— a constant dialogue, both online and in person.

Common challenges

An increasingly innovative criminal fraternity and soaring public expectations are common challenges for law enforcement organizations worldwide, as Accenture confirmed in recently conducted interviews with 22 senior police officers from 17 such organizations in 16 countries.[1]

And in an age of austerity, many governments are struggling to do more with less. Spain, for instance, has reduced the budget for public safety programs by almost 11 percent since 2010, and expenditures will likely continue to slump until at least 2015. Meanwhile, funding for Europol, the Netherlands-based agency of the 27-member European Union that battles cross-border terrorism and serious international crime, has dwindled by more than 7 percent during the past two years.

Yet these challenges also represent significant opportunities—a chance to transform policing into a more efficient and effective service, fit for the 21st century.

Our interview findings, coupled with experience from the work of Accenture Police Services and the Accenture Police Center of Excellence, show that farsighted law enforcement agencies recognize that the time is ripe for change. Some are already pursuing different approaches to crime fighting—more integrated, joined-up approaches that promise to deliver significant benefits.

As these leaders move toward this new model of policing, six steps are emerging as the keys to success.

[1] Accenture conducted interviews with police services in Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, Slovakia, Spain, the United States (state and federal) and Wales, 10 of which were national police forces.

Spain: Using social media to fight crime

With more than 16 million of them on Facebook, and hundreds of thousands also trending on Twitter, the Spanish are among Europe's most enthusiastic users of social media. Indeed, almost 66 percent of Spaniards with access to the Internet are already active social networkers.

Small wonder, then, that the Policía Nacional—one of Spain's two nationwide police services—has been leveraging social networks in the fight against crime, significantly boosting its public profile in the process (the force's YouTube channel ranks as the most popular official site in Spain). And its Twitter profile is not only the most followed of any Spanish institution but also second only to the FBI's among law enforcement organizations globally.

In 2009, the Policía Nacional launched its Twitter account as a way to communicate with the press. But in January 2012, the force began to use the social medium to enlist the help of citizens in combating a diversity of offenses, from child pornography and domestic violence to vandalism. This more social-media-savvy tactic has proven remarkably successful. For example, thanks to information sent to the force via Twitter since January 2012, the police have arrested 300 suspected drug traffickers.

A growing threat from organized crime has also spurred Spain's law enforcement organizations to leverage other new technologies—notably the centralized, integrated information management systems that can help them become more operationally effective (see story).

For example, Spain's other national police force, Guardia Civil, now benefits from an integrated operations management system, known by its Spanish acronym, SIGO. It enables officers to share information with other law enforcement agencies both within the country and abroad, and allows citizens to file tips and complaints online.

SIGO's implementation has cut the time it takes frontline officers to record an incident by 70 percent and the time they spend on administrative tasks by 20 percent. What's more, the system now boasts an investigation solution, whose Spanish acronym is SINVES, to support the Guardia Civil's elite Terrorism and Major Crime Investigation unit. By incorporating specialist intelligence and analytical capabilities in a highly secure environment, SINVES enables the unit to control access to sensitive information, and share it in confidence if necessary.

1. Engage the citizen

Empowered by technology, particularly social media, citizens clearly want to participate more actively in assisting law enforcement agencies. A 2012 Accenture survey of attitudes toward the police in six countries (Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States) found, for example, that fully 88 percent of people polled believe they should be playing a critical role in crime reporting. And a majority (especially among the young) wants more digital interactions with the police.

More than 70 percent believe that social media can help catch criminals, and the police concur. A recent survey by the International Association of Chiefs of Police revealed that of the 92.4 percent of law enforcement agencies in the United States that use social media, for example, 74 percent say it has helped them solve crime in their jurisdiction.

Consider the Policía Nacional in Spain, which has employed Twitter to raise public awareness of crimes like vandalism and enlist the help of citizens in successfully concluding several investigations into major crimes, including drug trafficking (see sidebar, above).

But if the astute use of social media can help build public trust in the police, our 2012 survey also showed that a majority of the public expects their interactions with the police to remain anonymous. That makes developing clear guidelines around just how and where social and other digital media will be used a top priority for any police force. Moreover, the web portals

Toronto: Optimization through organizational change

Toronto is the largest city in Canada, a multicultural metropolis of more than 2.5 million inhabitants whose numbers swell by a million when tourists and visitors are included.

Policing such a kaleidoscope of people would be challenging at the best of times. But like many law enforcement organizations these days, the Toronto Police Service is striving to meet rising public expectations in a climate of economic austerity. Indeed, the province of Ontario—Toronto is its capital—faces the biggest budget deficit among Canadian provinces for the current fiscal year.

Small wonder, then, that the Toronto Police Service wants to create a more economically sustainable operating model, one that's also capable of ensuring public safety far into the future.

The Chief's Internal Organizational Review (CIOR) established a governance structure to build that model. Its mandate: to balance the demands of austerity with the operational realities of delivering efficient and effective police services that are community-based.

The CIOR, which is soliciting the views of frontline officers as well as external experts, is an ongoing process, comprising a number of parallel strategic initiatives. Most significantly, it represents one of the boldest and most proactive attempts anywhere in the world to reexamine police services and the assumptions on which they are based.

The CIOR is not only scrutinizing how public-private partnerships could be leveraged. It is also performing a root-and-branch reappraisal of the Toronto Police Service's organizational structure—currently, a multilayered hierarchy of 62 different units.

By embracing best practices and optimization opportunities, the CIOR aims to deliver a more effective and efficient service. Moreover, recognizing that human resources account for most of the Toronto Police Service's budget, the CIOR is seeking external advice to determine the optimal number of police officers needed to ensure that service remains top-notch.

through which people interact with the police need to be exceptionally secure, as well as easy to use.

Where such safeguards are in place, the outcomes have been highly encouraging. Cases in point: New York City's 311 Customer Service Center, a self-service web portal that provides a single point of reference to all divisions of city government for non-emergencies, including the police; and the Facewatch ID app, which allows UK citizens to search closed-circuit TV images within a defined area and report confidentially to a registered police force.

The New York City service has helped resolve a variety of "quality of life" complaints—from noise and graffiti to faulty street lighting—more quickly and efficiently by routing them directly to the relevant police precinct or city agency. And the local police force in Surrey, England, leveraged the Facewatch ID app to make more than

200 positive identifications of wanted individuals within the first six months of the system's 2012 launch.

2. Empower police officers

Time is critical in police work. Evidence degrades, witnesses' memories fade and victims' determination to see a case through weakens. But such mobile technologies as smartphones and tablets can accelerate response times by helping frontline officers gain instant access to critical information at the crime scene.

Europol's mobile office solution, for example, gives officers real-time, secure access to the organization's centralized databases and analysis systems, from any location. In 2011 (the last year for which metrics are available), it was deployed 84 times— a more than 150 percent increase over 2010, when the capability was improved and upgraded.

Singapore: Analytics for an even safer city

Public safety and security are top priorities for Singapore, which takes pride in its famously low crime rate. But while the World Economic Forum ranks Singapore's police service third in the world and the top in Asia for reliability, the government is always seeking new ways to stay ahead of rapidly changing needs and mounting challenges.

Which is why the Ministry of Home Affairs (the parent agency of the Singapore Police Force), together with the Singapore Economic Development Board, has launched a one-year pilot program to integrate advanced, automated analytics capabilities into existing video monitoring infrastructure.

The "Safe City" pilot will apply electronic vision technologies and predictive analytics to surveillance video feeds to detect which of a multitude of street incidents—from crowd and traffic movements to signs of flooding and other environmental threats—pose real concerns for public order or safety. When serious incidents are identified, alerts will be sent to the appropriate authority, including, of course, the police.

The intelligent technologies the program leverages enable real-time information sharing and will give police deeper insights into public safety across Singapore's densely populated urban landscape. They will also increase the force's ability to anticipate and respond to incidents and crises as they occur.

If successful, the pilot will be extended. Meanwhile, Singapore's move puts it in the forefront of law enforcement organizations worldwide that are turning to analytics to help them cope better with increasingly complex security issues (see story).

Such technologies can also help make policing significantly more efficient. In Belgium, for instance, one local police force used smartphones to reduce administrative processes by 20 minutes per statement—equivalent to 30 man-days per year. In Portugal, meanwhile, police officers dealing with traffic violations can use tablets or PDAs that give them instant access to prior-offense records and other important databases, thereby significantly speeding up the issuance and management of fines.

Indeed, a 2012 pilot in southern England found that using such mobile technologies as laptops and PDAs was, on average, 15 minutes faster than manual processes, and enabled officers to send complete information to the central database in less than one minute, without having to return to the police station.

3. Optimize ways of working

As new technologies steadily reduce the administrative burden on the police—and even the need for brick-and-mortar police stations—they free up officers to focus more on interacting with the public in frontline positions. Some future police services—dealing with complaints, for example—may be run from contact points in supermarkets, coffee shops and community centers.

Twenty-first century police forces aren't only using technology to build the optimal organization, however. They're also partnering with the private sector to make such non-core services as the maintenance of vehicle fleets, buildings and other facilities more efficient. Denmark's national police force has gone so far as to outsource all facilities management services to a private company.

And a few forces are moving toward the sort of consolidated, fully inte-grated organizational structure that has the potential to deliver optimal operational efficiency.

In Scotland, eight separate regional police forces and the Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency have been consolidated into Police Scotland, a new police service responsible for

For further reading

"The Enterprise Approach to Law Enforcement," Accenture 2012: http://www.accenture.com/us-en/Pages/insight-enterprise-approach-to-law-enforcement.aspx

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law enforcement throughout the land. In the Republic of Ireland, structural changes, including the consolidation of police districts, have already allowed the An Garda Síochána, that country's national police service, to realize savings of more than €53 million over two years—a significant efficiency for a force whose budget shrank by 6 percent between 2011 and 2012. Meanwhile, in Canada, the Toronto Police Service is looking at opportunities to restructure and reallocate resources to achieve significant results (see sidebar, page 4).

4. Predict and improve through analytics

Predictive analytics that incorporate social factors and local demographics can play a significant role in enhancing the intelligence-led law enforcement that will help police anticipate crime, tackle chronic recidivism and manage risk more effectively. And some forces are combining geographic profiling and criminal analytics to identify criminal networks and predict crime hotspots.

Consider the case of Santa Cruz, California, where the police have applied predictive analytics to burglary data to identify streets at greatest risk. The upshot: a 19 percent reduction in property theft—without putting additional officers on the streets or changing shift times.

Analytics can also be combined with existing infrastructure—video cameras and sensors—to deliver real-time intelligence. In Singapore, for example, the authorities are launching a Safe City pilot, which integrates advanced analytical capabilities into existing video monitoring systems to increase situational awareness, streamline operations and accelerate response times (see sidebar, page 5).

In fact, analytics can be valuable in just about any aspect of a police

investigation—as long as intelligence sharing is fully supported. Local police forces, after all, often lack both the resources and jurisdictional authority to fight crime as it becomes increasingly internationalized. They need access to centralized, interoperable systems and crime databases. Which is why in Germany, regional, local and federal forces can communicate with one another through a central, standardized data exchange run by the Federal Criminal Police Office.

5. Enhance collaboration

As crime becomes more diverse and increasingly globalized, collaborative initiatives among and between police forces are more critical than ever.

In 2011, Europol, for example, supported more than 13,500 cross-border investigations—a more than 17 percent increase on 2010. Similarly, the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO–INTERPOL) has experienced about a 32 percent increase in requests for information since 2009, when the Lyon, France-based organization set up I-link, an electronic information exchange for its 190 member countries. I-link gives authorized users access to complete, uniform criminal data, within and across borders, allowing investigators to uncover connections between seemingly unrelated crimes.

Collaboration, however, needs to encompass more than just fellow police forces to be truly effective. The private sector, other public service organizations, and, of course, citizens themselves—all of them sources of information that could be critical in a criminal investigation—need to be drawn into a collective effort, led by the police.

In fraud prevention, for instance, private companies are often better placed to protect themselves and gather evidence of crime, which they can then send on to the police to investigate. Similarly,

insurance companies can directly incentivize people to protect their property. And collaborating with social services organizations can help the police both prevent crime and deal better with repeat offenders. In Denmark, for instance, a program that unites social services, schools and the police is helping officers work with people who are deemed high-risk for committing a crime or who have previously committed a crime.

6. Proactively manage change

The changes necessary to build the effective police forces of the future will require a much more creative and proactive approach to change management—an approach that recognizes change as a constant, and constantly evolving, process.

Above all, leaders will need to develop cultures that actively embrace change. By updating its competencies model and implementing a skills-development program that delivers intensive and interactive training and customized experiences to reinforce learning, one US federal law enforcement agency has helped ensure that future supervisors are fully equipped to be effective change managers, from the day they are promoted.

Structured change management of this order, where ownership and accountability are clearly defined and maintained, will facilitate the acceptance of new processes and technologies. And by drawing in frontline officers through appropriate training, setting and managing citizen expectations, and sharing responsibility for outcomes, progressive police forces will be able to drive maximum value from those assets.

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There is a long way to go before all police forces possess the real-time, intelligence-led capabilities that will enable them to crack the complex

criminal networks that threaten global peace and security. But our research shows that today's police leaders have a very clear understanding of the challenges they face, and that many are rising to those challenges—inclusively, collaboratively and with conviction. ◾

About the authors

Ger Daly is the managing director of Accenture's Defense & Public Safety industry group. He is based in Dublin.
ger.daly@accenture.com

Manuel Sánchez López, a Madrid-based managing director, heads Accenture Police Services.
manuel.sanchez.lopez@accenture.com

James W. Slessor, a London-based managing director, leads Accenture Police Services in Europe, Africa and Latin America.
james.w.slessor@accenture.com