POLICE RECORDS AND INFORMATION
PRI Management Group

Making Sure Your CAD/RMS Project Goes Right
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April 2013

Last week a police department in Pennsylvania made the news because its 1.2 million dollar RMS and field reporting project isn't going well. The system is not doing what it was promised to do and what should have been a 1 year project has turned into 3 (so far). Worse yet, the most important element of the project, end-users, the officers who need and use the system the most, don't like the system. Their concerns are valid: having to enter the same information more than once; missing statutes (code tables); cumbersome interface.

What was the Chief's response?
The article quoted the Chief of Police who said: *"It may not make officers on the street happy because it requires them to do a lot of work," he said. "It's a good system for management. If they're not happy, too bad ... They have to work with the equipment we give them."* See the article here.

Ample research from notable organizations such as the IACP, NIJ and IJIS Institute (which is readily available on the internet) indicates it is **this type of attitude and approach to a project that will doom it from the beginning.** Even common sense dictates that such disregard for the needs of the system's users is a recipe for disaster. With all of the information about technology initiatives that is available to law enforcement right on the internet, why do these kinds of failures still occur? The reasons can be many and this is why much work, research and due diligence must be done when undertaking such a project.

Obviously writing on behalf of a business that offers consulting services for these kinds of projects I am slightly biased and would always suggest hiring a consultant. Nonetheless, we also recognize that many agencies don't have the financial resources or support from the decision makers to do so.   With this in mind and having worn the badge myself, I can honestly say I have been there and done that and therefore have a sincere interest in offering any help I can, hence this article and our many others.

While it is impossible to spell out every detailed requirement of an RMS/CAD project in a newsletter short enough to keep your attention, here are **some key suggestions**:

First, do your research. I have amassed a lot of resources needed to learn about these projects on my website. Take the time to read these materials and follow what they say. Then you can begin working on the project itself, assuming you have obtained funding.

It is imperative to **form a governance structure** which is commensurate with the size and number of resources in your agency. A larger agency will require various committees charged with financial, technical, and oversight responsibilities and input. Someone must be in charge and buy-in must be obtained at the outset from all levels.

Assessing and documenting your agency's business processes and technical environment is imperative. This includes mapping out your key information workflows, approval procedures and the who, what, when, where, why and how of the way you manage information. Identifying the technical environment and what will be required of the new system will involve coordinating closely with your IT staff and aligning your needs with current industry standards. Networks, hardware, software, security and Global Reference Architecture must all be considered.

Begin a process of change management and stakeholder buy-in through regular meetings, informational sessions and enhancing internal communication strategies that keep employees up to speed on the project. Spend a lot of time determining end-user and system administrator needs from representatives in each and every corner of the department. Failing to get the input from those who know how to do the job and what will or won't work is critical to project success. This includes identifying both functional and technical needs as they relate to a new system.

Continue communicating up, down and horizontally within the agency and with any key external stakeholders to ensure open lines of communication continue. Begin to speak with other agencies about their systems and identify possible vendors that fit the bill. Be sure to consider vendors whose customer base and target market are agencies of similar size, scope and function. Avoid at all costs vendors whose growth has outpaced their capabilities to meet customer demands. The large tier one vendors will quickly forget about a smaller agency once the contract is signed and they have been paid. Also, vendors who have grown rapidly sometimes end up losing pace with their customer support requirements and getting help when something goes wrong becomes difficult.

If I can help you in any way, please contact me anytime. My business provides excellent RMS/CAD and records management consulting and training services with integrity and professionalism. We specialize in ensuring police agencies get the right information into the rights hands at the right time.

If you're seeking a new CAD or RMS consider PRI as your advocate to help manage the project correctly and make your investment go well. See what we can do here and best of luck!