Top 10 Law Enforcement Information Management Failures

#1 Failing at Culture

You have to see the big picture, not just your part of it. Getting an entire agency to build the importance of records management into its fiber requires work. It starts at the top. Furthermore, most records managers don't realize they're charged with ensuring the agency overall is managing information correctly, not just the Records Unit. This is the person who should lead the effort to create an organizational culture which takes records management, report writing, UCR, retention, disposal and quality control seriously.

#2 Keeping Everything

Operating under the mindset that law enforcement information should never be destroyed is counter to good government. This creates liability and increases costs. If you still have it, you have to manage (and potentially release) the record. Do you really need the noise complaint reports from 10 years ago? Or petty theft reports with no serial numbers from 20 years ago? This is what leads to rooms full of boxes and dust that nobody knows what to do with.

#3 No Retention Schedules

This is what causes #2. Time and again we encounter agencies which have never done a disposal because they don't know what to keep and what to destroy. That's what retention schedules are for. The longer you go without them, the further the can gets kicked down the road and the bigger the boxes get, the more storage and memory gets used and the less and less someone wants to tackle the problem.

#4 No Training

Failure to train is a plan to fail. The Records Manager or other person in this functional role needs to ensure training is provided in the agency's records management policies and procedures. If you want to avoid the GIGO factor and lessen the workload in Records you have to work on fixing what's outside Records first.

#5 Failing to Change

If you're proud of your Lektriever machine- well....it's 2016. Unless it's an archive record from a long time ago, paper is a thing of the past. It's time to move forward. Today's information should be managed digitally from creation to disposition. Holding your job hostage by insisting on doing business your way only makes it harder (and hurts the agency and the citizens we serve).

#6 Information Proliferation

Do you know someone that scans a record, files the original, then sends hard copies inter-office *and* keeps their own copy just in case any of the other 3 get lost? The efficient functioning of an organization is largely dependent on how well it manages its information. Unnecessary duplication costs time and money.

#7 Data Entry

If you're entering someone else's record, you're creating it twice- doubling the record and the work required to make it. We cringe when we hear agencies say...*"We would rather pay a clerk $15/hour than an officer $25/hour to enter reports".* So $40 for the same information is better?

#8 Not Letting Records Do Their Job

"No civilian is going to make corrections to my report". Actually, that's their job (in part)- to ensure the department is producing information which is accurate, error-free and well-written. This is a big myth that we debunk in our training seminars. We've heard too many CEOs say "if the report looks bad, it's a reflection of the officer- let them look bad in court." It's a reflection of the agency and the person at the top. Culture is everything. See #1.

#9 No CAD/RMS/MFR

In 2016, we all should have technology infrastructure in place that enables sound information management and good business processes. It's what helps prevent #1 through 7 above. While budgets are tight, some vendors ("solutions providers" is for the PC) have stepped up to the plate and developed cost efficient business models and tech platforms. There are solutions for every need and for every budget.

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#10 Paper, Paper, Paper

In every seminar we teach, there are agencies who admit that they're still printing reports out from RMS and filing them. There are agencies who print out 6 copies of documents as standard practice when only 1 should exist: the one in the system. And there are folks who just do it the way.....they've always done it.

How Do You Fix This?

These are issues that can be fixed. Besides knowing what to look for and how to fix them, it requires a certain savoir faire; finesse; a vision; an understanding of the law enforcement culture and its operations.

After an in-depth assessment of the current operations, we'll obtain input from top to bottom to garner insight into the agency's goals, objectives, points of friction and barriers to success (as an "outsider" we have the upper-hand in overcoming them). Then, we move to action and get the agency into compliance and operating smoothly with better workflows, process, technology and performance. See how at our consulting page. Policerecordsmanagement.com