

The RegJIN Project: a major RMS/CAD project gone wrong

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\$12.6M spent. \$6M over budget. 4 years late. 43 law enforcement agencies impacted. Decline in service to the public. And most importantly, officer and citizen safety called into question. This is the Portland, Oregon RegJIN (Regional Justice Information Network) project, a two-state RMS sharing cooperative between Washington and Oregon police agencies; a project that has received significant attention thanks to the press coverage detailing its problems.

At last count, nine stories have been published or televised in the Northwest about the failures of this very large project. In just a few short years, agencies which bought into RegJIN are now pulling out. And while the finger pointing has become a near race to arthritis, there really is only one common denominator- bad technology from a company with a reputation of not listening to its customers. Were there project management issues? Personnel issues? Performance issues? Planning failures? One only knows.

What is known is that a serious, grave injustice has been done to taxpayers and public safety practitioners alike in Washington and Oregon- over 2.5 million of them to be exact. RegJIN currently has between nearly 5000 total users in over 30 agencies, generating 50,000 electronic police reports a month. A complex project? Certainly. One that is likely to have some bumps along the way? No doubt. Can the problems be justified with any degree of reasonable explanation other than the fact that the system itself should not have been selected in the first place? Probably not. It is for this reason that law enforcement should be very aware of this ever so important case study. It is for this reason that I take no shame in writing this article and doing only what every consultant who serves law enforcement should have the fortitude to do- speak up and do right by your clients- let them know what to steer clear of. It's what they pay for.

"RegJIN is a disaster," Clark County Undersheriff Mike Cooke said here in [one of the numerous articles](#) written thus far. "The system is so needlessly complicated... It's really an unusable system."

Previously slated to be one of the nation's largest and most effective regional crime-fighting system implementations, the system has been nothing but trouble. The handwriting was actually on the wall long before agencies started [pulling out last year](#).

In 2011, The Oregonian wrote an article [about the troubles agencies were having](#) with the \$14.5M CAD system utilized by Portland and all of Multnomah counties- a system built by the same company that built the RegJIN RMS:

“A month into operation, the new computer dispatch system has raised more than 400 safety concerns. Police and firefighters complain that it's cumbersome and slow.

It also has irked municipal police chiefs, who said they were surprised to learn in January -- more than a year after the contract was signed -- that their agencies would have to help pay \$2.5 million annually to keep the system operating.”

In June, 2013, [The Portland Mercury](#) wrote:

“Portland Auditor LaVonne Griffin-Valade will tell you: The shiny new records system cops are teeing up for a late 2014 launch is coming in vastly more expensive than early projections, and four years later than planned.

And history will tell you Portland's got a spotty track record with the Canadian company the city is poised to give almost \$7 million.

*On Wednesday, June 12, Portland City Council approved spending \$6.6 million on new records software from the Ottawa-based Versaterm. Planners expect to spend an **additional** \$6 million to get the new system fully operational.*

Hales' comments glossed over the history of the project, known as the Regional Justice Information Network, or RegJIN (pronounced "region"). As an April audit pointed out, the effort was initially estimated to cost \$6.5 million total, and was slated for a late 2010 launch.

There was also no mention at last week's hearing of the city's other experience with Versaterm—the complaint-laden 2011 rollout of a \$14.5 million 911 dispatch system.

That process involved a near-mutiny from area law enforcement agencies, who considered not paying to use the system because of its perceived flaws. The months after the software went live were marked by hundreds of complaints and error reports—from system-wide crashes, to concerns officers were being incorrectly dispatched to calls outside of their jurisdictions, to complaints about the size of the font on cops' mobile computers.”

I've worked in Records; I've worked in Communications. I've been a call-taker, officer, detective, records manager, sergeant, lieutenant, end-user and system administrator of both CAD and RMS applications. I have since worked hard as president of our leading public safety [consulting firm](#) to ensure that agencies get the right solution, at the right price, on time and in alignment with the needs of their constituencies. I'm sympathetic to those who worked so hard to make RegJIN work.

I have also been approached on three different occasions by CAD/RMS providers wanting to “partner” with my company, offering lucrative commissions for any agencies we succeed in getting to buy their products. I've turned down every one of them. The customer comes first.

It is only by framing the work that you do through the lens of the customer that success is attainable. I know that back when I commanded my agency's records and data management unit this approach served my agency very well. It is an approach that involves putting the customer first- the customer being the public, our employees and partner agencies.

How will they be impacted by what we decide to do? What kind of experience will they have when interacting with our systems and procedures? What will be the outcome of the decisions that we make regarding our purchases and processes?

It is also an approach that has led to our success and why agencies that experienced the failures of RegJIN turned to us here at PRI for help. The Clark County Sheriff's office and Vancouver PD have entrusted us to assist with their records operations. Why? Because we care. We put our clients and their customers first. We ask "how will this impact the citizens, agency personnel and other agencies". Then and only then will our clients achieve success. Our formula is quite simple. And it has worked very, very well.

[Contact us](#) for help anytime.