CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

ACCELERATING POLICE COMMUNICATION PATHS

Smart and social media has completely changed the way we communicate. As the threat of terror continues, Frequentis' Mark Pearson and Alan Lee explain why modern policing should adapt its approach to communication with the public

The arrival of smart and social media over the last 10 years has had a huge influence on society and is continuing to play a large role in policing. Uses in this environment include police investigations and ongoing crime prevention through social media monitoring and keyword listening, and sharing outbound messages on social platforms to inform the public of incidents or dispel rumours. But the third area, not yet fully utilised, is the use of social media as a form of incoming contact from the public.

Prior to the introduction of handheld radios reporting of incidents or requests for assistance were phoned in via a Police Box or public phone box, which highlights how much a technology like this impacted the efficiency of tackling crime. It is therefore a logical next step to consider how mobile devices beyond voice communications can do the same. Today, nine out of ten over 16s use a mobile, seven out of ten use a smartphone and 76 per cent of all internet users have a social media profile. But why should the police utilise this communication path?

EXPECTING A CHOICE
Because the public can communicate immediately and seamlessly on various mobile devices and social media applications like WhatsApp or Facebook in daily life they expect the same communication methods to be available to them for all Police contact. Young adults are also much more comfortable sending text or instant messages than making voice calls, which is largely down to convenience. They are also more likely to make video calls.

Many businesses, including banks and phone companies, already allow contact via social media or instant messaging web chat – both of which accelerate communication flow between parties and increase efficiency. Messages can also be prioritised. More precise information can be delivered over social applications, while the ability to attach images or even videos will increase the understanding of an incident. For this reason, it is important to encourage Police Forces to embrace these communication streams as the norm, especially when it comes to enhancing situational awareness during live anti-terror operations.

DEALING WITH INCREASED DEMAND
As the gap between available police resources and the number of incidents that require support grows, solutions that improve officer and operator effectiveness increase in priority. The use of smart phones and social media is one way to enable law enforcement to do 'more with less'. Of course, confirming the integrity of information poses a challenge but all this additional information can provide front line officers with real-time access to vast amounts of data, ensuring better intelligence for an improved public service.

The London Bridge terror attack in 2017 demonstrated how images and messages from the public could enhance situational awareness, and in the wake of the attack the public were encouraged to upload videos or images to the police website to be analysed, as the investigation continued. The key is how we efficiently manage this information without adding additional strain on control rooms. The focus should be on operator performance, reducing manual tasks and harmonising operator communication and collaboration.

THE RIGHT COMMUNICATION PATH
Every situation is unique and it is therefore the expectation that police control rooms can support multiple communication methods, receive all types of media and respond in the appropriate way. Therefore, police control room capabilities need a single point of presentation if multiple media routes are going to be appropriately utilised.

The presentation of multi-channel communications needs to be mobile, flexible, practical, secure, robust and reliable, situational aware and capable of harvesting the positive aspects of Broadband 3G/4G/5G. The Frequentis LifeX3020 is an example of a solution that can handle multimedia information that comes in, in any form, and feed it out to the operator as a single communication stack. By adding smart geolocation there is an additional and valuable information layer, enabling improved contact handling and resource allocation. And when emerging technologies like facial, text and voice recognition software can be

MARK PEARSON

Key Account Manager, Metropolitan Police Service

Mark joined Frequentis in April 2018 from Motorola to deepen the company's important, long-term relationship with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). MPS has operated Frequentis' reliable communications hub since 2005, and in 2012 the system capacity was increased for the London Olympic Games, ensuring effective support for extra police resources.

Alan Lee is a retired Police Superintendent who has been supporting Frequentis UK with public safety advice since 2011, focusing on the evolvement of digital communications.

combined in a control room solution we further increase the potential for the police to make proactive and reactive decisions. Artificial/augmented intelligence can help to consolidate this information and make an 'intelligent' presentation of the overall situation to control room personal, to aid more efficient decision making. Once live images or videos from the public can be analysed in real-time the potential is endless.

A multimedia control room that can manage and respond to all kinds of communication paths will increase the flexibility and ease of use for public emergency contact and also assist operator and police response times. The goal is not to change police and public communication but to enhance it, by embracing smart and social media. ∎

FURTHER INFORMATION
www.frequentis.com