

Knowledge Exchange by and for Public Safety Professionals



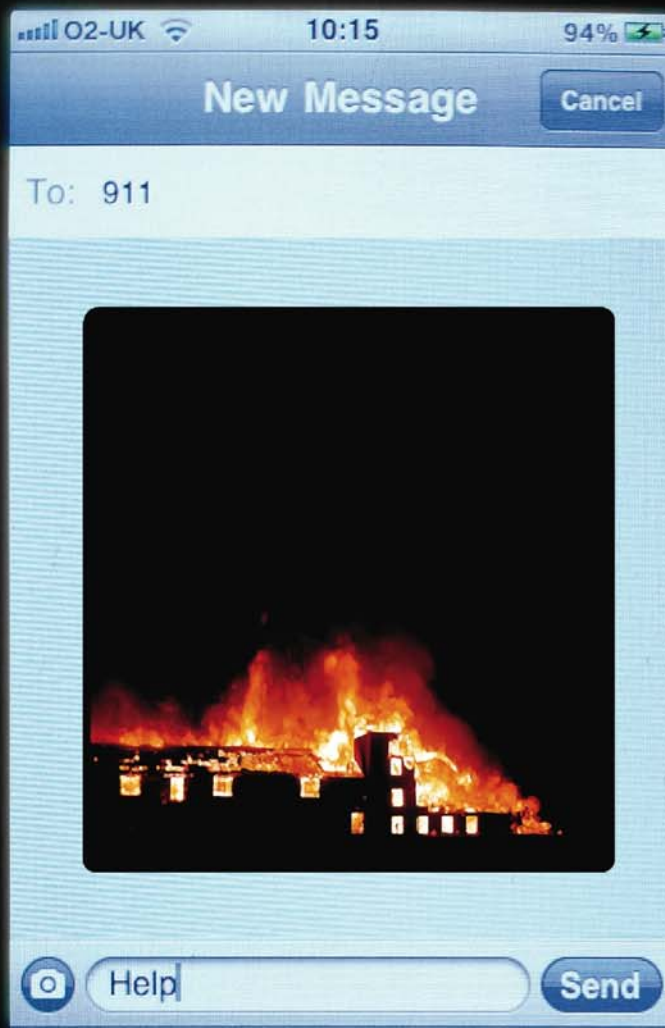
Top tips for ensuring a trouble-free procurement process for command vehicles.



European project bears fruit in achieving seamless communications.

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Text 911 for help

US leads in multimedia emergency response

Business intelligence for the public sector



Intergraph consultant Nick Chorley explains why business intelligence is a smart idea for public safety.



"BI is not a new technology: in 2009 analyst Gartner measured the BI market at \$9.3 billion, and its research has identified it as a continuing management priority."

Nick Chorley, Intergraph.

Business intelligence (or 'BI') is an umbrella term that refers to a range of software applications used to analyse an organisation's raw data. Many sectors are already using BI to improve company decision making, cut costs and identify new business opportunities; and according to CIO.com, executives often use BI to identify business processes that are ripe for re-engineering.

However, to date BI's penetration of public safety and security organisations has been very limited. Why? A 2010 survey conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit identified culture as the main barrier to implementing information strategies in the public sector. Perhaps, but the performance-enhancing and cost-cutting potential of BI technology are worthy of public safety consideration.

BI consists of several related activities including data mining, online analytical processing, querying and reporting. It allows the user to quickly access a wealth of data from systems such as CAD and RMS (records management).

BI tools 'mine' the data hidden within complex database structures and integrate it into an organisation's business processes. The user can use BI systems to generate and present quality reports from CAD and other public safety applications; view and explore information from those applications, and do up-to-the-minute performance monitoring using intuitive dashboards. For example: a police agency needed to quickly access critical blue light dispatch call information; however creating reports from its computer-aided dispatch CAD system took more than 14 different steps to generate a report. Using Intergraph's Business Intelligence for Public Safety solution the agency can now more swiftly access and analyse critical data on emergency calls, run reports in minutes with one click, and monitor police performance more efficiently.

In another case a US federal agency, which investigates murders, fraud, drug-related crimes and people who steal secrets and sell them to other countries, has recently shifted its focus to not only investigating and solving but now also preventing crimes. It uses BI to analyse trends in criminal behaviour that then allow it to take proactive measures against crimes, before they happen; and because BI is suitable for non-technical users, non-IT staff are able to analyse information, increasing productivity.

Being a latecomer to BI may be good news for public safety, as developers have had time to iron out the costly deployment complexities that have sometimes dogged this technology in other markets. The Business Intelligence in Public Safety solution achieves this by combining public safety, application-specific information from Intergraph's command and control software with Business Objects' BI infrastructure software. The result is a commercial off-the-shelf BI solution for public safety use. The underlying information sits in a single pre-configured warehouse and reporting universe, which acts as a foundation and has been created from command and control data, but which can also be extended to include other related or derived data, such as call handling data from a telephone switch.

In a BI environment of this kind the user sees only familiar public safety terminology on their screen – but (actually) every term they see and use relates to the underlying database. This process gives the organisation access to a large amount of additional, highly structured information that is considerably more dynamic than simple reporting, but without the deployment issues referred to above.

BI-generated information can also be distributed through a secure, pre-configured Web portal that allows controlled access to a wide variety of users such as command staff, mobile officers and crime analysts. This type of specialist, dedicated BI environment improves the organisation's analysis, planning and operational decision making. It maintains information for media/public; and it improves resource allocation because it promotes better distribution of workloads and equipment, helping the user to deploy resources based on real-time, accurate shift information.

Performance monitoring is carried out with the help of intuitive, highly graphical, non-technical management dashboards with associated analysis engines. These allow the public safety user to relate their strategies to goals and metrics, measuring performance in real time and over time.

Using BI, budget planning reflects actual staff requirements, workloads and other very real information. Operational problems are flagged earlier for action, and steps to optimise performance are highlighted. In these and other ways, BI has the potential to help the public safety user achieve operational excellence, and cut costs.

DELIVERING LOWER COST INCIDENT MANAGEMENT THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

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