



BlackBerry Customer Success Story

Baltimore Police Department gets More Officers into the Community with Help from BlackBerry Smartphones



The Baltimore Police Department has more than 4,000 sworn and civilian members. The agency patrols and governs the Baltimore area and oversees a population of 660,000. The Baltimore PD is continually focused on finding new ways to effectively police their community. Baltimore PD was an award recipient at the 2010 Wireless Leadership Awards, sponsored by Research In Motion, for Innovation in the Public Sector.

Industry: Law Enforcement

Region: North America

Company Size:
Large Organization - 5,000 employees

Email Platform:
Novell® GroupWise®

Solution: Side Partner

BlackBerry Alliance Members:
InterActPocketCop and Xora Field Force Manager

THE CHALLENGE

Baltimore Police Commissioner Frederick H. Bealefield III wanted to get 2,000 officers out of their vehicles so they could spend more time relating to their communities and patrolling the streets. But police communicate with their dispatchers by laptops and radios hardwired into their cars - which keeps them vehicle bound.

“In the last 15 years in domestic law enforcement, we’ve trained cops around their vehicles,” says Bealefield. “We’ve made their vehicle their mobile office. Except that now they don’t leave the office.”

To mobilize police communications, Baltimore PD knew any new solution had to contribute to the safety of the officer, increase the ability to do their jobs easily on the street, and provide up-to-date information that could be acted on. The solution also had to connect to secure police databases such as the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) and the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) in Baltimore.

“We realized a mobile solution could be a priceless way for an officer to have tangible, visible information about who they are dealing with when they meet someone on the street,” says Gayle Guilford, Director of MIS for the Baltimore Police Department.

THE SOLUTION

Baltimore PD used the BlackBerry solution as the basis of an amalgamated policing solution they call Side Partner. Side Partner is designed around a BlackBerry® smartphone that becomes an all-in-one tool for communications, criminal database access, zeroing in on GPS locations, video and photography.

One key aspect of the solution is an application by InterAct™ Public Safety called InterActPocketCop. It’s designed to provide secure access to NCIC, MVA and other databases, with alarm capabilities and wireless messaging. While on a scene, without a dispatcher’s help, an officer can run a license plate, look up the name of a suspect, and receive both their criminal record and a current mugshot.

“I no longer have to wait for the dispatcher to give me a person’s history,” says Sergeant Sheree Briscoe. “I can run that information while someone is in front of me, or even before I knock on a door.”

“Side Partner and the BlackBerry smartphone helps us achieve what our police commissioner wanted – more officers out of cars and into the community, interacting with people on the street in a way that’s both safe and with the information they need.”

Gayle Guilford,
Director of MIS
Baltimore Police Department

KEY BENEFITS

- Ability to run more warrants
 - Saves time for officers and dispatchers
 - Makes information about suspects more accessible
 - Reduces security risks in the field
 - One device replaces the need for many
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Another aspect of Side Partner takes advantage of BlackBerry® GPS. Using Xora’s Field Force Manager, the GPS coordinates from each officer’s BlackBerry smartphone are relayed to a desktop map. Command staff is able to see the location of every police officer deployed to an area, which is particularly useful when they’re looking at crowd control and want to reallocate their resources. This solution is also used as a locator when the whereabouts of an officer is unknown.

Baltimore PD also consider the video and camera capabilities built into the BlackBerry smartphone as a powerful aspect of their Side Partner solution. While at crime scenes, they can record what they see and use it as evidence in court – without having to carry a separate camera.

BALTIMORE PD’S BENEFITS

“Side Partner and the BlackBerry smartphone help us achieve what our police commissioner wanted – more officers out of cars and into the community, interacting with people on the street in a way that’s both safe and with the information they need,” says Guilford.

Baltimore PD estimates that it’s running double the number of warrants from a year ago, when it relied on laptops and radios as the primary communications tools. According to its analysis, each officer also saves 30 minutes every day by not having to wait for dispatchers to answer routine questions while they’re in the field. And dispatchers are freed up to handle more urgent communications.

“Having a BlackBerry smartphone means I’m spending less time trying to figure out who’s in my presence,” says Sergeant Briscoe. “I get more timely intelligence so I can quickly identify if I’m in a high risk situation.”

It’s not just officer safety that’s affected. According to Briscoe, being able to quickly rule out someone as a person of interest benefits community-police relations. “It can leave people with a positive experience with a police officer because they’re not being held up as long,” she says.

The ability to track officers by GPS signal on their BlackBerry smartphones helps deploy resources in crowd situations and can help find officers who may be missing. “Being able to tell where an officer last transmitted helps us find their last known location and means we might be able to get help to them faster,” says Guilford.

The camera capabilities of the BlackBerry smartphone means officers carry one less device while they’re mobile and don’t have to wait anymore while someone goes to find a camera. Officers use their BlackBerry smartphones to take all the necessary photographs and footage of a scene and that information becomes evidence and part of their case folder.

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