

Communications Plan

For the City Police Service

Community Based Policing

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Prepared by Harvey & Associates

Introduction

The City Police Service is embarking on the most important transition in its 100-year history – the transition to Community based policing.

Community policing represents a new philosophy and a new approach to policing that stems from the City Police Service's core value statements – Committed to Community Needs. It grows out of a necessity to provide more effective policing in the face of restricted budgets, and increasing crime rates.

The City's Police Service has 35 fewer police now than it did 10 years ago. During the same time, the City's population grew by close to 100,000 people and calls to the department increased by an almost equal number. The resources to continue the 'old' mode of delivery simply are not, and will never be available.

While the concept of Community Policing is not new (in fact it is a return to the traditional roots of policing), it has been fully implemented in very few North American cities. The City's model was developed internally to meet the specific needs of the City. As such, it represents a courageous and innovative new direction, which will be closely monitored by other police services across the country.

The main principle behind community policing is to view the community as the 'customer', and to serve the 'customers' needs as opposed to the organization's. The 'front end', those officers in direct contact with the community, are the most important component of community policing.

In order to realize this new vision of policing, both the culture and the structure of the organization are being changed. The major components of that change include a new service delivery system whereby citizens will be asked to visit community stations to receive police service for non-emergency incidents. Sixteen stations will be in operation by early 1995. As a result, police will respond to fewer service level calls, which will free up patrol members to do more problem-solving – to provide quality, preventive policing at the community level.

The Communications Challenge

While community based policing is largely an internal philosophy that involves organizational changes, a new style of leadership and a new way of thinking for all employees, it cannot be achieved without the participation of all City residents. It demands a higher level of involvement from many sectors of the community.

The challenge is to identify these sectors (the target audiences) as precisely as possible, and to understand their needs, concerns and interests – their psychographics as well as demographics. Our message to them must then be clearly identified. They must receive

enough information and the right information to lead to behaviour changes. Once we have established the desired results, the target audiences and the key messages, the most effective channels of communication can be determined.

Direct Benefits (to the target audiences)

1. Quality Service: The primary benefit to the people of the City is more effective, 'quality' policing at the community level.
2. No telephone delays: Individuals will no longer have to wait for extended periods of time to get through the main telephone complaint line. They will be able to call a community station or take their complaint to a local station at their convenience.
3. Personalized service: By dealing with an officer face to face, people will receive more personalized service. With one or two constables to deal with on a consistent basis, they will get a high level of service from officers familiar with their neighborhoods.
4. Faster emergency service: As more citizens use the stations, police will be able to respond more quickly to priority calls that require an officer to be on site.

Key Messages

1. Community policing is much more than 'working closely with communities'. It is a fundamental change in policing that affects all procedures and systems to ensure they meet the real needs of City residents. It is based on customer service.
2. Community policing enables the police service to provide a more effective service, resulting in quicker patrol car arrival time, and quicker telephone response times.
3. Community policing requires the active participation of citizens. In turn, they will receive better (ie. more personalized, more effective) service.

Objectives

To establish a high level of awareness and effective use of the City's 16 community police stations, diverting 60 per cent of all dispatched calls to the stations.

To create widespread awareness and positive acceptance of the City Police Service's new community based policing.

To increase the visibility and accessibility of the Police Service in the City communities and to foster a high level of trust between the police service and the citizens it serves.

To create a positive awareness of the City Police Service as a group of highly motivated, caring individuals who are committed to the welfare of City residents.

Target Audience Analysis

Primary: adult residents of City

1. frequent or repeat users of the police service. 79% of all calls for service are from repeat callers (within the year). These people can be best identified through a geographical breakdown of neighborhoods that generate the highest number of calls. Since the 21 beat offices exist in the top 45 busiest neighborhoods, these neighborhoods provide a good sample for analysis. See Addendum A for demographic analysis.
2. non-users, or non-repeat callers: these are people who may not place a single call in the next year, but are potential users. They are concerned, taxpaying citizens with political influence. The demographics of this group are different, including higher education and higher income levels.

Secondary:

- City Police Commission
- members of City Council
- the business community
- employees of CPS
- media
- schools (children, youth, and teachers)

Strategy

A two-tiered communications approach is recommended: Phase I – Awareness Creation, and Phase II – Information Dissemination.

Phase I will aim to create a high level of immediate positive awareness over a short period of time – 2 – 3 weeks. The objective is to create a high ‘reach’ of the target audiences. (As many people as possible will be exposed to the message of community policing.)

The purpose of Phase II is to provide audiences with adequate information to change their behavior – to begin using the community stations effectively. This information will need to be repeated through a variety of communications vehicles over a longer period of time – at least 3 months – and then sustained for the long term. Certain levels of ‘frequency’ need to be achieved before people will act on their new awareness.

In summary, a very concentrated burst of communication from Jan 6 to approximately January 26, will be followed by a longer program of communications to reinforce the

message, using a variety of methods including print material, advertising and community relations activities.

The overall tone of the campaign should be personal, warm, and human. It should convey a high level of integrity, honesty and candidness and a genuine willingness to provide a higher quality of service to City residents.