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**DEALING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA • SCORE A HOME RUN IN MIAMI • STAFF PROFILES
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Marketing

A Valuable Tool for the Business of Policing

by **Commander Stephen M. Ramirez**

Throughout the nation, law enforcement agencies are beginning to direct their energies toward the concept of community policing. The long-overdue realization that the success in achieving organizational goals is directly related to agencies' ability to satisfy the needs and wants of the communities they serve is finally being addressed. This is a concept which has long been understood and practiced by private business.

The modern police executive is increasingly aware that what we really do is manage the business of policing. The law enforcement manager, much like his private business counterpart, must become involved in planning for the current and future success of the organization. Community-based policing is a logical extension of the marketing concept. Though management of a police organization is not directly comparable with that of a private business, many of the same principles apply.

Strategic Planning and the Marketing Concept

Strategic planning provides a vision of where the organization must go in order for it to be successful, as well as a procedure or map to facilitate the journey. Without the benefit of forecasting and planning, the police executive is left with a "muddling-through" approach. A lack of

strategic planning will lead to a crisis-to-crisis style of management.

The marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals is determining the needs and wants of the various constituents and delivering the desired satisfactions efficiently and effectively. Marketing focuses on the needs of the customer and takes an outside-in perspective by defining exactly who the customer is and then preparing a tailored marketing program for each target market of constituents. In the private business setting, the constituents include customers, suppliers and stock holders. In the law enforcement setting, constituents include residents, visitors, merchants and city council members.

Law enforcement agencies need to develop a customer orientation. This can be achieved by defining the constituents' needs from their points of view. It is not enough to simply listen to needs and complaints; the strategic planner must maximize the customers' opportunity to complain and provide input. The data collected must then be used to create a marketing or strategic action plan to respond constructively to the needs of the various constituents. A customer oriented organization should track its customer satisfaction level each quarter and set appropriate improvement goals.

In a law enforcement organization, data relative to customer needs and levels of satisfaction can be obtained by several methods. The most common sources of *secondary data* are government publications, trade periodicals and internal sources, such as criminal activity tracking systems. This secondary data can help the strategic planner forecast trends in criminal activity or other areas of customer need.

Primary data can be collected in three ways: observations, focus groups and surveys or questionnaires. Observational research simply means that the strategic planner observes relevant constituent group members and takes note of their comments relative to the performance of the police department, as well as their needs, wants and fears about future trends. Focus group research is a gathering and interview of several relevant constituent group members.

The easiest method for gaining primary data in a law enforcement setting is the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires should be constructed so that they ultimately create a wealth of data of constituents, such as knowledge, beliefs, preferences and level of satisfaction. Once all necessary data has been gathered and analyzed, it should be used in the formulation of a marketing plan.

The Marketing Plan

In the private business arena, the marketing plan is a way to focus on future change necessary to obtain maximum profits. In law enforcement administration, it can be a tool for understanding the future needs of our customers. The marketing plan can help the police executive in the strategic planning and organizational development functions.

The law enforcement marketing plan should consist of the following:

1. Executive Summary—a brief summary of the main goals and recommendations within the plan.

2. Current Situation—the dynamics of the various constituent groups. This includes a) the micro-environment—limited resources and needs

of the internal organization, and b) the macro-environment—needs and wants of each constituent group.

3. Opportunity and Issue Analysis—opportunities for organizational development in order to proactively deal with forecasted trends, needs and wants of constituent groups.

4. Objectives and Action Plan—goals and procedures for accomplishing them.

5. Controls—contingency plans and methods for tracking organizational progress towards customer satisfaction.

"The Steak and the Sizzle"

A common marketing saying is that "what is sold is not the steak, but the sizzle." In law enforcement,

the "steak" represents patrol officers, investigative divisions and crime prevention programs. The "sizzle" represents a feeling of safety among our constituents. That intangible feeling of safety is the product that we sell to our customers. In order to provide this product in our dynamically changing world, the law enforcement organization must maintain a customer orientation and constantly seek a greater understanding of customer needs and how future trends may affect them. ☺

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