Case Study

County Law Enforcement Agencies Use PocketCop on BlackBerry Smartphones to Access Police Information

Company: **The Franklin County Sheriff's Office** serves a population of 1.7 million people in Franklin County, Ohio

Industry: Public Safety/ Law Enforcement

Region: Americas

Company Size: Large Organization – 900 employees

Email Environment: Microsoft® Exchange

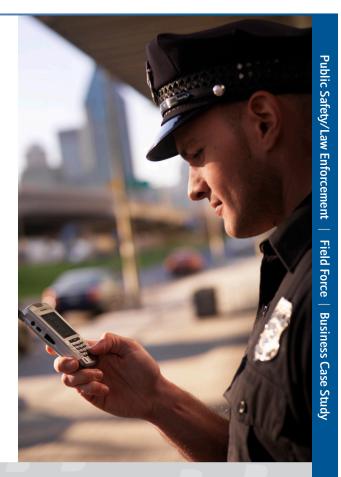**Type of Solution:** Industry Specific Application

BlackBerry Solution: PocketCop® by BIO-key® International

Challenge: As the lead for several law enforcement agencies exploring the use of wireless technology, Franklin County Sheriff's Office was asked to find a mobile solution to help officers look up suspect warrants, license plates and driver's licenses.

Solution: Franklin County Sheriff's Office deployed PocketCop on BlackBerry® smartphones, a wireless application from BIO-key International that allows secure, over-the-air access to law enforcement and motor vehicle databases. About 30 BlackBerry smartphones with the application were provided to officers across several police departments and other law enforcement agencies.

Results:
- Cost-effective solution
- More information in the field
- Lightweight and manageable
- Lightens the load on police radio systems and dispatchers

Public Safety/Law Enforcement | Field Force | Business Case Study

BlackBerry.

The Challenge:

Access to Criminal Databases for Mobile Law Enforcement Officers

Franklin County Sheriff's Office was given a task and a grant by the Department of Homeland Security: find the best way to ensure law enforcement officers have wireless access to police databases such as the Ohio Law Enforcement Automated Data System (LEADS) and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC).

Franklin County acted as the lead agency for several other Ohio counties, some members of the FBI, the Metropolitan Parks Division and Ohio State University who faced the same challenge. Officers in patrol cars can use in-car laptops to look up suspects and license plates. But officers who patrol on foot, motorcycle, bicycle and horseback or, who work undercover, don't have the same convenience.

"We wanted something that was light, so officers didn't have to lug around laptops," says Thomas Welch, Systems Administrator. "And the people who work in our Special Investigations Unit needed something covert, that allows them to run searches without attracting undue attention."

The solution they chose was from BIO-key, a BlackBerry Alliance Partner, who offered PocketCop – a mobile application designed for lightweight, multifunctional BlackBerry smartphones.

Why the BlackBerry Solution?

Cost was one of the driving forces behind using BlackBerry smartphones. Welch points out that small police departments often don't have the budget for expensive technology and are looking for the most cost-effective use of their resources.

"The BlackBerry smartphones are a huge cost advantage to groups such as the Metro Parks organization," he says. "You can deploy a BlackBerry smartphone with software for about $1,000 per user, as compared to $4,500 for a laptop. So we spend about 20% of what it could have cost and we get the same access to police information in a mobile device."

Convenience was another factor. BlackBerry smartphones are highly regarded for their all-in-one capabilities. For users, who had been carrying separate cell phones, PDAs and laptops, it truly lightens their load to have only one device that can do it all. "BlackBerry smartphones offer additional functionality, beyond email," says Welch. "They include phones, calendars and – with PocketCop - the ability to tie into criminal databases."

Detective Austin Francescone, a 10-year veteran of the Sheriff's Office, and an undercover officer for the Special Investigations Unit, agrees. "It wasn't great in the past having to carry a couple of devices, like a separate phone and pager, especially when you're undercover in plain clothes," he says. "The less you have to carry, the better."

> *"Law enforcement has to embrace technology and use it to our advantage. PocketCop on the BlackBerry smartphone is small, portable and it helps me be more effective in the field."*
>
> ~ **DETECTIVE AUSTIN FRANCESCONE,** *Franklin County Sheriff's Office*

Partner Profile:

BIO-key INTERNATIONAL

Company: BIO-key International

- Develops and delivers advanced identification solutions and information services to private sector and government
- Mobile, wireless solution designed to provide first responders with reliable, quick data and images from local, state and national databases
- More than 1,200 police, fire and emergency services departments use BIO-key solutions

Featured Product: PocketCop

Application Type: Industry Specific Application

Business Value:

"BIO-key has given us excellent customer support. I have always been able to get someone on the phone within minutes of making a support call to them."

~ **Thomas Welch,** Systems Administrator
Franklin County Sheriff's Office

For more information, *visit www.bio-key.com*

BlackBerry
Alliance Member

On-the-Spot Inquiries Help with Police Work

Using the grant received from the Department of Homeland Security, Franklin County Sheriff's Office coordinated the deployment of the PocketCop application on 30 BlackBerry smartphones. Everyone from patrol deputies to undercover detectives, FBI agents and parks and university security teams began using them to look up information from police databases such as LEADS and NCIC.

Detective Francescone is an undercover officer who knows first-hand how the solution can help. He's able to use his BlackBerry smartphone to look up warrants, license plates, social security numbers, or a person's name, and receive an individual's complete record, including a photo, if available.

"I was in a situation when an unknown person walked into a hotel room where something suspicious was underway," he says. "Normally, I'd have to radio an officer in a squad car that has a laptop so this individual's ID could be run. But by using PocketCop on the BlackBerry smartphone, I was able to run his social security number and pull up his picture from his driver's license. It saved a lot of time."

Detective Francescone says having the solution helps eliminate potential problems because he's able to check information himself. For example, numerous agencies can be involved in executing a search warrant on a house. "I use my BlackBerry smartphone and PocketCop to pull up the auditor's property database web site and see the picture of the house at the address we're at," he says. "I can send my colleagues the link to the page, while we're all onsite, so there's no confusion about which house we're about to enter."

Being covert is a big part of an undercover officer's job. Detective Francescone says that being discreet is almost impossible to do at night with a laptop. The bright, white light from the laptop screen is a beacon to anyone he may be watching, which means he was unable to search for information while on a stakeout. With his BlackBerry smartphone, he can now do multiple tasks, silently and unobtrusively.

Freeing Up Dispatchers and Maximizing Time

In the past, police officers without laptops in cars would have to radio in to dispatchers who would look up the information they needed in police databases. The time this took had a corresponding effect on how often an officer would call in. No one wanted to tie up the dispatcher's time, so many times they would only call in when absolutely necessary.

"Now I can sit and do surveillance and run as many license plates as I like," says Detective Francescone. "The fact that I can do this takes a burden off the entire system and frees up the dispatchers, who are often serving multiple agencies."

He believes that having this power at his fingertips makes him more effective in the community. It makes it more likely that he will run more information, such as suspicious license plates. "When I see a vehicle that looks out of place, I can run its tag and find out if it's stolen," he says "I just wouldn't do that if I had to radio in every time."

Like many of the officers using the BlackBerry smartphone, Francescone also finds access to email an enormous benefit. When he has downtime, he can communicate with other officers and his supervisor, plus arrange his schedule, all from one device.

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~ **Detective, Austin Francescone**
Franklin County Sheriff's Office

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~ **DETECTIVE, AUSTIN FRANCESCONE,** *Franklin County Sheriff's Office*

Results

Cost-effective Solution: The BlackBerry solution is significantly less expensive than equipping an officer with a laptop and is ideal for small security forces on tight budgets.

More Information in the Field: Because officers have easy access to NCIC and LEADS information on their BlackBerry smartphones, as well as email, they are more likely to pursue more leads, resulting in a community that is better served and protected.

Lightweight and Manageable: Undercover officers who need to be subtle about their use of technology find the BlackBerry smartphone a light, portable, discreet way to view information from police databases.

Lightens the Load on Police Systems: Law enforcement officers and investigators no longer have to be careful about using up too much airtime with radio dispatchers. With PocketCop on the BlackBerry smartphone, they are more likely to look into suspects or vehicles, while also relieving the pressure on the communication system.

For more information on BlackBerry solutions,
visit www.blackberry.com/go/success