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2022 Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report

Key technological trends facing the law enforcement profession in a post-pandemic world.

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Last year, our 2021 report summarized how the law enforcement profession—and its functions related to documentation workflow and certain procedural realities—were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As first responders dealt with new safety protocols for interacting with the public, heightened documentation burdens related to curfews and lockdowns, not to mention staffing issues, they faced the same technology-enabled blurring between work and home-life as countless other professionals.

With the pandemic fostering a growing reliance on QR menu codes and virtual communications, as well as the mass proliferation of other touchless, voice-enabled tools, our 2022 report asks a post-pandemic question for law enforcement: In addition to the longstanding use of PoliceTech to address evolving documentation needs, how many PoliceTech innovations are here to stay and how might they proliferate?

Introduction

The documentation burden for law enforcement continued unabated in 2022, exacerbated by the same recruitment and retention trends loosely known as "The Great Resignation" that have impacted a wide swath of professions and sectors, including Law Enforcement. Post pandemic, agencies throughout North America are confronting a wave of veteran officers retiring, alongside heightened demands for schedule flexibility and remote work options for some "back-office" and administrative aspects of the job, new recruits open to voicing mental health and wellness concerns, and an expectation that technology will be a core enabler to help officers protect and serve.

Technology ushers in new options to address changing expectations in policing.

According to Gartner, 30% of all workers worldwide—nearly 600 million— will be remote by 2024, a 13% increase from 2019 pre-pandemic levels. And while law enforcement has absolute" in-person" requirements for many duties, certain functions, and roles (like report writing or professional development) may be effectively accomplished through a hybrid work model.

The same Gartner research projects that by 2023, 10% of Public Safety and Justice organizations will deploy a "multi-experience development platform"—including natural language processing capabilities—to enable mobile, wearables and augmented reality for day-to-day operations. These technologies hold the promise to automate "low value" administrative tasks, improve job satisfaction and morale, and provide greater insights into crimes to bring perpetrators to justice.

Our 2022 report reveals steady increases in acceptance of technology and rising expectations of its ability to deliver value. Beyond simple conveniences and workflow efficiencies, there is a heightened focus on the use of mobile devices to support "non-core" aspects of the job like personal wellness, the adoption of virtual reality, simulators, and digital collaboration tools to conduct training and support certification, and the adoption of communication tools like Teams to help achieve greater "work/life" balance. Together, these solutions can help law enforcement keep pace with the changing dynamics of its workforce—and the citizens they serve.

Key findings

>50%

agree their department's **reliance on mobile hardware and software** for mission critical work has increased

48%

say they are **especially interested in exploring new tech** for workflow and documentation now that Nuance is a Microsoft company

Documentation demands have increased since February 2021

- 22% and 75% of law enforcement personnel say mandatory documentation has increased "significantly" or "somewhat" respectively
- Almost ½ spend between 2-4 hours daily on incident reports and other paperwork
- An additional 14% spend more than 4 hours daily on reporting and other paperwork

79%
say the volume of paperwork causes officers to spend too much time on reporting and less in the field

Mobility and the use of speech-to-text for purposes other than documentation has increased

- 70% of respondents indicate their departments' use of mobile technologies for purposes **other than** documentation has increased
- 72% feel speech-to-text has a significant role to play in officers' usage of apps (e.g., wellness, safety, professional development) **outside of** police documentation

89%
say creating incident reports limits time in community

Existing and anticipated technological tools are a welcomed development for law enforcement

- 78% say an AI-powered, voice-enabled "virtual partner" to automate mundane tasks would be a welcomed development in modern policing
- 51% believe the potential benefits of authenticating access to law enforcement systems using a unique voice print as their "password" outweigh concerns surrounding privacy and potential misuse
- 68% say mobile phones and apps are helping automate incident reporting and other document
- ¾ of respondents say body-worn cameras are helping automate incident reporting

85%
say communication tools like Teams are playing (or soon will) a more prominent role in police administration

Law Enforcement professionals see promise in Nuance now becoming a Microsoft company

- Almost half (48%) say they are especially interested in exploring new tech for workflow and documentation now that Nuance is part of Microsoft
- 71% believe tighter integration of Dragon speech recognition within Microsoft documentation productivity and communications software (i.e., Word, Teams, Outlook) would enhance daily workflow
- 71% agree their department is substantially more receptive to secure, cloud-hosted applications (like Dragon hosted on Microsoft Azure) that can be accessed by officers wherever an internet connection exists compared to 5 years ago

92%
say they need a "connected workplace" with smart tools similar to those available in their personal life

2022 survey implications

The Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report **underscores how PoliceTech is expanding beyond the MDC and incident reporting,** and into the domains of mobile devices, applications, and cloud-native platforms, as well as new focus areas such as wellness and professional development.

– **The documentation burden continues unabated:** Public safety always has—and will continue to be—a document intensive profession. Incident reports, witness statements, interview transcripts, and mandated crime statistics reporting (i.e., NIBRS) are but a few examples. Our 2022 report reveals this burden continues with almost half (48%) indicating they spent 2-4 hours daily on reporting. An additional 14% say they spend more than 4 hours daily on reporting. Writing and filing reports is also cited by 41% of respondents as the biggest drain on productivity, while 79% concur that the amount of paperwork in policing is causing officers to spend too much time on reporting and administrative work.

– **Mobile technologies are proliferating:**
Mobile tech continues to gain ground in the documentation processes of policing. Sixty-eight percent of respondents say "mobile phones and apps" are helping automate or streamline incident reporting and other documentation processes.

Additionally, a trend that gained traction during the pandemic—a focus on personal wellness and development—is also noted by survey respondents with 72% agreeing speech-to-text has a significant role to play in facilitating the usage of apps and services for wellness, safety, and professional development.

69%

of respondents **agree or strongly agree** VR simulators, and digital collaboration tools **will play an important role** in accreditation and ongoing training within the next 5 years

Furthermore, more than 2/3 of survey respondents cite their departments use of mobile technologies for purposes

other than documentation has increased significantly. As mobile tech gains ground, it functions as both a key enabler of documentation workflows as well as a way to holistically address the needs—and optimize the performance—of the "whole officer" as a human being navigating what is inherently a high-stress environment.

– **PoliceTech has become strategic to the departments mission and its implementation is maturing:**
Public safety agencies need to be strategic when implementing technology. Taking a "systems approach" means understanding the implications of deployment as well as potential unintended consequences. This [trend] is consistent with research from Gartner citing a "multi-experience development platform," (including natural language and understanding) that ties together wearables, mobile tech, and augmented reality.

According to our survey, "Records Management" (78%), Officer Safety (64%), and Officer Moral and Retention (48%)

were the "Top 3" aspects of law enforcement that benefit most from technology. These findings underscore how, today, PoliceTech benefits multiple facets of the job, supporting the "whole officer" as they carry out their duties.

Lastly, 79% of survey participants either agree or strongly agree that technology applied to active police work must be sanctioned by their IT department for [better] security and reliability. Collectively, these sentiments strongly suggest PoliceTech is maturing and moving away from "ad-hoc" implementations.

The use and availability of PoliceTech is rapidly expanding into new areas of public safety. As officers increasingly expect "anytime, anywhere" mobility and connectivity to support their daily operations and higher-level, existential objectives such as wellness and professional development, agencies that embrace these tools will be more successful surmounting today's recruitment and retention challenges.

Methodology

The **Role of Technology in Law Enforcement Paperwork Annual Report** is a national survey to Police Chiefs and their Command Staff, including Patrol Officers, Detectives, Commanders, Sergeants, Lieutenants, as well as those responsible for IT and Records Management (RMS) systems within the department.

The survey respondents include law enforcement professionals in our national database. They are current customers, interested parties we have met with during law enforcement trade shows and other industry events, or who have responded to our marketing efforts.

Survey questions were selected to solicit feedback on the role technology plays in completing incident reporting and other documentation in the day-to-day life of law enforcement professionals. The survey is administered via a leading commercial software platform.

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