

can choose to develop the “best available person” into the “best person for the job.”

In his discussion of getting the right people on the team, Collins asserts that the “... ‘who’ questions come before ‘what’ decisions.” (In other words, the great companies first got the right people on the bus, and only then began deciding where to steer the bus.) SMIP presumes that the nominating chiefs have answered the “who” question, leaving the program free to address the “what” issues. Bill Bratton has identified the SMIP program as the key development program in his career; unlike any other program he had attended, it exposed him to faculty members outside of policing. Bratton and others found that one of the most effective ways to build an executive team was to send promising managers to leadership programs like SMIP.

The impact of national training programs such as the FBI National Academy, Northwestern University Center for Public Safety’s Executive Management Program, Southern Police Institute, California POST-supported West Point Leadership Program run by the Los Angeles Police Department, Police Executive Leadership Program at Johns Hopkins University, and SMIP reaches beyond the classroom and the individual student. When chiefs, in order to send employees to these programs, must identify young officers or managers with the potential to be leaders, they are more likely to become conscious of other ways of developing and using leadership potential in the organization. At the very least, when a student returns from one of these programs, the chief will be inclined to call on him or her to put what they have learned into practice, thereby extending their education. While giving a boost to the careers of the people who attend them, these programs also provide the stimulus for their organizations to identify and reward people with leadership ability.

When Chief Lee Brown left Houston to head the New York City Police Department, some of the young leaders he had developed in Houston also left the department to head police agencies in Texas and other states. Many of these new chiefs had participated in national training programs or conferences that gave them a sense of the wider world of policing. What may have been lamented as Houston’s loss should be heralded as a gain for the policing profession. Whatever loss Houston suffered was temporary; under Brown’s direction, the organization had developed the means of fostering leadership, and the department today, headed by Chief Harold Hurtt, is full of bright young managers who will work to improve their own organization before some of them eventually move on to improve other departments.

The same thing is happening in Madison, Wisconsin. For years, the Police Department had many excellent young managers who never left town. Madison is a splendid place to live, and a great many people who live there, including police officers, have no desire to be anywhere else. But beginning in the 1980s,



Madison officers began to be involved in national-level research and to attend conferences and training programs that gave them access to, and information about, other agencies. As their vision of the police world expanded, so too did their willingness to venture into it.

While national training programs are excellent, elite institutions, the flip side of the coin is that they are small; relatively few desks are available each year. This lack of comprehensive, widely available leadership training is an issue that has been discussed in American policing for decades, and the solution is probably not yet on the horizon. Even if more training becomes available at a national or regional level, it will

REDESIGNING THE BUS IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS

The Arlington, Texas, Police Department is a community policing department in philosophy, function, and structure. This commitment was initiated in 1983 under the leadership of Chief David Kunkle and has been sustained and expanded and 730 officers and professional staffers during my time as chief.

Early in the planning stage, it was recognized that the Hedgehog Concept of community policing needed a new burrow (or bus). It wasn't enough to get the right people on the bus and into the right seats. If community policing was to be effective in that sprawling city, new physical arrangements were needed.

Arlington conducts “geographic policing.” A department that had been housed in one central location now occupies three district stations (with a fourth planned) at which a deputy chief has responsibility for all policing services delivered in that area. Districts are further divided into sectors for which lieutenants have responsibility for services seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Within sectors, sergeants are responsible for problem solving and service delivery in beats. All property crimes are handled at the district level. This geographically-based arrangement facilitates the sharing of information within and across shifts and promotes the perception of responsibility for an area among all the officers who work there.

The newer district stations have workspace for some other city employees, such as Neighborhood Services, thus promoting closer problem-solving relationships across city departments. One has a large community room, complete with media facilities that brings officers and citizens together for special events.

The Arlington bus was redesigned so that riders no longer look at the back of head of the passenger in front of them. Seats have been relocated so that passengers with a similar destination can have on-going conversations during the trip.

Chief Theron Bowman
Arlington Police Department

remain important for individual police departments to groom their own leaders as Madison is doing with its Leadership Academy.

“Flywheel Teams”

When a leader cannot move people in and out of the organization, it can be helpful to develop “kitchen cabinets” or “leadership teams” of people who are supportive of the proposed new organizational direction. They brainstorm and plan with the chief and begin to implement ideas in the organization. Their enthusiasm and dynamism can be infectious and can produce enough real change to set the Collins Flywheel in motion, despite apathy or opposition from others in the organization. One conference participant referred to this as her “subversive” means of supporting change.

Restructuring

If it is difficult to move people on and off the bus, it may be possible to rearrange the seats on the vehicle so passengers can interact more effectively. This might involve organizational restructuring such as changing the number of layers of management and supervision. It might involve restructuring that puts people into area-specific rather than task-specific work groups. Also, work teams might be allowed to ride in smaller buses that are all headed to the same place (to the Hedgehog Concept) but that have developed different routes for getting there. In the last 20 years, many departments have physically decentralized their facilities so that officers can work more directly with citizens and, at the same time, work more closely and effectively with each other. For example, detectives may no longer inhabit separate, secretive work spaces, working instead in close proximity with patrol personnel. Arlington, Texas (see sidebar) has created new facilities in which all personnel serving a neighborhood share office space with their supervisors. The people are the same, but the seats on the bus have been rearranged to facilitate interaction.

(3) Confront the Brutal Facts (Yet Never Lose Faith)

Collins notes that the GTG companies were characterized by a pattern of good decisions based on solid information. There may have been some bad decisions but they were significantly outnumbered by good ones, and the GTG companies made many more positive decisions than did the comparison companies.

When ... you start with an honest and diligent effort to determine the truth of the situation, the right decisions often become self-evident. Not



always, of course, but often. And even if all decisions do not become self-evident, one thing is certain: You absolutely cannot make a series of good decisions without first confronting the brutal facts. The good-to-great companies operated in accordance with this principle, and the comparison companies generally did not. (p. 70)

Perhaps the best example of a “confronting the brutal facts” program in policing is CompStat. Pioneered in New York City under then-Commissioner William Bratton, CompStat refers to weekly citywide and precinct-by-precinct computerized statistical reports on crime—and to meetings in which police commanders are grilled about local increases in crime or other facts revealed by the statistics. As the program has become widely publicized, more departments are following New York’s lead in using current crime data at regularly scheduled meetings to identify problems, compare performance across districts, and assess the impact of responses to previously defined problems. Data do not lie. People may lie *about* data (or manipulate data to serve their objectives), but when several people are examining the same data and asking hard questions about the data, there is a good probability that the data will reveal “truths that cannot be ignored”—a key GTG precept. Police agencies are fortunate in having more “real-time” data readily available to them than do many other organizations. In well-run police agencies today, crime data are current. It is no longer a matter of waiting for quarterly reports. On Monday morning, commanders and officers can know about the crimes that occurred over the weekend. The most recent incidents and the developing trends can be studied daily.

It is not enough for data to be readily available. Managers need to be intimately familiar with the data and involved in analysis and assessment. Data should “belong” to no one group in the organization. History offers some cautionary tales. In the mid-1970s in Dallas, Chief Frank Dyson promised to reduce the crime rate dramatically. Detectives, who were vehemently opposed to Dyson’s plans for organizational change, managed to increase the crime figures month by month. As creators and monitors of the data, they were able to topple the chief by manufacturing false statistics about crime. In Chicago in the 1980s, some district commanders “killed crime” by either not reporting certain crimes or by downgrading their seriousness so that crime would appear to be less of a problem than it actually was. With pressure from the news media and from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting program, which refused to publish Chicago’s dubious crime statistics, the department faced the brutal facts of its internal problems and dealt with both the guilty personnel and with the issue of an easily manipulated data system. Mechanisms are

now in place to monitor the veracity of the department's data. The Chicago experience was a wake-up call to other agencies to improve and monitor their own reporting systems.⁶

The increasing focus on data has been one of the driving forces in a sea change in policing from solving individual crimes to preventing crime. While crime prevention was a goal urged by some policing prophets in the 1960s and 1970s, it did not become a dominant policing strategy until the 1990s. Computers and computer-savvy personnel have helped move the status of "prevention" from philosophy to practice. The ability to have real-time data and the internal capacity to analyze the data have allowed departments to view crime problems in ways that isolate types of crimes by time and location and to identify patterns that can be strategically addressed. The power of problem-oriented policing begins with data that are used to identify a problem, and ends with data that are used to determine whether the strategy designed to address the problem has been effective.

Data from internal surveys can provide a means of detecting and dealing with sensitive situations. When the Clearwater, Florida, department was struggling with internal racial issues, Chief Sid Klein commissioned an employee survey that focused on attitudes about race and about members of other groups. The chief led his officers through discussions of the results. The conversations focused on the data rather than on the feelings of individuals or groups of officers about each other. Again, statistical information was used to prompt a frank attempt to face a brutal reality.

Collins' research indicated that big-ego, larger-than-life leaders often are the least likely to have access to truthful information about their organizations. For one thing, they tend to believe they know the answers and don't need to bother with data. For another, they tend to surround themselves with people who consider it their responsibility to protect the boss from bad news. By contrast, GTG companies deliberately strive to create climates in which the truth is heard and valued.

Collins offers suggestions (pp. 74–80) for creating this climate.

- (1) Lead with questions, not answers.
- (2) Engage in dialogue and debate, not coercion.
- (3) Conduct "autopsies" of mistakes without blame.
- (4) Build "red flag" mechanisms that prevent you from ignoring the data.

He offers an interesting example from the business world in which a company gave its customers the option of "short pay." Short pay is exactly that: the customer pays less than the amount on the invoice if the service or product was not satisfactory in the customer's view.

⁶ In 1983 Pam Zekman, Head of the Investigative Unit of WBBM-TV in Chicago, received the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award for her documentary, "Killing Crime: A Police Cop-Out," which revealed a long-standing Chicago Police Department practice of manipulating crime statistics.



Short pay gives the customer full discretionary power to decide whether and how much to pay on an invoice based upon his own subjective evaluation of how satisfied he feels with a product or service. Short pay is not a refund policy. The customer does not need to return the product, nor does he need to call [the company] for permission. He simply circles the offending item on the invoice, deducts it from the total, and sends a check for the balance. When I asked [the company owner] his reasons for short pay, he said, “You can get a lot of information from customer surveys, but there are always ways of explaining away the data. With short pay, you absolutely have to pay attention to the data. You often don’t know that a customer is upset until you lose that customer entirely. Short pay acts as an early warning system that forces us to adjust quickly, long before we would lose that customer. (pp. 79–80)

Short pay is a wonderfully creative idea, perhaps not readily applicable to policing, but it may serve as a stimulant for thinking of more relevant early warning devices. To make an extreme example, by the time police or firefighters are pelted with rocks and bottles in the streets, the reality that hits them is more brutal than community feedback data would have been.

Confronting brutal reality will do little more than make you run for cover unless your willingness to face the facts is coupled with an unwavering faith that you are on the right path and will prevail. Collins calls this the “Stockdale Paradox,” in honor of Admiral Jim Stockdale, who survived eight years of imprisonment in Vietnam by facing reality but holding fast to the belief that he ultimately would get out, would prevail, and would “turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which, in retrospect, I would not trade.” (p. 85)

The men who did not survive the prisoner-of-war experience were, paradoxically, what Stockdale called “the optimists”—the ones who continued to believe that release was just around the corner, and who, as a result, repeatedly were disappointed.

There are, of course, many cases where chiefs face brutal facts and persevere. Confronted with several organizational cultures, Chief David Kunkle in Dallas changed departmental policy to end unproductive responses to alarm calls. Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in London, recognized the need to change the storied culture of Scotland Yard and instituted one of the largest geographic community-based policing programs in the world. This effort would be his front line of defense in combating terrorism. In Kansas City, Missouri, then-Chief Richard Easley brought officers together to confront internal racial issues. The candid and tough discussion resulted in heightened sensitivity as well as a communications awakening across the upper management levels. In New Orleans,

then-Superintendent Richard Pennington recognized the extent of corruption issues in the department and, in an unprecedented move, invited FBI investigators to work alongside New Orleans IAD staff to root it out. Both John Timoney in Miami and Charles Ramsey in Washington, D.C. recognized that their departments had significant problems with police use of force and reengineered their policies, resulting in dramatic reductions of deaths and injuries. In Chicago, then-Superintendent Terry Hillard took on the issue of racial profiling by inviting outspoken community leaders to sit down with top Chicago police commanders in citywide forums to candidly discuss issues of race and class. These forums became standard operating procedure in Chicago. Similarly, Ed Davis, who served as superintendent of the Lowell, Massachusetts, Police Department for a dozen years, did not wait for a tragic event or tensions between police and the community to build trust. Concerned about growing complaints across the country during the 1990s of racial profiling by police, Davis launched a series of community forums designed to build bridges between the Lowell police and minority groups. The forums not only opened channels of communication; they sometimes uncovered potential problems before they could result in tragedy. For example, police learned that among members of a Liberian community in Lowell, it was considered respectful to get out of one's car when stopped by police and to approach the police car, rather than waiting for the officer to approach the stopped vehicle. Some Liberians also had a custom of keeping their wallets stuffed in their socks. It is not difficult to see that such customs could easily have resulted in disaster. But by encouraging public debate on the question of racial profiling, the Lowell Police Department became more familiar with the communities it served, learning critical information that helped the department avoid crises that could have seriously damaged police-community relations.

(4) The Hedgehog Concept

The Hedgehog Concept may be the most problematic for public service agencies. Collins argues that, for companies to be great, they need to determine the one thing they can do better than any other company in the world and focus on producing only that thing. Even if it means completely changing what the company produces, that should be done in order to move the company from good to great. Determining the path the company should take, what is its Hedgehog Concept, evolves from finding the overlap of three "circles" in a Venn Diagram. The three circles are:

- (1) What you can be the best in the world at.
- (2) What you are deeply passionate about.



- (3) What drives your economic engine (Because police agencies and other nonbusiness organizations do not have a profit-making “economic engine,” Collins modified the third circle somewhat in his monograph *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. He argues that non-business agencies should consider what drives their *resource* engine—not only money, but any other resources that allow them to function and achieve their Hedgehog Concept.)

(*Good to Great*, pp. 95–96, and *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, pp. 17–19)

All the energies of the company are focused on the area where these circles converge. And sometimes the result involves destroying the “curse of competence”:

To go from good to great requires transcending the curse of competence. It requires the discipline to say, “Just because we are good at it—just because we’re making money and generating growth—doesn’t necessarily mean we can become the best at it.” The good-to-great companies understood that doing what you are good at will only make you good; focusing solely on what you can potentially do better than any other organization is the only path to greatness. (p. 100)

So what is the Hedgehog Concept for law enforcement? Police have responsibility for a wide range of outcomes that cluster roughly under the heading of “public safety.” Police service is largely call-driven, and police are able to decide what the organization will do only to a limited degree. By requesting service, the community dictates the function. Police participants at the GTG conference agreed that the Hedgehog Concept could have temporal or geographic applicability in their agencies, with a deliberate focus being given to a particular problem or a particularly problematic neighborhood for some specified period. Even within the organization at the same time, different bureaus or units might be focused on different hedgehog concepts. The point is to be focused.

Policing did become more focused in the 1990s when proactive policing—focusing on stopping crimes before they occur, which had been a low priority in many agencies—shot to the top of almost every chief’s priority list. Police chiefs learned that strategic partnerships with the community can affect crime. Using CompStat, problem-oriented policing, community policing, and improved technology, police departments began to focus on crime reduction as a core mission. Performance, which previously had been measured by the number of arrests and crime clearance rates, increasingly was measured by the reduction of crime.

Some city managers have adopted the practice of having each city agency focus some of its energies for the year on a problem or issue that concerns the entire city. One year it might be youth; another year it might be the elderly, or reducing poverty, or city beautification, or recycling. Some might call this a case in which a limited Hedgehog Principle is used to address a problem and create a team effort across agencies. But one wonders whether Collins might consider such programs a “Doom Loop”—every year a new direction, a new event, a new fad, a new Hedgehog Concept.

Constant improvement can be a valuable goal for any agency. Collins’ discussion of “The Council,” while formulated as a means of discovering a company’s Hedgehog Concept, is potentially quite useful for police organizations that are seeking ways of planning long-range improvement. The “Characteristics of the Council” are these:

- (1) The Council exists as a device to gain understanding about important issues facing the organization.
- (2) The Council is assembled and used by the leading executive and usually consists of five to twelve people.
- (3) Each Council member has the ability to argue and debate in search of understanding, not from the egoistic need to win a point or protect a parochial interest.
- (4) Each Council member retains the respect of every other Council member, without exception.
- (5) Council members come from a range of perspectives, but each member has deep knowledge about some aspect of the organization and/or the environment in which it operates.
- (6) The Council includes key members of the management team but is not limited to members of the management team, nor is every executive automatically a member.
- (7) The Council is a standing body, not an ad hoc committee assembled for a specific project.
- (8) The Council meets periodically, as frequently as once a week or as infrequently as once per quarter.
- (9) The Council does not seek consensus, recognizing that consensus decisions are often at odds with intelligent decisions. The responsibility for the final decision remains with the leading executive.
- (10) The Council is an informal body, not listed on any formal organization chart or in any formal documents.
- (11) The Council can have a range of possible names, usually quite innocuous. In the good-to-great companies, they had benign names like Long-Range Profit Improvement Committee, Corporate Products Committee, Strategic Thinking Group, and Executive Council. (pp. 115–116)



Principal Leleck had her planning team. David Couper, the chief in Madison, Wisconsin, for 20 years, met each month with a leadership team that represented a cross-section of the organization. In Baltimore County, Chief Neil Behan used his Monday morning staff meeting as a “Council,” where each member had an opportunity to debate and discuss challenges and problems facing the organization. Each meeting ended with the chief issuing a directive for action to members of the Council. It is hard to imagine that an organization would *not* improve if it had the services of a Council that regularly focused its discussion on ways of enhancing the performance of the agency.

(5) A Culture of Discipline

Collins says that the ability of an organization to function like a focused hedgehog depends on the existence of a culture of discipline. Discipline is not just about action, he says; the formula consists of disciplined people, disciplined thought, and disciplined action. The culture of discipline depends on getting the right people—disciplined people—on the bus in the first place. It is wasteful to hire the wrong people and then try to impose discipline on them to force them to perform the right behaviors, Collins argues. A culture of discipline should not be confused with a tyrannical leader who imposes discipline through sheer force of personality. Instead, executives should try to hire people with self-discipline.

Chief Darrel Stephens of the Charlotte, North Carolina, Police Department exhibits this discipline in many ways. He and his department are known for careful research, consistent follow-up, and continual refinement of programs.

Again, because most chiefs inherit, rather than select, the majority of their employees and managers, it is difficult to create the kind of culture of discipline Collins found in the GTG companies. But creativity and a self-generated sense of responsibility do not flow out of people on whom discipline must be imposed. So the police department that wants to move in the direction of constant improvement must find a middle ground between having a culture of discipline and being willing to impose controls on employees who need it because they lack internal discipline and they cannot be forced “off the bus.”

Many departments that have oriented themselves toward community policing and problem solving—approaches that require creative and responsible officers—have attempted to redesign their disciplinary systems so that honest mistakes that result from well-intentioned acts are dealt with more generously than are malevolent deeds. In some departments,

the honest mistakes are appropriated for “teaching moments”—opportunities to distill lessons from an incident that can provide future guidance for the organization. Discussion rather than discipline is used to help an officer who has made a mistake consider alternative behaviors or approaches. Sometimes citizen complaints are handled through mediation between the citizen and officer. This can strengthen the bond with the community while instructing the officer and avoiding the punitive disciplinary process. In this kind of organization, employees may be more willing to be experimental and creative in their responses to problems and may be more likely to generate and share ideas for the improvement of the organization.

Discipline in an organization has two purposes. The disciplined manager or leader not only focuses on what the organization needs to do but also uses discipline to focus on—and eliminate—those things the organization should not do. The organization should not do anything that takes attention and resources away from the central objective of the organization. Since the Hedgehog objective at the Broad Acres School was to raise reading and math scores, the disciplined decision was made to reduce the number of field trips taken per year while making sure the trips were specifically relevant to the curriculum, and to hold assemblies in the evenings to avoid infringing on instructional time. These changes caused parents to complain that their children were no longer having fun at school. It would have been easier—surely much more pleasant—to have preserved the events that provided entertainment and social education, but a culture of discipline prevailed and the focus on the goal was sharpened.

Police departments wrestle with Collins’ question of trying to eliminate tasks from the organizational “to-do list” if the tasks do not serve the Hedgehog Concept. In some departments, officers no longer rush to every call regardless of seriousness. In other departments, certain crime reports are taken online or by phone. In still others, officers schedule appointments with citizens in response to “cold” crimes. Many departments have curtailed their response to burglar alarm calls, either requiring some kind of verification that an actual crime may be occurring or charging for repeated runs to false alarms. Some departments no longer provide on-duty escort service for funerals. Each of these changes can be a painful decision for a chief who is concerned about losing public support because he is reducing services. But these decisions reflect the discipline necessary to allow a police agency to focus on its core mission.

A culture of discipline also requires that a leader take a long, hard look at facts about the organization, and then act on those facts. Paul Evans, commissioner in Boston, was concerned about the number of incidents in which officers fired at suspects who were fleeing in vehicles. When suspects were



shot after the danger had passed, the community asked understandably tough questions. When innocent bystanders were shot or run over, or police officers injured, both the community and police were distraught. In 1972, the New York City Police Department had changed its policy so that officers were prohibited from firing at a person in a moving vehicle unless the occupant(s) of the vehicle is/are using deadly physical force against the officer by means other than the vehicle. Although there was 30 years' worth of research and experience to support the policy, it remained controversial in many departments, including the Boston Police Department. Evans decided a change had to be made, and the department adopted the policy of not firing at moving vehicles. The Patrolmen's Association in Boston waged a campaign against this change that resulted in a vote of “no confidence” against Evans, but he stood firm in the face of opposition. When John Timoney became chief in Miami, he instituted this same policy there, and the city has not had a single incident of an officer firing at a vehicle in four years.⁷ These policy changes resulted in dramatic reductions in officer-involved shootings without compromising officer safety.

⁷ John Timoney's letter to the editor, Tuesday, December 5, 2006. <http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/editorial/letters/16165274.html>

Level 5 leaders make disciplined decisions regardless of personal consequences. They put the interests of the organization above their own. In the case of a Level 5 police chief, this means putting the interests of the larger community above all other factors, including his or her own police department and career.

(6) Technology Accelerators

Collins and his research team found that technology was not a prime cause of either greatness or decline among the companies they studied. (p. 162) They did find, however, that the GTG executives thought differently about technology than did the leaders of the merely good companies. While the great companies made pioneering use of selected technologies, the technologies were not adopted for their own sake and did not drive the direction of change. The technologies were chosen to support a company's Hedgehog Concept.

Technology has long been a daunting challenge for police departments. In 1972, the Dallas Police Department almost certainly was not unique in having to wait in line to use the city's mainframe computer while the city's water bills were being run. Now, of course, the police department has its own computers, as do many departments. Few departments, however, are satisfied with their systems, primarily because they have not been in a position to design a system that truly fits their needs.

HOW TECHNOLOGY ACCELERATED CHANGE IN THE CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT

In 2000, the Chicago Police Department was seven years into the implementation of its community-oriented policing strategy, commonly referred to as CAPS, or the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy. While significant changes had already been made in the way the department policed, newly appointed Superintendent Terry G. Hillard charged his new command team to “take CAPS to the next level.”

We knew where we wanted to go (Collins would say we had identified our Hedgehog Concept). Our efforts were focused on three key areas: to make Chicago the safest U.S. city; to partner with the community and other city agencies to solve problems of crime and neighborhood disorder; and, because criminals know no boundaries, to share information with the hundreds of law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in the greater Chicago area. But like many departments at the time, Chicago had mountains of data sitting around in file cabinets or locked in an antiquated, largely inaccessible mainframe computer. We were data-rich, but information-poor.

In 1995, the department had begun a technology upgrade, transitioning from an old mainframe system to one that featured a new relational database.⁸ The idea was right, but the implementation had lost focus. Instead of examining how this new tool could be used to position the department to meet its three goals, efforts had become mired down with getting information into the database by automating the same forms used by the department for decades. This approach lacked what Collins would call the necessary, relentless focus on our Hedgehog Concept. It wasn't looking at what information was needed to accomplish our three key goals; nor was there an understanding of who needed the information, why they needed it, when they needed it, and how best to present it. In 2000, the technology implementation was in trouble. One frustrated detective expressed many department members' concern: “This is ridiculous. I spend all my time putting data into the system, but I never get anything out that helps me do my job!”

Missing was a tool that could organize and link the millions of tactical, statistical, and administrative files that were available, do it in real time, and do it in a way that made sense to the most important user—the cop on the street. New thinking on the part of Hillard's management team led to the formation of a unique partnership between the department and the Oracle Corporation. This partnership in turn resulted in the development of a new tool—Citizen Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting, or CLEAR. We brought to the partnership the vision and law enforcement business know-how; Oracle supplied its technical and IT expertise. But experience had already shown us that building a system around our current business practices would not help us achieve our goals. And we recognized that there were plenty of police departments throughout the country using innovative business practices that could improve the way we policed. We wanted to incorporate some of these innovative ideas into CLEAR, so we asked PERF to analyze law enforcement “best practices” both nationally and internationally to ensure that CLEAR reflected the very best.

⁸ A relational database is one with the ability to compare and link any data element to any other data element.

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So, did the use of technology help the department accelerate its efforts to meet its core missions? Yes—and the proof is found in three key areas.

- 1. More productivity:** CLEAR allows officers to do more in less time and to solve crimes that were unsolvable before. By linking previously unavailable information, the department has stopped many criminals in their tracks. Since CLEAR was rolled out, the department has also enjoyed a 22-percent reduction in violent crime and a 27-percent decrease in homicides. During tight budget times, this increased productivity also has allowed the department to put more officers back on the street.
- 2. Better management and accountability:** The department now is able to monitor in real time the effectiveness of plans to address crime and disorder problems and to immediately make adjustments when needed. Millions of files at officers' fingertips and a lot of good old-fashioned police work have also resulted in a new capacity to identify emerging crime. Members are now easily deployed where they are needed, when they are needed.
- 3. Stronger partnerships:** Designed to be scalable (able to handle growing amounts of work easily), CLEAR now allows information to be shared with every law enforcement agency in Illinois. As the result of a successful partnership with the Illinois State Police, CLEAR has expanded to become I-CLEAR, significantly increasing the state's crime-fighting capacity. The department is rolling out a new community component called CLEARpath which allows the department to share crime information with residents who sign up for CLEARpath e-mail updates about crime alerts and other news.

CLEAR isn't finished. New modules will continue to be developed—always with the department's Hedgehog Concept in mind. Terry Hillard's successor, Superintendent Philip J. Cline, built upon the CLEAR program with effective crime-reduction strategies—a combination that resulted in record-low crime rates in Chicago. I believe that Collins has it right when he says that technology, while it doesn't create change, surely can be an effective accelerator of change.

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THE FLYWHEEL AND THE REVOLVING DOOR

Policing in America has always had the problem of “revolving chiefs,” whether they were competent or not. It has also had a problem with the double-edged sword of reform of civil service. While civil service was designed to protect chiefs from politics, it also protects incompetent or lazy chiefs. Nevertheless, a number of American cities have been fortunate to have some very competent chief executives leading their police departments for extended periods (five to ten years). This stability often depends on having a competent, politically stable chief executive at city hall.

Often (but not always) these police CEOs are brought in from the outside to repair a troubled department, tackle an overwhelming crime problem (whether the fault of the police or not), or take the department in a new direction, such as community policing.

Competent police leadership starts at the top. In the first few years, the new chief must spend time becoming established within the community and within the department. It is a lot of work, and there comes a time when there is a “tipping point” of acceptance with the community (usually earlier) and the department (usually later). During these first years, the true Level 5 leader must be out front and visible, leading and showing results by dealing with the issues the hiring authority has identified as priorities. At the same time, the chief must begin the long-term process of developing future Level 5 leaders within the organization, building that capacity from the ground up, starting with the officer selection process and training of recruits, and continuing to promotions and advanced training based on performance. By the five-year mark, the fruits of this labor will begin to show with inspired, competent middle- and upper-level leaders in the right positions in the organization. As these individuals get into position, the chief must then step back and give them the room and guidance necessary to truly reach self-actualization in their profession. Stepping back doesn’t mean doing less work. It means working more behind the scenes, mentoring below and coordinating and facilitating above and in the community. Once these managers and leaders are in place, the chief can devote more “quality time” to being visible and marketing the department with “deeds and not words.”

Being a good chief executive means always doing the right thing, no matter how difficult. The effect of difficult decisions can be cumulative, especially among groups that are negatively affected by the decisions, resulting in diminishment of the chief’s power. At that point, the best leader may have to make the most difficult decision of his or her career—the decision to leave the organization and turn it over to the cadre of leaders that has been developed to do the job.

Chief Robert K. Olson, ret.

Former chief, Minneapolis and Corpus Christi Police Departments

Former commissioner, Yonkers Police Department



Even so, several departments in the country have successfully used technology as an accelerator for their Hedgehog Concept. For example, as Barbara McDonald notes, the Chicago Police Department has implemented its massive computerized crime information database known as CLEAR (Citizen Law Enforcement Analysis and Reporting) to support its crime-reduction strategies. It is used effectively by both administrators and street cops to allocate patrol resources where they are most needed. It is used to help solve crimes with a state-of-the-art relational data base. And, of course, the New York Police Department could not have pioneered the highly effective CompStat model without successfully finding ways to get accurate and timely information from the field to the administrators downtown. Technology in Chicago and New York was critical in supporting the vision of the leaders of both of those departments.

(7) The Flywheel and the Doom Loop

The concept of the Flywheel, as described in the opening section of this paper, refers to the relentless, steady push toward a goal that finally produces sufficient momentum to keep the change moving. The concept of the “Doom Loop” refers to the tendency of some organizations to run off in one direction, then turn and chase another fad in a new direction. This habit of running after new ideas dooms the organization to tracking in circles rather than making any real progress. The Doom Loop often is the fate of departments that have a number of new leaders in rapid succession, but it also can happen with a chief who has been in place for several years and is addicted to the thrill (and publicity) of new programs for their own sake.

Many major-city chiefs are subject to relatively short tenure or anticipate that they may be. (The average tenure of a major city chief is less than four years. The rule of thumb is the larger the city, the shorter the tenure.) Consequently, there is the temptation to rush into new processes or programs to fix all the apparent problems with an agency. In response to these eager leaders, Collins says:

It’s important to understand that following the buildup-break-through flywheel model is not just a luxury of circumstance. People who say, “Hey, but we’ve got constraints that prevent us from taking this longer-term approach,” should keep in mind that the good-to-great companies followed this model no matter how dire the short-term circumstances.... (p. 172)

Chief Olson correctly suggests that successful pushing of the flywheel can depend on the chief’s ability to develop managers and then step back

and let them grow as they take on new responsibilities and are tested. But before the flywheel ever gets its first push, the chief needs time to create the trust and the support, both internal and external, to make the change possible. The change, however desirable, may be destabilizing. A chief has to make the complicated calculus of how much change can be accomplished, at what cost, within a predictably short tenure. It's a tricky business.

Using a Crisis to Get the Flywheel Moving

Because the management of crises is a common part of a police executive's job, conference participants were asked to consider whether crises constituted an insurmountable obstacle to organizational greatness. There is no question that crises are a distraction, and that they can funnel resources away from the change effort; however, they do force the Hedgehog leader to come up for air and tend to matters outside the burrow. Most police leaders and some of the corporate leaders at the conference had dealt with crises, and few considered crises a permanent roadblock to organizational improvement.

What became very clear, however, is that quite often, crises in police agencies became the major catalyst for widespread organizational change.

In New Orleans in the mid-1990s, Chief Richard Pennington confronted severe and widespread corruption by implementing significant changes. With the support of Mayor Marc Morial, Chief Pennington fired, demoted, or reprimanded scores of officers; tightened background checks on recruits; created an early warning system to detect problem officers; limited off-duty employment; created a new public integrity division outside of police headquarters (to make it more welcoming to complainants); raised abysmally low police salaries; required ethics training of officers; established problem-oriented policing and CompStat programs; and made many other changes. The changes produced sharp reductions in the city's homicide rate, particularly in public housing areas.

Dean Esserman joined the Providence Police Department directly after the city's mayor—one of the longest serving mayors in America—was convicted in federal court of corruption and the former chief was implicated in a promotions testing scandal. Esserman aggressively leveraged one scandal after another to develop a mandate for change. Sixty days into his tenure with the Providence Police Department, he had removed the entire command staff, launched an investigation into a promotions testing scandal, and discovered and destroyed a wiretapping system that was illegally recording all phone calls into and out of the department. He did all this in full view of the public and thereby held himself and the department to account to the citizens.

Even if a crisis costs a chief his or her job, the organization might be strengthened by the crisis and more strongly motivated to bring about



needed changes. Many chiefs said that a crisis can provide the stick they need to propel change.

When Robert McNeilly became the chief of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, he was faced with a consent decree from the U.S. Justice Department for pattern and practice violations. He had a choice: Either fight the decree or somehow find a way to use it to make changes that needed to be made. McNeilly, who came from within the department, decided to embrace the decree and used it as an opportunity to change the way the bureau does business. The experience generated widespread reform. McNeilly pioneered the development of an early warning system to alert department managers about problem employees who needed to be counseled or disciplined. McNeilly’s work made the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police a model for reform that has been studied by police leaders all across the country.⁹ (But it should be noted that while McNeilly was recognized nationally for his leadership and vision, he paid a significant price and faced internal challenges from employees who resented the changes.)

A crisis in the New York City Police Department allowed Commissioner Bratton to make his own powerful public statement about corruption. An investigation by prosecutors uncovered extensive corruption in the 30th Precinct. When the results of the investigation were due to be released, Bratton went to the district station and removed the badge from one of the corrupt officers. He held it up for the media and assembled police personnel and announced that that badge number would never be used by anyone in the NYPD again—ever. A shameful moment was transformed into a moment of dramatic and memorable condemnation of corruption.

When John Timoney was faced with a scandal in Philadelphia concerning the underreporting of rape, he first changed the reporting system to make sure the department captured every report of rape and sexual assault. Then he invited women’s advocacy groups to review every case to make sure a good investigation was conducted. If they thought more work was needed, they could make a request for further investigation. As a result, the department obtained more accurate reporting of sexual crimes and rebuilt the essential trust between the community and the police department. A crisis can become an important accelerator to needed change.

And as Rick Neal, a vice president at Motorola, pointed out (see sidebar on following page), a crisis often provides the opportunity for direct interaction with customers, and serves to underscore the important relationship between the customer and the organization. Attitude toward crisis probably is the key; leaders who see a crisis as an opportunity are

⁹ For example: *Turning Necessity Into Virtue: Pittsburgh’s Experience with a Federal Consent Decree* (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceMain.aspx?RID=217>) and *Federal Intervention in Local Policing: Pittsburgh’s Experience with a Consent Decree* (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/ric/ResourceMain.aspx?RID=90>). Both can also be found at www.vera.org.

A VIEW FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR: CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Maintaining credibility and managing in a crisis go hand in hand. Crisis situations are part of the entire customer interaction process. Two things are important to remember: First, credibility is built over time and not during an incident; second, managing the crisis is just that—managing. The crisis is managed through preparation, planning, training, and execution. These situations, if managed well, offer opportunities to broaden and strengthen relationships with customers. Because of the nature of our product—mission-critical communications and information—our customers have very high expectations of us and our technologies. They expect the product to be tailored to their unique needs and they expect highly reliable, secure, and instantly available networks and systems. To meet these expectations, a sizeable portion of our work is dedicated to staying ahead of potential problems. We have to have strong diagnostic tools (both centralized and remote) and rapid deployment of necessary resources to customer locations.

If problems occur outside the scope of our preparations and the problem turns into a system failure, the technological problems become intertwined with customer problems. Our customers, because of the nature of the business, have significant public exposure during these events. We have had instances in which we responded well to the technological problem but did not adequately handle the information process with the customer, the media, and the general public. It is our job to acknowledge and understand the magnitude of the problem, communicate the steps necessary for restoration, collaborate with the customer, and execute the solution. Sometimes this has to be done humbly before a large audience, in partnership with the customer.

Every event is different, and every customer situation adds a different dimension of complexity. It is our job to learn, adapt, and create increasingly better proactive processes to prevent these events from happening. The key in these situations is not only to have the technological resources in place but to have streamlined decision-making, an immediate problem-evaluation process, and a laser-sharp focus on the number one priority—fixing the problem in the shortest time possible. All other internal concerns take a back seat to getting our customer back on the air.

Rick Neal
Vice President
Motorola



more likely to be graceful under fire and to move their organizations forward rather than be stymied by the setback.

Conference participants agreed that a crisis that involves fault on the part of the agency should be dealt with honestly, openly and—when appropriate—apologetically or with obvious sorrow. Retired Chief Terry Hillard of the Chicago Police Department offered this advice: “When you mess up, ‘fess up and clean up.” It is a lesson one of his protégés took to heart. As the new executive director of Chicago’s Office of Emergency Management and Communication, Ron Huberman was with the mayor and the fire chief, welcoming President Bush to the city, when the 911 system failed. He went immediately to the media to admit that the department had “messed up.” And he set about dealing with policies, procedures, and personnel to solve the problem. What could have been a career-ending incident became an opportunity to strengthen his relationship with his own managers as well as to strengthen community trust.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this kind of leadership can be found in the handling of a tragic death in Boston after the community celebration of the Boston Red Sox victory over the New York Yankees in 2004. A college student who had been swept up in the celebrations died tragically as a result of a Boston police officer’s actions. The Commissioner of Police, Kathleen O’Toole, immediately met with the victim’s family to express her personal condolences. Commissioner O’Toole then publicly took responsibility for the department’s actions. Acting with minimum facts but certain that a young woman had died, O’Toole did what her gut told her to do—accept responsibility and look for ways to prevent future tragedies.

Similarly when Jim Burke, the legendary CEO of Johnson & Johnson, was faced with the tampering of Tylenol, he completely reengineered how Tylenol was packaged, radically changing an industry standard, and restoring trust with Johnson & Johnson customers.

The examples of crisis management reflect a major advancement in policing from only a few decades past, when a “deny, justify, and stonewall” posture too often characterized the response to crises. Full disclosure of errors and a transparent effort to correct them can strengthen bonds with the community and clients, while efforts to deny responsibility or to cover up a problem will breed distrust and disrespect. Full disclosure is another way in which an organization faces brutal reality. When the external stance in a crisis is to deny and justify, that easily can become the internal stance as well, with little recognition that serious efforts need to be made to fix the problem that caused the crisis in the first place, or to improve the way the organization responds to crises. When the Madison

CONFESSION, CONTRITION, AND FORGIVENESS: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Long before I became an ordained minister, I learned as a police chief the importance of confession, contrition, and forgiveness for individual and institutional health.

In the late 1980s, there was a fire in a low-income, mostly minority housing complex that had been a thorn in the side of the community and the Madison Police Department (MPD) for a long time. The frequent site of assaults and drug dealing, it consumed an inordinate amount of MPD time. One long-term solution was to locate the south district substation next door to the complex, but before that solution could help, there was the fire that could have ignited the town.

When the fire call went out, a young female sergeant—a very promising supervisor—heard it and responded in what she thought was a private comment to the dispatcher by singing, “Somerset is burning down, burning down, burning down....”

The sergeant did not know that a tape of her conversation with the emergency center dispatcher would be sent around the department. She also did not know that a child would die in the fire. Both facts would make newspaper headlines the next morning.

We had a potential crisis on our hands. Appropriately enough, the entire community was outraged. Minorities, especially, were expressing a potentially dangerous level of anger.

Our first response was to publicly admit the violation and to express pain and regret from the chief’s office. No denial. No justification. No blaming the victims. Our second move was to meet as soon as possible with community leaders to formulate the larger response. Ministers in the black community agreed that a public apology from the sergeant, plus her commitment to a substantial amount of community service, would satisfy their congregations.

Then we needed to “sell” this approach to the police union. We put forth our position and why we thought it would be the best way out of a desperate situation. The union leadership agreed with us, and a press conference was arranged. I escorted the sergeant into the room filled with reporters and other observers, and introduced her. She made a deeply heartfelt apology. Members of the community accepted the apology, and she thanked them for their generosity. I walked her out of the room without permitting questions.

Confession. Contrition. Forgiveness. They did not occur spontaneously. They happened because they were goals for which we made a very determined effort. The result was a peaceful community, a department in which many employees spent many subsequent hours in small-group soul-searching, and a basically good sergeant who took a step that day toward greatness.

Fr. David Couper

Episcopal Priest

Chief of the Madison, Wisconsin Police Department, 1973–1993



sergeant in Chief Dave Couper’s accompanying sidebar confessed and apologized for her behavior, many other members of the department were drawn into conversations among themselves about their own attitudes and the consequences for their mission. “Fess Up and Clean Up”—both inside and out. Perhaps the saying should be “Mess up. Fess up. Clean up. Step up.” Step up to improved organizational performance.

Crises that may or may not involve fault on the part of the agency may be occasions for the expression of sorrow. Thirty years ago it would have been unheard of for police leaders to visit a grieving family as Commissioner O’Toole did. They would have feared that any expression of sorrow would appear to be an expression of guilt and that would cause the agency to appear to “side” with the grieving family rather than with the officer or officers involved in the incident. In the late 1970s, Joe McNamara had just become the chief in Kansas City when 15-year old Rory L. Lark was killed in an encounter with police. McNamara attended the funeral, and the department was outraged. Most lawyers for cities and police departments had generally recommended not expressing any kind of regret for fear that this would be used against the city in future litigation.

When Ray Kelly was the commissioner in New York City a second time, an officer climbing to the top floor of a housing project walked onto the roof and startled a man who was walking across the roof from one apartment to another. Startled himself, the officer reacted by fatally shooting the man. In an unprecedented move for the NYPD, Ray Kelly acknowledged that this shooting was not justified and apologized to the family. His action proved popular in the community, but controversial in the department because officers felt that Kelly should have waited for the officer to be questioned and the investigation to be completed.

Similarly, officers in Boston attempting to execute a search warrant went to the wrong address. When they knocked down the door, a black minister in the house died of a heart attack. Because he had been correctly briefed by his officers and they admitted they had made a terrible mistake, Commissioner Paul Evans was able to go immediately to the family and to the public with an apology.

In 2007, regardless of who might eventually be found to bear greater responsibility for an incident, police leaders are much more likely to say, “We are so sorry this has happened and we are sad for your loss. We will do everything possible to learn what actually happened.” This is not an expression of guilt, only an expression of humanity. Greatness in policing requires this kind of compassion and transparency. In the 21st century, compassion **is** the response of a disciplined police culture.

Achieving a “Culture of Greatness” in Policing

Collins gives us a common language to talk to one another about factors that promote organizational greatness. We talk about “facing brutal facts” and “getting the right people on the bus,” about “good being the enemy of great,” and about Level 5 leaders. In law enforcement, the most difficult part of achieving greatness may be *sustaining* the types of changes that can make a police or sheriff’s department great. Police chiefs in major cities have notoriously short tenures, typically only a few years. A chief who wants to achieve greatness by Collins’ definition—success that lasts 15 years or longer—needs to think beyond his own tenure. In policing, greatness is not merely about finding a few great individuals for top management positions, but also creating great *systems* for overcoming obstacles and establishing a strong, self-disciplined *culture* within the organization that will continue long after the chief retires or is replaced.

Thus, in the world of policing, some of the Collins principles may be particularly important—for example, finding Level 5 leaders who pay close attention to preparing the next generation of leaders and are not afraid to set up their successors for even greater levels of success. That may involve giving managers plenty of authority to make important decisions, sending managers to leadership academies and bringing them along to professional conferences, and encouraging managers to think on their own, ask questions, and “challenge the boss” in constructive ways. Sustained greatness in policing also may hinge on Collins’ principle that greatness involves hiring people who are comfortable with strong internal debate but will always support the chief’s decisions, once they are made. A great police agency will not have a “genius with 1,000 helpers,” but rather a chief with a strong management team that will continue to ask tough questions after the chief has departed. And the farther down the ranks this culture of discipline extends, the more likely it will survive a change at the very top.

One additional point: In a conversation with Chuck Wexler, Collins emphasized that in public-sector organizations, achieving greatness often is about “overcoming obstacles.” It may be crystal-clear that a police or sheriff’s department’s Hedgehog Concept should be finding ways to reduce violence and other crimes, but the trick is to find ways to accomplish the goal. If an ironclad labor agreement prevents a police chief from firing officers who are not performing, perhaps the only way to overcome that obstacle is to move the officers to new positions where they might prove more useful. If a tight budget prevents a chief from acquiring the latest computer technology, the only solution may be to look for a computer whiz on the staff who can make the best use of the technology in hand.

In this connection, Collins also warns public-sector executives to avoid the temptation to obsess about “systemic constraints” that are beyond their



control. He cites the example of hospital executives who, when asked, “What needs to happen for you to build great hospitals?” answered, “The Medicare system is broken, and it needs to be fixed.” When pressed, the hospital executives were able to cite at least one health care organization that made a leap to superior results, Collins noted. Even when faced with enormous obstacles, a few leaders usually find ways to “build a pocket of greatness.” Collins encourages public-sector leaders to ask themselves, “What can you do *today* to create a pocket of greatness, despite the brutal facts of your environment?”

Finally, it should be noted that *the process of seeking greatness* cannot help but improve a policing agency. Whether a given police chief or sheriff actually achieves greatness is something that will be left for others to decide. But for each chief and each sheriff, any efforts to find the path to greatness surely will lead to some improvements. And in policing, even a small success can be immeasurably large. Each murder, rape, robbery, or other crime not committed is utterly important to the person who is not victimized and to his or her family and friends.

Collins has given us the dots. Our challenge is to find ways to connect them in the contexts of our own organizational puzzles. For this we are grateful to you, Jim Collins. You have inspired us to find greatness in what we do.

Appendix 1. Attendee List for March 29, 2005 Good to Great Leadership Summit

Chief William Bratton

Los Angeles Police Department

Chief Jim Burack

Milliken, Colorado Police Department

Bennie Click

Retired Chief

Dallas Police Department

Reverend David Couper

St Peter's Episcopal Church

Wisconsin

Bonnie Cullison

President

Montgomery County, Maryland Education Association

Superintendent Edward F. Davis, III

Lowell, Massachusetts Police Department

Chief Donald De Lucca

Miami Beach Police Department

Chief Charlie Deane

Prince William County, Virginia Police Department

Chief Kim Dine

Frederick, Maryland Police Department

Paul Evans

Director

Home Office–Police Standards Unit

London

Chief Terrence Gainer

U.S. Capitol Police

Raymond Geoffroy

Assistant Deputy Commandant

U.S. Marine Corps



Chief Ellen Hanson

Lenexa, Kansas Police Department

Ron Huberman

Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communication

Chief Gil Kerlikowske

Seattle Police Department

Lorne Kramer

City Manager
Colorado Springs

Chief David Kunkle

Dallas Police Department

Chief William Lansdowne

San Diego Police Department

Dr. John Leathers

Pennsylvania State University

Jody Leleck

Principal
Broad Acres Elementary School
Maryland

Chief James Lewis

Pomona, California Police Department

Bob Lunney

Consultant
Police and Public Safety
Toronto

Chief J. Thomas Manger

Montgomery County, Maryland Police Department

Barbara McDonald

Senior Advisor
Chicago Office of Emergency Management and Communication

Chief Robert McNeilly

Pittsburgh Bureau of Police

Rick Neal

Vice President
Motorola

Michael Nila

Franklin Covey

Carl Peed

Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Chief Charles Ramsey

Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department

Bruce Romer

Chief Administrative Officer
Montgomery County, Maryland Office of the County Executive

Karen Rowan

Former General Counsel
Chicago Police Department

Jim Sarallo

Senior VP & General Manager
Motorola

Jerome Weast

Superintendent of Schools
Montgomery County, Maryland Public Schools



For More Information:

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
1100 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

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COPS Office Response Center at 800.421.6770

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