When I Seem More Important than T in IT: The Case of Police Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

It has long been argued that information (I) is more important than technology (T) in information technology (IT). Thus in this case study, we will focus on information. The case is concerned with intelligence, which is the kind of information needed to prevent crime. This article starts by describing police intelligence, the case of U.S. intelligence strategy, and intelligence sources. Intelligence supports knowledge work as classified in the knowledge matrix. Next, technology is introduced in terms of the stages of growth model for knowledge management technology, since police intelligence work is conceptualized as knowledge work in this article.

Keywords: Information Sources, Information Systems, Knowledge Management, Law Enforcement, Policing, Strategic Technology

INTRODUCTION

It has long been argued that information (I) is more important than technology (T) in information technology (IT). The argument implies that technology is only useful when relevant information is available. Technology is dependent on information to be of value, while information is independent of technology to be valuable. Technology can increase the value of information, and information can increase the value of technology. But information comes first, not technology, as I can be valuable independent of available T.

Nevertheless, we seem to spend most of our IT research efforts on T rather than I. A reason for this kind of research priority might be that information seems to be considered given while technology can be influenced. Technology can collect, retrieve, store, manipulate and present information in steadily improving ways, and IT research makes an important contribution to this evolution.

In this case study, we will focus on information. The case is concerned with intelligence, which is the kind of information needed to prevent crime. This article starts by describing police intelligence, the case of U.S. intelligence strategy, and intelligence sources. Intelligence supports knowledge work as classified in the knowledge matrix. Next, technology is introduced in terms of the stages of growth model for knowledge management technology, since police intelligence work is conceptualized as knowledge work in this article.
POLICE INTELLIGENCE

Traditionally, intelligence was understood to mean information from criminals about criminal activity by a covert source. Today, intelligence is a systematic approach to collecting information with the purpose of tracking and predicting crime to improve law enforcement (Brown et al., 2004). Intelligence analysts investigate who is committing crimes, how, when, where and why. They then provide recommendations on how to stop or curb the offences. As part of this, analysts produce profiles of crime problems and individual targets, and produce both strategic (overall, long-term) and tactical (specific, short-term) assessments within the confines set by the police force.

Intelligence work in policing is based on intelligence strategy, where the aim of intelligence strategy is to continue to develop intelligence-led policing in all parts of a nation and in all regions of the world. An intelligence strategy provides a framework for a structured problem solving and partnership enhanced approach, based around a common model. For example, the National Intelligence Model in the UK is a structured approach to improve intelligence led policing both centrally and locally in policing districts such as the South Yorkshire Police (SYPIS, 2007).

Intelligence-led policing is carried out in many law enforcement areas. For example, intelligence-led vehicle crime reduction was carried out in the West Surrey police area in the UK. Analysis of vehicle crime included identifying (Brown et al., 2004):

- Locations (hotspots, streets, car parks, postcodes, wards, etc.) of vehicle crime
- Sites where vehicles were dumped
- Times of offences
- Prolific vehicle crime offenders
- Areas where prolific offenders were identified as offending
- Models of vehicles targeted for vehicle crime
- Type of property stolen in theft from vehicle offences

The analysis resulted in problem profiles, which identified emerging patterns of crime. These patterns included vehicle crime occurring in beauty spot car parks and the theft of badges from cars. Such information was disseminated to local officers to act on. Intelligence-led policing is defined as a business model and a management philosophy according to Ratcliffe:

Intelligence-led policing is a business model and managerial philosophy where data analysis and crime intelligence are pivotal to an objective, decision-making framework that facilitates crime and problem reduction, disruption and prevention through both strategic management and effective enforcement strategies that target prolific and serious offenders. (2008, p. 89)

THE CASE OF US INTELLIGENCE STRATEGY


The vision of the national intelligence strategy is to become a unified enterprise of innovative intelligence professionals whose common purpose in defending American lives and interests, and advancing American values, draws strength from U.S. democratic institutions, diversity, and intellectual and technological prowess.
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