Chapter V

Officer-to-Technology Systems

Knowledge management, as a field of study, is concerned with simplifying and improving the process of sharing, distributing, creating, capturing, and understanding knowledge. Hence, knowledge management has direct relevance to policing. So much so that Europol has a Knowledge Management Centre (KMC) at The Hague in The Netherlands. Europol regularly updates its databases at KMC to ensure it keeps abreast of new developments in technology, science, or other specialized fields in order to provide optimal law enforcement.

It is argued that knowledge is the most important resource in police investigations, and several police researchers make the case that successful investigation depends on knowledge availability (e.g., Chen, Schroeder, Hauck, Ridgeway, Atabakhsh, Gupta, Boarman, Rasmussen, & Clements, 2002). Furthermore, Chen et al. (2002) also point out that knowledge management in the knowledge-intensive and time-critical work of police investigations presents a real challenge to investigation managers.

Part of the reason for this challenge that knowledge management presents to police investigations has to do with the level of IT support required in organizations as knowledge management becomes more sophisticated. In this regard, Figure 1 depicts the KMT stage model that conceptualizes, on a continuum, the stages involved in the growth of knowledge management systems, and their relationship to the level of information technology support required.
Figure 1. Officer-to-technology systems at Stage 1 of the knowledge management technology stage model

Stage 1
- Officer-to-Technology
- End-user-tools

Stage 2
- Officer-to-Officer
- Who-knows-what

Stage 3
- Officer-to-Information
- What-they-know

Stage 4
- Officer-to-Application
- How-they-think

Use of IT tools that provide personal efficiency (e.g., word processing, spreadsheets, presentation software, etc.)

Use of IT to find other knowledge workers (e.g., intranets, yellow pages, systems, etc.)

Use of IT to provide access to stored documents (e.g., databases, contracts, articles, photographs, reports, etc.)

Use of a specific IT system designed to solve a knowledge problem (e.g., expert system, business or criminal security intelligence, etc.)
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