Municipal Police Department Utilizes Learning Management to Improve Training Programs—A Law Enforcement Training Management Case Study

By Dave Boggs, CEO of SyberWorks, Inc.

The Department

ABCPD police department serves a growing municipality which is home to over 60,000 citizens. ABCPD has 114 sworn officers, and a support staff of 30 individuals as administrative assistants, dispatchers, animal control officers, matrons, and parking control officers. The department's training office, located within the Support Services Division, is responsible for providing all the training needs of police personnel within the department, including making arrangements to send officers and employees to classes and seminars around the state. The training office is coordinated by a Lieutenant and Sergeant, who also write grants, police the community, recruit, and handle firearms qualification.

The Problem

The police department's training office was using a homegrown database to track officers' training records and schedule future training. Their records management system had many drawbacks:

- ➔ The homegrown database often experienced bugs and breakdowns. It was created by an employee who had left, and the current training coordinators constantly struggled to create fixes and other work-arounds, to obtain at the data they needed.
- ➔ The database was limited in functionality and not efficiently designed to handle the recent growth of department divisions and their data needs. The database also contained information about officers, and not support personnel.
- ➔ Training coordinators spent too much time inspecting training records on an officer-by-officer basis, to determine their current certification status and potential dates for recertification training. In addition, there was no way to record exemptions on an individual's training record such as if an officer had a back problem or was serving a deployment overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan for a year.
- ➔ The department could not effectively keep track of roll-call training. Nor were they able to efficiently test officers and other employees, to assess their retention of material.
- ➔ The department was interested in the benefits of web-based training, but was limited in its ability to create, develop, and present department-specific training materials.
- ➔ Department training requirements were handled piecemeal, by different coordinators. And the training office could not easily compile and present an overall view of the department's learning and development activities to supervisors.
- ➔ Training coordinators, administrators, and officers in charge of personnel development could not easily collect feedback about training and other pressing department issues. As a result, efforts to improve the existing system were hindered.
- ➔ The existing system did not manage firearms assignments and certifications. These were tracked manually, through a separate system of file folders.
- ➔ The existing system did a poor job of managing some equipment that was issued to officers, such as less-lethal weapons, holsters, batons, and duty belts. Tracking this equipment and managing their department's expenditures for such items was a headache, because no centralized location stored

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this information. In addition, they wanted to track less-lethal weapons and other equipment by squad car.

➔ Once an officer requested training or is required to attend training of some type, the request had to go through an approval process that might entail multiple levels of authorization with in the organization. Keeping track of the approval process and following it through to completion took a lot of time and left less time for training officers to focus on course content development.

➔ The police training division knew they needed to look at a solution that solved these problems. The system had to be scalable for future growth, and easy to implement and manage.

The Solution: The SyberWorks Police Training Management System

The SyberWorks Police Training Management System is a robust and flexible, SCORM/AICC-compliant, web-based technology that manages and tracks all aspects of a law-enforcement agency's training requirements. The highly scalable system lets a department start with a small pilot project and easily upgrade to a department-wide, town, or even city-wide solution. It delivers compelling and measurable e-Learning over the web or department Intranets, while also managing academy training, in-service training, specialized training, computer-based training, and web-based learning.

The system is customized with the look and feel of the department's own website or intranet. And its companion SyberWorks Web Author Tool allows administrators to create web-ready courses from doc files, add interactivity with sound and animation, and create tests.

The system is also offered as a *hosted* solution. Hosted solutions eliminate the need for internal IT support because upgrades, support, and system maintenance are done by SyberWorks. The data is hosted on a secure server with secure socket layer (SSL) technology. The system itself is designed with six levels of user authority, ID's, passwords, and date range checks, to keep all information secure.

The SyberWorks Police Training Management System delivers the following targeted benefits:

➔ **Records and Transcripts**—Training coordinators can pull customized reports with the click of a mouse. The system also allows them to upload any file, such as a .jpg, .pdf, or .doc file, to a specific course or evaluation that an individual has completed. This makes it easy to attach certification records to individual training records. Since officers and other personnel often attend training all over the state, the system also allows training coordinators and other administrative officials to upload and store training certificates. The SyberWorks Police Training Management System can automatically mark exceptions which exclude an individual from training like an injury or some other issue, recognize critical recertification dates, send email and system reminders about upcoming training events, and identify divisional or department-wide training needs.

➔ **Firearms Training and Certification**—Training coordinators can both schedule and track firearms qualifications. All department firearms can be tracked within the system. The system can identify which officers are due for specific firearms qualifications and recertifications. These recertifications are then easily assigned in conjunction with an officer's existing schedule, and recertification reminders are sent by email or through the training management system.

➔ **Less-Lethal Weapons and Equipment Management**—Organizations can track and manage other types of less-lethal weapons and equipment used by officers, and to track any extra training associated with those items. Less-lethal weapons and equipment types can be organized by group, department, or the department's organizational hierarchy. The system makes it easy to prepare for meetings, because administrators can instantly pull reports to track inventories.

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- ➔ **Roll Call Training**—A long-running "Roll Call" class type is used to track attendance, monitor the status of assignments, and record daily roll-call topics and activity. Once it has been recorded, this information is archived and becomes available on individual transcripts. Transcript reports also can be filtered by learning-event type and activity, so that administrators can quickly print documents with the information they need for meetings or trials.
- ➔ **Surveys**—An Online Survey Tool allows training coordinators to collect immediate feedback about training materials and sessions. All responses are stored in the Training Management System database for reporting purposes. The dates of survey responses are automatically stored in the database, so supervisors can see how results have changed over time. Surveys can also be tailored to a department's organizational hierarchy, so that administrators can see how results vary by office, division, or bureau. The Online Survey Tool supports five question types: short answer, long answer, single select, multiple select, and Likert scale. It allows training coordinators to create and edit questions efficiently, with intuitive drop-down boxes. Surveys can be made public or private and results can be edited if necessary.
- ➔ **Read and Sign Functionality**—A unique Read and Sign function ensures that important information sent by training coordinators and administrators reaches, and is reviewed by, all members of the police department. Alerts are sent that users must "read and sign" these materials, and managers can see in real time who has done so, and who has not.

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The Results

As a result of using the SyberWorks Police Training Management System:

➔ The hosted solution that has erased the need for training officers and internal IT to deal with system-support problems. This also meant less time working on the system and more time dedicated to actual training.

➔ Training coordinators are able to develop and tailor web-based training to the department's needs.

➔ The police department now has a system that maintains all training records electronically, which has increased training-division efficiency.

➔ Training coordinators can now easily bring up and print customized reports about any aspect of any officer's training, including time-sensitive recertification dates, to better schedule future certifications. This made preparing training record documents for trials and hearings much simpler because it's just a few clicks, then print!

➔ The department finally has a way to effectively manage and track roll-call training.

➔ Training coordinators are better prepared to present training data and information to managers, since the division can quickly create reports about all training and development activities.

➔ Training coordinators have streamlined user communication and feedback about training issues, leading to specific recommendations about existing programs.

➔ The department has finally integrated firearms qualifications into the system, allowing training coordinators to easily identify officers' upcoming certification needs.

➔ The police department is controlling costs, because they can now track and manage their less-lethal weapons and equipment.

➔ Training coordinators use easily accessed transcripts-and-read and sign records to quickly review certification accreditations and policy updates.

➔ If an officer requests or is required to attend training, the request can be automatically approved or follow a preconfigured approval path, which can be tracked and managed through the system. A series of email and system notifications are sent to various supervisors to streamline the approval process.

The ABCPD department has found a scalable, personalized solution to fit their training needs department-wide. Training coordinators have found that they are more efficient and more effective because the SyberWorks Police Training Management System is easy to use, yet carries out a wide variety of needed functions. The SyberWorks solution delivers access at any time and in any place, plus easier accreditations, and simplified, organized managerial overviews of past, current, and future training needs within the department.

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