

CASE STUDY

How the Huntington Beach Police Dept. Saved Time and Improved Service by Converting Their Field Officer's Handbook into a Mobile App



Agency Background

Responsible for providing law enforcement services to over 200,000 residents and 11 million visitors to Huntington Beach every year, The Huntington Beach Police Department (HBPD) currently has 212 funded sworn positions and 121.5 civilian positions.

HBPD launched an internal police department app in October 2018. The app provides a host of tools, including the ability to make printed documents and supporting material digital and mobile accessible. Training and guidance on how to use the app was included in briefing trainings with a pilot group of about 15 officers, and subsequently rolled out to the entire department after one month.

The HBPD internal app currently has an 85% adoption rate among its officers, with 60% of officers using the app 3-5 times per day.

Executive Summary

The HBPD's Field Officer's Handbook was out-of-date, literally and figuratively. The physical booklet was difficult to read, costly to produce, and became increasingly inaccurate as data constantly changed after publishing. Making the handbook digital and accessible through HBPD's secure internal mobile app leveraged modern technology to better serve the officers and staff dedicated to protecting public safety. Consistent, accurate data is now searchable and conveniently accessible with a few swipes. This fiscally responsible and environmentally friendly change has been a significant upgrade to a tool field officers utilize to protect citizens on a daily basis.

Problem

Like all police departments, HBPD maintained and produced its own edition of the Field Officer's Handbook. This Handbook is critical to officers stopping crime and protecting the public as it provides essential information on processes, procedures, directory information, and more.

Unfortunately, the Field Officer's Handbook had limitations that made working in the field more difficult. These included:



Inaccurate data. Because phone numbers, job titles, and other information change frequently, the handbook became outdated almost as soon as it was printed. To save costs and resources, it was reprinted only when copies ran out, but that resulted in years between print runs.



Increased risk of human error. Officers manually correcting the inaccurate data opened the door for officers to miss information updates and misinterpret their notes, increasing the likelihood of errors and confusion in the field.



Difficult to read and search. For the handbook to be portable, the text was extremely small which made it difficult to read and required flipping and scanning to find information during potentially time-sensitive situations.

Producing the handbook required a significant amount of time, over 120 hours according to Shirley Salter, HBPD Training Unit staff member. "Every phone number, address, organization, code, school, park, bank, etc., etc., were thoroughly checked to see that they were up-to-date," said Salter.

Production requirements for the Handbook included:

Extensively reviewing data for accuracy and incorporating previous corrections in a concerted effort over the course two to three months, taking focus away from other administrative tasks

Staff time requirements, in HBPD's case an estimated 120 hours of work exclusively on the handbook, costing an estimated \$2,280.

Editorial duties like formatting and proofreading

Outsourced printing costs of \$2,000

Solution

Huntington Beach Police Department selected MottoMobile, Inc. along with their public safety focused Apex Mobile platform, to help solve these challenges. Built on AWS, with sensitive documents stored on the AWS GovCloud, MottoMobile's Apex Mobile platform is a cloud-based solution that allows for the creation, deployment, and management of native iOS and Android applications along with an integrated web portal.

Mobile App Benefits Include:

- ✔ **Consistent, accurate data.** The app allows real-time updates to be made in seconds, so information is as accurate as possible and consistent for every officer or staff member referencing the handbook.
- ✔ **Convenient, with one less thing to carry.** Officers and staff within the department can view the handbook with a few swipes, on any device they are carrying with them while on duty.
- ✔ **Searchable.** The digital handbook is completely searchable, saving officer's time in the field by delivering critical information as quickly as possible at a time when seconds can impact safety.
- ✔ **Improved staff workflow.** Updates can be seamlessly executed as they arise, so the effort is more easily woven into staff workflow.
- ✔ **Fiscally responsible and environmentally friendly.** \$2000 printing costs and need for editorial and ordering coordination is eliminated, along with paper waste.
- ✔ **Expandability.** Content and features can be added to the app on the fly allowing for ongoing improvement and the instant addition of critical tools and resources
- ✔ **Supplemental Alert & Notification System.** Push notifications services ensure users are alerted to critical information and updates immediately bridging the gap between email and radio.
- ✔ **Resource Prioritization.** User grouping allows for content to be curated for and presented specifically to relevant users resulting in faster access to role specific resources.



Results



Making the handbook digital leveraged modern technology to better serve the officers and staff dedicated to protecting public safety.

The digital version of the Field Officer's Handbook, accessible through Apex Mobile's Platform, provides the following benefits:

- Increased efficiency resulted in an additional 1,900 annual patrol hours
- Allows real-time updates so information is always accurate and consistent for every officer.
- \$2000 printing costs and need for editorial and ordering coordination are eliminated.
- 120 staff hours, equaling \$2,280 are eliminated.
- Digital handbook is completely searchable, saving officer's time in the field.
- Updates can be seamlessly executed as they arise, so the effort is more easily woven into staff workflow and doesn't require exclusive focus.

Working with HPBD, Apex Mobile expanded their already comprehensive platform with additional features that can benefit any public safety agency, while also allowing for customization to serve the unique needs of different organizations. The feature set developed in conjunction with HPBD is now broadly available and offered as Apex IRIS.

“The use of this app has greatly benefitted the Huntington Beach Police Department. Mobile technology is a critical component to law enforcement today. Our new app has allowed us to provide our officers with useful resources, critical information, and valuable data in an organized and easily accessible solution. Our agency routinely finds ways to integrate this technology into our daily operations.”

- Sergeant Shawn White #1002, Special Investigation Bureau/K9 Unit, Narcotics/Vice, Huntington Beach Police Department