

# City of Syracuse: Police and schools collaborating for the benefit of the community

## Overview

### ■ **Business Challenge**

The City of Syracuse Police Department (SPD) wanted to give its officers wireless connectivity across the city so that they could access the IT network at police headquarters from the field to file reports, obtain data, such as mug shots and building floor plans, and exchange e-mail. Budgetary constraints, however, posed a challenge.

### ■ **Solution**

By teaming with IBM, the SPD was able to leverage IT investments already made by the Syracuse School District. A secure link was established between the school district's high-speed fiber optic network and that of the SPD, so that police could access the network wirelessly, through hotspots at school buildings.

### ■ **Key Benefits**

- Leverages human and infrastructure IT resources
- Fosters collaboration and sharing of resources
- Gives SPD officers wireless access to their own network from the field
- Provides school district with guaranteed police presence near schools



### **Making the most of scarce resources**

The public sector has always had to work under tight budgets. There is never enough money available to do all that officials wish to accomplish. But on occasion, two very different organizations align in such a way that they can leverage investments and resources to achieve something that neither could on its own.

That's what has happened in the City of Syracuse. The Syracuse Police Department (SPD) and the City of Syracuse School District have collaborated on an IT connectivity project that is a winning proposition for all concerned: the police, the schools, and most importantly, the public.

*“This benefits the schools, the police department, the whole city government...and the community itself.*

– Anita Murphy, Deputy Superintendent, Syracuse School District

## Collaborating to optimize the use of IT resources

### Business Benefits

- Leverages human and infrastructure IT resources belonging to both the Syracuse School District and the SPD so that limited budgets are optimized
- Enhances collaboration and sharing of resources between the SPD and Syracuse School District, avoiding wasteful bureaucratic procedures
- Increases police presence near schools, enhancing security and public safety
- Enhances police officers' capabilities by giving them wireless access to the police department's own network from the field, direct access to surveillance video feeds from anywhere in the school system and dynamically managed physical access to school buildings

*“We share common needs, and we’re able to work together to get our jobs done very effectively.”*

– Richard Trudell, lieutenant,  
Syracuse Police Department

The project got its start when the SPD identified a need to give its officers wireless connectivity to its network from their patrol cars. The primary driving force was the need for the officers to download and send completed electronic police reports without having to come back to police headquarters. Once the link was established officers would also be able to take advantage of resources that were normally available only from the wired network. These included booking mug shot photos, access to state and federal law enforcement databases, law enforcement records management information, school emergency plans and floor plans, e-mail, New York State inmate corrections data and the department's policy management system, among others.

The SPD had been talking with IBM about the requirement, and had also been meeting with the school district and other city organizations to implement the idea of installing wireless hotspots at various public buildings around the city. The primary challenge to moving forward was a lack of available resources—mostly monetary—to make the entire vision a reality.

As it happened, the Syracuse School District had recently installed its own highly robust fiber optic network. Aware of the budgetary constraints, IBM suggested that the police department leverage the school district's investments by linking the existing school network to that of the police department. All that would be needed to provide WiFi access was to install the hotspot hardware itself.

This would help fulfill the police department's requirements while avoiding the installation of redundant infrastructure and the need to use a commercial network provider. That initial concept rapidly grew into the larger idea of more extensive resource sharing, in which not just networks, but IT personnel are shared by both departments.

### A simple idea that enhances capabilities

Linking the school and police networks and enabling officer access to the school network through WiFi was the key idea that opened up a whole range of other capabilities. The school district had already been working on pilot projects for digital video surveillance and electronic access systems (door locks). The link to the police department has taken those projects and enhanced their capabilities dramatically, in ways that would not otherwise have been possible.

For example, police can now pull up to a school and, from inside the car, watch a video feed from any security camera located at that school. Police can also use the system to enable access to the school's electronic door locks and gain entry, as well as also manage those entry privileges should it prove necessary.

### **Serendipity: one department helping another**

While the enhanced technical capabilities that the synergistic relationship gives to the school district and police department are highly significant, collaboration has a much more practical benefit: the optimal use of scarce resources.

By leveraging each other's human and IT resources, both departments are able to do more with less. "The thought of resource sharing was very exciting to us," says Lieutenant Richard Trudell of the SPD. "The police department's budget to get this kind of thing done is significantly smaller than that of the school district. Since we've started working together, we've been able to accomplish things we never would have been able to do on our own, and it goes beyond just our day-to-day projects. If I have an IT issue at the SPD, I'm able to call on the school district's IT department for help, and vice versa."

This kind of relationship between governmental organizations is highly unusual, notes Trudell. "Police departments are, by their nature, insular. It's really rare for us to work this closely with other agencies." He says that what put the resource sharing initiative over the top was the strong collaborative relationship that evolved during the solution's pilot at Fowler High School. "We had been talking to all of the city IT departments about these projects, but the police department and the school district developed this very close relationship that worked really well. The environment and the personalities all meshed."

School district Deputy Superintendent, Anita Murphy, concurs. "The school district has a lot more IT people than the police department does," she says. "It just makes sense for us to share that resource. It makes sense for the leaders of all the city's organizations to agree that we shouldn't have redundant resources."

### **A winning proposition for all concerned**

"This has been of tremendous benefit for all parties," adds Murphy. "On a very basic level, the police get their hotspot connectivity without having to go and install a whole new infrastructure, while the school district, in turn, gets guaranteed police presence near the schools, which enhances public safety. But it's about much more than that. Because of the link that we have, we've been able to move forward with all of our other projects, such as digital video surveillance at all of our schools."

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## **Key Components**

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### *Services*

- IBM Global Business Services
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## **Why it matters**

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By leveraging existing investments in IT infrastructure made by the City of Syracuse School District, the Syracuse Police Department has been able to gain wireless access to its own network from the field without having to install a costly, redundant infrastructure. Moreover, the police and school IT departments share human and IT resources, further extending their budgets and enhancing their capabilities. This collaboration helps to improve public safety by keeping officers out in the community and also gives the police new capabilities, such as direct access to school surveillance video and electronic door locking systems.

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A significant driver of the resource sharing initiative was the availability of a substantial amount of money for school security. "This was a really strong motivator," Murphy says. "We had to do this security project anyway and we wanted to do it right. We knew that the police department was doing things over on their side as well. So working together was an obvious step to take."

### **IBM, facilitating innovation**

IBM Global Business Services provided solution and architecture design, planning out the infrastructure for the various projects and helping to implement them. But, according to Trudell, a critical IBM contribution didn't come in the form of formal service contracts. "IBM had the foresight to introduce us to one another and suggest that we work together in the first place. That's something that doesn't really fit with the culture of these two kinds of organizations. But, surprisingly enough, it works really well. We have a relationship that doesn't involve a lot of turf conflicts or bureaucracy. We share common needs, and we're able to work together to get our jobs done very effectively."

While resource sharing has allowed the two organizations to stretch their budgets, Murphy notes that collaborating is more important than just saving money. "We're all resource-scarce. Collaborating, and having the two organizations working as one, lets us make the most of what we've got IT-wise," she says. "But the bottom line is that we're all working for the public here. At the end of the day we can go to our bosses and say, 'This benefits the schools, the police department, the whole city government . . . and the community itself.'"

### **For more information**

To learn more about how IBM can help transform your business and help you innovate, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner.

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