

Morgan Wright: Technology is Key to More Efficient and Effective Law Enforcement



Morgan Wright is an internationally recognized expert on cybersecurity strategy, cyberterrorism, identity theft and privacy. Wright was a senior adviser in the U.S. State Department Antiterrorism Assistance Program and senior law enforcement adviser for the 2012 Republican National Convention. In addition to 18 years in state and local law enforcement as a state trooper and detective, Wright has developed solutions in defense, justice and intelligence for some of the largest technology companies in the world.

Government Technology recently spoke with Wright about how technology can help law enforcement agencies manage challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic and other recent events.

How can technology help law enforcement agencies address some of their biggest challenges?

Law enforcement departments are facing severe budget pressure. At the same time, crime continues to increase in some of our major cities. Homicides in Minneapolis are up 86 percent year over year, for example. Technology can help police departments provide services more efficiently. With fewer officers on the

street, we need to identify technologies that can increase the capabilities of each officer — solutions that improve access to information and enable them to make better decisions faster. Used well, technology can be a force multiplier in that respect.

Which types of technologies can benefit law enforcement the most right now?

Mobility is critical. Officers need the ability to access data from anywhere on devices that are easy to carry. Access to video and information sharing capabilities are especially important. The more law enforcement personnel know, the more effective they are and the safer everyone can be. 5G will enable many of those capabilities.

Analytics is also important. The more real-time analysis an officer has, the better he or she can preempt dangerous activities and collaborate with the public to enhance safety.

How has COVID-19 impacted police departments, and how might technology help address those impacts?

The pandemic decreased proactive activities. There are fewer cases where an officer might stop you for speeding 10 mph over the speed limit, for example. Departments have to weigh whether it's worth the risk to stop a car to issue a traffic ticket and

potentially be exposed to COVID-19, or to reserve their exposure time for things that are a matter of life or death. The impact of that is reduced revenue generation.

COVID-19 also impacted morale. More law enforcement personnel have died from COVID-19 this year than have died in the line of duty. That impacts a police department and its morale — people work longer shifts, and health often suffers. We need more efficient ways to get the results we need. COVID-19 also changed crime patterns — some types of crimes have gone up; other types have gone down. Again, that's where analytics comes in. Analytics can help law enforcement understand shifts in criminal behavior and patterns of crime, and then change staffing levels or tactics in response.

What else should law enforcement agencies keep in mind about technology?

Don't forget about cybersecurity. Implementing technology is great, but you have to keep it secure.

Nobody wants to call 911 and get a busy signal because the system has been taken down by ransomware. As departments become more reliant on technology, they're going to have to get smarter about the cybersecurity aspects of it, too.