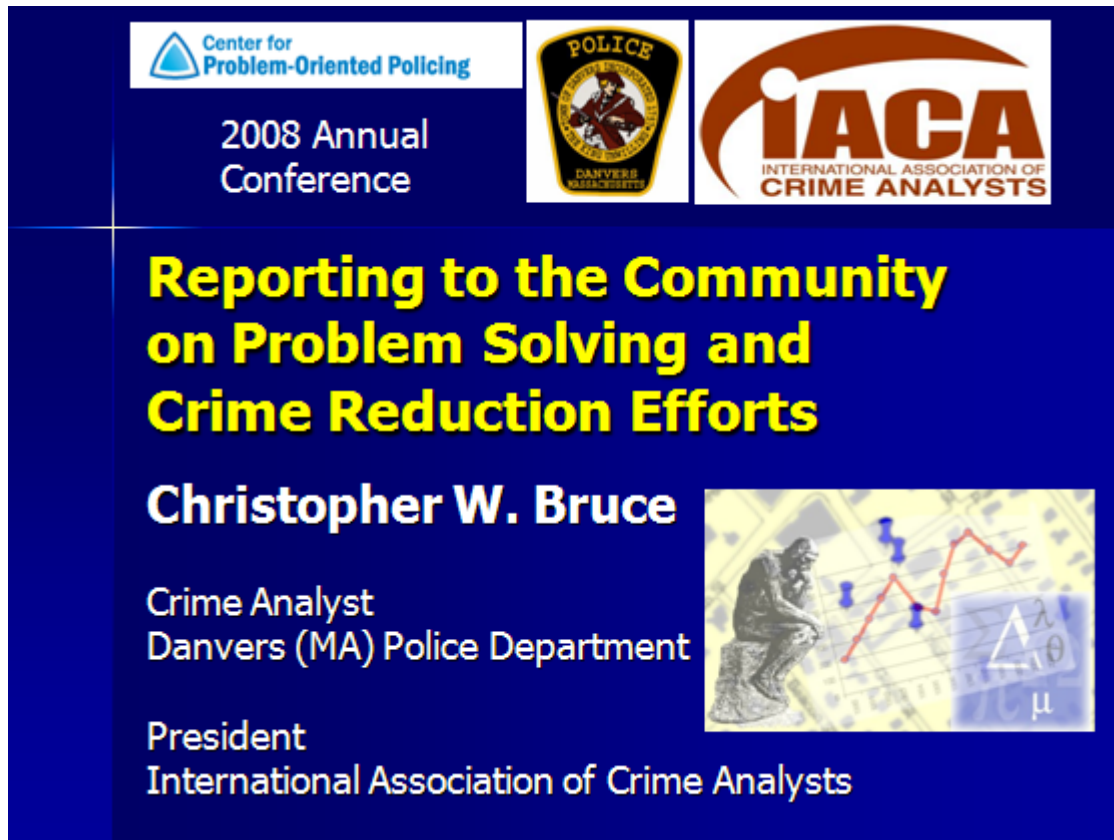


## Reporting to the Community on Problem Solving and Crime Reduction Efforts

Synopsis of 2008 Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Conference Presentation

Christopher W. Bruce

30 September 2008



Center for Problem-Oriented Policing

2008 Annual Conference

POLICE  
DANVERS MASSACHUSETTS

**IACA**  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF  
CRIME ANALYSTS

**Reporting to the Community  
on Problem Solving and  
Crime Reduction Efforts**

**Christopher W. Bruce**

Crime Analyst  
Danvers (MA) Police Department

President  
International Association of Crime Analysts

This presentation was given on Tuesday, September 23, 2008, at the U.S. Center for Problem-Oriented Policing Conference in Bellevue, Washington. The instructor, Christopher Bruce, has been a crime analyst for 15 years in Massachusetts, first for the Cambridge Police and now for the Danvers Police. He is also the president of the International Association of Crime Analysts. One of his flagship products is his yearly *Annual Crime Report*, which indirectly led to this presentation.

This is a textual adaptation of a one-hour presentation and is not meant to be a comprehensive article.

### Introduction

When police talk about reporting to the community, the focus usually drifts into one of these areas:

- Legal considerations
- Sunshine laws
- CORI
- Freedom of Information Act
- Reporting liability

- CALEA criteria

These issues may be important, but they are a different presentation. Our focus here is not on things that we *must* report, or conversely things that we *cannot* report, but rather on things that we *should* report, even though we're not compelled to do so.



There is rarely much overlap between what we *must* report and what we *should want to* report. The Clery Act, for instance, requires police to report campus-area crime statistics to colleges and universities. It does not require us to provide truly useful analysis or qualitative information of those statistics. But if we want current and prospective students to make intelligent choices about safety and crime prevention, we should report that interpretive information.

There are plenty of reasons to supply information about problems and police problem-solving efforts to the public:

- **Prevention.** By providing quality information, you arm citizens and businesses with the tools they need to prevent victimization.
- **Reduce fear.** Crime statistics by themselves can generate fear among readers unfamiliar with definitions or who don't know how to interpret the numbers. Better information can help a resident assess real risks of victimization.

- **Build confidence.** A police agency that extensively reports to the public shows that it is “on top” of crime and disorder issues and is working on them.
- **Solicit intelligence.** Through its problem reports, a police agency can ask the public for information or intelligence that will help solve problems.
- **Solicit perspective.** Residents and business owners may have a different interpretation of the causes and consequences of a problem.
- **Establish partnerships.** Providing quality information helps draw guardians, place managers, controllers, and other stakeholders to the table.

There are, of course, a few reasons to *withhold* information from the public:

- **When there’s a significant potential for misunderstanding.** It’s better to provide nothing than to provide raw statistics or maps with no interpretation or definitions.
- **When the information is incomplete,** such as problem information that hasn’t been fully analyzed.
- **When there’s the potential to screw up an investigation or intervention strategy.** “In response to the problem, we’ll be staking out the parking lot every Wednesday night for the next month” would not be a good idea to release.
- **To protect the privacy of victims and witnesses.** Withhold victim’s names, addresses, and other identifying information, of course.
- **When it’s illegal,** as in the case of juveniles’ names in many jurisdictions.

In general, however, when we fail to report quality information to the public, it’s not for any of these reasons. It’s because we don’t have it in the first place (e.g., the agency has no analysis capability) or we just haven’t taken the time and effort. Thus, when we do report information, we often make the same mistakes over and over:

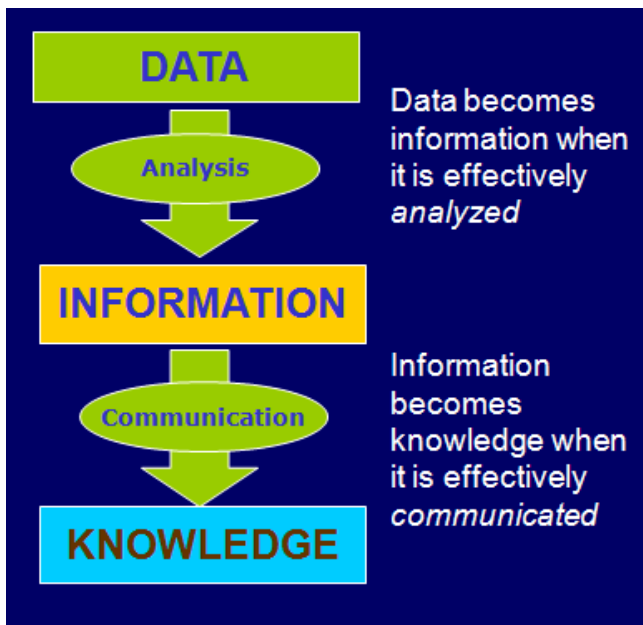
- **We start providing information and stop.** There are plenty of web sites with crime statistics through 2003 but that haven’t been updated in five years.
- **We provide only data or statistics.** Raw data and statistics don’t do much to help the public. What are citizens supposed to do with the knowledge that robberies are up 20% if they don’t know when, where, the nature of the robberies, the characteristics of the victims, and the weapons used? How should an online map viewer react to a cluster of burglaries near her house if she doesn’t know how they got in, what was stolen, or the relationship between the victim and the offenders?
- **We don’t provide anything actionable.** Related to the point above, our information often gives members of the public little or nothing to go on. If we’re expecting them to make intelligent safety and crime prevention choices, we have to give them the information necessary for such things.
- **We provide information only in limited formats.** Some citizens don’t have access to the Internet or don’t know where to look for the reports you’re posting. To truly reach the public,

we have to provide reports in numerous formats: web, mail, e-mail, presentations, television, newspapers, and so forth.

- **We treat them like children**, by providing the same tired crime prevention tips that any fool could figure out on his own.
- **We spin**, trying to turn bad information into good information or trying to take credit for crime decreases we've had nothing to do with.
- **We present hypotheses as facts**. We blame gangs or methamphetamines or homeless people or some other factor for everything without fully studying the problem.

## Effective Communication

Crime analysis audiences are taught that their jobs are one part “analysis” and one part “communication.” Analysis transforms raw data into information, but only effective communication transforms information into knowledge—information that has been absorbed by its audience and is used in decision-making. The same model applies to information a police agency wants to release to the public. Only effective communication will lead them to receive and internalize the information and make sensible decisions based on it. This presentation is about the communication aspect; please use the resources of the International Association of Crime Analysts ([www.iaca.net](http://www.iaca.net)) for help with the “analysis” part of the process.



The first step towards effective communication involves understanding the difference between “pull” media and “push” media.

**Pull: the audience actively seeks it**

**The audience cares more**

“Pull” media is media that the audience actively seeks, or is pulled towards. Those that issue this type of media rarely have to hunt for their intended audience; they have millions of people who are clamoring for the information every day. Examples of this type of media include celebrity news, sports scores, sensational crime cases, headlines, stock quotes, and movie reviews.

With “push” media, most the audience is indifferent or hostile and must be convinced or pushed to read it. Even though some of it is for the intended reader’s own good, they must be convinced to spend time with it. Examples of push media include nutritional information, endangered species lists, amber alerts, the current national debt, and social or political information.

**Push: the audience is indifferent or hostile**

The collage includes:
 

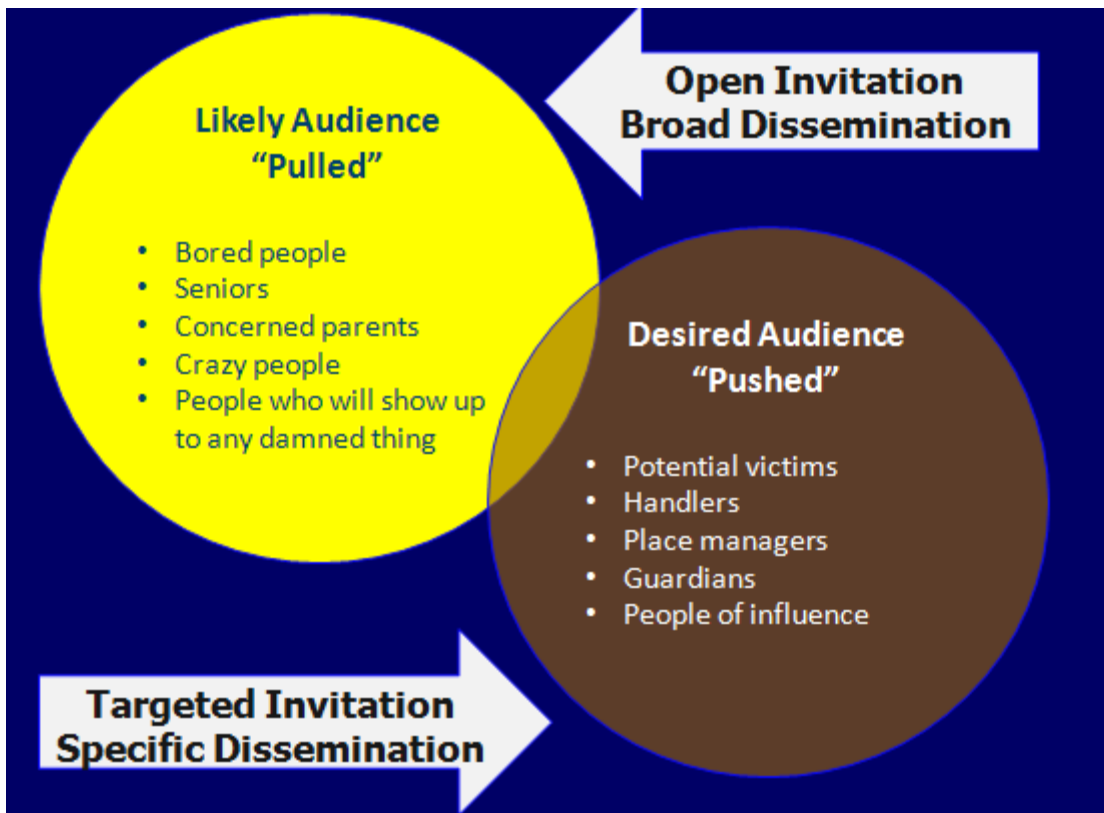
- A food pyramid with text: "The Food Pyramid", "The Food Pyramid is a guide to help you choose the right foods to eat. It shows you how much of each food group you should eat each day. The pyramid is divided into four sections: Grains, Vegetables, Fruits, and Protein. Each section has a list of foods and a recommended amount to eat each day." (Note: The text in the image is partially obscured and difficult to read).
- An "ENDANGERED SPECIES INFORMATION NETWORK" logo featuring various animals.
- An "AMBER ALERT" sign with a car icon.
- A "U.S. NATIONAL DEBT CLOCK" showing "The Outstanding Public Debt as of 28 Aug 2008 at 06:30:42 PM GMT is: \$9,639,142,083,971.10".
- A "STOP GENOCIDE IN SUDAN" sign with a hand icon.

**The issuer cares more**

In policing, we deal with both types of media, but “pull” media in policing is usually stuff that doesn’t particularly do the audience any good. It includes information about murders (particularly sensational ones), high-profile crimes, bizarre crimes, and police scandals.

Most of what we *want* the audience to read in policing—pattern information, problem information, prevention information—is “push” media. Most of them aren’t actively seeking it. We need to lead them to it.

With any type of media, there is always *some* audience “pulled,” but it isn’t necessarily the audience we want. As an example, imagine that your agency has a problem with something like thefts of laptop computers. You decide to hold a public meeting and you widely disseminate the date and time of the meeting. Who comes?



If your agency is like most, the audience naturally “pulled” to the meeting will be composed of bored, annoying, or crazy people who will show up to anything just to hear themselves talk. Your core audience—the ones that really need the problem information—such as potential victims, handlers, place managers, guardians, and other people who can influence the problem—will probably stay home unless specifically targeted and convinced to attend.


There are few ways we can “push” our target audience and engage them with the information.

- **Make it interesting to read.** Thousands of people around the world know detailed information about crime and disorder in Lincoln, Nebraska, because they are dedicated readers of Chief Tom Casady’s blog, “The Chief’s Corner” (<http://lpd304.blogspot.com>). By writing well, clearly explaining problems, and offering a healthy dose of wit, Tom makes crime and disorder information fun and interesting to review. He has made “pull” media out of information that would normally be “push.”
- **Make it easy to receive.** If audiences won’t proactively seek out the crime information you want them to have, at least make sure they can receive it easily. Most of your residents don’t want to check your web site every day, so disseminate your crime information by e-mail, and mail it in flyers, and convince the newspa per to publish it.
- **Put it in their path.** The best way to “make it easy to receive” is to find ways to disseminate information in such a way that your intended audience literally can’t miss it. For instance, when we wanted to alert potential victims to a problem of GPS thefts in Danvers, Massachusetts, we designed flyers to be posted by businesses, where potential victims would encounter the information *at the very moment* they were making the decision to leave their GPS unsecured.
- **Highlight the danger to the audience members or their loved ones.** A report on bicycle theft around M.I.T. in Cambridge, Massachusetts starts off, powerfully, “If you own a bicycle that cost you \$200 or more, live in Cambridge or Boston, and you do little to protect it, it will be stolen within a couple of years” (<http://web.mit.edu/~joncox/www/bikesafety.html>). A report on neighborhood problems in Pinellas County, Florida starts by encouraging readers to “imagine your elderly grandmother looking forward to lunch every day with friends in the neighborhood,” and subsequently menaced by drug dealers and gun-wielders.
- **Find a spokesperson**—someone known and respected by the community who will draw attention when they speak or write about your issue. This might be a popular newspaper columnist, a community organizer, a public official, or a business leader.

### Valued Customers

We have been informed by the Danvers, Peabody and Saugus Police Departments that numerous vehicles along the Route 1 corridor have suffered **thefts** of GPS devices, laptop computers, iPods, CDs, purses, and like items.

**Please remove any visible items** and secure them so you can enjoy your time at our business. If you observe any suspicious activities please advise us immediately or call 911. Thank you!



**Danvers/Peabody/Saugus  
Route 1 Partnership**

*Businesses  
and police  
working together  
to reduce crime.*

### Offenders

Woburn – 17 Miles  
Burlington – 16 Miles  
(Try Burlington – the crime analyst is still catching up on August)



In terms of the information itself, there are several **content considerations** to keep in mind:

- **Write powerfully.** Draft the best writer in the police department to write the text. Do not overestimate the power of good writing to motivate people to action, and do not underestimate the power of bad writing to make people stop reading after the first paragraph. Also, do not underestimate the power of The Force.
- **Define terms.** Use vernacular language (“vandalism” instead of “malicious mischief,” “rape” instead of “aggravated sexual assault”) and even then, define your terms. Most audiences don’t know the difference between a robbery and a burglary.
- **Provide a feedback mechanism.** Remember, part of the reason for providing the information is to solicit feedback and intelligence. Make sure readers have a contact name, number, and e-mail address (or, online, a feedback form or message board) that will allow them to write to you with their own perspectives and information.
- **Analyze rather than guess.** A good public report is based on thorough analysis, not untested hypotheses.
- **Tell them how to use the information.** Suggest specific courses of action they can take based on the information you have provided.

### Mercyside (UK) Police

#### Burglary

##### Burglary in a dwelling

- **Burglary in a dwelling**  
Where an offender enters a dwelling as a trespasser to steal, rape or commit grievous bodily harm.
- **Aggravated burglary in a dwelling**  
Where an offender, armed with a firearm, weapon or explosive, enters a dwelling as a trespasser to steal, rape or commit grievous bodily harm.

##### Burglary in a building other than a dwelling

- **Burglary in a building other than in a dwelling**  
Where an offender enters a building other than a dwelling as a trespasser to steal, rape or commit grievous bodily harm.
- **Aggravated burglary in a building other than a dwelling**  
Where an offender, armed with a firearm, weapon or explosive, enters a building

### Nashua (NH) Bulletin on Catalytic Converter Thefts

... (http://www.catclamp.com/catclamp.asp), or a cage that surrounds the converter and makes it difficult for thieves to remove the devices quickly.

Residents can work with police by reporting suspicious activities such as:

- Suspicious persons carrying power saws, spare batteries, socket wrenches
- Suspicious vehicles entering parking lots/garages and driving around



*Data Sources: (1) MBTA Transit Police Crime Analysis Unit: Catalytic Converter Thefts Bulletin July 2008 (2) Newsweek 2008, URL: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/88793> (3) Nashua Police Department's Records Management System (IMC)*

- **Be careful of overpromising.** Don’t announce strategies you can’t implement or promise solutions you can’t deliver on. The example below comes from an annual report I wrote in 2006. Although I think the language is good, I went too far in promising a major private-public sector collaborative to help people with a host of social problems.
- **Report failure along with success.** Frankly admitting when your agency’s strategies didn’t work builds confidence in the truthfulness of your whole report. Plus, it’s the right thing to do.

## From the Danvers (MA) Police 2006 Annual Report

The Danvers Police Department is interested in exploring whether a similar strategy might work with lower-level offenders such as the ones described above. Each of the individuals described in the list requires some combination of:

- Drug and/or alcohol rehabilitation
- Mental health counseling
- Employment assistance
- Education
- Family support
- Residential stability
- Legal assistance
- Anger management
- Life management
- Spiritual restoration

At the same time, they need to be aware of the very real and probable consequences if they continue on the same path—not just criminal consequences, but also medical, social, and financial ones.

These services *are* available, in different forms, throughout the region. But they are scattered, uncoordinated, and often confusing to the uninitiated. Moreover, many require individuals to exercise significant personal initiative to obtain them—initiative that is beyond the capabilities of those who need them most.

We envision a working group of medical, legal, educational, and occupational professionals who can work in conjunction with the police and the family and friends of the “Existentially Dysfunctional” to solve their underlying problems and put them back on a productive path. Offenders could be referred to this team by police or family members, or they could be legally coerced to participate as part of a criminal sentence.\*

Various juvenile intervention programs offer precedents for this kind of proposal, but we are aware of no such programs that target the multi-faceted needs of adults. We plan to research this prospect further in 2007—research that will include feasibility, existence and effectiveness of similar programs throughout the nation, and potential funding sources.

We hope that by the time we write the *2007 Annual Crime Report*, we can report on a new avenue for the Town of Danvers—an avenue that will provide troubled men and women with the services that they most need, and that will reserve the severity and stigma of the handcuff, the judge’s gavel, and the prison cell for the truly incurable criminals.

It is also important to **disseminate in multiple formats**. Again, don’t assume that your audience has access to the web or e-mail, or reads the local newspaper. Think of ways to reach your specific audience. When we wanted to alert the community to questionable magazine salespeople in 2008, not only did we publish information in our *Annual Report* and in a web alert, but we also convinced the newspaper to run a story and presented on the problem during our monthly television show.

**Problem #5: Annoying and Suspicious Solicitors**

From the 1950s to the 1970s, the door-to-door salesman was a common and prevalent part of American life. Every family could expect frequent visits from well-dressed men and women peddling vacuum cleaners, encyclopedias and cookbooks and people thought little of it.

Today, with so many ways to sell products to the American consumer, the door-to-door strategy is rarely adopted by legitimate companies. However, a high crime rate during the 1980s and early 1990s made most residents suspicious and fearful of strangers at their doors. A salesman who would have been greeted with a polite response 30 years ago is more likely to be greeted with a police response today.

And rightfully so—door-to-door salesmen can be dangerous. Each year, in various parts of the country, we see reports of home-invasions, mugged, threatened, assaulted, and raped by drugging salesmen.

Moreover, the salesmen themselves, lured into employment by false promises of high wages, are often victims, assaulted by their colleagues, left abandoned in unfamiliar areas, forced to pay for their own travel expenses and otherwise subjected to unsafe and unfair working conditions.

Some of the companies employing such salesmen have been recorded in Danvers and other parts of Massachusetts. Each year, starting in May, we begin to receive calls from concerned residents. Regarding citizens typically determine whether the company employing the salesman has received a license to solicit in Danvers. If not, the companies are usually warned not to return, though some have been made of salesmen working for companies that have already received warnings. Citizens also often enter solicitors on other grounds, including a variety from other jurisdictions, often for illegal soliciting.

**What Does the Police Data Say?**

Police data shows that calls for solicitors have fluctuated, but have grown through the years and reached an all-time high of 87 in 2005. Data also shows that calls show up on May peak in June, remain high through the summer, and fall sharply in the fall and winter. During the winter months, calls begin at around 10:00, grow throughout the day, peak at around 10:00 and drop quickly in the evening. They are most likely on weekdays and rare on weekends.

Calls Involving Solicitors

Calls by Month, 1995-2005

**Magazine Solicitors**

- Home and Food
- Travel and Entertainment
- Industry sales to the store

**Magazine salesmen rounded up by police**

By Mike Stucka  
Staff Writer

SALEM — The North Shore is a tough place to sell magazines, especially if you don't have permission and are already wanted by police.

Marblehead police were in the midst of arresting solicitors on Tuesday when they got complaint calls about other salesmen. On Wednesday, five magazine vendors were gathered at the Salem police station, where officers found they'd been illegally working in four different towns. Then on Thursday, Salem officers had to tell another solicitor to stop.

On Tuesday, just before 4 p.m., a Canterbury Road resident complained to Marblehead police about solicitors in the area. Police couldn't find them at first, but at 4:39 p.m. found Marcel Albertson, 27, on Hambrick Street.



## Examples

With those considerations in mind, here are four examples of public information that illustrate various aspects done well.

### 1. Cambridge, MA Annual Crime Report:

[http://www.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge\\_Content/documents/2007Annual.pdf](http://www.cambridgema.gov/CityOfCambridge_Content/documents/2007Annual.pdf)

I started my career in Cambridge and learned how to create an Annual Report in that unit. This 150-page monster is stuffed full of qualitative crime information, including an executive summary, detailed analysis of major crimes, analysis of each neighborhood and business district, special reports on juvenile, domestic, and other crimes, and crime prevention tips. The Cambridge Annual Report perfectly marries the quantitative with the qualitative, never presenting statistics alone but always thoroughly interpreting them.

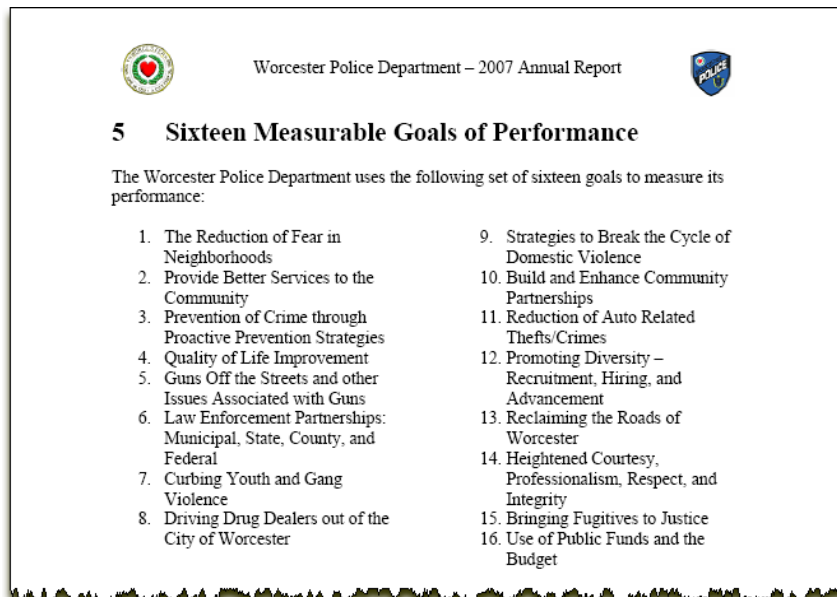
### 2. Community Safety Plan for West Dorset (UK):

[http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media/pdf/c/2/West\\_Dorset\\_CSP1\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/media/pdf/c/2/West_Dorset_CSP1_Final.pdf)

What I love about this report is the catchy formatting. Either they have a talented person on staff, or they hired a desktop publisher to create the report. Either way, its colorful graphics and layout make it fun and interesting to read.

### 3. Worcester, MA Annual Crime Report

<http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/reports/WPDAnnualReport2007.pdf>



The cover page of the Worcester Police Department's 2007 Annual Report features the department's logo on the left and a police badge on the right. The title "Worcester Police Department - 2007 Annual Report" is centered at the top. Below the title, the section "5 Sixteen Measurable Goals of Performance" is highlighted. A paragraph states: "The Worcester Police Department uses the following set of sixteen goals to measure its performance:". The goals are listed in two columns:

1. The Reduction of Fear in Neighborhoods
2. Provide Better Services to the Community
3. Prevention of Crime through Proactive Prevention Strategies
4. Quality of Life Improvement
5. Guns Off the Streets and other Issues Associated with Guns
6. Law Enforcement Partnerships: Municipal, State, County, and Federal
7. Curbing Youth and Gang Violence
8. Driving Drug Dealers out of the City of Worcester
9. Strategies to Break the Cycle of Domestic Violence
10. Build and Enhance Community Partnerships
11. Reduction of Auto Related Thefts/Crimes
12. Promoting Diversity - Recruitment, Hiring, and Advancement
13. Reclaiming the Roads of Worcester
14. Heightened Courtesy, Professionalism, Respect, and Integrity
15. Bringing Fugitives to Justice
16. Use of Public Funds and the Budget



The infographic titled "Working together for a safer community" features a blue and orange color scheme with a circular arrow graphic at the top. It contains the following text:

This is the Western Dorset Community Safety Plan for 2006-10. It outlines the actions that will be taken by the agencies that make up the Western Dorset Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to make the communities in and around West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland even safer. The plan will build on some significant successes achieved over the lifetime of the previous plan for 2005-06, namely:

- A 10% reduction in overall crime\*
- A 15% reduction in dwelling burglary\*
- A 10% reduction in vehicle crime\*

The number of residents who perceived high levels of anti-social behavior more than halved (from 40,000 to 18,000)

\* Results from the National Crime Survey for Dorset County Council area 2005-04 and 2006-07

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) were established as a result of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The Act requires that county and district borough councils, the police, primary care trusts, the Fire and rescue services, other key agencies and the community work together to develop and implement plans for reducing crime and disorder. The Act also requires that authorities consider the impact of all their functions on crime and disorder issues.

The new Western Dorset CDRP membership include Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, West Dorset District Council, Dorset County Council, Dorset Police, Dorset Primary Care Trust, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police Authority and Dorset Fire Authority. They are committed to working together, with other key agencies and with the West Dorset and Weymouth and Portland communities to address the priorities published in the pages of this Community Safety Plan. The CDRP determines and agrees the strategic crime reduction priorities for Western Dorset through a process called the Partnership Strategic Assessment. This is a key role of the Partnership Strategic Assessment: Analyse and plan data from the police and other key agencies, including ambulance call-outs, accident and emergency data from hospitals, and public perception survey findings.

4 \* Figures based on performance of Dorset Crime Survey Comparison of crimes for the Western Dorset CDRP area with 10 Metropolitan Police Areas in England and Wales

What I find fascinating about this report is its organization. Rather than structuring itself around major crime categories, like most annual reports do, instead it announces the main police goals at the beginning and organizes the rest of the report around how well the agency met the goals. It's a very unique way to write an annual report and shows a focus on assessment in addition to analysis.

4. Port Washington, WI "Problem-Oriented Policing Initiatives" Page  
[http://www.pwpd.org/sp\\_pop.htm](http://www.pwpd.org/sp_pop.htm)

I found out about this one at the POP conference. The PWPD has provided a very accessible format for citizens to read their officers' initiatives. The various initiatives show that the police are concerned with a broad range of problems, have problem-solving skills, and care about the community's concerns. None of the "reports" are more than a paragraph long, providing a quick abstract of the problem and what the agency did about it.

Problem-Oriented Policing Initiatives - 2006					
EMPLOYEE	LOCATION	DATE STARTED	POP PROJECT	STAGE OF COMPLETION	
Officer Kirstin Moertl	Fisherman's Park, North Slip and North Beach	09/26/05	Open intoxicants, littering and fish entrails. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
Officer Craig Czarniecki	800 block of Algoma Blvd.	02/01/06	Speeding. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
Dispatchers Tammy Shepherd Becki Hill	Port Washington Police Department	03/08/06	Tax Refund Intercept Program. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
Officer Matt Keller	N. Wisconsin St., north of Main St.	05/04/06	Drivers crossing into on-coming traffic to mail items in mailbox. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
Officer Tom Schleg	Highway LL, north of Willow Dr.	05/07/06	Add "No Passing On Shoulder" sign on Highway LL. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
Officer Eric Schmeling	Throughout City	09/19/06	Stop signs and corresponding ordinance. <a href="#">Click here for more info.</a>	Completed	
			Meeting place for fights, suspected drug sales and other		

Finally, my own Annual Crime Report for 2007 can be found at:

<http://www.danverspolice.com/DPD/stats/Annual2007.pdf>

I try to focus on problems and prevention throughout the report, merging qualitative data with quantitative statistics. I hope it gives you a few ideas for your own public reports.

**DANVERS POLICE DEPARTMENT**  
*Annual Crime Report*  
**2007**  
**DANVERS MASSACHUSETTS**  
 A proud past. A strong future.

**20 Danvers Police Department**

### Thefts of Wire, Piping, and Scrap Metal

In May 2006, copper futures reached a record high of \$4.04 per pound, driving up the prices commanded for used copper at salvage yards. It had been climbing steadily since 2002, driven by new construction in Asia. Not coincidentally, reported thefts of copper wiring, piping, and scrap copper began increasing in 2002 as well and peaked in the spring of 2006. Thieves first stole it from construction sites, hauled it away from construction in Asia. Not coincidentally, reported thefts of copper wiring, piping, and scrap copper began increasing in 2002 as well and peaked in the spring of 2006. Thieves first stole it from utility yards, and shipped it from Home Depot and Lowe's. Then, as those sources became more difficult to tap, thieves began tearing down live wires, disrupting power to thousands (many thieves have been electrocuted and killed in these attempts). We've even seen reports of burglars entering businesses, tearing down the drywall, and stealing the copper pipes directly out of the walls. Prices fell towards the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007, but have started to climb again since the fall. The problem certainly isn't over.

In Danvers, this problem manifested itself in several ways:

- Shoplifting at Home Depot.** For some reason, the phenomenon has not affected Lowe's (or they're not reporting it in us). The Home Depot on Route 1 reported eight incidents of shoplifting in the last two years, and one by the Liberty Tree mall reported three. These aren't explained (the thieves just walk or carry it right out the front door. Almost all of the incidents have resulted in arrests.
- Burglaries and thefts at construction sites.** There have been seven such incidents in the past two years, with some sites suffering multiple thefts. Poorly secured and unguarded at night, construction sites often make attractive targets for thieves.
- Thefts from utility yards.** Danvers Electric Light suffered two thefts in 2006, but the problem went away on the adoption of better security (and, possibly, the arrests of the offenders in Lynch).

The media has made out these copper thieves to be some special breed of criminal. But, in reality, they seem to be the same disorganized, substance-abusing thieves that we find involved in other crimes. The majority in Danvers are heroin addicts in their late 20s and early 30s. Many of the shopliftings are committed by boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife teams: one wheeling the goods out in a shopping cart, the other driving the getaway car. The utility yard thefts seem to be committed more by pairs of male offenders with their own pickup trucks.

**2007 Annual Crime Report**

### Auto Theft

**Auto Theft: The theft of a self-propelled motor vehicle that runs on the surface of land and not on rails-trailers, automobiles, buses, recreational vehicles, trucks, motorcycles, and mopeds.**

**Average of 61 • 28 in 2007**  
**38% Decrease**

Auto theft is a crime on its way out. The 2007 total of 28 was the lowest in at least 28 years and probably a 1st longer (we don't have data prior to 1980). In 2007, there was a period of almost three months (April 20-July 22) with no thefts, and two other periods of one month with none.

**Auto Theft, 1983-2007**

Several technologies and strategies have converged to reduce auto theft. In the 1990s, city and state Police put an end to most of the "steep slope" that would buy stolen cars and strip them for parts. Electronic keys have made stealing a car more difficult, and many owners of older cars have turned to steering wheel locks. Mobile police computers allow officers to determine quickly if a vehicle has been reported stolen, and tracking systems can lead police to stolen cars. Consequently, much of the auto theft that remains is either (1) cars stolen with keys in the ignition or (2) cars stolen by friends or family members. And unlike the police, when owners never saw their cars again, today stolen cars are usually recovered within a few days, with little damage.

Incidents were so low in 2007 that only three locations had more than one: the Liberty Tree Mall showed the top spot because of the large number of vehicles with sales; a dealership on Route 124, with two; and a body shop on Route 1 with another two.

Despite the low totals, we did have one pattern. Between December 18, 2007 and January 1, 2008, there were three thefts of 1995 Honda Accord at the Liberty Tree Mall, with recoveries made in Saugus and Malden. The thefts were concentrated between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on weekdays. We also recovered two Honda Accords, stolen from Saugus and Salem, at the Mall. On January 5, State Police arrested a 20-year-old Lynn man driving a Honda Accord stolen from Saugus. He had a master key stolen from a Honda dealership, and the thefts stopped after his arrest.

During the past three years, the Honda Civic has been the most stolen model, with 23 thefts. The next in order are the Acura Integra (6), the Pontiac Grand Am (7), the Ford Explorer (6), and the Honda Accord (6). Historically, the average model year stolen has been about six to eight years prior to the year of the theft. The average model year stolen in 2007 was 1993.

83% of cars stolen since 2005 have been recovered. Our recovery rate in 2007 was 82%. Towns supplying the most recoveries since 2004 have been:

Danvers	15	Revere	9
Lynn	16	Chelsea	6
Peabody	12	Lawrence	6
Boston	10	Salem	6

Danvers Police recovered 17 stolen cars in Danvers in 2007, well below the average of 20. As we saw in the November notes, recoveries often occur at the same time a theft is reported, and from other "lead" thefts. For instance, a recent report for car stolen from the Home Depot. An officer responded to take a report. A few hours away, he discovers a car stolen the previous day from Lawrence. The next day, the officers respond to a report in Lawrence.

**Preventing Auto Theft:**

About 25% of all cars stolen in Danvers, particularly newer models, have the keys in them at the time of the theft. Do not leave your car keys in your car.

Do not leave your car running, even to turn over a gas station or coffee shop. Thieves watch for such behavior.

If you have an older car, without electronic security measures, consider a Club or steering device. These are very effective. Though they sometimes displace thieves to the next car.

Be careful who you lend your car to. At least 10 thefts a year occur after a victim lends his car to someone he doesn't know very well.

# Thank You!

**Christopher W. Bruce**  
**President**  
**International Association of**  
**Crime Analysts**  
**1-978-853-3502**  
**[cwbruce@gmail.com](mailto:cwbruce@gmail.com)**

**<http://www.iaca.net>**

