

Improved Customer-Oriented Policing in an Age of Austerity

Submitted by the Garda Síochána Division of Dublin North Central Police Service

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Size of organisation

500-5000;
people involved: >15

Type of sector

Justice, police, human rights and security

Key words or the project

Policing and the market orientation
performance relationship

In the context of austerity, diminishing resources, reducing salaries, increasing customer expectations and police reform (doing more with less), the senior management team in the Garda Síochána Division of Dublin North Central Police Service, supported by research, set out to explore the market-orientation performance relationship in a policing context. They sought to achieve this through a focus on the antecedents and consequences associated with the deliberate engendering of a market-orientation in the eighteen square kilometre area of Dublin's North Inner city. The purpose of the change in approach was to explore the effectiveness of employing a market orientation construct as a framework for transitioning from a traditional reactive model of policing to a more effective, proactive customer-oriented policing approach. It was anticipated that the knowledge generated from this experience would afford new insights and so inform policing policy and practice in achieving what the international research clearly indicates is the preferred reform model for policing, and to facilitate the generation, dissemination and responsiveness to information pertaining to the current and future needs of customers with a view to improving the quality of life in communities.

The research examined the police failure to adequately explore and exploit marketing logic in the past and the theory that underpins the market-orientation performance relationship which indicates that the adoption of such an orientation results in improved performance for the organisation, its people and its customers. This approach required the police to engage in activities geared towards developing an understanding of customers' current and future needs and the factors affecting them, sharing this understanding across departments and the various departments engaging

in activities designed to meet those customer needs. This reflects an integrated, interrelated and interdependent construct which is based on behaviours and processes, and which can be used as a framework for the deliberate engendering of a customer-oriented policing approach. The concept of a market orientation is centrally underpinned by a customer orientation and it is internationally accepted that a focus on the customer is central to achieving this orientation.

The senior management team in the D.M.R North Central engaged in appropriate segmentation, targeting and positioning with a view to providing a sufficient standard of service to improve performance and enhance public confidence, and therefore, they undertook to change the existing policing strategy and restructure to accommodate such an approach. The policing division subsequently engaged in a process of geographic, demographic, socio-economic and psychographic segmentation, targeted each customer group to generate information pertaining to their current and future needs (conducting over 15,000 interviews with customers and stakeholders), engaged in continuous dissemination of that information between policing departments and crafted appropriate customer-unique responses to meet the identified needs.

An independent assessment in February 2015 by the Excellence Ireland Quality Association (EIQA) awarded the Division the 'Q' Mark for Quality Management Systems Level 2 and reported that: "the programme of change they have embarked on since 2009 has delivered significant internal improvements in the way the Division operates and that the market orientation of this approach, which is a departure from traditional models of policing, has already delivered improved results in crime and quality of life outcomes."