

Stop! wait! i am  
pulling down a menu!



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San Jose, CA, with the smallest officer-to-resident ration in the country, is named one of the safest cities in the United States. From 1990 to 2004, officers worked on a daily basis with a text-based mobile dispatch system, which they had no problem with. A major issue happened when, in 2004, this system was replaced by a new Windows-based touch screen software, developed by Intergraph. In this new project, a new touch screen computer was installed in every patrol car. The idea of the software was correct, it was supposed to bring many benefits and simply help officers, make their life easier.

The new software was designed to receive orders, send messages, write reports, receive maps of the city, and use the GPS to let officers know where they are located. The success of the software was not as planned. Even before it was installed, officers were already upset that their input was not asked about the design of the interface; nobody asked their opinion and suggestions for the creation of the new system. The software itself had way too many complications. Officers were not satisfied at all with it.

Some of the issues included were the increasingly difficult to use code 99-emergency, the time it took them to find whether a person they stopped had violent criminal record, mapping and GPS inaccuracies, and unneeded information that took screen space along with difficult font to read. The software simply did not work, it crashed after two days of its debut. It was fixed and debugged, but still had major issues. Dispatchers were also very dissatisfied with the Intergraph system because of the risky delays in task execution, because it could not perform multiple tasks simultaneously, between many more.

They too, thought should have been consulted during the interface design stage. To fix these issues, SJPOA provided more training to officers and hired a consultant to see what could be done. The consultant realized there were too many complex hierarchies that did not make sense for anyone who had to be using the system while driving a car. Even with all these disagreements, San Jose did not replace the system. While looking at the examples given about Chicago and San Diego, I can see there is still hope for San Jose and the implementation of the new system. Are the problems encountered by the police officers due to hardware or software?

The problems encountered were due to both, hardware and software. Hardware refers to the physical components of computers and related electronic devices such as PDAs. It was stated in the case that older officers were having more trouble than the younger ones and I believe it is because they are not used to the new computers and devices. The input devices are the ones that receive signals from outside the computer and transfer them into the computer. The most common input devices are the computer keyboard and mouse, but some devices accept voice, image, or other signals (Oz, E. , 2009).

In this case, their problems were with the touch screen computers, which can serve both as an input and output device. Software was the major problem in this case. The software implemented simply did not work; there were too many bugs and mistakes. The idea of the software was to make officer's lives easier and not more complicated. It seems that the software was too complex and slow to be used by police officers and fire fighters, who can most of the time be in danger and in need of fast and accurate information.

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Whom do you think is at fault for the unsuccessful implementation of the new software?

Why? I believe the fault is to be blamed on the police and city officials. Their thought was good, they wanted to improve their system, but did not get any input from the officers to know what kind of system would work for them, what they need to most, if it is speed, accuracy, GPS, what would make their lives easier. I believe it lacked communication between them. With all this information, police officials could have gone to Intergraph and explained what kind of system they were looking for, how they wanted it to be, what should have its emphasis on.

People, specially the “technologically challenged,” are often not receptive of new technologies. Was this a major issue in this case? I don't believe it was a major issue, but it was one. The case stated even the tolerant and receptive officers were having obstacles to adapt to the new system, and it also said the older officers were having more trouble than the younger ones.

Technology is changing so fast and some of us can not get caught up with it many times. The older officers were used with the paper and pen method, some of them probably do not even have (or if they do they got it not too long ago) a computer at home.

If they are used to computers I am sure it is not the touch screen one, it is the laptop or desktop type. All of these make it more difficult to accept the new technology but it is not something that can not be converted with training. After getting familiar with the computers and systems they will realize it is going to make their job much easier and simple. If you were the

CEO of Intergraph before it assumed the project for San Jose, what would you do differently? As the CEO of Intergraph I would have talked to the officials to know exactly what they are looking for in the system and try to create one that is as easy as possible to use.

I would hold a lot of training sections to the officers to make sure they knew what they were doing and how they could use the system to their advantage. I believe Intergraph probably created a system that is not compatible with what they were needing. They should have held sections with the officers to know how familiar they are with computers, what they do and do not know about it. I am sure with useful information like this the system created would have been much more user friendly and therefore more effectively used.

My recommendations for this case are as follow: Hold more training sections: I believe with training this situation can be solved in a simple way. I know that much of it depends on the effectiveness of the software itself, but once it is solved and free of bugs, training sections will be helpful for officers to get very familiar with the system and start using it to their advantage. Nowadays they can no longer work with paper and pen, computers will save them a lot of time and effort if used correctly. I also believe the training sections should be done with touch screen computers instead of desktop or laptops.

Officers need to be able to practice on a screen just like the one they are going to work with in the car. This will make them feel more comfortable when using the software on the job. Get input from officers: the best way to

make officers and dispatchers satisfied with the new system and computers is to get them involved in the process. They should be able to give their opinion about the whole situation and give inputs on what they believe would make a difference and what would not. They are the ones who will use it all times so they should know what kind of system they want and will fulfill their needs when time comes.

Fix software error: I am sure this is something they are already working on, and as stated in the case, San Diego also had the same problem when started using the same software and now it is working much better. They worked with Intergraph to fit the system to their needs and I believe San Jose needs to do the same. Get officers more adapted to technology: with time they will understand that technology is there to make their personal and professional lives better. Resistance is an emotional response based on feelings. You cannot talk people out of their emotions.

In fact, their emotions become fiercer when they sense that their feelings are being challenged. An alternative and more effective approach is to ask about the concerns regarding the change. Talk to the officers to know what is holding them back. I think some workshops and/or meetings with experts in technology would give them an idea of what is available to them. I am sure a touch screen computer with many icons and items can be scary to some of them, but after they understand how to use everything they will truly take advantage of it.