Security conversations

with Lieutenant Brent Feig
of the St. Louis Police Department

Lieutenant Brent Feig has been a police officer at St. Louis PD for 18 years. In his time there, he's seen a lot of changes. Particularly, he's seen how technology has evolved to become a cornerstone of the city's security. In this short Q&A, Lieutenant Feig tells us how technology continues to play a bigger role in assisting over 11,800 sworn officers to keep the city safe. He also dives into the importance of connecting with the community, and how that collaboration is helping the city move forward with bigger plans.

Q: What are the top three challenges that you face in your environment?

A: As far as technology goes, our major challenges really come from making technology accessible to our first responders and other users. The cost of implementing a city-wide system is part of that challenge. Also, we are the ones driving a lot of technology recommendations for our end users such as the police precincts, police street department, and private businesses or anyone that requires or has access to the video surveillance system. We're happy to facilitate those programs but we've had trouble finding vendors who think outside the box and help make those recommendations. At least locally, we're designing the systems for our end users and partners.

On a broader scale, we're challenged with crime and the perception of crime in certain areas. That's really where the technology assists us. It's a force-multiplier that helps drive those crime numbers down.

Q: How does Genetec technology help you overcome or manage those challenges?

A: With Genetec solutions, we get real-time situational awareness. We can see what's coming into our crime center using the automatic license plate recognition (ALPR) and video surveillance systems, and offer additional support to officers in the field. That really enhances both officer and public safety. We're also freely able to expand our efforts by merging other technologies within the unified platform.

We actually just had discussions about some future projects to integrate more products. Some solutions that we're interested in are Genetec Clearance and Genetec Citigraf™. Having a unified platform helps us to reduce the time spent in data mining for investigational purposes. It also assists operators at our real-time crime center, who can push information out to our officers on the ground.

Q: ALPR is a big focus at your police department. What have been the results of this strategy?

A: We do things a little bit different than other cities. We've taken the reverse approach, using the ALPR system as our core technology, and video surveillance as a secondary tool to follow-up and drive investigations further.

The ALPR system gives us actionable intelligence. Based on that information, we use video surveillance to support our efforts and that's made a huge impact on the areas where we have deployed these solutions.

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We have a very successful ALPR program. It began in August 2015 with a couple of AutoVu ALPR cameras, and now we have 23 cameras. We're doubling that this summer because the results have been outstanding:

- **305 arrests as direct result of "hits"**
- **854 criminal charges resulting from those arrests**
- **144 stolen vehicle recovered**
- **29 illegal firearms recovered**

Q: Do you build community connections? In other words, do you engage with public or private organizations to better secure your community?
If so, how? Please describe your experience.

A: Community connection is vital to the success of our crime center. Our police department routinely engages with the public, showcasing what we're doing, how we're using technology, and how we operate to keep our community safe. We do these tours on an individual level, or with neighborhood groups, private organizations, and anyone else who wants to partner with the police department. Additionally, we have developed comprehensive security plans to show how businesses can integrate into the crime center.

In a couple of weeks, we're kicking off Operation 'Blue Light'. We're partnering with local businesses to implement security solutions which will connect back to our real-time crime center. Currently, we have three pilot locations ready and a dozen more on the horizon.

The feedback that we've received from the community has been very positive. There's been a lot of excitement from the community because they see the goal of a comprehensive security plan. To put things into perspective, we have access to over 500+ cameras, and the department only owns about 60 cameras. All of our ALPR cameras have been procured in cooperation with the private sector. It just goes to show the level of buy-in from our community in our security efforts.

It hasn't always been so straightforward. When we first started, getting everyone to the table to discuss our objectives was challenging. We began by selling the concept of this through Genetec Federation. But we were lucky because the port authority, and a few other city entities already had the Genetec system in place. Our Police Chief was also heavily focused on making technology one of the cornerstone of our department.

This year, we're doubling our ALPR system and federating more cameras into our crime center. Today, the private and public sectors understand how their security investments all come together to keep the community safe.

Q: What excites you about advancements in technology?
And how do you think these advancements will impact your police department?

A: We're always looking to improve our operational effectiveness and efficiencies, and we do that with technology. So, we're aiming to bring all our disparate technologies within one platform to increase our efficiency. We're not unique, many law enforcement teams have made investments in a host of different technologies that don't talk to each other. But we're pushing for more unification at our real-time crime center. It helps eliminate any guesswork and makes everything easily accessible in real-time.

We're also looking to share more information between stakeholders to reduce the information gap and improve our decision-making process.
With the latest innovations from Genetec, we're able to continue breaking down the silos and improve our effectiveness in securing our city.

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Q: How will your organization evolve its security operations in the future? What's top of mind?

A: The security of our high-crime areas is certainly top of mind. In the past, we would invest heavily in human resources in high-crime areas, so we had a lot more officers patrolling the areas to effect a reduction in crime. Now, we're looking at technology and how it can play a larger role in securing those high-crime neighborhoods. It all comes back to technology being a force multiplier. Technology is a tool that helps us increase situational awareness, both from an investigative standpoint and in real time. We can use technology to build stronger cases and drive more in-depth investigations.

Q: In St. Louis, there is a large push for more transparency. How do you manage this?

A: Being transparent and open was built into the design of our crime center. It is meant as a centralized hub of information, so any new technology that we implement comes through the center. Part of offering greater transparency is providing those tours on a continual basis. Anyone can come in and see what we do and what we don't do.

These tours are also very productive for us because we're able to gather a lot of input from our community and really solidify those relationships with our partners. This helps us get buy-in, and develop new opportunities for partnerships.

We've also moved away from the traditional installation of cameras at intersections. Our cameras are highly visible, outfitted with our police department logo and a flashing light to make them stand out. The goal of our cameras is primarily for deterrence. But when we capture high-resolution images of an event, we're able to make quicker apprehensions in the community.

We also only federate with cameras that gather public fields of views. Within the Genetec platform, we're able to maintain our privacy policies and procedures using auditing tools and other functionalities.

Q: How do you see investigation management and the cloud driving change within the community and St. Louis PD?

A: The collaborative investigation management solution from Genetec will assist us in closing cases faster. It can take 48-72 hours to pull video and evidence from disparate systems. Sometimes by the time we reach a business in search of evidence, it's already been over-written. With the investigation management solution, we can reduce that time it takes to collect evidence, and help speed up investigations.

The investigation management solution also provides the ability to streamline the coordination process between different agencies and enhance that community connection. We share a lot of data with other stakeholders in the judicial process, so we're always looking for ways to simplify that process where we can.

At the moment, we do not use the cloud. However, we are discussing the implementation of body-worn cameras. That will require a large volume of storage, so that may be our first foray into the cloud.