

HAPPIER TRAINING OFFICERS, MORE SUCCESSFUL TRAINEES

“Fishers PD is more than satisfied with Agency360 Field Training Software” – Tim Dees

AT A GLANCE

AGENCY

Fishers Police Department
www.fishers.in.us

LOCATION

Fishers, IN

AGENCY TYPE

Police Department

CHALLENGE

The field training program was using 1,000s of pages of paper. Getting FTOs to fix mistakes would take countless hours and the process of storing the data was becoming difficult and time consuming.

SOLUTION

Implement Field Training Software to simplify and store field training documentation.

BENEFITS

- Access all field training information easily from one centralized location.
- Convert 1,000s of paper pages to digital versions and decrease physical storage requirements.
- Reduce errors and eliminate lost or missing paperwork.



ABOUT FISHERS POLICE DEPARTMENT

Fishers, Indiana is the sort of place where Beaver Cleaver might have grown up. In this growing city of about 77,000 people, the 100 sworn officers of the Fishers Police Department protect and maintain order in the community, training their new officers on what is commonly known as the “San Jose Model” field training program. Over the years, they have streamlined this process considerably by using [Agency360’s Field Training Software](#).

THE FIELD TRAINING CHALLENGE

The San Jose Model was conceived at the San Jose, CA Police Department in the 1970s and is in widespread use across the country and abroad. One of the hallmarks of this training program is documentation. Right or wrong, a trainee will know exactly how they are doing every step of the way. At the end of each shift, their FTO produces a Daily Observation Report (DOR) that scores the trainee in different performance categories on a numeric scale of one to seven (some agencies use a five-point scale). Everything from personal appearance to knowledge of the law and driving skill is documented, with the FTO required to point out specifically the best and worst performance of each day.

In addition to the DORs, the sergeant who oversees the FTOs and their trainees produces a bi-weekly performance report, and each FTO writes an end of phase report at the conclusion of their time with the new officer. This produces a huge volume of paperwork.

Sgt. Scott Wilcox oversees the Fishers PD field training program and is ultimately responsible for maintaining the paperwork that attends it. He describes the situation before Fishers PD started using the Agency360 FTO Software: "It was very labor-intensive. Hard copies had to be made of everything, and then put into three-ring binders. There were two binders for the daily reports, and a third one for checklist tasks and other documents the trainee handled. It was close to 1,000 sheets of paper. We put these in our property room, so we could keep a record of it." That's three thick binders and a lot of paper and printing costs for every new officer, and Fishers PD typically brings on five to ten new officers in a typical year.

"I don't think there is any doubt we are saving money by using it."

*Sergeant Scott Wilcox
Fishers Police Department*



Working with paper forms also means chasing them down. Police officers work around the clock, and paperwork doesn't always flow smoothly to where it is supposed to go. Forms get lost. People forget to sign them, or aren't furnished with a copy. When errors or omissions are discovered, the form has to be routed back to the author, with the same potential for loss or delay. Multiply the potential for this problem by the almost 1,000 sheets of paper for each trainee, times the number of trainees, and you get an idea of the complexity of the problem.

THE SOLUTION

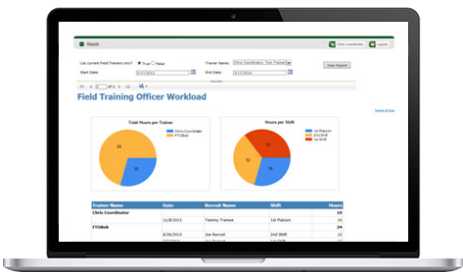
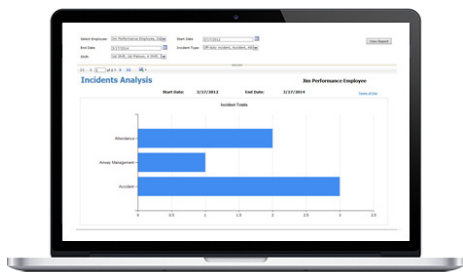
When the Agency360 Software came online, the FTOs' world changed considerably. "They were very receptive to the software because it made their job easier. We still document performance, but it wasn't the long narratives they were used to," Wilcox said. "The FTOs were able to complete the DORs in 15 or 20 minutes at the end of their shift, rather than having to write almost constantly their entire shift." The Agency360 Field Training Software is web-based, so FTOs can access it from the computers in their patrol cars or any other internet-connected computer. Having the data "in the cloud" also means if there is a computer crash, the data will not be lost. "We can burn a report when we're finished [with a training cycle] and that report pulls in every single report we've done on that trainee," Wilcox noted. "All that information is stored here in digital form, as well as on the software company's servers."

It saved Wilcox a lot of time, too. "We could see at a glance that everything had been covered." The FTO Software includes a feature that flags any DOR that has missing ratings, comments or other absent required elements. The software also automatically calculates the number of minutes the FTOs commit to additional training time, average scores in each category, and other statistics that would require many man-hours to assemble by hand. The Field Training Software even accounts for inconsistencies between FTOs, showing each FTO's scores in every single category. If an FTO is a particularly tough grader on tactics, Field Training Tracker will show their scores as being lower than other trainers, normalizing for multiple trainees. This issue would be difficult to spot without the software, and even more difficult to demonstrate objectively.

"Just about any information you want to find, you're going to be able to get it."

*Sergeant Scott Wilcox
Fishers Police Department*

The trainees obviously have a stake in this, too, and they also benefit from online access to the reports. Access privileges are set individually for each user, so trainees have access to the relevant paperwork that concerns them, and not others. The software creates an audit trail for every change in a report, and locks down reports for changes once they have been electronically signed.



Agency360 FTO Software can be used on multiple platforms.

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THE OUTCOME

Using the Agency360 Field Training Software has resulted in cost savings. "There's definitely a cost savings associated with the program, because the man-hours are a lot less, we don't have to have our secretaries put together the training binders, and everything is accessible from a central location," Wilcox noted. "I don't think there's any doubt that we're saving money by using it."



While the ten officers who have completed the field training program under the Agency360 Software have all successfully completed their probation, Wilcox says it is too early to tell if the software impacted the success rate. "I can say that with this software it makes it very easy to see where our problems are. I know we can catch problems a lot quicker." It's an expensive proposition to recruit and qualify a new candidate, put him or her through the academy, and then have them fail to complete the field training program. Improved retention means lower recruiting and training costs, and more new recruits achieving their goal of becoming professional law enforcement officers.

Tim Dees is a retired police officer and the former editor of two major law enforcement websites who writes and consults on technology applications in criminal justice.