



Appriss JusticeXchange Technology

Written by Bruce Crouch

A visit to the local police department's narcotics unit can be an educational experience. Some departments proudly display the tools of the illegal drug trade: pipes, bongs and the basic necessities of the generic meth lab. The collection of these items can become quite large, depending on the bust and the number of people involved.

As any officer or detective knows, it takes long, hard work to bring a narcotics case to a close. And as soon as one dealer is convicted, dozens of new dealers hit the street. Add a heavy caseload, and the war on illegal drugs becomes a never-ending cycle. Unfortunately, the declining economy is making efforts to put dealers behind bars even harder. As unemployment reaches epic levels, some people are turning to the sale of illegal drugs as a way to make some fast cash.

Our unit handles all drug cases, from trafficking to pharmaceutical. While some people might not think that a small, picturesque town like Nicholasville, KY, could have a drug problem, it's a reality. Nicholasville lies near interstates 75 and 64—major pipelines for moving drugs. The biggest challenge for our unit is the need for more detectives to follow leads and make arrests. Administration supports the need for additional people, but the budget doesn't. There are four detectives in our unit, with three covering the county while the fourth is assigned to DEA.

Like all narcotics units, we rely on good police work to find the dealers and put them behind bars. That means a lot of time on the phone conducting numerous interviews with witnesses, other dealers and detectives, and road trips to other jurisdictions, if necessary, to bring in a suspected dealer. Not only do we have to manage the caseload in our own backyard, but we have to track who's supplying them from other towns or states. Bringing a case to its conclusion can take months.

Six years ago, Kentucky became one of the first states in the nation to begin using JusticeXchange®, <<http://www.appriss.com>> an integrated justice solution that gives law enforcement instant access to OffenderNet and other criminal justice information. OffenderNet is the nationwide, near-real time offender database of historical and current booking information from 31 states, including 1,650 jails and 17 departments of correction. Thousands of criminal justice agencies in 16 states are accessing this secure information to help locate wanted sex offenders and probation and parole violators, as well as to track suspects wanted for robbery, murder and the sale or manufacture of illegal drugs.

At a time of "belt tightening," we are able to save a tremendous amount of investigation time without having to leave our desks. We can query thousands of criminal justice databases at once, set up watches for suspected drug dealers who may get jailed in another jurisdiction and view probation/parole records and crime trends.

We access JusticeXchange daily to determine whether suspects have been arrested in other communities or states and to learn the charges leveled against them. JusticeXchange also lets us know if a drug suspect from another state is here and facing charges. This can save hours or days in an investigation.

"In the past, we relied on photos, faxes and telephone calls to share information on a suspect," said Todd Justice, a detective with the Nicholasville Police. "Now I can simply place a watch on an individual in JusticeXchange. Once I receive information, I can respond in a timely manner."

Detectives discovered a steady flow of cocaine coming into Nicholasville from Ohio during a routine traffic stop. There was no arrest record in Kentucky, but a record check through JusticeXchange identified the suspect's trafficking charges in Ohio. "We are able to work closely with narcotics units across the country, sharing information that helps each of us find suspects and close cases," Justice stated. "It benefits all of us to have a tool we can rely on to find the people we're looking for."

There are more than 40 million booking records and 6.5 million booking photos on file in OffenderNet, which is then accessed through JusticeXchange. Appriss, the provider of JusticeXchange, recently added analytics capabilities, allowing investigators to view relationships between suspected dealers, track addresses and phone numbers.

JusticeXchange is currently being used by law enforcement agencies in Texas, New York, Florida, Washington, Maryland, Utah, Arkansas and North Carolina. By sharing information with agencies in and out of state, detectives are able to locate drug dealers or receive notification when a suspect shows up in another jail.

Diane Vinh, a crime analyst with the Everett, WA Police, was looking for information on a new renter in an apartment complex suspected of drug trafficking. Several neighbors had complained, but they knew little of the man. "Using JusticeXchange, I found the suspect was an out-of-state resident with a long history of drug sales and possession," Vinh said. "I put together a subject profile in JusticeXchange, documenting all of his guests, their vehicles and their criminal records."

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement was looking for a suspect in a Lake County drug operation. Government Analyst Debbie Abney set up a watch in JusticeXchange, and within two weeks the suspect was located in another Florida county. "We would not have known where our subject was located because surveillance and informant efforts had failed to assist in his location," Abney explained. "JusticeXchange helped us keep a violent repeat offender behind bars and away from our communities."

"Law enforcement agencies across the country tell us that thousands of cases have been solved because of JusticeXchange," said Brian Oldham, Executive Vice President with Appriss. "Over the years, JusticeXchange has grown to become one of our company's most sought-after services."

Detective Bruce Crouch is with the Nicholasville, KY Police Department Drug Enforcement Unit.

This article was originally published in Law and Order Magazine - November, 2009

To view this article online, click here

<<http://www.hendonpub.com/resources/articlearchive/details.aspx?ID=207565>>