

# AN ASSESSMENT OF SURREY RCMP'S CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM



*Irwin M. Cohen, Darryl Plecas, Jim Begley, & Kevin Burk*

## Introduction

Two of the current challenges facing police agencies are a reduction in resources coupled with the increasing complexity of crime (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011; Crompton, 2014). Moreover, in many jurisdictions, police are being asked to respond to greater public demand for service than in the past (Fryer, Antony, and Douglas, 2007). Due to this, many police agencies are attempting to improve capability and deliver a better value for taxpayer dollars by improving overall efficiency and effectiveness (Cohen, Plecas, McCormick, & Peters, 2014). Undertaking evaluations and participating in continuous improvement strategies focused on what all members of a police organization do, how they go about their responsibilities, and how their individual activities directly contribute to the overall objectives of the organization are becoming a more routine and consistent part of every police agency. In effect, all members of an organization must take responsibility for improving efficiency. In order to achieve this goal, many police agencies are turning to management strategies, such as the use of a continuous improvement team, to find ways of enhancing efficiency and effectiveness.

The term continuous improvement is rooted in the Japanese management concept of *kaizen*, and can be simply defined as a process of incremental improvement initiatives that focus on increasing successes and reducing failures (Bessant and Caffyn, 1997; Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005). While a single large change can have a substantial impact on an organization, the theory of continuous improvement posits that many small, incremental changes across the organization can collectively lead to more substantial and entrenched improvements over an extended period of time. Put another way, continuous improvement is based on the idea that an organization can always get better, and that there is always room for improvement (Bessant and Caffyn, 1997; Crompton, 2014). In large public-sector organizations, such as police agencies, several small improvements that require low capital investment can add up to significant savings (Fryer et al., 2007).

The origins of modern continuous improvement programs are based in quality improvement programs pioneered by Americans Shewhart, Deming, and Juran in the 1930's through to the 1950's (Brown and Eatock, 2008). The United States government implemented one such improvement program entitled Training Within Industry (TWI) during World War II with the goal of increasing manufacturing productivity (Huntzinger, 2002; Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005). The TWI method included a four-step cycle aimed at process improvement that consisting of breaking down the job, questioning every detail, developing the new method, and applying the new method.

The TWI method of manufacturing was exported to Japan after the War, and has been described as the forefather of *kaizen* (Huntzinger, 2002). *Kaizen* - Kai means change and Zen means good - was implemented in an attempt to overcome the poor quality of many manufactured goods in Japan at the time, and is still a common practice in Japan today. *Kaizen* was essentially the first example of a process-oriented approach to management, and was focused on small, low-risk, low-cost, continuous improvements (Jacobson et al., 2009). The use of *Kaizen* and other management methods was attributed, in part, to Japan gaining a significant advantage in the manufacturing of numerous products, including electronics, vehicles, and steel in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bessant and Caffyn, 1997).

Over the past 50 years, numerous examples of continuous improvement methodologies have emerged, including lean manufacturing, six sigma, lean six sigma, and the balanced scorecard (Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005). The most effective outcomes tend to rely on methodologies that included continuous improvement teams or groups with both staff and managers, where senior members provide coaching, mentoring, and role modeling, while providing staff with a better insight into the challenges faced by the organization (Home Office, 2012). For their part, staff identify and raise issues with the improvement group, and work to resolve those issues, which when resolved, allows the organization to provide a better service to the public.

Numerous approaches to continuous improvement or quality improvement have been used around the world, in both the private and public sector, over the past 60 years. Some followed a more traditional Japanese kaizen approach, while others followed a more modified approach. This has created difficulty in reaching any consensus on what a continuous improvement team methodology or implementation should look like. While numerous authors have discussed the positive effects of continuous improvement in general terms, such as low capital investment, increased employee commitment, improved employee performance, and improved customer satisfaction (Fryer et al. 2007), it is clear that a more critical and rigorous method for evaluating continuous improvement is needed (Kaye and Anderson, 1999; Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005; Quesada-Pineda and Madrigal, 2013).

In reviewing continuous improvement, in the United Kingdom, the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) evaluated over 11,000 article abstracts published over a 20 year period in 2012, and identified very few publications that included empirical evidence in the area of organizational change. Due to this, they found no specific factors that could be said to be critical to successful change in an organization. Similarly, Bhuiyan and Baghel (2005) stated that there was no theoretical basis for continuous improvement arguing that the term 'continuous improvement' tended to be used to describe a wide range of different applications and methodologies.

The continuous improvement capability model, developed at the University of Brighton in the United Kingdom, appeared to provide one of the few methods for evaluating the usefulness of continuous improvement (Bessant and Caffyn, 1997). The Continuous Improvement Research for Competitive Advantage (CIRCA), the research Centre at the University of Brighton responsible for the continuous improvement capability model, aimed at creating a basic methodology for continuous improvement programs, along with training and support for organizations (Bessant, Caffyn, & Gallagher, 2001). Unfortunately, no further research on the topic of continuous improvement evaluation has been published by the CIRCA research Centre since the early 2000's. However, work from CIRCA was used as a foundation for further research at the University of Brighton's Centre for Research in Innovation Management (CENTRIM).

While there is no shortage of published articles that casually examines success factors or best practices in continuous improvement, very few provide empirical evidence (Fryer et al. 2007; Meyer et al., 2007). Nonetheless, there does appear to be some degree of consensus as to what constitutes best practices in continuous improvement. Most commonly, engagement and commitment from management and staff, communication between management and staff, quality of leadership, support from leadership, analysis and assessment of success, and access to sufficient resources are mentioned as vital to a successful implementation of continuous improvement.

More specifically, numerous authors have underscored the importance of strong engagement and commitment from staff and management when it comes to the successful implementation of continuous improvement (Gagne, Koestner, & Zuckerman, 2000; Bommer, Rich, & Ruben, 2005; Meyer, et al., 2007; Battilana et al., 2010). Central to the idea of continuous improvement is the acknowledgement that the individuals doing the work are experts in what they do (Crompton, 2014). In other words, those dealing with the day-to-day challenges of the job are best positioned to identify issues and potential solutions, all of which are fundamental concepts in continuous improvement. It logically follows that these individuals should have significant input in the changes made to improve that work. However, research has demonstrated that employees will only be willing to go through the continuous improvement process of identifying and discussing issues if they are fully engaged and committed to the process of change and believe that their leaders will implement and champion change (Crompton, 2014).

When attempting to engage in a program of continuous improvement, it is vital for management to get buy-in and commitment from staff (Meyer et al., 2007). In particular, it is important for staff members to feel like change is being done with them, rather than to them. Staff must see that their thoughts and opinions played a role in the decision making process by management (Gagne et al., 2000; National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). This inclusive approach can lead to staff feeling empowered, and increases the likelihood of staff becoming involved in and committed to the change process. Support and encouragement from supervisors and managers are vital in this process, and is often associated to improved employee morale (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011; Crompton, 2014). To be successful in continuous improvement, leaders and supervisors at all levels must encourage their employees to embrace change and adopt that change into their daily routine (Battilana et al., 2010).

Given this, regular and meaningful communication between management and employees is vital to a successful continuous improvement program (Kaye and Anderson, 1999; Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005; Quesada-Pineda and Madrigal, 2013). It is imperative for management to communicate the need to move away from the status quo by clearly illustrating the ideal state for the organization (Battilana et al., 2010). Getting support from employees for a proposed change is much more likely to occur when a clear communication plan is utilized, with particular attention paid to showing how the proposed changes will benefit employees (Bommer et al., 2005; National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). Trying to force change without providing a clear rationale will rarely be successful, and will often lead to employees being less committed and engaged (Gagne et al., 2000). In particular, the use of group oriented goals was identified by Bommer et al. (2005) as an effective method to improve communication between employees and management, and often led to employees viewing management as more knowledgeable and legitimate.

Successful continuous improvement relies on the ability of management to anticipate the emotional reaction of employees to change, such as confusion, stress, fear, or anxiety, and to take the necessary steps to reduce those reactions (Battilana et al., 2010). These types of reactions can be significantly reduced by utilizing an effective communication strategy. Ensuring employees are up-to-date on upcoming changes. Taking the time to explain the need for change can decrease fear and increase the level of trust between management and employees (Gagne et al., 2000).

Communication of success in the continuous improvement process is also very important. Engagement and commitment in the change process is increased when employees understand the benefits of the new approach (Crompton, 2014). Consequently, success stories from all levels of the organization should be shared as often as possible. This allows employees to learn from the successes and failures throughout the organization (Bhuiyan and Baghel, 2005).

Clearly, leadership is extremely important in any successful implementation of continuous improvement (Bessant et al., 2001; Bommer et al., 2005; Battilana et al., 2010; Quesada-Pineda and Madrigal, 2013; Crompton, 2014). It is vital for senior management to lead by example and to demonstrate a full commitment to the change initiative, while ensuring that they are open and engaged with employees (Bommer et al., 2005; National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). The habit of assigning blame for failed improvement initiatives should be avoided at all costs, and instead, the focus should be on understanding why the change was not successful (Crompton, 2014). This will allow the continuous improvement team to learn from the mistake and make the necessary adjustments necessary for future success.

While it is clear that leadership characteristics can influence success or failure of continuous improvement, very little information is available about the specific nature of a successful leadership style (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). Bessant et al. (2000) stressed the importance of leaders understanding that continuous improvement is not a short-term activity, but must be viewed as a process of steady progression and advancement for the organization. Leadership wishing to sustain long-term continuous improvement within the organization must cultivate an innovative culture, where employees are comfortable with change and feel supported throughout the change process (Quesada-Pineda and Madrigal, 2013).

Continuous improvement is an organization-wide method of identifying problems, devising potential solutions, recognizing and implementing the best solution, and measuring the results. A crucial part of the continuous improvement process is the proper analysis and assessment of any successes or failures after changes have been made (Battilana et al., 2005; National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011; Crompton, 2014). It is also critical for leadership to evaluate the extent to which members are involved in the change process by specifically targeting and measuring the behaviors or activities being improved or changed (Battilana et al., 2005). This highlights the organizations need for proper collection of baseline data, the identification of those behaviors or activities being changed, and the analytical capability to evaluate the effects of the change. It is important that this analysis is done cautiously. Crompton (2014) warned that it could be appealing for leadership to simply focus on finding evidence to support success. However, analysis and assessment needs to be done objectively and critically. Finding evidence that point to success, while ignoring evidence to the contrary, will not allow an organization to learn from continuous improvement efforts. It is important to keep in mind that successful continuous improvement is reliant on an organization's ability to critically and honestly evaluate its actions (Crompton, 2014).

Finally, it is important to ensure that sufficient resources are available to an organization prior to implementing a program of continuous improvement (Kaye and Anderson, 1999; National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). This does not mean that simply throwing resources at a problem will improve it. Instead, management needs to ensure that the time required for continuous improvement projects are made available for employees, and that the time required for oversight,

support, encouragement, and discussion is provided to supervisors (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011; Crompton, 2014). When done properly, the resources spent allowing employees to work on change projects will generate wider gains for the organization (Fryer et al. 2007; Crompton, 2014).

While continuous improvement can appear simple, it is not always successful. In fact, many organizations find it difficult to implement and sustain continuous improvement teams and initiatives over an extended period of time (Bessant et al., 2000; Garcia-Sabater, Marin-Garcia, & Perello-Marin, 2012; Quesada-Pineda and Madrigal, 2013). Along with a failure to pay attention to some of the aforementioned best practices, there are several additional inhibitors to a successful continuous improvement program. The first is the challenge of multiple stakeholders who often have diverse needs, expectations, or requirements (Fryer et al., 2007). In policing, this is often echoed by the public who also frequently has diverse needs or expectations. This can create a significant challenge when it comes to identifying a solution to an existing organizational problem or when trying to improve the current approach to that problem. Due to the often varied and dissimilar nature of these challenges, continuous improvement initiatives often fail to produce the results that an organization desires; however, there is usually no single cause or single solution to these challenges (Gallagher et al., 1997).

Further complicating continuous improvement in the public sector is the effect of external factors, such as politics or public opinion, on the organization (Fryer et al., 2007). In an environment where goals or expectations can often shift due to changes in politics or a dramatic events, many organizations fall into the trap of ‘fighting fires’, rather than focusing on continuous improvement (Fryer et al., 2007; Garcia-Sabater et al., 2012). The continuous improvement initiative can also be inhibited by the rigid nature of an organization that has a long history of doing things a certain way, such as a police agency, where it can be difficult to break the traditional mindset and encourage a new continuous improvement mindset (Bhuiyan and Baghel 2005; Fryer et al., 2007). None of these issues are insurmountable for a commitment leadership group with good and open communication with staff and meaningful internal and external partnerships; however, ignoring these issues will pose a substantial challenge to any continuous improvement efforts.

## **Police Agencies in British Columbia and Continuous Improvement Teams**

The concept of Continuous Improvement Teams is not new to police organizations in British Columbia. There are examples of Continuous Improvement Teams having existed in various forms at a number of British Columbia RCMP detachments, such as Richmond, Kamloops, Burnaby, and Coquitlam. There are also examples of teams in municipal police departments, such as West Vancouver, New Westminster, Abbotsford, and BC Transit Police. Virtually all of these examples have their roots in the work of Dr. Terry Anderson, who introduced the concept of Continuous Improvement Teams to the police community in 1993. These teams had various names or structures, but each started out with the purpose of facilitating continuous improvement within



their respective organizations.<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of Continuous Improvement Teams and their purpose is provided in the book “Every Officer is a Leader” (Anderson, Gisborne, & Holliday, 2006). Additionally, the purpose and other details associated to the operation of Continuous Improvement Teams is described on Dr. Anderson’s website [www.ConsultingCoach.com](http://www.ConsultingCoach.com).

As first articulated by Anderson, the work of a Continuous Improvement Team is to serve as an advisory body to management that is directly linked to the strategic planning and the service delivery plan of the policing agency. Specifically, Anderson (2014) notes that the purpose of a Continuous Improvement Team is to:

1. act as a representative advisory body to management;
2. collect information and opinions regarding community and employee needs and concerns, and report these to other Continuous Improvement Team members for their consideration;
3. participate in the strategic planning and change management process;
4. represent issues and recommend strategic changes and communicate these back to the department, bringing their feedback and concerns back to the planning table for consideration and possible improvement;
5. assist in the design and monthly review of the strategic plan and implementation plan with the management team;
6. integrate the strategic plan with the service delivery plan;
7. help communicate and lead the execution of the approved plan;
8. monitor progress toward measurable goals and support unit leaders;
9. report monthly progress to management regarding achievement of the strategy; and
10. act as leading agents of change, promoting the agreed upon mission, vision, values, and strategies of the department.

While this articulation remains an ideal vision for Continuous Improvement Teams, it does not accurately reflect the way that Continuous Improvement Teams have historically developed in police agencies in British Columbia. Rather, they came to be introduced and rolled out with less ambitious goals. Most commonly, each was in effect a committee/team of employees put in place as an advisory group to provide advice to the management team on calling attention to conditions and practices within the department that were seen by employees to need improvement. Today, in British Columbia, most of these teams have been disbanded. To some degree, this occurred because the teams became the victim of their own success. Once most of their memberships’ concerns were dealt with, they were viewed as redundant. The Continuous Improvement Team within the Surrey RCMP detachment; however, has remained in place. In effect, it has gone through an important evolution. It began as a “Relocation Committee” responsible for dealing with the recentralization of the district offices back to the main Surrey headquarters. Once the work of the Relocation Committee was completed, the members continued to respond to various issues within the new structure as they arose. Currently, at the time of this current project, the committee had 28 staff members with a nominal role on the team. From meeting minutes, it appears that there are usually 13 to 17 people in attendance at meetings. In terms of their specific mandate, it is the responsibility

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<sup>1</sup> Direct communication with Dr. Anderson, July, 2014.

of the Continuous Improvement Team to facilitate an avenue of communication for concerns from employees and staff to the detachment's management team.

The purpose of this report is to review of the current Continuous Improvement Team. The review was not intended to simply assess whether the team is functioning as intended, but to examine the effectiveness of the team in contributing to achieving the goals of the detachment's strategic plan. Furthermore, this review is intended to be primarily a formative evaluation with a focus on what could be done to improve the effectiveness of the Continuous Improvement Team.

## Methodology

The methodology for this review largely consisted of 12 structured personal interviews. Specifically, structured personal interviews were conducted with six RCMP employees who have experience working on the Surrey Continuous Improvement Team, and further structured personal interviews were conducted with another six employees of the Surrey RCMP detachment who have no direct experience working on the team. For a list of the guiding interview questions, please see Appendix A.

Both members with experience on the team and members without experience on the team were selected by the Staff Sergeant Major to participate with this review based on their availability while the interviewer was present at the Detachment. The members with experience on the team understood that a functional evaluation of the team was being undertaken, the members with no experience on the team were only advised that they were being interviewed in regard to what they knew or did not know about the team. At the outset of each interview, the participant was advised of the purpose of the interview and that there were limited guarantees of anonymity. Each of the interviewed staff members signed an informed consent form indicating that they were willing to participate in the review. At the conclusion of these 12 interviews, it was determined that the responses were so similar between the groups that there was little value in interviewing additional staff. The research team was also confident that the interviews provided an excellent representation of the detachment's view of the Continuous Improvement Team.

In addition to the employees of the Surrey RCMP detachment, 12 telephone interviews were undertaken of experienced police officers, including several senior managers, who had experience with various forms of Continuous Improvement Teams at other RCMP detachments and municipal police agencies, such as the RCMP detachments of Burnaby, Coquitlam, Richmond, Kamloops, and North Vancouver, as well as West Vancouver Police, BC Transit Police, and Saskatoon Police. One interview was also conducted with the leader of a major municipal police organization in the United States. Participants were selected based on the research team's knowledge of police leaders who had experience with continuous improvement initiatives.

From the telephone interviews with individuals outside of the Surrey RCMP detachment, some common themes emerged regarding the value and effectiveness of continuous improvement or similar teams, such as Constable Committees, Continuous Improvement Teams, or Employee Advisory Committees. Specifically, all those interviewed expressed the view that such teams provided a valuable communication conduit between front-line staff and management, and that



they provided a valuable contribution to improving working conditions and service delivery. Furthermore, there was a shared view that the best and most effective teams included a wide cross-section of staff from within the organization. It also became clear why so many continuous improvement teams no longer existed as official continuous improvement teams. The reasons cited for this were changes in management, lack of support from management, a lack or loss of interest among staff, not enough time for meetings, heavy workloads, human resource shortages, and staff transfers. At the same time, the majority of those interviewed expressed the view that underlying these seemingly negative reasons was the consideration that the teams they were familiar with were victims of their own success in that they were seen as having achieved their goals and no longer necessary.

With the above in mind, this report will focus on the results of the structured interviews with employees of the Surrey RCMP detachment.

## **Interview Results**

### **THE VALUE OF THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM**

It was clear from the interviews that the employees who were familiar with the Continuous Improvement Team and its work felt that it was of value and helped to bring issues of concern from employees to the attention of senior management. Employees who had no experience with the team were still supportive of the concept of a continuous improvement team, especially in terms of its value in bringing issues to the attention of their police leaders. Notably, when employees with no experience with the team were provided with some examples of the issues resolved by the team, such as in relation to the acquisition of new equipment and changes to basic Detachment procedures, their support increased.

A common theme among respondents was that they considered the Continuous Improvement Team a valuable link between the membership and senior managers. In fact, several interviewees provided examples of issues that were resolved immediately by a decision of a senior manager when brought forward at a Continuous Improvement Team meeting. Some examples that participants provided included the installation and relocation of water stations, and improved access to flashlight batteries and stationary supplies that had previously been restricted to certain hours. Successful achievements in process by the Continuous Improvement Team, where matters that were presented at an initial meeting, researched by a Continuous Improvement Team member to be brought forward at a subsequent meeting, and a decision being rendered based on the additional information provided, were also mentioned. One example provided by a respondent related to the Detachment Commander's decision to purchase ammunition and range time for members who wanted to practice shooting. In some cases, the examples given by respondents were relatively simple issues that they believed management was unaware of at the time, such as the restricted access to flashlight batteries and stationary supplies.

Interviewees also commented on the value of the Continuous Improvement Team in terms of it being a small, but needed influence on the overall morale at the detachment. It was expressed that, while members are faced with bigger national issues, such as base compensation, changes to the

pension plan, and changes to medical and dental benefits, the resolution of seemingly smaller issues was a small, but welcome relief to the membership and staff.

Interviewees commented further that many members were frustrated with the fact that some things, such as issues with kit and clothing, ballistic armour upgrades, and national policy changes, did not seem to get addressed in a timely manner. Similar comments were referenced in regards to the PRIME records system and how frustrating it can be for members when issues take months or longer to be resolved. Importantly, interviewees understood that many matters of concern to them could only be resolved by national or other outside policy centres, yet, they still felt that the Continuous Improvement Team could and should remain a valuable conduit for communicating their concerns to those external bodies. In effect, there was a general feeling that even though the Continuous Improvement Team cannot deal with national or external policy issues, their ability to deal with seemingly smaller issues that made the day-to-day working conditions better for members and staff at the detachment was very important and should be continued and supported.

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM MANDATE AND MISSION**

As previously noted, the current Surrey RCMP Continuous Improvement Team is an evolution of the former Relocation Committee – a committee that provided valuable communication and solution options to some of the problems faced during the centralization restructuring of the Surrey detachment. Evolving from the Relocation Committee did not result in any clear delineation or change of function for the committee beyond a name change, and the team continued to serve as a conduit for communicating issues between the detachment membership and management.

Of note, although the detachment is in the process of developing and reviewing the mandates of each unit, at the time of writing this report, there was no clear mandate or mission statement for the current Continuous Improvement Team. All of the employees interviewed assumed that the mandate was simply “continuous improvement” with no real clarity to what the Continuous Improvement Team could or should be responsible for. Equally important, there was no clear understanding of what the Continuous Improvement Team was not responsible for. During the interviews with employees, there was consensus that there would be a significant benefit to having a clear mandate with parameters of what members could bring to the Continuous Improvement Team and what the Continuous Improvement Team could bring to management.

The question of whether the Continuous Improvement Team could be empowered in the absence of a commissioned officer to deal with some issues was raised by some of the research participants; an issue that could be addressed with the establishment of a more formal mandate statement and mission statement for the Continuous Improvement Team. While most of the interviewees felt that they were capable of establishing a mandate within the group, there were also suggestions that employees from outside of the group, such as members of the leadership team or staff relations representatives, could be involved in the establishment of a clear mandate and scope of duty for the team.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM LEADERSHIP**

All interviewees were complimentary of the current chairperson of the Continuous Improvement Team. They were also very complimentary of the Officer in Charge of the detachment. They were very impressed with the personal interest taken by the Officer in Charge into the work of the Continuous Improvement Team, and participants were also very happy with the contributions that the Officer in Charge and his senior managers made at the committee meetings. While the interviewees all expressed an understanding of the senior managers' busy schedules, it was clear that they felt that it was important for at least one member of the senior management team to be available for every meeting.

It was not expected that the senior management representative would take over the meetings or chair the meetings. Again, the point made was that at least one member of the senior management team should be in attendance. While the interviewees felt that having a delegated decision maker at the meeting from outside the management team might meet the functional needs of the Continuous Improvement Team, they also expressed that having a member of the senior management team there, or even available for part of the meeting, would provide credibility to the Continuous Improvement Team and improve the communication between the senior management team and the members on the Continuous Improvement Team who represent the operational and administrative staff of their respective units.

There were suggestions that it may be timely for the new Staff Sergeant Major to take on duties as the chairperson of the meeting as he is the closest advisor to the management team. Meetings could still be organized and managed by subordinate staff, but it was felt that the new Staff Sergeant Major might also be in a position to make some decisions in the absence of a senior management team member. It would appear that the current staff and chairperson of the Continuous Improvement Team are providing good support and structure to team meetings. Regardless of whether the team chair is reassigned or greater decision making authority is given to the chair or the team, it was a common expression by each of the interviewees that a commissioned officer of the senior management team should be present at every meeting.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM PARTICIPATION AND RECRUITING**

There was a reoccurring theme amongst the interviewees that it was important to have representation from all units of the detachment at the table when the committee meets. It appears that some units either lack representation or that they rarely attend meetings due to other duties or the meeting not coinciding with their shift. While it is understood that not everyone will be able to make every meeting, it was felt that some units are conspicuously not represented or tend to miss a lot of meetings.

Interviewees with experience on the Continuous Improvement Team felt that representation was important to ensure that everyone was on the same page when issues were discussed and decisions were made. Interviewees who had no experience being on the Continuous Improvement Team did appear to know that it was important for their representative to be there whenever possible.

Several of the people interviewed indicated that they were currently active in trying to recruit additional members to the Continuous Improvement Team. Interviewees suggested that the best members to be assigned to the Continuous Improvement Team would be volunteers, not necessarily the unit manager or supervisor, and ideally they should be enthusiastic about the possibilities of trying to make the Surrey RCMP detachment a better place to work.

Interviewees offered various solutions to recruiting that included compensation, rescheduling meeting times to allow for members to more easily attend meetings, or having one designated alternate to attend if the primary unit representative cannot make a meeting. Still, all interviewees said that there it would be best and most effective to have all units represented at every meetings, if possible.

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM TRAINING**

Only one interviewee was able to recollect someone who came to one meeting shortly after the 2010 Olympics to speak directly about goal setting and measuring success for the Continuous Improvement Team. With this exception, none of the interviewees could recall any specific training that was given to team members with regard to realistic or achievable goal setting, measuring success, or developing effective communication strategies to disseminate ideas or decisions throughout the detachment. Nor had any of the interviewees received any training in how to present ideas at the meeting in a manner that would allow better and informed decisions to be made in the first instance or in a timely manner.

According to the interview participants, members did not receive any familiarization or a specific orientation focusing on what would be expected of them if they agreed to participate on the Continuous Improvement Team. It would appear that most volunteered and were simply welcomed to the meeting and expected to participate. This lack of orientation or training resulted in some participating team members either remaining silent or using the forum to vent or debate issues in an unproductive way.

Interviewees were generally of the view that current Continuous Improvement Team members would need little formal training to be effective, but also stated that if the Continuous Improvement Team was to establish a mandate and parameters for issues that could be addressed by the team, it may be a good opportunity to get everyone on the same page in terms of what the mandate of the Continuous Improvement Team is, to provide some training on realistic goal setting, and to develop processes for how to better communicate results back to the general membership.

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM PROCESSES**

It was clear by speaking to members of the current Continuous Improvement Team that there is good management of the meetings of the team by the chairperson, and that that the meetings tended to meet the needs of the group at the current time. The meetings take place on a regular basis, approximately every six weeks, and the interviewees who had experience with the group they felt this frequency of meetings was appropriate.

Currently, the designated Continuous Improvement Team members will approach unit members prior to a meeting to learn of any issues that they would like placed on the agenda or to be brought to the meeting as new business. According to some interviewees, where the process could be improved is in having that process start earlier with an expectation that all team members will come to the meeting prepared to discuss the issues at hand. It was also pointed out that the cutoff date to include items for the agenda, with very few exceptions, should be well established and provide for enough time for team members to understand the issues that will be addressed at the meeting. The general consensus was that this cutoff date should be at least one week prior to the meeting. This would also allow the Chair or another Continuous Improvement Team member to invite and prepare a guest that could attend the meeting to respond to a specific issue. Finally, some interviewees felt that the minutes of the meetings could be more informative and reflect some of the debate or rationale for the decisions or recommendations made by the Continuous Improvement Team.

### **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT TEAM COMMUNICATION AND CELEBRATING SUCCESS**

Interviewees stated that communication about the purpose and achievements of the Continuous Improvement Team often got lost in the larger communication “fog” of such a big municipal detachment, like Surrey. While there is information available on the detachment’s webpage that automatically comes up when members sign into their accounts, many members and staff of the detachment have little time to visit the site or they bypass it to get on with the heavy workload of the day. In a similar manner, members with heavy workloads often prioritize viewing emails and, while they may have good intentions of returning to group or administrative emails, the demands of their jobs often sidetrack them before they get to these emails.

All interviewees felt that the best way to communicate issues for the Continuous Improvement Team or to get information back to the units from the Continuous Improvement Team was through their selected representatives. Having said that, it was also clear that some of the interviewees who were not involved with the Continuous Improvement Team were unaware of some of the issues that were dealt with successfully by the team. This highlights the need to ensure that each unit has representation on the Continuous Improvement Team, and that the team members who represent the units ensure that the positive achievements of the Continuous Improvement Team are reported to the all members.

Given the insight provided by those interviewed and a consideration of the information presented in the review of the literature, there are 5 main recommendations that the Surrey RCMP and all police agencies in British Columbia should consider associated with the functioning of the Continuous Improvement Team that are designed to improve the Continuous Improvement Team’s effectiveness and efficiency.

## Recommendations

### **The Continuous Improvement Team Should, As A Group Effort, Establish A Clear Vision And Mandate Statement**

It was clear from interviewees that the only mandate that they envisioned for the current Continuous Improvement Team was “continuous improvement”. That, in itself, is a very general mandate for the Continuous Improvement Team and does not specifically define what the team can or cannot deal with, what authority they have for change, or even the issues that they can address. In talking to experienced police officers who have worked with Continuous Improvement Teams in other jurisdictions, it was expressed that Continuous Improvement Teams often fail or disintegrate when they lose focus, are deemed by the Team or other members of the police agency that they are not effectively making a contribution to the organization, or are simply turned down by management on most of the ideas they propose.

In order to avoid these type of situations, it is recommended that Surrey RCMP establish, articulate, and disseminate a vision and mandate statement for the Continuous Improvement Team tied to the detachment’s strategic plan that would give clear direction to the Continuous Improvement Team with respect to its purpose and scope of activities. The vision and mandate document should also outline what the Continuous Improvement Team can manage on its own, what issues or requests require the approval of managers or financial decision makers outside of the Continuous Improvement Team, and what explicitly the Continuous Improvement Team cannot deal with. With a clear mandate and strong representation of membership on the Continuous Improvement Team, the group can remain focused on dealing with those specific issues that they can have a positive effect on, rather than being a venue for discussions of issues that cannot be dealt with. It stands to reason that a workgroup cannot be effective without a clear sense of direction.

### **Each Unit Of The Surrey RCMP Detachment Should Have Representation On The Continuous Improvement Team**

It is clear that there is involvement on the current Continuous Improvement Team from a wide cross-section of the detachment’s employees. That said, it was also clear that some specific groups were underrepresented or their designated representative had not been regularly attending meetings. Given this, there is some room for improvement of the Continuous Improvement Team’s effectiveness by having a full cross-representation of the detachment’s employees, including municipal staff attending where appropriate.

There are two key areas that having a better representation of the entire detachment would increase the benefits and the effectiveness of the Continuous Improvement Team. First, having representation from all units of the detachment will ensure enhanced communication and reduce communication gaps between frontline workers and senior management through the Continuous Improvement Team. Second, people who are more directly involved in change are more likely to buy into change and support it. Given this, involving more people from various functions and levels of the detachment during the discussion, research, planning, implementation, and communication stages of team recommendations will garner more support for positive change at the detachment.



In terms of management representation on the Continuous Improvement Team, it was clear that everyone interviewed understood the demands on the detachment commander and appreciated whenever he was able to attend and participate in meetings. That said, it was also clear that what people wanted was not just the support of the detachment commander where possible, but, just as important, was the desire to have at least one member of the management team available for the meeting to help deal with quick decisions on some issues. In effect, having good representation of staff that is interested in positive change at the detachment attend the meetings will help to ensure the continuation and success of the Continuous Improvement Team.

### **The Continuous Improvement Team Should Enhance Its Process For Ensuring That Issues Deserving Of Consideration Are Brought To The Agenda And Addressed In A More Timely And Productive Way**

While it was clear that there is some formality to the Continuous Improvement Team meetings, that minutes are taken, and that the chairperson conducts the meetings in an appropriate manner, setting a better or clearer structure to how the agenda items will be addressed would benefit the functionality of the Continuous Improvement Team.

Establishing a timeline for submissions to the agenda, ensuring that minutes for the meeting are informative and broadly disseminated, formalizing how issues would be presented at the meeting after research has been conducted to identify alternative possible solutions, and not allowing anything but the most urgent of issues to come as new business would ensure that the time of the Continuous Improvement Team members is used effectively. A general discussion or roundtable of concerns just to get them in the open or establishing sub-committees to deal with these issues would be appropriate. Still, in most cases, issues that come to the table on the agenda should include viable options or solutions available for a decision at the meeting. Alternatively, issues should be raised by a formal presentation to management for a decision that is based on a review of the issue and an established consensus of the Continuous Improvement Team.

### **Members Of The Continuous Improvement Team Should Be Provided With Training In The Areas Of Mandate Development And Project Management Principles Relating To Researching And Presenting Issues To Management So That More Effective, Timely, And Better Informed Decisions Can Be Made**

There are several benefits to providing training to members who actively and voluntarily participate on the Surrey RCMP Continuous Improvement Team. Training could be workshop-based and focus on developing a team mandate and vision statement that would improve the functionality of the Continuous Improvement Team. The second area of training could be based on project management principles that would coach members through the complexities of conducting research, preparing presentations for management, and project implementation and evaluation. One element of communication training should also be included as it is the Continuous Improvement Team members who are communicating the issues discussed at the meetings back to their co-workers.

What might be a small investment in training of the Continuous Improvement Team members would not only contribute to the effectiveness and positive contributions of the team, but it would also be developmental for the team members and benefit them personally in their careers. This might encourage other staff and members to be more participative in the Continuous Improvement Team and its activities.

### **The Achievements Of The Continuous Improvement Team Should Be Communicated And Recognized**

During the interviews, it was apparent that disseminating and discussing issues, challenges, and successes at such a large RCMP detachment could be challenging. It appears that information is available about the Continuous Improvement Team and what it accomplishes through a variety of different publications, webpages, and oral presentations. However, communication about Continuous Improvement Team issues is often lost in the large number of daily emails, bulletins, and administrative announcements that members receive. In effect, there can be simply too much information sent and presented to the workforce; information that is coming from many different sources. In discussing some of the achievements of the Continuous Improvement Team with interviewees who were not familiar with the team, it was clear that they were aware of the advancements made in their interest, but not of the work done by the members of the Continuous Improvement Team to achieve these gains. Continuous Improvement Team members must ensure that they not only bring the issues of their coworkers to the team's and management's attention, but, as mentioned above, they must also communicate the achievements and successes of the Continuous Improvement Team to the members effectively.

There is no doubt that the management of the Surrey RCMP detachment recognizes its membership for their many achievements over the years. This should be continued and enhanced in relation to the issues that are dealt with by the Continuous Improvement Team. Whether it is the recognition of an employee that gives a well-considered, practical, and helpful suggestion, or the recognition of a sub-team for the work they have conducted on some complex issue for the Continuous Improvement Team, the work of the Continuous Improvement Team and its members should continue to be acknowledged at every possible opportunity as this builds morale among the Continuous Improvement Team members and the wider Surrey RCMP membership, and builds confidence in the management team.

### **Summary**

Based on the interviews conducted for this report, the current Continuous Improvement Team of the Surrey RCMP detachment appears to be serving a useful purpose both in terms of communicating the concerns of frontline workers to management and in terms of being a catalyst for change at the detachment. At a time when staff and members are concerned about big issues, such as compensation, reduced benefits, and perceived diminishing public trust that could have negative effects on members' morale, the Continuous Improvement Team is contributing to a more

positive working atmosphere by being a conduit and catalyst for change on a wide range of 'smaller' issues that can be dealt with at the unit, team, or detachment level.

There were issues identified even within the scope of the interviews conducted that clearly could be addressed by the Continuous Improvement Team or through recommendations by the Continuous Improvement Team to management. Some issues that might be more easily addressed include recruiting of new Continuous Improvement Team members, exploring the feasibility of Continuous Improvement Team members being compensated or rescheduled to attend meetings, the selection process for Continuous Improvement Team members, and identifying and providing the kind of training Continuous Improvement Team members feel they may need to make the team more effective. With a clear mandate and some training, the Continuous Improvement Team might be in a better position to consider issues like the value of watch clerks for each shift, peak hour scheduling, or other staff concerns where several alternatives need to be presented to management.

Currently, the Continuous Improvement Team primarily deals with internal issues and contributes to enhanced communication between the frontline workers and the management team. However, the Continuous Improvement Team, based on a cross-functional representation of the entire detachment, could, in the future, also be challenged with examining external or community issues that may be identified within the strategic planning process and where the outcomes of research and Continuous Improvement Team's recommendations might affect external clients.

From an outside perspective, the Continuous Improvement Team has a current value, but it also has the potential to become a true model of what Continuous Improvement Teams should be in policing. As the largest and most complex Detachment of the RCMP, there will never be a shortage of issues for the team to deal with, which, in itself, should sustain the team. That being said, the real opportunity for this Continuous Improvement Team lies with its strong leadership and dedicated staff that are engaged in the concepts of continuous improvement for both service delivery and employee wellness. With a mandate and some training in project management or other initiatives, Surrey RCMP's Continuous Improvement Team could be challenged with providing management with well-considered and researched options on more complex and difficult issues that will present themselves in the future. Staff who participate on the Continuous Improvement Team will not only realize the satisfaction of improving the service delivery and working conditions at Surrey Detachment, but they will also be given developmental opportunities that will benefit them personally and be recognized by management.

Speaking specifically to transformational leadership in policing during times of organizational change, Anderson, Gisborne, and Holliday (2006) suggested that the concept of a Continuous Improvement Team could be a very valuable tool in leading organizations through many of the challenges faced by police and public safety organizations. Further, they emphasized that one of the key values of a Continuous Improvement Team in a policing environment was to provide an open door of communication between the frontline workers and the management or leadership teams that work with them. It is clear that the Continuous Improvement Team as it functions in Surrey RCMP detachment reflects that value and with some modifications holds the promise of providing a best practice example of what a Continuous Improvement Team can and should be.

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## Appendix A: Guiding Questions for Personal Interviews with Surrey RCMP Detachment Employees

The following questions formed the foundational structure for the personal interviews with Surrey RCMP employees. Questions were modified slightly throughout the interview where appropriate.

- 1)** How long have you been employed in policing? What about specifically with the Surrey RCMP? What is your position? How long have you been acting in this role? How did you get to this position?
- 2)** Are you a sworn member or a civilian?
- 3)** Can you tell me a little about the training you received for this position? What did it generally consist of? Who trained you? How long did it take?
- 4)** Do you know what a Continuous Improvement Team is? What do you think their purpose is? What do you think they really do on a daily basis?
- 5)** Are you familiar with the Surrey CITs mandate? Is it adequate or does it need to be expanded/restricted in any way? Is it in line with the Detachment's strategic plans and priorities? Do you think they achieve their mandate?
- 6)** Should there be a minimum level of experience to sit on a CIT and if so, what is it, in your opinion?
- 7)** What type of person is the ideal candidate to sit on a CIT, in terms of experience and influence?
- 8)** Have you ever been consulted by a CIT representative as part of an investigation into an issue? What was that experience like? Did you feel that they asked relevant questions and valued your opinion?
- 9)** Has your work ever been affected by a CIT recommendation? Do you feel that this was a positive or negative change?
- 10)** Do you feel there is enough transparency around what CITs do and how they do it? Do you have access to what they discuss (e.g. meeting minutes) and if not, is this something you would like to have access to? How can they be more transparent or inclusive of non-CIT members?
- 11)** How are the recommendations from a CIT investigation communicated to you? How can this communication be improved?
- 12)** How realistic and helpful are the recommendations in general? Do you have the capacity to implement them or are they more "pipe-dream" recommendations?
- 13)** What is the committee's mandate? Is this mandate clear? Does it need to be restricted or expanded in any way? Is it in line with the strategic plan/priorities of the detachment? Who created your mandate and how often is it updated to reflect current needs and practices?
- 14)** What resources do you have at the committee's disposal to meet your mandate? What other resources are necessary / ideal to better meet your mandate?



- 15)** What are the powers of the committee in terms of investigating problems? In other words, what is your capacity to generate the necessary information/intelligence?
- 16)** Do people tend to cooperate with CIT requests for information? Why/why not? What can be done to improve this?
- 17)** What are the powers of the committee in terms of making recommendations? Are the recommendations made by your team generally respected? How quickly are they acted on?
- 18)** How often are the recommendations of the committee implemented/enforced? What are the common reasons for non-compliance and how can compliance be improved or better supported?
- 19)** How free/encouraged do you feel to come up with unique recommendations? Why do you feel this way? How often are the team's final recommendations "out-of-the-box"?
- 20)** How do you ensure that the opinions of those primarily affected by your recommendations are solicited and considered in your discussions?
- 21)** How do you communicate the nature of your recommendations with those who will be primarily affected by them?
- 22)** Do you feel that the CIT as it currently operates in Surrey provides a useful service?
- 23)** How could the services offered by Surrey's CIT be improved?

