



DEPARTMENTAL BUY-IN

WHY DEPARTMENTAL BUY-IN IS IMPORTANT

For any effort in a law enforcement agency to be successful, there needs to be buy-in from agency personnel and leadership. Identifying someone who is intentional, passionate, embraces change, and can make a substantial and measurable impact on the effort can profoundly impact the project's success by taking on the role of an internal champion. An internal "champion" can build, drive, and sustain the effort by overseeing the implementation process while coordinating and gaining buy-in from internal and external stakeholders who will help advance the initiative. Buy-in from an agency's leadership is also essential. Leadership buy-in and commitment sends a clear message of the relevance and importance of the effort to the rest of the agency. Because an agency's executive leader sets the department's tone, clear communication of leadership's commitment and support of an effort makes it more likely to succeed.

HOW DEPARTMENTAL BUY-IN IS CRITICAL TO CS360

CS360 is a problem-solving model that provides agency leaders with ways to integrate community needs and feedback into the department's traditional data-driven crime monitoring process. Across the multiple jurisdictions that the CS360 team worked with, it became evident that the departments that had full commitment and support from agency leadership were the ones that were able to move the effort forward and work best with the community toward collaborative problem-solving efforts.

To help build leadership commitment and support, the CS360 effort employs a collaborative and iterative process. This allows for consistent communication among the agency personnel and leadership to ensure alignment as the process moves forward. During this period, there is engagement with internal and external stakeholders in the department, giving them space to share any concerns and potential solutions. The CS360 project team advocates for creating a Problem-Solving Team (PST), which comprises department and community leaders who initiate and guide the CS360 process within that community. An internal champion is a vital team member in driving the CS360 process and ensuring follow-through on the objectives. The internal champion can also serve as a direct and reliable link, sharing successes and requests for support with the community. This process of allowing space to share, both internal to the department and external with the community, and being responsive to the information gathered can help to build departmental buy-in.

CASE EXAMPLE

The project team quickly learned that the success of the CS360 effort is largely dependent on the buy-in from members of the department as well as department leadership. In jurisdictions with leadership support, the departments could be responsive to the concerns of both personnel and community stakeholders. For a small city police department in a rural area, having buy-in from the department's leadership and a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Law Enforcement Advancing Data and Science Scholars (LEADS) scholar as the point of contact enabled the department to excel in the implementation of CS360. That internal champion quickly assumed the role responsible for successfully implementing the CS360 effort by embracing the CS360 model, owning the process, and working diligently to build enthusiasm and gain buy-in from internal and external stakeholders. The department was able to launch a robust problem-solving team to address the rising gun crime and the fear of gun crime in the community. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the beginning of the problem-solving team's discussions had to be virtual, significantly extending the initiative's expected timeline. The buy-in and commitment from the department's leadership and persistence of the internal champion gave this group the time and space that it needed to set up an effective and successful team, even with the extended timeline.

The intentional and communicated commitment and support of leadership allowed the CS360 team to navigate difficult situations and break down barriers. However, in some jurisdictions, the CS360 effort did not go beyond the scanning phase due to a lack of commitment and support to work directly with community members in problem-solving. Two mid-sized agencies in the Midwest struggled to gain traction with CS360 because they either did not have the buy-in from the department's leadership and decision makers or did not have an internal champion to drive the initiative forward. In both agencies, the CS360 project stalled shortly after the scanning recommendations were provided to the department.

KEY TAKEAWAYS »

- » *DEPARTMENT COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT ARE CRUCIAL FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF ANY EFFORT IN A POLICE DEPARTMENT. THAT COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT MUST BE CLEARLY COMMUNICATED TO GAIN BUY-IN FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND BUILD MOMENTUM FOR THE WORK TO BE DONE. INTERNAL CHAMPIONS CAN BE AN ESSENTIAL PIECE OF THIS PROCESS.*
- » *STRESSING THE IMPORTANCE OF A PROJECT BOTH PUBLICLY AND INTERNALLY IS ESSENTIAL FOR POLICE EXECUTIVES IMPLEMENTING NEW INITIATIVES. THIS CAN BE DONE BY FOLLOWING UP WITH STAFF ON MEASURABLE GOALS AND POSTING TO SOCIAL MEDIA PERIODICALLY TO PROVIDE UPDATES ON THE PROJECT'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS.*
- » *AN INTERNAL CHAMPION MUST HAVE THE AUTHORITY OR SUPPORT FROM DEPARTMENT LEADERSHIP TO IMPLEMENT AND DRIVE AN EFFORT SUCCESSFULLY.*