Use of Technology in the Corrections Field

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Abstract

Technology has crept into every facet of our lives. From smart devices to smart cars, technology has made our lives easier and more efficient. As society changes, law enforcement must also adapt to these changes. The use of technology in the law enforcement career field, specifically in detention and corrections, has been a long time coming. Technology has made detention and correctional facilities safer, more efficient and more accountable. From architectural design to identification chips embedded in an armband, the use of technology in law enforcement is here to stay. This survey was sent to jail administrators throughout the state of Florida to ascertain how much technology has impacted their daily operations.

Introduction

As we all know, Law Enforcement is a calling that is not suited for everyone. To perform the job correctly, the Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) must show honor, integrity, fortitude, and the most important trait is bravery. The Law Enforcement Officer must be able to handle an immense amount of pressure, and be able to make decisions in the blink of an eye. Most often, these decisions can and will have a lifetime effect on them, their agency and the community with which they serve.

The above description can be aptly applied to all Law Enforcement Officers, but I will be speaking to those that have the ability, strength and courage to be "imprisoned" with many of societies destitute, murderers and rapist day in and day out. To be a Correctional Officer or Detention Deputy is not like any other job. This profession is not glamorous, or the stuff of dreams. Correctional Officers do not get movies made about them or get the praise from the community they serve and protect. To be a Correctional Officer is to be a superhero every working day or night. To be a Correctional Officer, one must subject oneself to unimaginable danger from physical, emotional and biological dangers every time they step into a correctional facility.

Correctional Officers endure the same law enforcement training as their counterparts, Police Officers or Deputy Sheriff's. Although sworn law enforcement officers receive additional academy training in areas ranging from constitutional law and legal aspects to situational awareness, training usually consists of various subjects ranging from Defensive Tactics to Report Writing to Constitutional Law. Academy training is usually a twenty two (22) week process that prepares students for the rigors and demands of being a law enforcement officer. Once academy training has been completed, these new deputies are sworn in, given a badge and assigned to a platoon to continue training. Training varies from organization to organization, but will mainly comprise of professional

interactions with the internal clients of the facility, the inmates. Along with inmate interactions, new correctional officers will be trained on facility rules, policy and procedures and platoon expectations of performance.

County jails, State Department of Corrections, and Federal Bureau of Prisons have always been behind the curve when it came to the use of technology. The private sector was always ahead of the curve employing technology to make the job easier or using it to gain an advantage on a competitor. But with the inception and acceptance of technology in the correctional career field, correctional staff are now being presented with a new way of doing business. Although the job stills remains dangerous, technology is bringing cutting edge tools that not only make the duties easier, but it is also bridging the security lapses that once plagued the system.

In years past, every facet of the day to day operation within the correctional facility was documented using pen and paper. In essence, paper was king in the correctional field. The saying use to be, "If it's not written down, then it didn't happen." Everything was written down and archived. Inmate logs, medical records, professional visitors and family visits were all tracked with paper. As with anything, the information was only as good or accurate as the officer who was documenting it.

Technology takes the guesswork and the possibility of human error out of the equation. Through the use of technology, correctional facilities are becoming safer for both correctional staff and the inmate population.

Literature Review

The U.S. Department of Justice is a leading proponent and advocate for improving our criminal justice system. The Justice Department accomplishes this mission through its research, development and evaluation agency, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The NIJ has been responding to and meeting the needs of the criminal justice professionals through partnerships for over 30 years. (Hart, 2003)

Through these partnerships and funding, the NIJ focuses its research on four (4) distinct technological areas within corrections. These areas consist of:

1. Safety within correctional agencies
2. Efficacy of offender supervision
3. Allocation of resources within the correctional agencies to reduce cost, enhance staff management and reduce injuries
4. Collaboration between state, local, tribal and federal correctional agencies and other criminal justice agencies through the integration of technology information. (Campbell, 2015)

A major concern for criminal justice professionals is how to make the jails and prisons safer for staff and inmates. One of those ways is to eliminate the threat of weapons inmates can make and use against staff and fellow inmates. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, in its report, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2001*, reported that in the year 1990, states reported 10,731 assaults by inmates on prison staff. By 1995, there

were 14 employee deaths as a result of assaults, but the number of assaults had also increased to 14,165. (Hart, 2003)

An accepted practice throughout the corrections field to deter the manufacturing of weapons has been preventative patrols by the officers working in the housing pod. Although an accepted practice, this method is very antiquated and time consuming. In addition, like most contraband found within an institution, the facility has unknowingly provided it to the inmates. The best way to combat this problem is to deny the inmates the ability to make these weapons. To this end, the NIJ has partnered with Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Laboratory (APL). The APL will research the attacks within the facilities to determine frequency, severity and nature in order to gather information on the material composition of the item used in the attack. Once this information is gathered, APL will attempt to produce items found within the facility by using alternative materials, making it harder for inmates to produce the same type weapon. (Hart, 2003)

If an individual officer decides to search the housing pod, they go cell to cell, bunk by bunk looking for contraband material. This is useful for finding weapons or other contraband in the pod. However, what happens when the correctional officer suspects an individual inmate or inmates may possess weapons on their person? In cases such as this, several deputies are required to be present in order to strip search each inmate, thoroughly search through their issued uniform, and then separate them from the others until the search has been completed. This is not only time consuming but takes much needed resources, causing staff to be away from their assigned areas of responsibility. Another initiative through the NIJ that is based on expert recommendations is the use of scanners or other detection devices. These devices would be utilized to identify objects ranging from knives to cell phones. (Bulman, 2009)

In 2009, at the Graterford State Correctional Institute in Pennsylvania, they were using an NIJ pilot program that utilizes a millimeter wave imaging system to scan incoming visitors to the facility. This system is currently in use by the Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) throughout the United States in airports. Basically, each visitor was passing through an airport scanner. While passing through the scanner, each visitor was being scanned, using radio energy from rotating antennas attached to the portal. The radio energy in turn produced an image of the body and any objects that may be hidden under the clothing. (Bulman, 2009)

These devices are now being used in many correctional facilities to scan inmates as they exit and re-enter the facility for various reasons. As with anything new, many had privacy concerns, specifically what happens to the images. Once explained that the devices were similar in nature to X-ray machines and facilities could construct barriers to hinder unwanted gazing, it was then widely accepted. (Bulman, 2009)

Many of the weapons discovered and confiscated within the correctional facility are of a specific type. Weapons manufactured inside the facility are of the stabbing, slashing and puncture style. These are up close and personal type weapons that are meant to either kill, permanently maim or cause disfigurement to staff members or other inmates. Technological advances in the form of a Kevlar vest have contributed to a safer environment for correctional officers. Ultra Armor Apparel, Ltd developed this type of vest in conjunction with the NIJ and its' Office of Law Enforcement Technology Commercialization (OLETC). These type vests were developed to withstand lower

ballistic threats by providing the maximum amount of stab and slash protection available in a lightweight, concealable everyday worn vest. (Fay, 2000)

Staying in touch with family members are of critical concern for incarcerated inmates, whether in the county jails or the state Department of Corrections. Sometimes, this continued contact will de-escalate tensions the inmate may be feeling or going through. In years past, visitation was of the contact type. This involved having family members and inmates in the same location, usually sitting next to each other. Although staff was present, it was never enough to watch all activities that would happen between them. This was a prime time for contraband to be passed on from the family member to the inmate to be brought into the compound, thereby compromising the safety and security of the facility. In one instance, although staff was present and had a duty to prevent such an event, the staff member was actually involved. The staff member was paid to look the other way and allow the contraband exchange to happen. (York, 2016)

Through advancements in technology, scenarios such as the one described above are now becoming a thing of the past. Correctional facilities are now utilizing video visitation equipment which allows for family members to visit the inmate inside the correctional facility without setting foot onto the compound. Visitors are directed to a building that is separate and apart from the main building where they sign in. Once signed in, they are then directed to a booth which corresponds to a video monitor in a specific housing unit. At the specified time, the visit starts where the inmate and visitor are able to see each other and also speak to each other with the use of a phone receiver. (York, 2016)

Video visitation eliminates the possibility of contraband entry due to its prevention of contact visits. As many agencies are facing staffing and manpower shortages, video visitation allows for minimal staffing which enables agencies to utilize its resources more fluidly and wisely. Aside from the prevention of contraband, video visitation also allows for a more secure environment for children that accompany a parent, prevents unauthorized sexual contact between inmate and visitor and visits are always monitored and can be terminated at any time to help deter inappropriate behavior. (York, 2016)

Video visitation is very useful when eliminating the entry of contraband into a correctional facility. Another technological advancement that is having a profound cost savings for many agencies is the use of video equipment for inmate arraignments. This type of technology allows for court rooms to be outfitted with video equipment that will allow for inmates to be seen by a judge without ever having to leave the facility. This is extremely useful when staff has to interact with dangerous inmates or inmates that cause problems, and saves time and money by not requiring additional staff that might be needed to transport these types of inmates to and from a court proceeding. (Page, 2011)

Keeping track of inmates is the main job function in corrections. Knowing the location of all inmates at any given time is one of the most important tasks given to a corrections officer. In the past, corrections officers have relied on visual sight of the inmate to determine their location and activities. This was usually documented, via paper and pen log entries, which sufficed for the time. However, as the jail and prison population increased, other methods were needed to accurately track the inmate population. Besides, over population of the facilities, the problem was further compounded by most agencies experiencing manpower shortages through a reduction in staff. Staff reduction was no excuse for not being able to accurately complete the job. To bridge this gap,

agencies began using radio frequency identification (RFID) technology. This process usually begins at the Book-In process. During this process, the inmate is outfitted with either an inmate armband or an identification card (ID) which has all of their pertinent information printed on the front (inmate book-in, picture, name, book-in number, sex, and race, date of birth, height and weight). Embedded in the inmate armband or ID card is a small microchip that can interface with the facility's jail management system (JMS). During the inmates' incarceration, every movement made is tracked using the RFID equipment. This system can track inmates' court appearances, dorm assignments and recreation time. In some instances, the RFID can track an inmate's health and vital signs, as well as if the inmate is in a restricted area. (Martinez, 2016)

Although most of the advances in technology have been for the safety and security of the facility and staff, the inmates also benefit from technology's introduction into a correctional setting. Used properly, the RFID can prevent co-defendants from being housed in the same housing pod/unit. It can also prevent a perpetrator from coming into contact with their alleged victim. Inmates can also utilize tablets for educational and, if approved, entertainment purposes. When inmates sit idle in a dorm or pod, this is when they devise schemes against other inmates or staff members. Boredom is their worst enemy, which can and often times causes inmates to act out. If given the chance to educate themselves, or view some sorts of entertainment (other then what is shown on pod televisions), facilities can decrease the amount of unwanted violence. (Martinez, 2016)

Not all technological advances for the safety and security of a facility is confined to the interior of the facility. One such example is the construction and configuration of the facility. Old jails / facilities were constructed with brick and bars. In order to observe inmates, correctional officers had to walk by each area or cell to observe inmate activities. This is indirect supervision whereby the officer is stationed outside of the inmate housing area with the capability of communicating with them through a series of intercoms and speakers located within the housing area. (Smith, 2013)

Direct supervision jails are considered new generation jails. They differ from indirect supervision in scope due to the close proximity of corrections officer and inmates. In a direct supervision jail, the corrections officer is stationed inside the housing pod/dorm with the inmates. This allows the officer to keep constant sight and sound of the inmates in their charge. Being in the pod allows the officer to gauge the atmosphere within the pod, thereby being able to detect any tensions or possible hostilities that may be brewing. Everything the inmate does is seen by the officer in the pod and can be properly annotated. The officer also controls all doors in the unit, which are usually required to remain open at all times while the inmates are in the dayroom area. Due to the constant observation by the corrections officer and their proximity to the inmates, these type pods experience less violence. Less violence equates to a safer facility for both staff and inmates. (Smith, 2013)

Methods

This paper sought to explore the advantages of integrating technology into a career field that has for years relied on pen and paper entries, line of sight observations and the use of antiquated equipment. The scope of this paper was to explore the advantages of an emerging technological arena as it relates to corrections.

Surveys were utilized to gather data from members of the Polk County Sheriff's Office Department of Detention, Orange County Corrections and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. The survey questions were asked in a way to illicit a response concerning how members viewed the effectiveness of technology in the daily performance of their duties. The questions were asked in a way to gauge the members' familiarity with technology at certain intervals in their law enforcement careers and how computer savvy they were prior to employment with their current agency.

One major variable that had to be taken into account for this survey was the age of the employee and their length of service. From baby boomers to millennials, each generation has had to contend with new technologies that have been developed and implemented. Educational level was also factored into the survey as newly hired employees were more apt to have a technology background or familiarity with computers than their more mature co-workers.

Results

The survey was sent to eight five (85) jail administrators throughout the state of Florida. I received fifteen (15) responses, for a response rate of 18%. Of those fifteen (15) responses, 1 chose not to answer all of the questions asked.

The first question asked respondents about the Average Daily Population (ADP) of inmates housed in their jails.

- Two (2) respondents (13%) stated their ADP was between 1000 – 1499 inmates.
- Two (2) respondents (13%) stated their ADP was between 2000 – 2999 inmates.
- One (1) respondent (7%) stated they had an ADP of over 3000 inmates, while the vast majority of facilities, 10 for 67%, stated they had under 100 inmates for their   ADP.

Average Daily Population
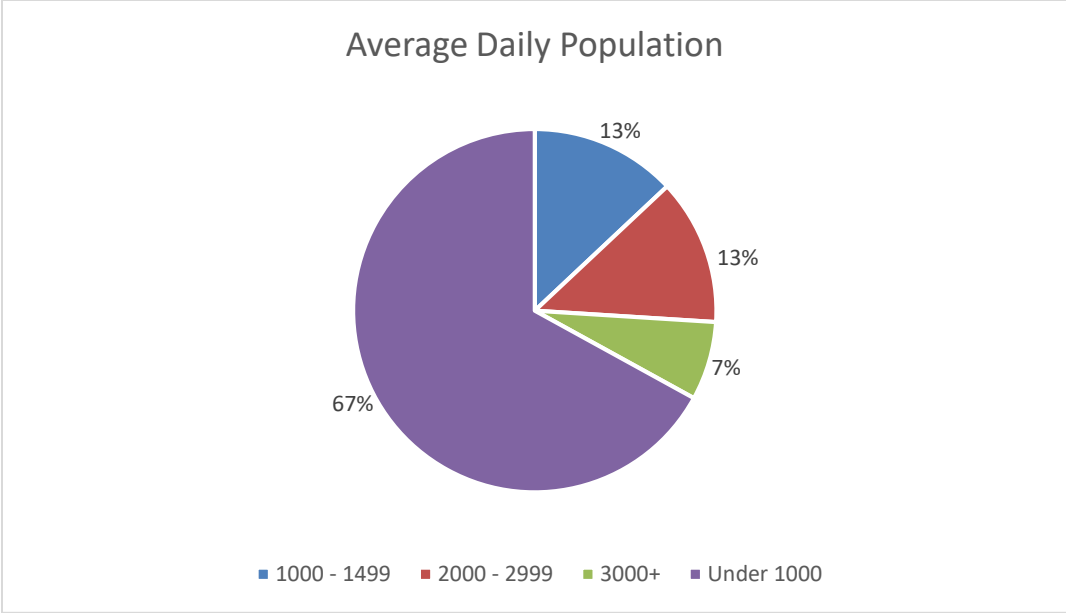
The second question asked participants the number of Detention facilities currently operated.

- Eleven (11) for 73% stated they operate one (1) Detention facility.
- Two (2) for 13% stated they operate two (2) Detention facilities.
- Three (3) for 7% stated they operated three (3) Detention facilities.
- One (1) for 7% stated they operated more than three (3) Detention facilities.


# of Detention Facilities
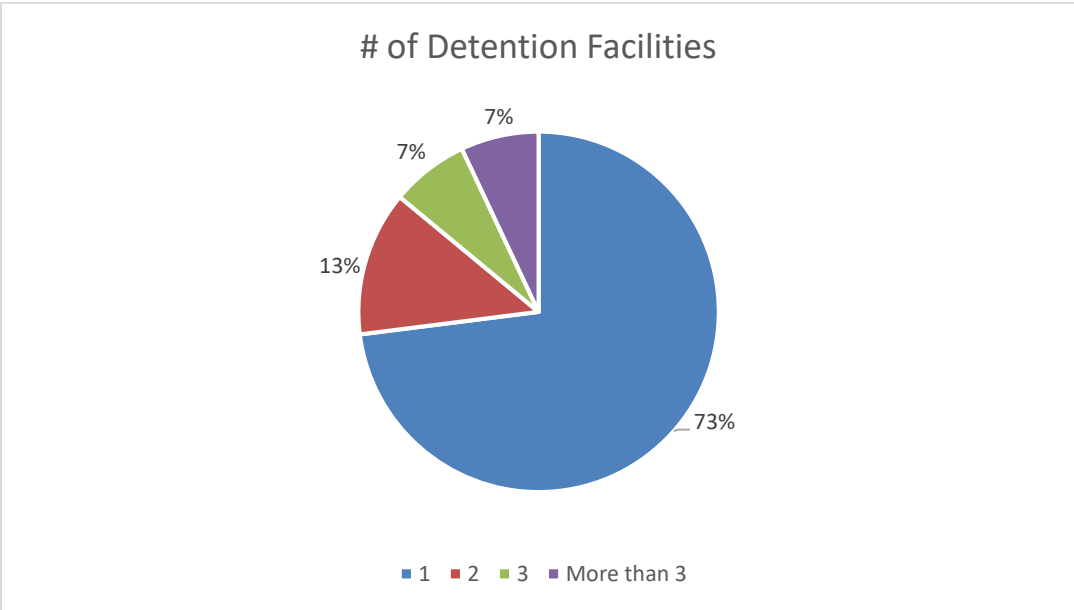
Question three asked participants if their agency had implemented new technology within the past 5 years. Overwhelmingly, all fifteen (15) for 100% stated their agency has implemented new technology within their facilities within the past 5 years.

Question 4 was a continuation of question 3, regarding new technology implemented in their facilities within the past 5 years.
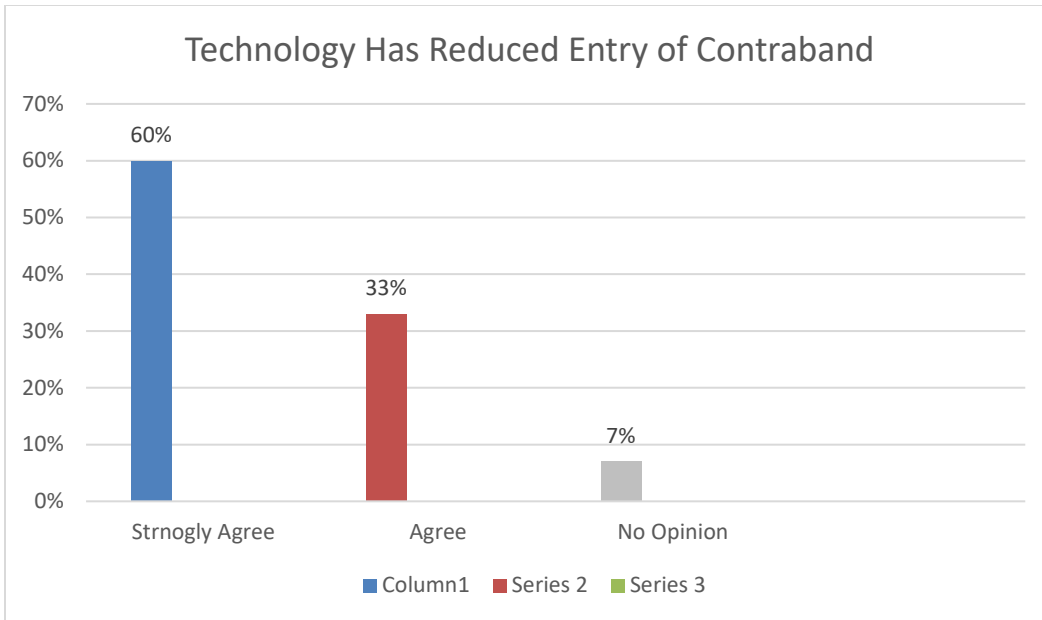
- Three (3) for 20% stated they implemented Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology.
- Nine (9) for 60% stated they implemented Video Visitation.
- Seven (7) for 47% stated they installed a new Jail Management System (JMS). Eight (8) for 53% stated they implemented other technologies.

Of the eight agencies that implemented other forms of technology, the technology included the use of body scanners, inmate tablets, the ability for inmates to communicate with family and friends through e-messaging and an inmate kiosk system for messaging and receiving mail. Participants were given the option of choosing more than one (1) named technological equipment in use at their facility.
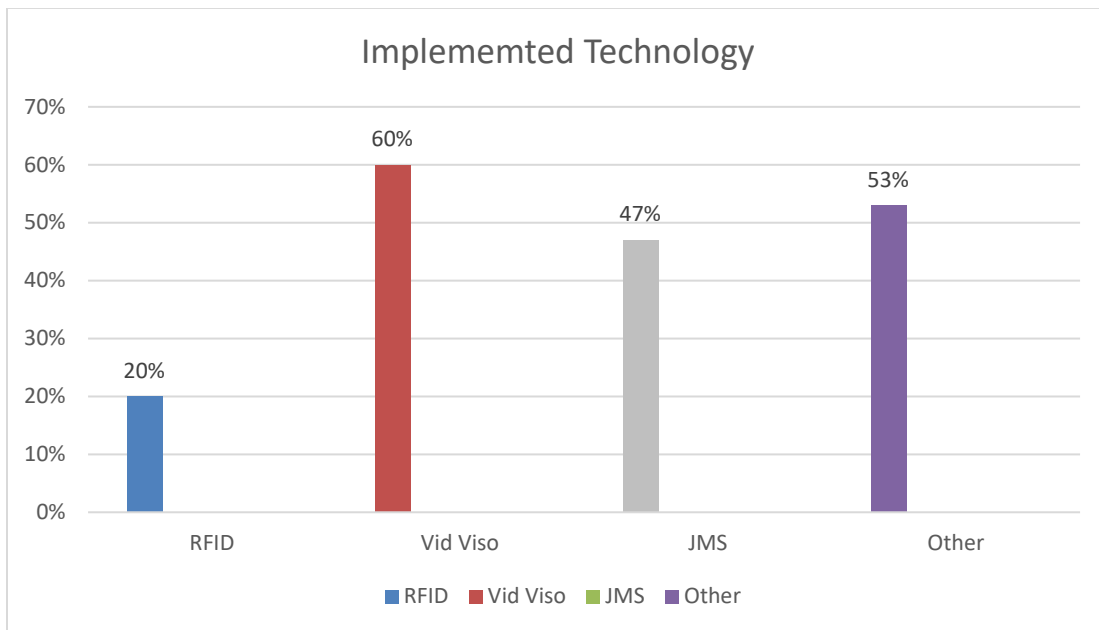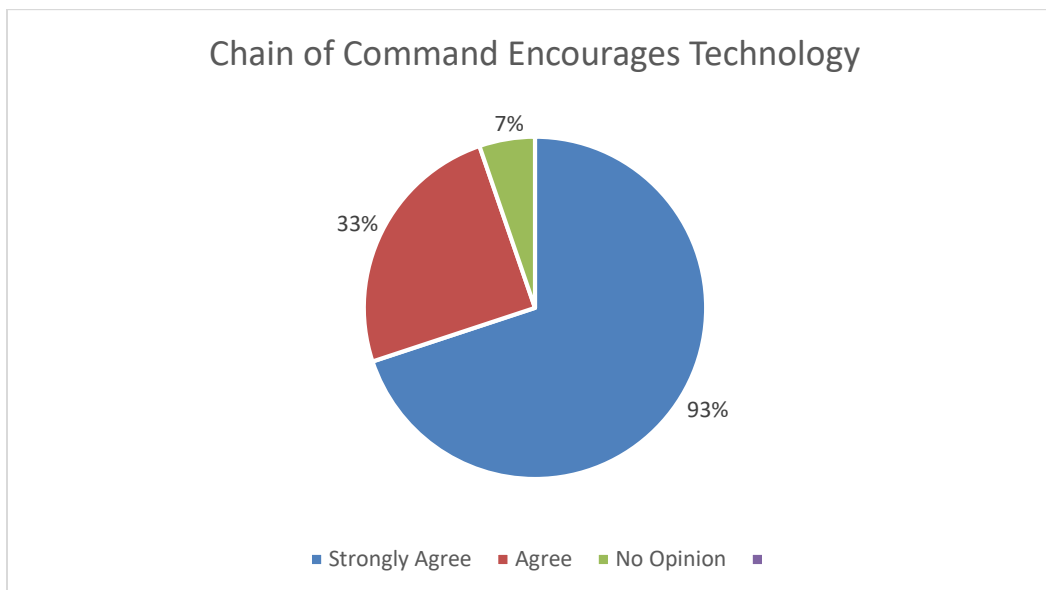

The fifth question asked participants if the implementation of new technology has reduced the flow of contraband into their facilities.

- Nine (9) for 60% strongly agreed that contraband was reduced.
- Five (5) for 33% agreed with the statement.
- One (1) for 7% had no opinion on the statement.

Technology Has Reduced Entry of Contraband

A bar chart titled "Technology Has Reduced Entry of Contraband" showing:
- Strnogly Agree: 60%
- Agree: 33%
- No Opinion: 7%

Legend: Column1, Series 2, Series 3

Question 6 asked participants if their Chain of Command encouraged the procurement of new technology at their respective agencies.

- Fourteen (14) for 60% responded they strongly agreed.
- Five (5) for 33% stated they agreed with the question.
- One (1) for 7% had no opinion.

Chain of Command Encourages Technology

A pie chart titled "Chain of Command Encourages Technology" showing:
- 93% (Strongly Agree)
- 33% (Agree)
- 7% (No Opinion)

Legend: Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion

Question 7 asked the question concerning the application of the technology and the impact it has had on the facility.

- Fifteen (15) for 100 stated that the use of technology has made their facility a safer and more secure environment.
- Thirteen (13) for 86% stated technology has brought additional accountability to the workforce.
- Fourteen (14) for 93% noticed a reduction in the entry of contraband into their facility as a result of new technology.
- Thirteen (13) for 86% noticed a lessened amount of paper used with their facility.

Participants were given the option to select multiple responses on how technology has impacted the safety and security of their facilities.
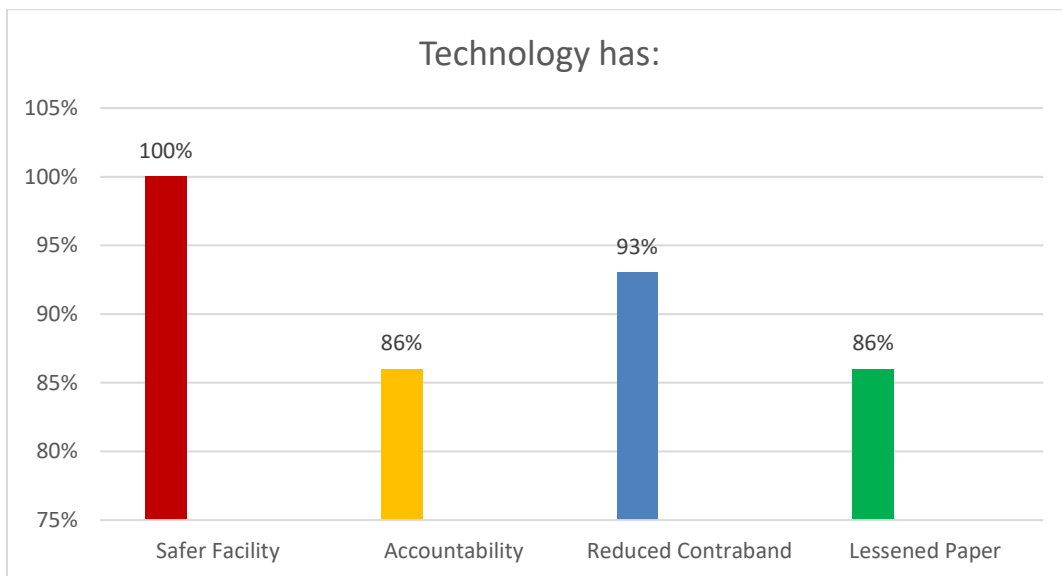
Question 8 asked participants if they employ the use of body scanners within their Detention facility.

- Twelve (12) for 80% responded that they have body scanners in their facility.
- Three (3) for 20% stated they do not use body scanners within their facility.

Question 9 expanded on question 8, asking if body scanners are used in multiple Detention facilities.

- Six (6) for 40% stated that they use body scanners in multiple facilities.
- Eight (8) for 53% stated they do not use body scanners in multiple facilities.
- One (1) for 7% did not respond to this question.

Question 10 continued the subject of the use of body scanners in Detention facilities, by asking participants if the use of body scanners has reduced the amount of contraband entering their facility.

- Eight (8) for 53% stated they strongly agreed that the use of body scanners has reduced the entry of contraband into their facility.
- Four (4) for 27% agreed with the statement.
- Two (2) for 13% had no opinion regarding this statement.
- One (1) for 7% did not respond.

Body Scanners Has Reduced The Entry Of Contraband

Category	Percentage
Strongly Agree	53%
Agree	27%
No Opinion	13%
No Response	7%
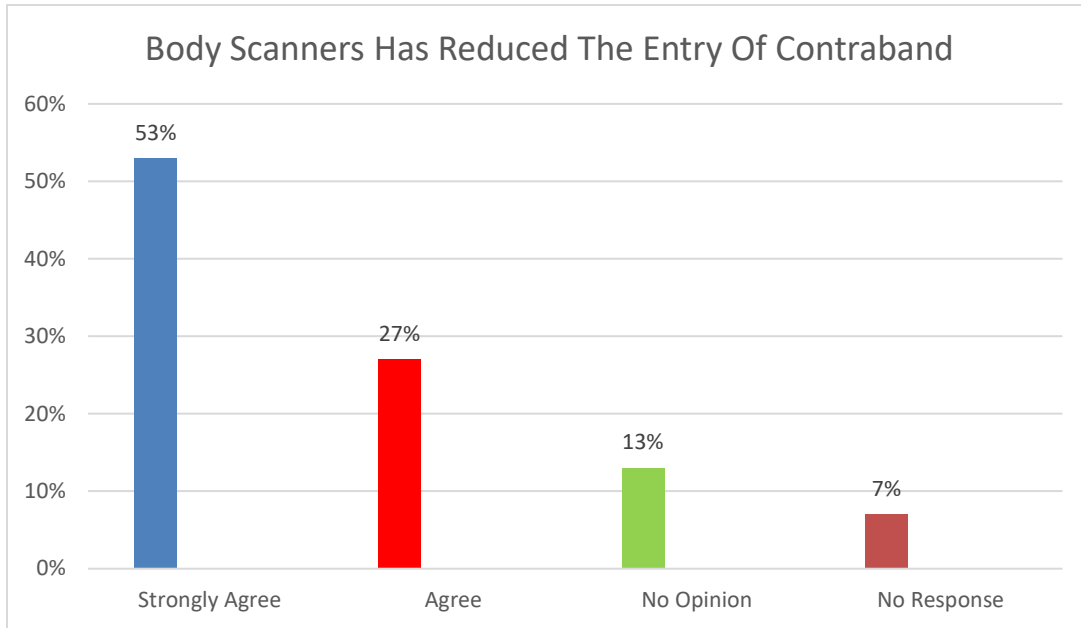
Question 11 asked participants about the use of a Rapid Identification System in certain detention scenarios.

- Ten (10) for 67% stated Rapid Identification ensures the correct person is arrested.
- Nine (9) for 60% stated Rapid Identification ensures the correct inmate is released from the facility.
- Seven (7) for 47% stated that a Rapid Identification System eliminates the human error aspect of the job.
- Three (3) for 20% stated they do not use a rapid Identification System.
- One (1) for 7% did not respond to this question.

The Use of Rapid ID Has:
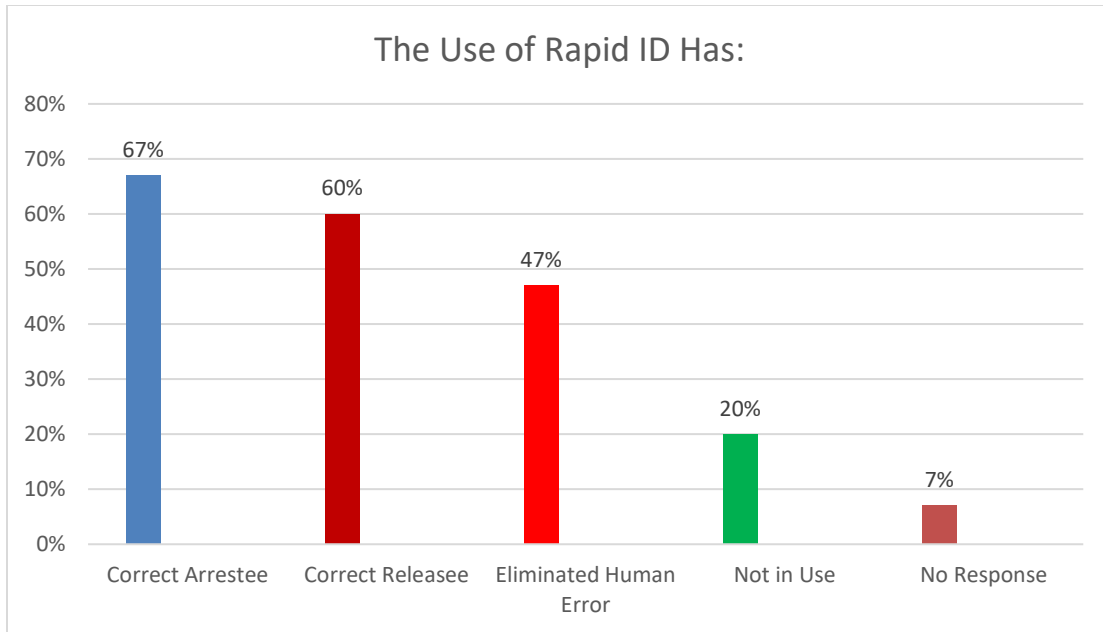
Question 12 asked participants if there were other emerging technologies in use within their facilities.

- Four (4) for 27% stated they were using additional technologies.
- Eleven (11) for 73% stated they were not using any additional technologies within their facilities.

Of the four (4) that were using additional technologies, the technology consisted of the use of Guardian RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), "Zoom" and "Teams" application to assist with the facilitation of court functions, and Guard1 for inmate and zone checks.

Discussion

After reviewing the results of the survey, a picture can be painted that law enforcement agencies are in agreement with the acquisition of technology in an effort to enhance the effectiveness of their officers and staff, and to ensure a safer and efficient detention facility.

The survey shows that the different agencies Chain of Command is very much interested in the acquiring new technology for their staff with 93% of the participants stating they strongly agree. This is also represented in the fact that 100% of the respondents state their agency has implemented new technology within the past 5 years.

As the job of a Detention Deputy or Corrections Officer is to observe those in their charge, a majority of the queried agencies utilize the same type(s) of technology. 80% of participants stated they utilize body scanners within their facility. Another 60% stated that they utilize Video Visitation for their inmates. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this one

technology will prove to be an invaluable tool. By preventing contact visits, each facility dramatically reduces the possibility that their inmate population will be infected with this virus, thus causing an internal pandemic among detention staff and the inmate population. 53% of participants utilize other technology ranging from inmate tablets and inmate kiosks to inmate electronic mail delivery and inmate e-messaging.

Another aspect of technology was that 100% of participants viewed technology made their facility more safe and secure. 93% stated technology reduced the introduction and the flow of contraband coming into their facility. As agencies attempt to reduce their foot print, technology accounted for an 86% reduction in the use of paper within a facility and also 86% thought technology brought more personal accountability to staff members.

Recommendations

The survey clearly shows that agencies can only become better, more efficient and their facilities are more secure when they employ modern and emerging technology. We all know that many agencies lack technology or resist in the implementation of technology due to the price tag associated with the acquiring of said technology. But, in the long run, the initial investment made in acquiring technology will pay greater dividends on the back end. The survey displays that members agree that technology is a necessary aspect of the law enforcement / detention career field.

Although retention and hiring were not part of this survey, with the ever-changing landscape of law enforcement, our detention deputies and law enforcement officers are getting younger and younger. We are now hiring applicants that are Generation Z (Gen Z for short). This generation was born between 1996 and 2015. They have grown up knowing nothing else but how to use technology and how to take advantage of its ability to make life easier and more productive. If we want to retain these applicants, each agency must make the sacrifice to add new technology to its inventory when possible. The days of pen and paper logs, although will we never get completely away from them, are almost over. It is now all about handhelds, RFID, JMS and other technology that make it easier and safer for a detention deputy to accomplish their responsibilities.

If the law enforcement career wants to compete with the private sector for the best and brightest young minds, we must leverage technology to our advantage. We must stay one (1) step ahead and actively search for technology that will and can make a difference in how we do business. Our next big battle lies with transparency with the public. Although many law enforcement agencies utilize body worn cameras for their deputy sheriff's or patrol officers, we need to look at that for detention staff as well. Detention staff encounters incidents that require split second responses, which can result in a deadly encounter. We must acquire technology that will show every second of the interaction, but this technology must not break the budget. This is our next big investment.

To that end, I would recommend:

- Continue to invest in new and emerging technologies.
- Equip detention and corrections staff with body worn cameras.
- Create partnerships with new tech companies to act as a "test" agency for their technological innovations.

- Involve our line level deputies / corrections officers to see what technology they feel can increase efficiency and safety in their areas or responsibilities.
- Outfit all detention / correctional housing units with video recording equipment to act as a secondary means of transparency.
- Introduce body worn technology to continually monitor detention / correctional officer vitals to warn of increased stress on the body, which may result in manpower shortages.

Captain William C. Galloway has been in Law Enforcement for twenty-seven (27) years with the Polk County Sheriff's Office. He began his career in 1994, and currently serves as the Commander of the South County Jail facility, one (1) of two (2) detention facilities within the Polk County Sheriff's Office. He has worked in all facets of the Department of Detention, from Book-In, to Transportation, and finally in Housing. Captain Galloway was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2000, to the rank of Lieutenant in 2005, and finally to the rank of Captain in 2017. Captain Galloway holds a Bachelor's of Science degree in Political Science from Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) and a Master's of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Troy University.

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Appendix A

TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

1. What is the Average Daily Population (ADP) for inmates housed by your agency in all housing facilities?
   a. 1,000 – 1499
   b. 1500 – 1999
   c. 2000 – 2999
   d. Other _____

2. How many Detention facilities does your agency operate?
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. Other_____

3. Has your agency implemented any new technology within the past 5 years?
   a. Yes
   b. No

4. If answered "Yes" to question #3, pick all that apply.
   a. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)
   b. Video Visitation
   c. Jail Management System
   d. Other_____
   e. No new technology

5. The implementation of new technology has reduced the flow of contraband entering my facility.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. No opinion
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

6. My Chain of Command encourages the procurement and use of technology at my agency.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Agree
   c. No opinion
   d. Disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

7. The use of technology has (circle all that apply):
   a. Made my facility a more safe and secure environment
   b. Brought additional accountability to the workforce
   c. Reduced the introduction of contraband into the facility
   d. Lessened the amount of paper used within my facility
   e. Other:_____

8. Does your agency employ the use of body scanners?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. If answered "Yes", are they being used in multiple locations?
   a. Yes
   b. No body scanner used

10. The use of the body scanner has reduced the amount of contraband entering your facility.
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. No opinion
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree

11. The use of the Rapid Identification system has (circle all that apply)
    a. Ensured the correct person is arrested.
    b. Ensured the correct inmate is being released from custody
    c. Eliminated the human error aspect of the job
    d. Not worked as efficiently as expected
    e. RID is not used at my agency
    f. Other_____

12. If applicable, list any other emerging technologies being used within your facility(s):
    _____