



EMPAC Roundtable: Innovation in Policing

Research Insight report

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“Innovation is a by-product of a healthy culture. You have to fix the environment. To explain by way of a metaphor. You want to bring the otters back. First you have to clear the human pollution. When the water is flowing and fresh again, the otters will appear.”

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Background

As part of the *East Midlands Police and Crime Research and Development Plan*, the important topic of encouraging and increasing innovation in policing was highlighted as a key workstream. Deputy Chief Constable Gary Knighton, of Derbyshire Constabulary, offered to host a roundtable on this topic to seek views and insights. Thanks is due to the Joint Police and Fire Training Centre, Derbyshire, for being such welcoming hosts.

The topic of innovation is of pressing concern to society and industry alike. As policing takes its personnel from, and is providing its services to, society, it has to be in tune with societal change or be left behind. The Police Foundation (2018) identified three core reasons why innovation was vital to policing:

1. Innovation is the foundation of police operations

We most often conceptualize innovation with a sense of novelty; that it's a supplement to our day-to-day practices and processes. This is a mistake. Every tool, system and procedure you use today was, at some point, a critical innovation that changed the nature of your work. Innovation is the bedrock of policing as we know it today and is the only viable solution to a crime-free future. Simply having more of what we have already is not enough.

2. It's our best chance to beat austerity

Unprecedented budget cuts have caused waves of change throughout the UK. They have caused increased pressure at an organisational level that will only be passed on to individual officers as they race to cover the gaps. A 2018 House of Commons Library Briefing paper reports that policing numbers are at their lowest since 1985. Doing more with less has become the new norm for officers across the country.

Innovation systems offer an avenue to think our way around resource deficits, opening up new opportunities for collaboration, automation and streamlining. Innovation-focused technology and systems allow for not only top-down, leadership-led approaches but also facilitate grass-roots innovation by those closest to the challenges that austerity creates. This helps us to build viable, nationwide solutions using the critical insight of the police workforce that can save hundreds of thousands.

3. It solves problems before they happen

Robert Peel's founding principle of prevention is embedded within a vision not simply for better service and faster response, but for broad cultural change. Crime prevention is a community responsibility for which the police are a catalyst, helping to manage transparency, educate the public, deter offences and make people feel safe and valued. To make these changes, police forces need to share the ground-level interpersonal knowledge police officers establish through constant interaction with their communities. At their core, innovation systems are about officers using their acumen to help colleagues do their jobs better, helping to keep both them and the public safer.

The EMPAC roundtable was informed by two key previous events. Firstly, a Staff Innovation Network Forum, supported by University of Nottingham Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Simon Mosey, and secondly by a workshop led by Terry O'Connell (formerly New South Wales Police) and A/Professor Kerry Clamp (University of Nottingham), which explored restorative frameworks as a way to transform internal and external policing culture. At both events, the notion of innovation was identified as a positive by-product of a learning organisational culture.

To ensure that thinking about innovation was not restricted by insular policing only perspectives, external industry representatives were also invited, to widen the conversation about what innovation is and how it can be facilitated.

The intention was to offer insights and innovation from the roundtable to inform both regional and national thinking on policy and practice.

Method

The roundtable informal, action-orientated approach has been used successfully in other settings (such as national security consortiums with academia in Australia) and builds upon the existing collaborative partnership of EMPAC across the region. Within the EMPAC region, the approach was first promoted by Professor Rob McCusker. The basic origins are as a form of democratised conversation – with no 'top table' hierarchy – but rather an open and eclectic problematisation to critically challenge and inform new ways of thinking about key topics. A number of academics from HEIs were involved, across several academic disciplines (i.e. Policing, Criminology, Behavioural Psychology, Engineering, Risk Management, Business) a mix of policing professionals from Change Management, Control Room, Performance and Corporate Services, representatives of the local Criminal Justice Board and the Home Office.

Specifically, an adapted facilitated focus group¹ method was utilised using a semi-structured conversation topic focus with strategic and tactical questions to provoke discussion (see page 8). The questions were framed by DCC Gary Knighton, to stimulate the need for practitioners and academics to tackle the challenges and opportunities by working together.

¹ Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M., & Robson, K. (2001) - for focus group methodology

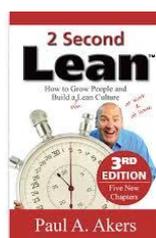
Objective

The RoundTable approach is a tangible way of working in partnership between policing professionals, industry and academic researchers to discover new ways and challenge conventional thinking. The opportunity for the roundtable, given the mix of delegates, was to seek diverse views, establish what is already known and encourage fresh thinking from across the involved partners, with a research 'known unknown' outlook at the centre. The interconnection of differing sorts of data, whether called intelligence, information or evidence are all forms of knowledge which a proactive research outlook can assist to expand.



The objective of the event was to use a joint approach between policing professionals and academic researchers to think together in order to inform policing policy and practice. To ensure the conversation was not insular towards policing, three short external key note addresses were integrated, to stimulate wider perspectives from industrial and scientific applications. The contextual opening statements used three main aspects: LEAN, Toyota business philosophy and Assael (1985) used by the Ministry of Defence.

Akers (2011) has developed LEAN principles for industry, and these were shared for application in policing.



The Toyota Way (Liker, 2003) of continuous improvement, can be summarised as: -

Challenge - long-term vision, meeting challenges with courage and creativity;

Kaizen - continual improvement to business operations for innovation and evolution;

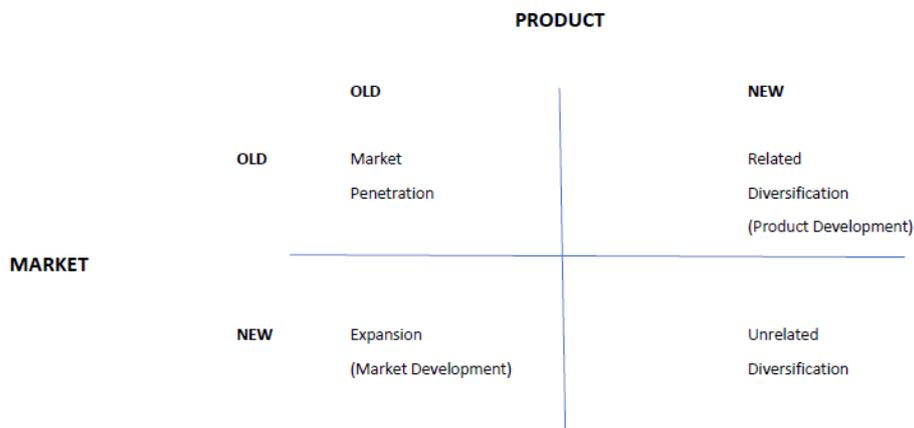
Genchi Genbutsu - getting to the source to find the facts to make correct decisions.

Toyota philosophy is underpinned by respect and teamwork, and works towards the long-term rather than the short-term. Processes are key, and the right process is argued will produce the

right result. Staff are encouraged to ‘go see for yourself’ to thoroughly understand the situation (Genchi Genbutsu, 現地現物); make decisions slowly by consensus, thoroughly considering all options (Nemawashi, 根回し) but implement decisions rapidly; and support a learning organization through relentless reflection (Hansei, 反省) and continuous improvement (Kaizen, 改善).

The examples shared by the Ministry of Defence Security and Defence Accelerator illustrated the model developed by Ansoff (1957) which shows innovation is sometimes not new, but in a new place. This allows many opportunities for existing practices from one place to offer insight in other applications, like asking hoteliers how they would go about operating an aircraft carrier!

THE ANSOFF MATRIX, H. Igor Ansoff *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 35, No. 5, October 1957



The overall objective of the Roundtable was subdivided into why, (so) what and how:

a. Asking ‘why?’-

Why do we want to innovate and be more innovative?

What do we mean by innovation?

b. Asking ‘so what?’

Just what difference can innovation make to policing?

What marks innovation from ‘change for change’s sake’?

c. Asking ‘How’?

How does policing culture need to change to drive innovation?

How could leaders enable innovation?

How do we convince people that innovation adds value?

The structure of the event's process was in six stages²:

1. Contextual keynote addresses

- a. Ashley Bailey, business user of LEAN principles
- b. Andrew Parsons, Toyota UK
- c. Dr Dudley Hewlett, Defence and Security Accelerator, Ministry of Defence

2. Why do we think we need innovation? (facilitation)

- a. Why do we think we need innovation?
- b. What do we mean by 'innovation'?

3. So what? (facilitation)

- a. Just what difference do ideas make to policing?
- b. What marks good innovation apart from change for change's sake?

4. How? (facilitation)

- a. How does policing culture need to change to drive innovation?
- b. How should leaders facilitate innovation?
- c. How do we mean convince people that innovation is a social good?

5. Coding

- a. The core themes, insights and next steps to emerge from the Roundtable

6. Respondent validation

- a. Delegate interaction post-event for data and thematic interpretation validation

² At the roundtable, the contextual opening statements were delivered by Ashley Bailey, Managing Director, Klime-ezze; Andrew Parsons, Technical Skills Development, Toyota; Dudley Hewlett, Innovation Partner, Wales and North Midlands, Defence and Security Accelerator

Key discussion themes

What do we mean by innovation?

There was consensus that the word ‘innovation’ can put some people off, based on presumptions that any insights or changes need to be huge. There was a view that innovation and change was a natural and healthy process of evolution that should not be stifled, nor artificially perceived as something beyond people.

I'm a bit frightened by that word innovation. It reminds me of a white coated scientist in the cellar with something bubbling.	We shouldn't be referential towards innovation – otherwise it ends up something that someone else does. And that means it often doesn't happen at all.	We do need to be clear though what innovation does mean – whilst not being frightened of what it's not!	Within innovation we can say this is about constant quality. You need consistency for that but you also need involvement. It's about people making involvements within their sphere of influence.
Look at Apple – they were innovating much faster than IBM when IBM were spending way more on R & D. It's about to what extent people in the firm 'get it', not about what budget it has.	Innovation means to me a culture of improvement.	Innovation means being able to be brave and expose your problems. We all know the Peter Perfects of this world with no problems are just covering things up.	It's about a mindset of innovation rather than a fixed process or tool. Having a spanner doesn't make you an engineer.
Innovation is not always to do with science. It can simply be somebody spotting a better way of doing things.	Innovation to me means doing things better by doing things differently.	It's about being positive when people ask 'why?' not telling them to shut up. The eyes that are close to things, or are fresh, are a massive asset.	The cultural stuff is about being amenable to being asked questions. For policing that can be staff or the public. There can be a lot of learning in a question.
That's a key point – it's really important that questions are recognised as being valuable.	From the public point of view, I think there would say the police aren't good at sharing their weakness and faults. There's a perception they are insular.	Innovation is about honesty and a passion to do more and better. Who would want to stifle that?	Middle managers can find it really uncomfortable because they want processes, structure and control.
43 different ways of doing things. Is that the best way? How about more joined up shared learning?	The culture for me comes down to everyone 'owning their own job'.	Innovation is all about the power of the team.	The culture needs to be focussed on outcomes. Not outputs or who to do outputs. Tying people down is a race to the bottom.
Policing culture is really embedded. It's hierarchical. It's all	Rank has its benefits but sometimes it really is in the way. The irony	You can get into the mindset of I like the status quo and I just	Innovation doesn't have to be about 'Eureka!'

<p>about rank and permission.</p>	<p>is the most important thing is the public contact. And in the main it's a fairly junior constable doing that.</p>	<p>want to be told. This isn't a great formula for survival and success.</p>	
<p>People hear the word innovation and can think efficiency and then interpret that as cuts.</p>	<p>We need to be clear not to conflate different things. One is people owning their own job. The other is the wider corporate matters – you want great constables but there is a different role for the chief constable.</p>	<p>You can't command and control innovation – you create the environment for it to occur. But it is important to remember this is about the weaponisation of innovation – we are talking here about a strong focus on our real-world problems, not purely flights of fancy.</p>	<p>There's another possible conflation of the changes that are needed 'out there' and the changes that can make people's lives easier 'in here'.</p>

A culture of 'us'

An emerging pattern was that a positive workplace culture that was focussed on continual improvement in service was the fundamental factor that brought innovation along with it as a form of by-product.

For me as a manager what this is about asking my most junior employee 'what bugs you?' and together fixing it.	Our company changes every day. It's naturally organic. As a leader I do not micro-manage any of that. I trust 'us' to do the right thing.	Our motto is what went wrong yesterday, what are we doing today to fix it and what are doing better tomorrow.	The way it should be is if anyone sees an improvement needed, then do it.
When you join you come with ideas, why are those knocked out of people to 'fit in'?	If you look at the best companies and the second best the big differentiation is culture. All great companies develop from within, not boardroom down.	The freedom to be open and honest comes from the culture.	Some think culture is somehow a 'fluffy' thing – this is about a strong organization, ruthlessly exposing problems and using the power of the team to innovate to reach the target.
For me the 'us' is not just internal but also taking the best ideas from anyone, anywhere that can be used.	It's about that culture of the team – culture swallows strategy for breakfast. It's about the soul of the company not bits of fancy paper.	If the culture is not right people won't rock the boat. Then it sinks anyway.	How do we reward success for innovation for all of us? You know some of this is thinking outside of the hierarchical promotion structure.
In the anti-innovation culture the supervisor blocks it. We've seen cases of take the supervisors out and the innovation floodgates open.	We're talking here not about an employment model but an ownership model.	Companies who don't innovate just go bust. Public services may still get the money but they can still go bust in terms of public confidence.	I've seen cases of process just strangling policing – senior officers who can authorise a shot but can't authorise uniform purchase.
The culture must always be about the customer. There are internal and external customers.	It all boils down to positive regard – respect for each other, listening to each other.	The process world just loves passing things around, like the buck. All very nice but what a waste of time and effort.	We have to acknowledge some of this is about being brave because the police are so aware of blame for failure.
It's about having a fair process, one that puts humans and humanity at the centre of things	Need to get to a position where you care about your work environment and your environment respects you.	Respect is not, and doesn't need to be about, hierarchy.	We need to take the ego and status out of things – the best ideas can come from anyone, anywhere.
Us applies to us as a service. There's a problem in how forces operate like a cracked mirror – there's little corporate learning across the whole service, let's beyond 43 ways of doing things.	Allowing people to try things out is important. Letting a whole team review and try things, that's learning.	This is about recognising there are ten thousand heads, not just the one in the boardroom.	Creating an atmosphere that allows honesty about near misses and solutions for change is something latent in every team. Some cover things up, some are open. Why?

Leadership and mission

An emerging theme was that for the pride and passion of an employee to be optimal there needed to be a really clear mission they could relate to. Where management processes lacked fundamental clarity but rather created a fog for personnel they reduced themselves to being a cog in a process, through alienation, cynicism, confusion, being powerless or simply seeking an easy life. The role of leadership was to help cut through various complexities and help give authentic meaning.

For policing it must be stripped back to what's your purpose? Your mission is your purpose, your strategy is how to get there. Give people ownership to help you.	Need to be more joined up over 'what does good look as an end result' thinking.	Micromanagement is really a problem. It's about an obsession with yesterday's rules and a lack of trust.	You've got some folk sat there waiting for things to 'go back to normal'. In the 1980s this was folk hoping that computers were a fad. There's no going back.
There's that change fatigue of 'here we go again' and sometimes this is a form of cynicism – new brooms proving themselves.	Here's a question for you. If your focus is problem solving, how do you know when something is going wrong in policing?	I've seen this in the NHS. X is not allowed to do this because of 'them'. When you stand back you realise we are all somebody's else's 'them', in their way.	The way I look at this in my company is my purpose, my mission is to grow my people. In doing that, everything else sorts itself out.
You can get a blockage on culture. You can have executives all for it and new staff who find it natural but there's an old guard in the middle.	The funny thing is when you look at demand the vast majority of demand is internal.	Best to focus on soft metrics – on other words how people feel about things doing the job.	Policing is riddled with process. Who's working for who? Ironically often people don't even know where the policies and processes have even come from, they're just there, all pervading.
Managers need to be authentic – you can't smack a child and say 'don't be a bully'.	Some managers seem frightened or jealous of their staff, like they'll come up with a better idea than they might.	In policing humanity is really core – a victim will remember being cared for not the form you fill in.	Policing does not test itself. It's run by litigation. When proven wrong it defensively reacts. It's not into proactive change.
There's an authenticity test for innovation. If you're doing this for the wrong reason, like to look good for promotion you end up with 'doomed to success'. If you're on the level, things not working out as planned is genuine learning and isn't hushed up.	The real power of a leader is not saying no it's finding a way to say yes.	There's a huge power base in the police. Police staff for example often feel left out of things. The promotion process is like a game, and you see change for change's sake quite often.	We like to think we're new power but we've come from old power and perhaps we've not moved so far?
Some middle managers have worked their way up and they are not	Think about things differently. For example, that focus	Out of decades working in a control room and sending officers to incidents I never	It needs to be about 'effect what you can effect'. No-one expects

going to give away power. That comes down to promoting managers when you should promote leaders.	on the mission and value of the organisation. Do staff even know the outcome of the jobs they've been involved in?	see the outcome. I've never sat in court. I never see justice in the round.	one employee to run the whole thing, but they should be encouraged to be as good as they can be in their role.
The test of a leaders in all this is not about them looking good but the team as a whole achieving the goal. A leader should be judged by their team.	There's a lot muddled up that is written off as moaning – there are maybe some important insights in there that are not being listened to.	There's a middle layer of blockers in the police. It's like those fresh in and the very senior people are on the same page but those in the middle are in an entirely different book.	We need to break away from the perception of change is 'done to' people.
How do you change a culture? No-one is in a position of senior leadership for long enough. Lucky to get people in post for three or four years.	Senior leaders coming in and wanting change in 6 months is ridiculous. It takes a long-term approach and no-one wants to do it because it's not their legacy, on their watch.	Forces often get buried in process, like policies. The policies are wordy but doesn't mean they are well written or serve a purpose. In all honestly most see policies as an irrelevance.	In our force we have 469 KPIs. How can they be all be key?

Conclusion and next steps

1. The environment is key, and that creating a culture of respect will produce innovation as a natural by product.
2. It is important not to conflate organisational wide developments needed with incremental, step by step changes that improve the workforce experience and system flow and productivity. These are both valid and valuable types of innovation, which can enable organisations to ruthlessly expose problems and solve them, but it is important not to confuse them.
3. An open, enabled culture does not mean a 'free for all', it means people own their own job within their own sphere of influence and are supported to see an opportunity and to realise it.
4. For policing an all personnel approach was needed more – some police staff felt on the periphery and overly affected by promotion orientated innovations by officers. The point was for authenticity in innovation, involving all.
5. Consideration is needed to focus on policing's core role and victims and justice. Where personnel operate only within a partial aspect of that it can be difficult to get behind the overall mission. Opportunities to enable personnel to see their role in the wider context should be explored.
6. There was a recognition that silo innovation can simply make one department more efficient at the expense of another, this undermined collegiate respect and more holistic consideration was needed for innovation that was of genuine benefit.
7. Whilst the market dynamics around public and private sectors were different there was a commonality over the importance of people and humanity in any organisation that allowed real team work to flourish. This was important to policing given the perception of a stifling impact of a rank hierarchy and arguably over-reliance on process.
8. The Home Office and Ministry of Defence were keen to continue to stay engaged and work more around policing innovation, particularly in science and technology product development and knowledge exchange across agencies and forces.
9. Academia were interested in bringing policing into problematisation days for research students to discuss how real-world problems could be innovated against, alongside other industries and sectors.
10. Explore the possibility of harnessing organisational energy that is fuelled by professional ownership and pride, informed by 'mission', whilst minimising inhibition by supervisory management, to deliver innovation naturally.

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