

“Listening to Albert”

“The world we created today has problems which cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.”

Those words, spoken many years ago by a rather bright guy named Albert Einstein, are as true today – whether we are referring to business or policing – as they were in Einstein’s day. Consider world affairs or technology, health care or banking, photography or insurance, or any other global reality, industry or profession you can think of. Are any of them the same way they were 20 years ago? Is our wonderful city the same? Are its streets? How about the extent of our open space? Do our community’s young people face the same challenges we did as they grow up?

Policing in Redlands has changed dramatically since I first jumped into a patrol car in 1978. The fundamental nuts and bolts of how to catch your run-of-the-mill, not-so-bright bad guy remain essentially the same: after they commit a crime someone calls us and we respond as fast as we can. If we’re lucky the offender is still at the scene or we have a description of him that facilitates his apprehension. But, other than that, the whole world of policing has changed and we must – if we are to fulfill our purpose of helping Redlands stay safe – think differently about how we do our work.

Simply trying to arrest our way out of increasing crime rates – by adding more and more police officers – as we have done in the past, for instance, is a prescription for increasing the pressure on the City’s already anemic *General Fund*. Incarcerating more and more prisoners as a result of determinate sentencing laws and *Three Strikes* legislation has had an impact on crime but at a huge cost to other parts of the State’s budget. Moreover, it has created the current prison crisis that is getting lots of ink and consuming an inordinate amount of the governor’s time.

So, to fulfill Einstein’s mandate of thinking differently about persistent problems, the Redlands Police Department has been pushing the envelope on innovative approaches to public safety. These efforts have come in the form of new technology, programs and simply thinking differently by managing our corporate knowledge.

In the realm of innovative technology we have moved forward with things like police officers using *Segway Human Transporters* (those funny two-wheeled contraptions that seems to defy gravity) that are now common in airports, train stations malls (e.g. Victoria Gardens) and community events across the country. We continue to explore the use of video surveillance cameras and strive to maintain the appropriate balance between enhanced public safety and too much “Big Brother” (stay tuned for more information on how you can participate in our *Citizens Privacy Council* that will help us strike this balance).

The geographic systems software developed by Redlands’ own *Environmental Systems Research Institute* (ESRI) has literally changed the way we view the world. ESRI’s world-changing software has given us a tool to interact with the data that is generated by crime, RPD activities and the precursors to crime and disorder. I can’t

imagine how we would deploy the limited number of officers we have without using *ArcView*, ESRI's flagship product. Whether we realize it or not, we Redlanders owe Jack Dangermond and his associates a tremendous debt of gratitude for the development of technology that affects literally every aspect of our daily lives. This could be a column unto its own!

We have implemented one of the country's most innovative computer-aided dispatch systems (CAD) to help us manage our activities and the tremendous amount of data we collect. This system, coupled with ESRI's software, has created one of the most powerful police information systems in California.

We have also re-oriented the way we respond to crime via the addition of our plane. For half the cost of employing just ONE police officer we are able to have a set of eyes in the air that can see things ground officers can't and respond places much faster than they ever could. Even though we are still in our training phase with the plane it has proven its value several times already.

Our organizational structure and programming also reflect this need to think differently about our world. We consolidated recreation services into the RPD so we could add a preventative component to the department's response to "controlling" crime (rather than simply "responding" to it). We believe that recreation programming is not simply about providing leisure activities for kids. Rather, it's about providing them with positive, social opportunities during those critical after-school hours when my mother's admonition about my "idle hands being the work of the devil" was frequently proven true (sorry, mom!).

For many years, the City's housing programs fell under the purview of the RPD also. I believe that housing programs should not be about "bricks and mortar," but about creating transformational change in those challenged neighborhoods where crime is an everyday reality. Believing that crime control is enhanced when people have a meaningful investment in their neighborhoods, we used our housing money to help transition families from being renters to living the American dream as homeowners. This helped reduce the tremendous movement from neighborhood to neighborhood, and from school to school, that so many kids experience. How does a kid bond with neighbors, schools and teachers when they move every nine months?

Our senior bus service is another example of how we think differently to provide better service to our community. As our population ages, the challenges facing seniors as they accomplish everyday tasks also increase. For seniors living alone and on small, fixed incomes, getting to a medical appointment or going grocery shopping can be overwhelming if a caring relative or neighbor is unavailable to drive them. Accordingly, we created a bus service to get them to these appointments and ensure they maintain a degree of independence and dignity. As our community's elders, I believe they deserve nothing less.

I could go on about our ability – no, our need – to innovate and think differently about how we serve this great community. But I think you get the picture. I realize many of our proposals have not always been easy for some public figures or community members to initially support (can you spell "prisoner reentry?"). However, to think the same way about contemporary dilemmas as we did when we they were created, is foolhardy. If past thinking worked so well, why do these problems persist?

Rest assured, the RPD will continue to try and build that “better mousetrap” and push our responsiveness to community expectations and needs. To do less is to be unworthy of your trust.

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