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FROM UNCERTAINTY TO STABILITY

Miami County Sheriff's Office learned firsthand how uncertain times can lead to long-term positive changes when its previous software provider announced it was getting acquired by another company. Cisco, now a Caliber company, owned by Harris, was no longer able to provide the same software options at the price Miami County had previously enjoyed. The public safety agency had one of two choices: purchase an update to the software that would be compatible with the new Cisco owner, or switch to a different vendor altogether.

Jessica Brooks, Information Systems Coordinator of Miami County Sheriff's Office, said once it was apparent that things were changing one way or the other, it made sense for the agency to take the opportunity to switch vendors because there had been challenges with the software that the agency had struggled with for a long time.

"The reason we decided to go with a different software provider rather than upgrading to the new company really came down to inaccurate data," Brooks said. "We were always pulling inaccurate data from our system for the reports we create to give to the public."

The sheriff of Miami County discovered Spillman Technologies, a Motorola Solutions company, during the National Sheriffs Association tradeshow, Brooks said. However, it was the opinions and feedback from other agencies regarding Spillman that really caught the attention of agency personnel.

"Other agencies who were using Spillman Flex gave us good reviews and lots of positive talk of Flex as far as how the product is and working with support," Brooks said.

According to Brooks, Flex sales representatives also stood out from other vendors by working with the sheriff's office to create an affordable solution for the agency that would still provide them with the innovation they needed to improve their processes or data quality.

"We really appreciate being able to express our needs and our wants and having someone that listens to that and works with us to give us the best product for the best price that we can afford," Brooks said.

Miami County signed with Spillman in May 2013 and pushed its new system live one year later in June 2014. Although the agency uses everything from Records to Jail to Inventory Management, Brooks said the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Mobile modules have made the biggest difference for them after switching from Cisco to Flex. During the time before their switch, Cisco was unable to provide any updates to the CAD system and the sheriff's office was left with multiple challenges and without effective support.

"We were having outages and downtime and the response to try and get things fixed was very slow," she said. "The local city police utilized Cisco's mobile capabilities and they had some issues with it working
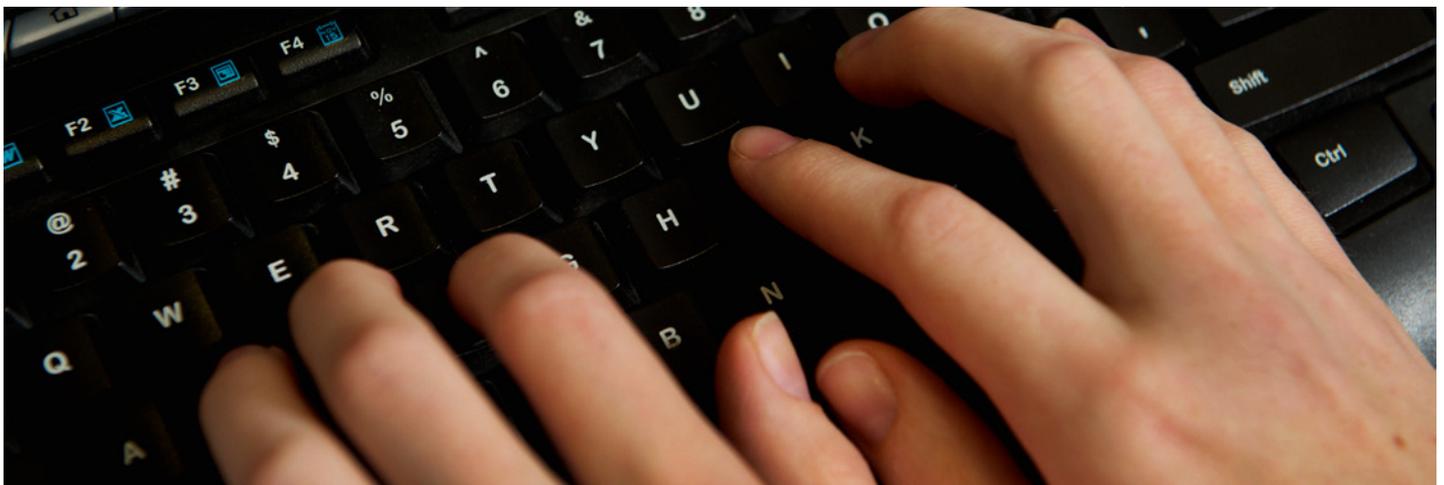
properly and our sheriff's office never even had mobile capabilities with Cisco. Moving to the Flex Mobile module was absolutely a huge step in our policing at the Miami County Sheriff's Office."

Another reason Cisco was difficult for the sheriff's office to work with was a lack of innovative searching capabilities, Brooks said. Cisco required personnel to run multiple reports and dig deep into tables again and again in order to catch all the needed information. Brooks then compared that to Flex, which has empowered Miami County Sheriff's Office to change searching processes, she said.

"Flex has a lot of different techniques when it comes to searching, such as the asterisk or the brackets," Brooks said. "Even if you only have a piece of information, you can still enter that in with a wildcard search from one screen or one report and pull any data that is related to that search."

Although the transition from one software vendor to another can be a difficult and time-consuming process, Brooks said the benefits of switching to Flex have drastically outweighed the costs. Keeping an open outlook during the transition process has helped agency personnel to adapt more easily and quickly to their new procedures and software layout.

"You just have to keep an open mind and look at the ways it can push your agency forward and better things for the community and citizens," she said. "Sometimes what you're used to isn't always the best. It can be an arduous process, but it's usually better."

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