

Spiral Up

... and Other Management Secrets Behind
Wildly Successful Initiatives

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A Note on the Sources: This book includes numerous case studies and examples. In many instances the information is so specific and perhaps surprising that the reader may wonder: "How can she know that?" The information comes from years of painstaking research, including personal interviews with many of the people profiled in the book. The facts are beyond question; their interpretation, of course, is my own.

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an emotional boost early on. When it comes to delivering the goods, striving to meet a deadline comes to the fore.

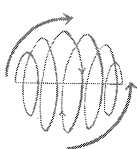
The most dangerous time in a wildly successful initiative comes when it moves out from under the radar and becomes an official endeavor. You know what happens. Professional management rears up and claims authority. The illegitimate, or at least nonstandard, management approaches that propelled the initiative toward wild success must be “cleaned up.” Momentum slows; fun evaporates; the initiative becomes ordinary. This isn’t terrible. It’s just a little sad—especially for the people who remember what it was like to work in the strong emotional field.

Galactica’s Karl Schmidt worked on several Sim-Mole improvements after helping to build the original simulator. “The experiences that followed were less spectacular,” he explains.

I have worked on and off on the system over the years, but building it for the first time was the best. Doing something no one had ever done before with marginal hardware and no blueprint; well, that was something. The next challenges became to do it faster or cheaper or to incorporate different hardware. It hasn’t been the same thrill in later phases.

If You Remember One Thing

Evoking powerful emotions is the everyday work of people who are wildly successful.



Coplink

An Unconventional Collaboration Revolutionizes Law Enforcement

Tucson recently had a series of incidents in which a white male and a black male were enticing young girls into their car. All the police knew about the car was that it was a yellow Cadillac with an “R” in its tag. They put these fragments of information into Coplink, and within two minutes, it came up with the suspects. Before Coplink, the leadership would have told the officers to do more drive-bys at the schools, but that probably wouldn’t have solved the problem.

—Mike O’Shea, Program Manager, National Institute of Justice

Hsinchun Chen, the director of the University of Arizona’s Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, considered his operation one of the bright spots in the academic community. Unlike most of his computer science colleagues, he belonged to the School of Management, and he had a taste for real problems. “The academic data-mining literature is boring because everyone is trying to get a 3 percent improvement on the same old hypothetical problem. In my lab, we work on real applica-

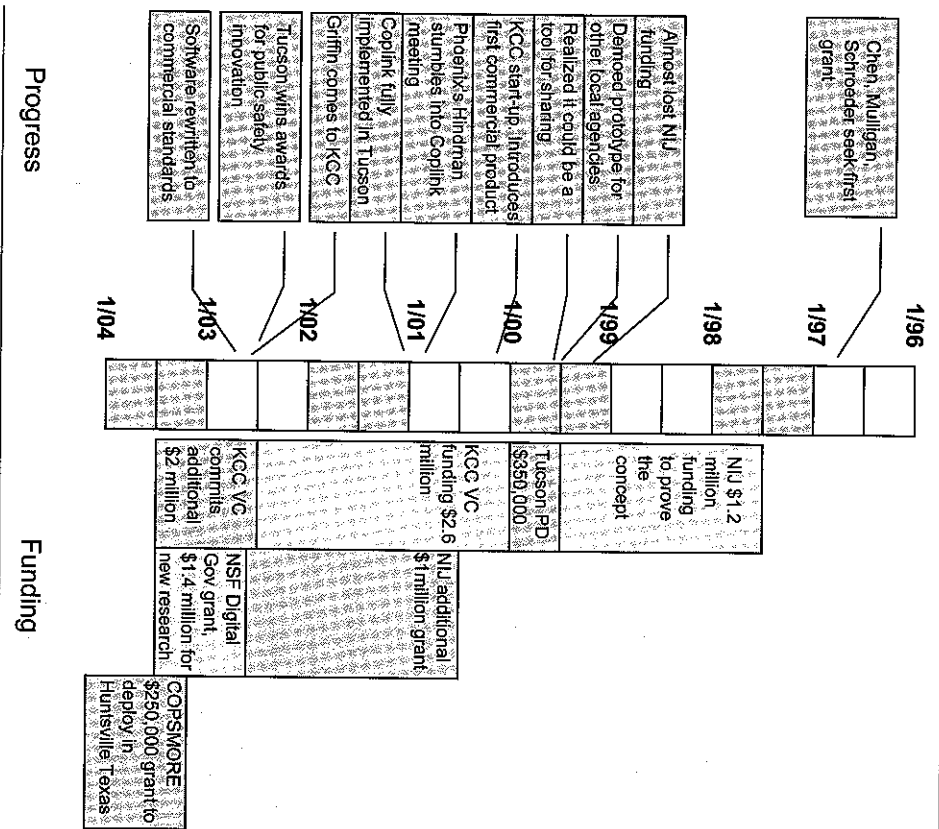
tions. They are so much more challenging.” He was looking for knotty problems for which he and his graduate students could pull associations and concepts out of messy, unstructured data.

Brad Cochran, a close-to-retirement Tucson police sergeant who was responsible for the crime analysis unit, was pursuing his bachelor's degree in information systems at the University of Arizona. In his day job, he struggled to support both the officers on the street and his chief with information scattered across disparate databases on different platforms. “We couldn't get data without running two or three routines and getting piles of paper,” Cochran complained. “You could take weeks to sift through all that to find the nugget you wanted. In many cases, we just didn't have the time.”

When Cochran took a course from Chen, he began to connect the dots. He knew Chen's national reputation in search capabilities, and he had been scanning the grant databases for one that might fit what he had in mind. He spotted a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) grant opportunity to create a collaborative system that would support both law enforcement research and practice. With this in hand, he approached Chen about the possibility of their working together. Chen recalls the meeting with Cochran and Jenny Schroeder, a young police officer who was also in Chen's class at the time: “The three of us were brainstorming. Old cops and young. Brad was about to retire; Jenny had only been on the force for a few years. We were talking about the possibilities of the technology and how important it could be for them.” The officers were so passionate to put the technology to use on their problem that Jenny developed the grant proposal in three days.

At this meeting, Coplink was conceived (see Figure 10-1 for an overall timeline of the events associated with Coplink). Initially, the trio envisioned a data warehouse system that would collect all the scattered information in a local police department's files into a single location. Because resource-strapped police forces often looked for grants to develop systems, they tended to focus on one kind of information at a time. Furthermore, the highway patrol, the sheriff's office, and the Tucson police all worked within their own silos, developing their own

Figure 10-1. Timeline of Events



systems. The result was a veritable garden of disconnected databases. For a local police force, these might include administrative files, the gang database, the mug shot database, the sex offender database, the parole database, and others.

Schroeder explains that police work often starts with making associations among people, places, and cars. Schroeder, Cochran, and Chen envisioned a system that would make it easier to round up all the information about a situation, no matter which database that information

came from. They reasoned that this would potentially help officers identify relationships among the snippets of data that were hidden by the disarray.

In the fall of 1996, when Schroeder and Cochran took their proposal to their chief, Doug Smith, he was extremely supportive. "We're a 'load' city," Smith explained.

Marijuana and cocaine are smuggled across our border, and then the smugglers are paid off in product. They're looking around here to find someone to sell it to, so we have the violence and property problems that result. Our closure rate on cases is only 8 or 9 percent, which is terrible. With 20 percent of the criminals committing 80 percent of the crimes, I can save myself fifteen burglaries by getting a burglar in jail fifteen days faster.

Smith had had previous experience working with the law enforcement grant-funding agencies: COPS MORE, local law enforcement block grants, and the National Institute of Justice, all of which fell under the office justice program.¹

NIJ's grants tended to support research rather than actual law enforcement tools; COPS MORE did the opposite. Needing both, Smith worked with a friend from the COPS MORE office to have funds from its side moved to NIJ to support both aspects of the Coplink project.

In July 1997, NIJ awarded Chen and the Tucson Police Department a \$1.2 million, two-year grant to develop a proof of concept prototype. They called it Coplink.

Building the Prototype

Chen pulled together a team of graduate and undergraduate students. Schroeder volunteered to represent the Tucson Police Department on the development team, and Sergeant Cochran agreed. Cochran also invited another woman who had extensive experience with the records management system to participate. Describing himself as a practical

person, Cochran explains that his superiors gave him a great deal of latitude in managing the project because of his longstanding reputation for getting things done.

At the outset, Chen had a vision for the project that included sophisticated analysis of disparate information nuggets based on social network theory. However, he knew that the team had to build and populate a technically ordinary data warehouse first. Chen explained:

Most of us researchers develop things and write papers. And most of the prototypes are never used again. I was ignorant about law enforcement when we started the project, but I wanted to give them something useful. In the first two years, we couldn't publish anything because everything we were doing was too basic from a technology standpoint.

Chen's team of Ph.D., master's, and undergraduate students built the data warehouse prototype. Guided by Schroeder, they concentrated on integrating data from a few key sources: the records management system, the mug shot database, and the gang database. Throughout the process, Schroeder taught the students about law enforcement. She recalled, "To fulfill the first grant, we just needed a proof of concept. But we liked the prototype so well that the university worked out a way to apply it to our real database and deploy it in our department." Schroeder trained fifty fellow officers on the Tucson force.

During one of the user trials with an early prototype of Coplink, ATF [the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms] called from Phoenix because it was searching for a homicide suspect. The agents didn't know his name, but they knew that his sister's boyfriend lived in Tucson, and they had *his* name. We were able to find their suspect's name in five minutes. Not only that, but we told them that he was already in jail. Without Coplink, it would have taken us weeks to find this information. We probably would not have had the resources to do it.

—Jenny Schroeder, Tucson police sergeant

Funding Fears

As part of the NIJ grant process, an administrator visited the team for a project review about six months after work began. Cochran recalls that the system's interfaces had been built, but they were not linked to the actual database. Chen was swamped with his university obligations and was unavailable to meet with the NIJ reviewer. Cochran said he could handle it, but the demonstration failed to convince the NIJ that Coplink would provide distinctive new value. "They didn't understand where we were going," Cochran remembers painfully. "They only saw where we were."

The reviewer's evaluation reported that Coplink did not make any relevant new contributions to research, and he recommended discontinuing the funding. Grants and funding are awarded through an expert-driven peer review process that is similar to the way academic research articles are approved for publication. Chen explains,

When reviewers see a proposal or a result, they evaluate it both on scientific merit and on its broader impact. The balance is usually 80 percent science and 20 percent impact. Coplink's value was the reverse—a bit less scientific contribution, but massive social impact. It's just so different from what they normally see.

Richard Miranda, Cochran's supervisor at the time, would not accept this result, Cochran recalls. "He said, 'I don't care what you do. Go to their symposium in Atlanta and kiss butt if you have to, but don't lose the funding.'" Cochran got plane tickets for Chen and himself, packed a demo laptop, and took off for Atlanta, where the NIJ brain trust was holding a conference.

Chen was able to convince the NIJ that the Coplink team was on to something big. Ultimately, NIJ did renew the grant in mid-2000 for \$1 million. To cover Coplink in the interim, the Tucson Police Department anted up \$350,000 in bridge funds. Schroeder notes, "The Tucson PD had developed a good relationship with the university. We did not want to lose the cohesiveness of the team."

In the meantime, another critical piece of the puzzle fell into place. Joe Hindman, the technology administrator for the Phoenix Police Department at the time, was registering his daughter for school at the University of Arizona. He was told that a group of criminal justice professionals was having a meeting there, so he invited himself to sit in. Cochran, Schroeder, Chen, and law enforcement agents from all over the state of Arizona were discussing how the Coplink concept could be extended to meet their needs. Intrigued by what he saw, Hindman recalls, "I thought that the data-mining tools might be a strong enough incentive to get the police and the sheriff's departments to share data. I told Brad that I wanted to play."

In the world of law enforcement, Tucson was a medium-size operation, with about 1,000 sworn officers and 300 to 400 civilian crime analysts. Phoenix and its six sister communities in the Salt River Valley dwarfed it. Remarks a member of the intelligence community, "Phoenix is the kingpin for us; Tucson is the second city. For Coplink to be truly valuable, it must succeed in the Phoenix area, with its well-established records management system, its sophisticated use of data, and its 2.5 million people—lots of whom are criminals." Like Tucson, Phoenix was struggling with violent and property crime rates that both exceeded the national average and appeared stuck at an unacceptably high level.

In mid-2000, the Coplink team demed its system to a well-attended meeting of the Phoenix Police Department brass. Shortly thereafter, the Phoenix police chief agreed to Hindman's proposed implementation plan. Chen and the Tucson team linked Hindman up with the NIJ to secure the funding to expand the Coplink concept and demonstrate that it could scale up to include multiple large agencies. Cochran recalls, "I knew Phoenix didn't have the money for all this in its budget, but NIJ got more excited about it as we took on bigger partners. The agency knew this would give it more impact in the criminal justice community, so it came through with more money."

The Tucson gang-unit supervisor brought in an individual as a suspect in a homicide. For some reason, a friend of his came along with

him. When the supervisor asked this second guy for some identification, he presented a valid Arizona driver's license. But something seemed wrong to the supervisor. The guys were talking, and he overheard one of them refer to the other one's mother as "aunt." He ran this through Coplink, which has mug shots, and found out the second guy's real identity. It turned out he was wanted in connection with another homicide.

—Jenny Schroeder, Tucson police sergeant

Becoming Bulletproof

Coplink was conceived and born through the early collaboration between Chen's AI lab and the Tucson police, but in 2000, the system was still a quirky prototype. It had been built to prove a concept rather than to support the day-to-day press of police business, and it was continually under construction by an ever-changing cast of graduate students. In addition, the Coplink visionaries were just getting started. They could now see the potential for a much more powerful system with improved data analysis capabilities and linkages across justice departments' jurisdictional boundaries. "Criminals are like great white sharks," one officer notes. "When they have eaten all the food in one area, they move on." The team began rallying support for interconnected regional nodes so that the police in the Phoenix area could both work together and follow criminal leads to Tucson and beyond.

When Jenny Schroeder was promoted to sergeant, Tucson officer Linda Ridgeway took her place on the team and worked with the graduate students to push Coplink's analytical capabilities forward. Coplink Connect—the ability to integrate databases—was well established. The team turned its attention to Coplink Detect—the ability to find criminal associations (see Figures 10-2 and 10-3 for technical schematics).

Meanwhile, Chen launched Knowledge Computing Corporation (KCC), a private firm designed to bring Coplink fully into the commercial realm. With \$2.6 million of venture capital funding, Chen began the process of rewriting Coplink's code to make it robust, reliable, and commercial-grade. Chen also began working with the University of

Figure 10-2. Schematic of Tucson Coplink Implementation

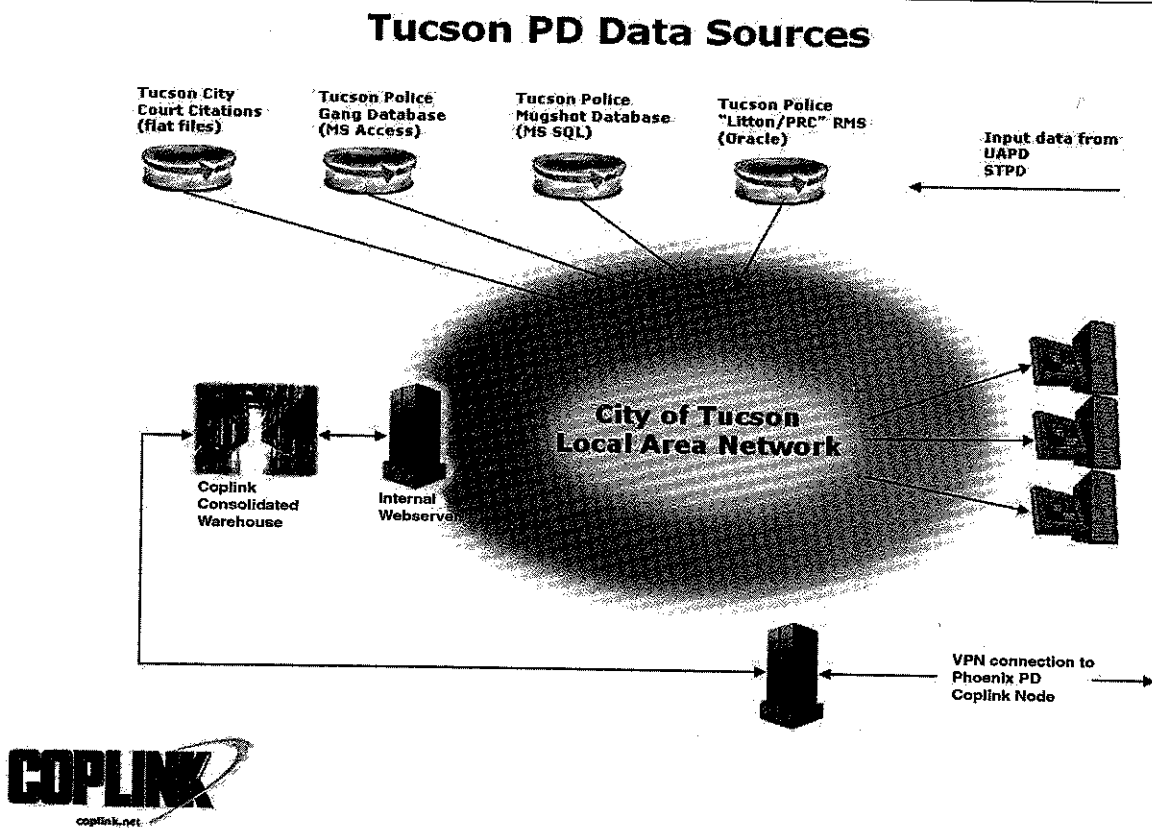
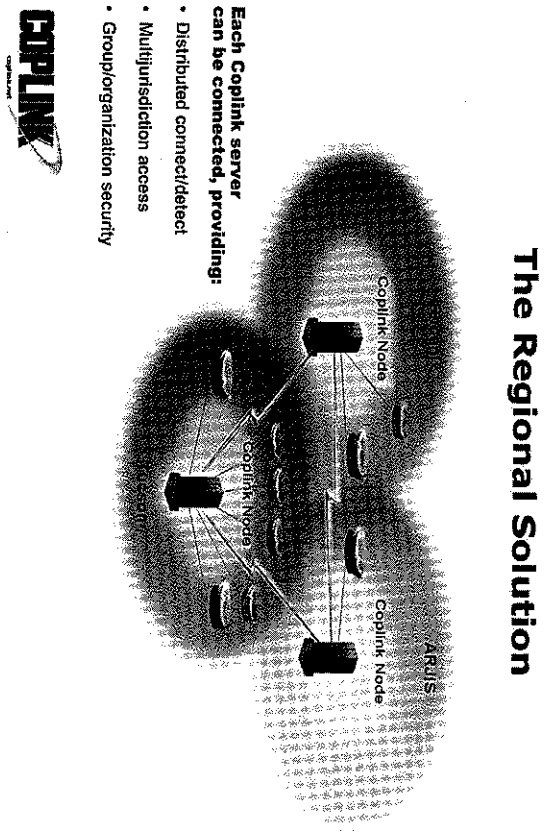


Figure 10-3. Schematic of Coplink Regional Architecture



Arizona's Office of Technology Transfer to sort out an intellectual property licensing deal. "I call it the 'office of preventing technology transfer,'" rails Chen. "It often takes so long to work things out with it that people just give up, and the technology gets stuck in there forever."

Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

KCC did not make as much progress as Chen had hoped over the next two years. While the company did finally acquire a license for the Coplink software from the university, it did not land any additional customers. Chen and the board hired an experienced CEO from a large company, but this individual's lack of start-up experience led to a series of bad decisions. For example, he priced the product at \$1,000 per seat with a \$1 million minimum. This price tag not only put off cash-strapped police departments but aroused a negative reaction from the NIJ. The NIJ reasoned that the software should be free to law enforcement agencies because its development had been funded by the government. Chen counters,

For the most part, NIJ funds bulletproof vests and devices that puncture tires; it has no experience with software. So it has a problem with the commercial pricing that you need to provide reliable code and ongoing support to offer a product that actually works in the real world of law enforcement.

At the same time, in the post-9/11 environment, the National Science Foundation (NSF) decided to try to make a more direct contribution to the defense of the nation. In order to make an immediate impact, the NSF worked with the NIJ to identify existing grants that could be redirected toward increasing intelligence effectiveness and given stronger support. The NSF added its financial weight to Coplink by providing its own grant to Chen's university lab.

We had a series of robberies at chicken fast-food places. The suspects at different locations appeared to be the same people. During one of the incidents, a witness thought he recognized one of the robbers as a person called "Peanuts" who lived in a certain part of town. There must have been over 100 people called Peanuts in our files, but by using Coplink, we found a mug shot of the suspect and included it in a photo lineup. He was identified and arrested. Without Coplink, there's no telling how long it would have taken our investigators to find the right one.

—Detective Tim Petersen, Coplink officer,
Tucson Police Department

By mid-2002, KCC had burned through all its angel money. Phoenix was still struggling to implement the system, and Tucson remained committed. It was unclear how Coplink could succeed until Bob Griffin arrived. Griffin recalls,

I had been named Washington, D.C.'s, 2001 Entrepreneur of the Year and met the dean of the University of Arizona. At a lunch meeting, the dean introduced me to a few professors who were teaching a course on entrepreneurs, and they invited me to become

a guest lecturer at the business school. During one of our sessions, the dean said that Tucson has two big challenges: finding senior management talent and doing technology transfer out of the university. He described the situation at KCC and asked me if I would be willing to meet with the professor who founded the company to talk about its challenges.

When Griffin looked under the covers, he found a company with a few basic problems. He summarized, "There was no adult supervision, no direction or leadership, no money, few qualified prospects, and no commercial product." He concluded, however, that KCC had the key ingredients for a successful company: talented people and great underlying technology that provided excellent commercial potential. He recalled, "There were clients who raved about Coplink, and it solved a real problem." He agreed to step into the CEO's role to turn the company around.

Building Buzz

Griffin raised an additional \$2 million from KCC's original investors to give him some runway. He focused the organization, got the right people in key jobs, and started trying to build buzz. When the sniper shootings started in Maryland's Montgomery County in 2002, Griffin learned that one of his senior executives, Doug Smith,² had trained with the county's police chief, Charles Moose. Smith called Moose and offered him the Coplink software for free. In addition, he convinced the NIJ to pay for the server and Microsoft to provide a \$250,000 SQL license. With all the politics, however, it took two weeks to get five critical data sources pulled into Coplink. As a result of the delays, the Coplink implementation was too late to identify the snipers. Just to put the system through its paces, however, Smith demonstrated what it would have shown. In one short run, it brought up seven suspects, including Lee Boyd Malvo and John Muhammad. "Within minutes of a shooting, we could show that they ran a red light," Griffin pointed

out. "They were questioned about sleeping in a rest area. After one shooting, they were stopped at a roadblock. Why is the same car showing up at opposite ends of the state within minutes of shootings? That's not a coincidence; that's a pattern."

Undaunted, Griffin and his organization continued to visit police forces around the country to demonstrate Coplink. They did encounter predictable resistance. Some police organizations expressed reluctance to share their data. One detective remarked,

Imagine if you had been following a case for eighteen months. Your reports are out there, but you don't have enough evidence to make an arrest. Someone in another department picks up your information, adds the last detail, and arrests your suspect. Not only does that department get credit for the closure and accolades from the press for two days of work, but it gets all the asset forfeiture funds.

Some officers were also unwilling to credit Coplink with helping them solve cases because they believed it depreciated their own professional contribution. This attitude interfered with KCC's drive to get public exposure for the product.

By mid-2003, however, KCC had signed up ten police departments across the nation: Des Moines and Polk County, Iowa; Boston, Massachusetts; Huntsville, Texas; San Diego County, California; Redmond and Spokane, Washington; Ann Arbor, Michigan; the state of Alaska; and Henderson County, North Carolina. Coplink had also received positive press from *Time*, *Newsweek*, CBS television, and CNBC. The CIA and the FBI were both evaluating Coplink, and it was being demonstrated in Canada, the United Kingdom, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

Loosening the Academic Ties

Chen's Coplink grants were wrapping up. The NIJ and NSF had worked hand in hand for years to support Coplink, with the NIJ fund-

ing the “cop” side of the effort and the NSF providing money for the academic side. This unusual collaboration had been a “new twist” for the NIJ. NIJ program manager Mike O’Shea remarked, “We usually fund projects on our own, but in this case, we had an excellent experience working with Valerie Gregg and Larry Brandt’s digital government program.” Chen’s NSF grant would expire in mid-2004.

The NIJ’s official position was that Coplink should begin to stand on its own two feet. While O’Shea continued to be a strong advocate for the system, public safety departments that wanted to implement it had to look elsewhere for money. Huntsville, Texas, used a COPS MORE grant. Des Moines and Polk County, Iowa, funded their projects with enhanced 9/11 money. Some others used drug forfeiture money.

Two weeks ago, the Tucson police found a guy who had been shot, set on fire, and buried under a mattress. He was disfigured beyond recognition. But we ran the information we had about him, including a tattoo. It narrowed our search down to four potential people, and the police were able to identify him through dental records. They also got a list of six of his associates so that they could begin looking for his killer.

—Bob Griffin, CEO, Knowledge Computing Corp.

Chen, who remained a board member at KCC, mused, “The research is at a critical moment. Now we are asking research questions of the data that no one else can ask.” Chen’s NSF funding was due to expire in six to eight months. He had a proposal under review by the Department of Homeland Security and was expecting to partner with the California agencies to extend Coplink research. He was pursuing other uses for the software as well, such as applying it to border safety. He argued that research of this kind required long-term funding.

Members of the intelligence community outside of Tucson were watching Coplink’s progress with interest. Some hoped that its most effective algorithms could be applied by other research programs to catch terrorists. One researcher remarked,

We have some policy issues to solve, but Coplink has put three critical elements in place: It has academic credibility through the University of Arizona, it has a good working partnership with actual police officers, and it has substantial support from other parts of the U.S. government. The connection between real problems and academics makes it most valuable to us. Most academic research is done on toy problems, but real problems are much harder, and Chen’s lab is brilliant at solving them. In addition, there’s no one in control—no chief of the whole thing. All police departments hate each other, and someone has to spend time keeping everyone from walking out on the project. This is very difficult, and the Coplink people have successfully developed that capability. Maybe it’s because they’re from a school of management.

Tsunami

By August 2003, Coplink’s value had not yet shown up in crime statistics, but evidence of its worth was accumulating. An independent NIJ study showed that Coplink users improved leads 65 percent over users of a standard records management system. Word of Coplink’s value was spreading across the fraternity as more police departments signed up to implement it. KCC counted twelve real customers and had turned the corner to profitability. Griffin had repriced the product so that it would be cost-effective for a small sheriff’s department as well as a large police force. For the first time, KCC was facing a “tsunami of interest.”

The Phoenix, Tucson, San Diego region was pushing ahead. Coplink was not yet live in Phoenix, and the individuals who had originally launched and supported the project had left, but the department remained committed to making the system work. A regional association of crime fighters in the Southwest and California had scored its own NSF grant to implement Coplink in San Diego County and the Tucson sheriff’s office. A total of nineteen agencies in the region had signed letters of agreement to implement Coplink. The federal customs and border patrol had also expressed interest.

NIJ program manager O'Shea, asked in 2000 to pass judgment on whether Coplink had any practical value, had also become an evangelist. In his role of communicating interesting new technologies to state and local public safety departments all over the United States, he had a unique platform for spreading the word about Coplink. "Everywhere we show this, they want it," he grinned.

It's easy to use. They don't have to send anyone to six months of training or change any of their current systems. And people like the fact that they can interface with other agencies. As the system grows, they'll be able to follow a criminal across the country. It's an incredible tool.

In 2003, Coplink's ability to connect the public safety organizations across a region was already being implemented in Des Moines and Polk County, Iowa. Six city and county law enforcement agencies were collaborating to get a broad array of public safety data brought together through Coplink. According to Smith, all the fire departments in the area used a de facto standard system called Firehouse. In addition to police files, the region's Coplink system would integrate Firehouse data and Department of Transportation information that was important to federal emergency management association (FEMA) directors.

The Tucson police found a guy face down in the street. He had been shot, his throat had been slashed, and he had been run over by the car when the perpetrators were leaving the scene, but he was still alive. All he could say was, "Shorty did it." Now, Shorty is a common street name; there must be hundreds of them in Tucson. He was also able to tell them that he thought Shorty might have "Caesar" tattooed on his arm. They put this in Coplink and found one person who had been paroled twenty-four hours earlier. From the time they found the victim to the time of the arrest was five hours. He's now doing sixteen years. Without Coplink, it could have taken them days or weeks to find the right Shorty.

—Bob Griffin, CEO, Knowledge Computing Corp.

Policy roadblocks to information sharing were being cleared away. Each state, each public safety agency, and the federal government had unique legal requirements that governed who could view criminal record information. Detective Tim Petersen, the Tucson Coplink officer who took over from Linda Ridgeway, explained,

We have entered into letters of agreement with all agencies participating in Coplink. These are legal documents approved by the agency's counsel or administrator that agree to restrict access to the same people who can get the information through other means. That lets us tap the certification infrastructure that is already in place.

Coplink's Connect and Detect capabilities were attracting interest, and the developers promised regular new releases. KCC was working on a wireless version that could be used in a police car. It was also eager to roll out Coplink Agent. One Coplink project manager explained: "If someone searches on a suspect named 'Bill Jones,' that person can flag him. If someone else adds information about Bill, the first person will be alerted by e-mail, cellular phone, or instant messaging over the Web. Then they can talk to each other and hopefully collaborate to solve the case together." Added Joe Hindman, now Coplink administrator in Scottsdale, "I would make the system more proactive. Any time a detective gets a case, he should also automatically get what the computer thinks about the case." With Coplink's development focus shifting from the lab to KCC, these officers were eager to participate in a user group to help influence the system's future direction.

On a Roll

By early 2007, KCC had landed the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), its fourth California jurisdiction and the third largest police department in the United States, with 9,300 sworn officers and 3,000

civilian employees. Winning the LAPD put six of the seven largest police jurisdictions in the country in the Coplink camp, including Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, and San Diego. Altogether, it created the largest information-sharing initiative for law enforcement in the world, with the LAPD alone managing 11 million records. Bob Griffin, still CEO of the enterprise, remarks, "Coplink's rapid national expansion continues to be fueled by leading law enforcement agencies like LAPD that are spearheading intelligence-led policing efforts."³

Like the other 349 jurisdictions participating in Coplink, LAPD funded its project through a grant. In its case, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Urban Area Security Initiative provided more than \$28 million to the Los Angeles urban area to improve its ability to prevent, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.⁴

Coplink would act as the intelligence core, linking many public safety agencies and departments together.

The U.S. military had deployed Coplink in Iraq to track down insurgents. It had been successful in locating one highly placed terrorist, who was subsequently arrested and publicly brought to justice.

KCC continued to push the envelope on Coplink's technical capabilities. The newest release included an intelligence module that constantly panned the growing information network for new leads on current investigations and alerted the relevant law enforcement agent when it had discovered a pattern of interest. A new GIS analyzer gave users the ability to array data bits spatially to help identify geographic patterns.

Chen remained on the board of KCC, but his University of Arizona AI lab had turned its attention to bioterrorism. Scoring funds from DHS, the CIA, the Corporation for National Research Initiatives, and its sustaining sponsor, the NSF's digital government program, the center turned its taste for real-world problems to border safety and terrorist networks. By 2007, its unparalleled expertise in the technologies of fuzzy association among disparate data nuggets had won it worldwide recognition.

Individual police commissioners still occasionally dug in their

heels when it came to sharing information. They still worried about who would get credit for the collar. They sometimes threw up false obstacles to Coplink to keep from losing "control" over their jurisdictions. However, as Coplink expanded, their interest in sharing information in order to catch the bad guys gained momentum. When KCC implemented the Orange County, California, jurisdiction, it found 55,000 "common criminals" who also appeared in the Minnesota and Tucson databases. Griffin says simply, "Today's crooks are highly mobile."

And the crime rate in Arizona? For the first time in recent history, Arizona began to gain ground relative to the rest of the nation in terms of crime. Between 2002 and 2004, Arizona reduced its property crime rate by 8.7 percent, compared to the national average reduction of 3.1 percent. It dropped its violent crime rate by 9.1 percent, while the national average fell only by 5.8 percent.

It's difficult to put a dollar value on this improvement, but some rough figures won't hurt. If we ignore violent crimes and just look at property crimes, the improvement from 2002 to 2004 gives us 510 fewer crimes per 100,000 people. With 5.7 million people in the state, that's a total of 29,000 property crimes that never happened. Researchers estimate the average total cost impact of a property crime at as much as \$20,000, counting the effect on housing prices and tourism. Even if we use only \$1,000 per crime, however, Arizona's performance improvement saved its citizens \$29 million in 2004 alone.

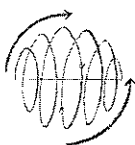
No one would argue that Coplink was solely responsible, but people certainly agree that it helped.

One grant monitor summarized the nature of the accomplishment:

This initiative has been a success because all the elements came together—against all odds. It had a research lab, venture capital, a private firm, state support, regional support, support from the NSF, support from the NIJ, support from the intelligence commu-

nity. The detectives love it because it's intuitive, but it's really hard to make a system like that. You have wildly different records management systems in different departments. They are doing completely different things with their databases. You have to take these very different databases and fuse them together so that they look exactly the same. The input going in may be variable, but what comes out is standard. That's really hard to do. But if all the world's cops had it, they'd have a common language. Then the criminal couldn't move from one place to another and escape the system.

C H A P T E R 11



Secret #5: Spiral Up

Trans – for – ma – tion, oh, yeah, yeah! Can you hear the beat? Can you feel the heat?

Nine times out of ten, when executives launch substantial organizational initiatives, they are explicitly looking for a transformation. If you call a consultant, you are guaranteed to learn that your enterprise needs to be torn down to the nub and utterly remade because some aspect of your organization is completely unacceptable—for example, your culture lynches innovators or you can't squeeze any more growth out of your wizened markets.

Whether by ourselves or with the help of the pros, we take on the task of big change fast. We dutifully articulate our aggressive vision and our three-year plan to achieve it through (fill in the blank) diversification/innovation/globalization/acquisition. We structure initiatives with top-level visibility and strong ROIs, and we cram activities into task plans in a way that will complete the work before the organization loses interest or, worse, faith in the executives who sponsored the thing in the first place.

Two-thirds of the time this doesn't work.¹ When the dust settles, the consultants, M&A professionals, and lawyers have done what they