Hitachi Solutions

Customer Success: Barrie Police Service

Equipping officers with time-saving technology needed to create safer communities

With its legacy officer reporting software being deprecated, the Barrie Police Service was looking to develop an innovative mobile app that helped officers complete and submit incident reports in the field. Read how they embraced Microsoft Power Platform and partnered with Hitachi Solutions to build an optimized and automated solution that improves efficiency, accelerates operations, and increases data-driven functionality and agility.

INDUSTRY

- Public Sector – Police Services

DRIVERS

- Replace obsolete tools while enhancing functionality
- Improve efficiency, mobility, and data handling
- Support agile growth
- Leverage Microsoft investment

PRODUCTS

- Microsoft Power Apps, Microsoft Azure, Microsoft Dataverse

INTEGRATIONS

- Microsoft Power BI

NUMBER OF USERS

- 300

DEPLOYED

- Canada

INTRODUCTION

The **Barrie Police Service** is located on the western shores of Lake Simcoe in Ontario, Canada. Established in 1853, today it is a thriving agency composed of 238 sworn police officers and 109 full-time civilian members.

As the second-oldest police service in the region, Barrie Police officers have experienced many changes over the last century and a half. But throughout their history one thing has remained constant — they are committed to providing accountable, responsive, and cost-efficient policing services to the community, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

CHALLENGE

From patrolling on foot, to having only one patrol car with no radio, to using strategically placed red lights downtown as alerts, Barrie Police Service has evolved from a county constable into a modern, proactive police organization. They have always made strides to improve their front-line services through technology, something many in the public safety sector have traditionally been slow to adopt.

"The Barrie Police Service recognizes the value of investing in technological solutions to create efficiencies," said Chief Kimberley Greenwood, Barrie Police Service. "Our community is growing, and we need to balance fiscal responsibility with operational requirements. The Microsoft Power Platform allowed our Service to not only increase officer productivity, but it was also easy-to-use, and allows for more apps to be developed in the future."

When their officer reporting solution became outdated and unsupported, they were determined to replace it with a modern mobile application that would increase efficiency and better support officers as they work on the road. After significant research, Barrie found that **Microsoft Power Apps** was the best and most cost-effective solution for their needs.

"When we learned InfoPath was being deprecated, our main goal was to find a solution that would keep officers on the road. But we also had other asks — it had to be available at any time and from anywhere and improve our data quality. When we realized Power Apps hit 99 percent of what we wanted, we decided to give it a try," said Information System Analyst Maria McWilliams, Barrie Police Service.

While they already had Power Platform licenses in place from their Microsoft 365 investment, Barrie Police didn't have the in-house know-how around low-code/no-code application development tools or cloud technology. They needed guidance in designing and building a scalable solution, training app makers and users, and establishing security and governance, which is why they engaged Hitachi Solutions.

SOLUTION

Hitachi Solutions demonstrated our industry knowledge and mastery of the **Microsoft Power Platform** during a workshop attended by Barrie Police. After the workshop, Barrie Police determined our Rapid Solution Development (RSD) tech hub of Power Platform experts was exactly what they needed to gain the advisory services, up-skilling, and hands-on help to accelerate and successfully complete this project.

Working collaboratively, Hitachi Solutions and Barrie Police strategized, planned, and designed a custom MVP Power Apps pilot. After testing it with a small group and enhancing it based on the feedback, the report management solution was then rolled out to officers for wider use.

The new solution, dubbed MORA (Maria's Officer Reporting App), was named after Barrie Police Information System Analyst Maria McWilliams. McWilliams was instrumental in championing the project and creating the easy-to-use app that automates, streamlines, and digitizes reporting functionality for Barrie Police officers and allows them to efficiently log live reports from the field using their smartphones.

"Before, officers had to come back to the station to enter report data. This meant they spent less time on the road. Now, they can use the app right on their phones or the computers in their cars — it's mobile, on-the-go, and can be used more efficiently to start, complete, and even submit reports," said McWilliams.

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> ***Chief Kimberley Greenwood***
> *Barrie Police Service*

Top features of MORA include:

- Report categories are available from drop-down menus and pre-populated with standard narratives. Instead of typing everything in every time, it's auto filled, and officers just make the appropriate changes to customize it. Officers can use the dictation capabilities on their smartphones as well.

- The application can be used seamlessly on multiple platforms and is connected via the cloud. This means officers can start reports on their phones and complete and submit them on a computer at the station or the computers in their cars.

- Information only has to be entered once and is then accessible by data entry personnel and other units, saving time and effort, and reducing errors. Reports are more accurate, complete, and processed faster — making them available to officers, the courts, and the public faster.

- Workflows for change requests, reviews, and approvals are automated. Officers, supervisors, and data entry personnel have complete visibility into the status of reports and automatically receive email notifications throughout the process.

And because MORA is connected to the **Microsoft Dataverse**, all this data is consumed by **Microsoft Power BI** and leveraged for advanced analytics and reporting. This has helped Barrie Police gain valuable insights into occurrence statistics. Empowered with this data, they can be more proactive, effective, and responsive to the community.

BENEFITS

The MORA app saves Barrie Police officers time spent on paperwork; increases their efficiency, productivity, and agility on the road; and reduces report approvals to just hours. Other benefits include:

- Modernizes, streamlines, and simplifies incident reporting

- Reduces time and effort required for officers to write, complete, and submit reports

- Provides complete and accurate reports, improving quality and speeding the approval process

- Increases data quality, visibility, and access, which improves operations, reporting, and services

- Integrates with Power BI to provide real-time data analytics and insights that help identify incident trends

"The new app is easy to learn and use, taking officers about 10 minutes to get the hang of it. While at first there was a little bit of resistance, once they realized how easy it was and saw the functionality and benefits, they loved it. Members in the Records Unit, and other personnel, also love it because of the improved quality of the reports, data, and tracking capabilities," said McWilliams.

FUTURE

Through this engagement, Hitachi Solutions helped Barrie Police gain valuable skills and knowledge around Microsoft Power Platform and citizen development. Now anyone on their team can make feature enhancements to MORA, as well as build new apps for modernizing other processes in the future.

"Our knowledge management officer has developed an app to help investigators with canvassing activities, we've created an app to track equipment maintenance, and the finance department has built an app for inputting expenses. We are also looking for other paper-based forms to digitize and we want to automate document creation with all the data we are collecting," said McWilliams.

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> Having Hitachi Solutions guide and advise us was extremely helpful. They were phenomenal to work with and taught us a lot. We are now confidently off and running, developing new functionality, enhancements, and apps with Power Platform.
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> **"**
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> *Information System Analyst Maria McWilliams*
> *Barrie Police Service*

Contact us to learn how we can help you!

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