

Law Enforcement App for Information Dissemination



Jon Compson
Founder & President
1st Cast Media LLC

CEOCFO: *Mr. Compson, what is the idea behind 1st Cast Media?*

Mr. Compson: 1st Cast Media is a digital company. We have created an app that is designed for law enforcement to expedite the process to disseminate information to other law enforcement officers and the news media. Using this app, they can send multimedia files, pictures, and so forth. That is our first product launched for this year.

CEOCFO: *How have people been doing it before 1st Cast? What has been the process? What have you figured out that is better?*

Mr. Compson: In the 24 years I have been a police officer and a detective for the last five years, the current process is this: when a robbery situation happens at a gas station, a detective would show up after the officers have secured the scene. Many times the information at the scene really needs to get out to the other officers in the area. Radio communication is easy and quick but it is only verbal and there is nothing tangible to hold onto so the officers can continue to look for the suspect or the suspect's vehicle throughout the shift or maybe into the other shift where communication really starts to break down. This app allows the detective to show up and maybe capture an image from a security surveillance monitor of the suspect entering the store with a ski mask on or a picture of the car pulling up to the front of the store and send it out directly from the scene within seconds to the other officers in the area. It does not have to be just the officers for that particular police department. It would go to any officers who have the app within a 20-mile area.

CEOCFO: *Would that be what that they were searching for when he was stopped at the border going into Belgium and let go?*

Mr. Compson: That is exactly right. If they had access to 1st Cast, they could have created a notification and that notification would have been sent to all media personnel that had the app and multiple jurisdictions that have the app as well. That type of communication is key. When New York City had the two prisoners escape, this would have been very handy. I had a fellow worker who was part of that search team and they had roughly 600 police officers in different cities looking for those two suspects. If they had 1st Cast, they could have transferred information out to all those different officers, who worked for 10 to 15 different agencies, all at the same time keeping everybody abreast as to what was going on. Right now when we talk from agency to agency most of the time, it happens on a cell phone which is really ineffective. When we can create through mobile apps the ability to add additional data quickly and send the data directly to a device everybody carries with them nowadays, especially police officers.

CEOCFO: *Was the challenge in putting it together or it more that no one thought of doing it?*

Mr. Compson: It was actually both. It was actually three challenges. The first challenge was that we are dealing with government agencies that are so bogged down with workload that sometimes once you start a process that is the process you just stick with for a long time until someone shakes up the boat a little and shows how certain types of communication can be done much faster. Our second challenge was creating a software system within an app that allows different levels of the agency to have different access. The enterprise app that we have created allows an agency to have the checks and balances so as a detective at the scene creates a notification, he will send that notification via a dropdown menu through the app to a supervisor who is on duty. That supervisor instantly gets the notification on his or her phone, reviews the notification for validity, accuracy, and so forth and then publishes the notification. This process from start to finish, from the detective at the scene who never has to leave the scene to do any paperwork pertaining to this information can get that information directly to his supervisor and that supervisor can send that information directly to all the other officers that are on the street and the news media.

CEOCFO: *Is there concern that something might get out too quickly?*

Mr. Compson: That can happen and probably does happen but not very often. Here is the nice thing about the app: the detective that created the notification or another detective who has access to that line of communication to create notifications and edit can actually go in and update that notification. For example, if it is 9 o'clock at night and I create a notification that goes out pertaining to that robbery suspect and a little while later we find out that there is actually a vehicle involved and we have that vehicle on film or a picture of that vehicle, a detective who works third shift can actually go back into that notification and do an update and resend out the most updated information to all those people who got the notification to begin with. That would have been really valuable in the situation with the New York prisoner escapees where they could have constantly sent out new information and new evidence that would have helped those 600 police officers looking for the suspects.

CEOCFO: *Where are you in commercialization? Is the product in use? How have you been reaching people?*

Mr. Compson: The product is ready to use. We just had a launch party about a week ago and we are in talks with several different agencies right now about bringing them onboard.

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CEOCFO: *How do you gain attention with so much going on with police departments?*

Mr. Compson: The biggest way to get their attention is that we are offering this app as a service to law enforcement and the media. That really peaks the interest especially now where agencies are always looking for ways to cut back. We offer this for free because what we are going to do down the road is actually to pivot the software program to enable this to be used for large companies. If you have a hotel chain or if you are a pharmaceutical company and you have 3000 representatives, you can communicate directly with all 3000 representatives with live videos from prerecorded messages, pictures, training updates, and so forth. So we offer this to the police agencies for free. We are eventually going to add bells and whistles to this app that we may end up charging the agencies for but right off the bat it will be free to law enforcement. Getting them to sit down and be open to change is always a struggle because we are dealing with such an old industry that is stuck in its ways. It is hard to break past practices sometimes, especially when it is something new, such as an app. It is not unheard of for the industry to use apps. We do have certain apps we use in law enforcement but it is rare, however this practice is becoming more common.

CEOCFO: *Does being a detective help to get an audience?*

Mr. Compson: It helps immensely because in the years I have worked in my job in the special victim's unit I have worked over 4000 missing/murder cases. I think that when they understand that this app was created by law enforcement for law enforcement they understand that I clearly understand the issues that they are facing and the benefits of the app that the officers on the streets will receive by having access to this information.

CEOCFO: *How are you reaching out to law enforcement? Are you choosing by geography, certain sized departments? What is your criteria?*

Mr. Compson: We can bring on a large agency. We are ready to do that but we are trying to tap into the mid to small agencies first because we are trying to figure out what their demand is going to be. We know from the perspective of a large agency such as the agency that I am currently working with, Columbus Police Department, with 2200 police officers, I understand what they want and what they are going to need but what I do not understand completely just yet is the needs of a small police department of say 10 police officers. Their needs are going to be juristically different. So we are approaching them first. They are a little bit easier to adopt. Sometimes they are open to certain ideas a little quicker than the large political system that the large agencies have that we have to work through. The small to midsized agencies are our target right off the bat.

CEOCFO: *What has been the response when you do talk with someone? Is there any skepticism?*

Mr. Compson: They are very impressed with the security features we put in, and they are very impressed with the supervisory monitoring function, the ability for an officer to create a notification and have an error or a picture that may be should not be released just yet to the media. That ability that we have put into this program giving a supervisor, a second set of eyes, approval rights to actually review the notification prior to that notification going out is a function I think the agencies really like because they want to make sure the information going out is correct, 100% accurate, and something

that is not going to jeopardize the case. 99% of the time the information that is going out is for the purpose of the safety of the public, to capture the suspect, or locate a missing child, which is important for that to be as fast as possible.

CEOCFO: *Are you funded for the development as you move forward? Are you seeking investment or partnerships in any way?*

Mr. Compson: We currently are funded for this phase of the project. When go to our second product line that will be another app designed to the specific type of sector, we will reach out for capital at that point because that project is going to be huge. It will be a project with many more bells and whistles than what we have put in to the first software. It is going to be pivoting the software that we have now and adding other features such as live broadcasts and so forth.

CEOCFO: *Are you concerned about competitive landscape? What do you see as barriers to entry?*

Mr. Compson: When I started another business several years ago, having another competitor actually busted our business. In the line of work that we ventured into with this first app, I do not really want to see another competitor but I am also not going to try to fend off another competitor because I think getting this out to the public and making them aware that this new technology can be beneficial in the way that we are doing it that other companies could actually bust the acknowledgement that it is out there for law enforcement. Some programs out there do allow law enforcement to send out notifications to the public. Many colleges and universities have programs set up that allow them to send out safety notifications, class notifications, and so forth to the student body and staff. We have taken it to a different level and allowed this important information to be broadcasted directly from the scene of the crime.

CEOCFO: *Why do current systems fail at times?*

Mr. Compson: There are a couple different reasons why that happens and we try to attack those issues. When a notification is sent out via cellular signal, there are times, especially at a large event like a college football game or an NFL game, where the cell towers simply cannot handle the volume, especially when you are asking the cell tower for a high data package which would be a video or a large picture. So what we have done is allow these messages to not only go to the end user via the app but it can also go via text and it can also go to their email address.

CEOCFO: *What has surprised you as you have started this venture?*

Mr. Compson: We are lucky to have an IT team that is innovative and the simple idea that I had to begin with which started from the napkin theory really grew as we got through the programming and so forth and the additional features that we can deploy based on the original software. It is really going to change quite a bit over the years and we already know certain features need to be added but we have not added them yet. I guess the malleable way that we can mold this software to be so many different things to so many different needs and fill demands in different types of industries.

CEOCFO: *Why pay attention today to 1st Cast Media?*

Mr. Compson: I think as we all know by watching the news, information dissemination through traditional means has evolved. I think just about every American in this country generally speaking has some type of smartphone. Therefore, we are trying to get information that can protect the public, provide information to solve crimes, and do things for law enforcement that has never been done before.

CEOCFO: *Final thoughts?*

Mr. Compson: We are going into some interesting times as law enforcement sees many new tools like our 1st Cast Media app evolve. I have seen quite a few law enforcement agencies going toward social media, reaching out to the public, and becoming more transparent, which is a good thing. I think the public can help most of the time and I think the general public does want to help. They just do not have the tools readily available to them to assist law enforcement in solving cases and so forth. I think this really is an evolution in communication not only just for the public but law enforcement as well. We are a very different type of industry. Most of the information we have is protected for obvious reasons but there is a certain level of communication that we really need to take advantage of with the public. Eventually when agencies decide that really want to release this to our community; they can flip the switch on 1st Cast and start sending out notifications to the general public as well.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine



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