



Creating a Sustainable Cultural Foundation and Public Feedback Mechanisms to Build Community Trust



ORGANIZATION

Carthage Police Department



INDUSTRY

Law Enforcement



ABOUT

The Carthage Police Department services City of Carthage, Missouri, and surrounding areas in Jasper County. Their mission is to work for and with their citizens in order to ensure safety and to improve the quality of life in the community through education, professionalism, and diligent crime prevention.

CHALLENGE

When Chief Greg Dagnan of the Carthage Police Department read Arbinger’s bestseller, *Leadership and Self-Deception*, he realized the book contained the underlying principles to simultaneously enable safe and effective policing and build community trust. Even though Carthage, Missouri, enjoyed an exemplary reputation among area officers and within the community, Dagnan understood that the aftermath of events like those which occurred in places like Ferguson, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland, are the result of a dangerous erosion of trust between law enforcement and the community—an erosion that can often escape detection until after situations escalate. Dagnan was determined to proactively create a sustainable culture within the department that would ensure ongoing success.

“When we started the Arbinger process there were leaders who were angry, frustrated, and ready to end their career. As a result of the Arbinger work, these are now some of the best leaders I’ve ever worked with. This change in our people has translated into a tangible increase in trust within the community we serve.”

GREG DAGNAN

Carthage Chief of Police

SOLUTION

In order to equip the department with the ability to train all officers in Arbinger’s outward mindset methodologies into the future, Dagnan and his chief of staff, Michael Banes, became trained as facilitators of Arbinger’s training programs. Under Dagnan’s leadership, Carthage PD implemented outward-mindset practices in multiple areas including recruitment, leadership development, de-escalation, crisis management, and community engagement. Additionally, in order to establish unprecedented transparency and accountability for each police action, the agency elected to use Arbinger’s “Voice of Your Community” program to provide all community members with the opportunity to rate and provide feedback on every interaction with a Carthage officer. This program, once tied into the department’s technology, allowed community responses to be linked to specific events and officer(s) so that officers could follow up where needed to proactively address concerns and rebuild trust.

RESULTS

Because of the outward culture within the department, community responses via this feedback program have sparked powerful learning and improvement among Carthage police officers. “We’ve received responses from people who have received tickets, people who have been arrested, you name it. Any type of situation, we’re getting feedback,” shared Dagnan. And they are not only looking for positive responses. They eagerly respond to negative feedback because it provides an opportunity to make things right and build relationships. “To be successful as a leader,” says Dagnan, “you have to say, ‘I really want to know. If it’s good, if it’s bad, if it’s ugly—I really want to know and I need to be open to it. I need to be willing to do something about it.’ No matter who’s filling out the survey, or what reasons they’re filling it out for—there’s something we can learn from it. That’s the leadership challenge. It’s real easy to talk yourself out of doing something with feedback, but you can’t do that.”

The seasoned police chief believes this survey mechanism can help transform any department, but he attributes their success in embracing and changing as a result of the feedback to the shift in mindset the Arbinger training enabled. “At Carthage PD we have all been through the Arbinger training, and we have a culture of treating people right, especially when in our minds they may not deserve it.” This mindset has created a powerful relationship between the community and their police force. The Carthage Chamber of Commerce recently recognized the Carthage Police Department for “Community Contribution”—an award generally reserved for businesses. The city also enjoys what Dagnan believes to be a corollary lower crime rate when compared to similar agencies and communities.