



Managing the Police Image

It can easily be said that the image and brand of any major organization or agency is managed almost entirely by the media in one way or another. Just as traditional and new media molds the image, impressions and ideas of celebrities, sports figures and politicians; it is increasingly molding and impacting the image of law enforcement agencies and their leaders.

The traditional role of the media and journalists holding people in positions of power accountable, and looking out for the rights of the underdog still holds true. The challenge moving forward is that the lines of professionalism, ethics and even what constitutes a journalist are being blurred on a daily basis.

Traditional and new media are often criticized as being biased in one way or another for an agenda or the purpose of generating attention, controversy that ultimately generates revenue.

The image of police and law enforcement is quite literally under the gun. Impressions from situations large and small are often amplified in such a way that it seems like an out-of-control flu epidemic. True facts and information do not reflect what is being portrayed.

Law enforcement agencies must adapt and take more responsibility for their brand and image. Police must develop their own media, brand and image management systems. The simple and yet increasingly difficult goal should be to offer accurate, useful information that educates and sheds a positive light on the important role of policing and law enforcement.

Police media and public relations is the responsibility and role of leaders, supervisors and spokespersons.