

The first instinct of police, even when they have been involved in a detailed analysis of a problem, is to try to solve it by beefing up enforcement. You should expect this and not oppose it, even if the impact is usually short-lived. But from the beginning you should be helping your police colleagues find more permanent solutions. Local community partners could provide this help, but instead they often promote their own agendas and push solutions with limited impact. The result is often a compromise package of measures, none of which is effective, but each of which may satisfy one or other of the parties. In fact, the disagreements over solutions may lead to a loss of momentum and nothing may be properly implemented.

You can help to stop this happening, but you must first become an expert on solutions. For example, if the problem is one of car theft, you must be able to speak authoritatively about the ineffectiveness of decoy vehicles or 'lock your car' campaigns. If it is a burglary problem, you must know the results of research on burglar alarms or improved street lighting, both of which may be suggested as solutions. You should also be thoroughly familiar with findings on displacement, since innovative solutions are often blocked by knee-jerk invocations of this theory.

To become expert on solutions you should become familiar with the many relevant studies on the Home Office website ([www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)) and you must know how to find out more about particular responses by undertaking rapid literature searches. You will need access to *Criminal Justice Abstracts*, *Security Journal*, *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, *Crime Prevention Studies* and other relevant journals. Because evaluative research is scarce, you should look for studies undertaken overseas by the Australian Institute of Criminology ([www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au)) or the National Institute of Justice ([www.ncjrs.org](http://www.ncjrs.org)) and the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services in the United States. The latter publishes a series of *Problem-Solving Guides for Police* that are focused on specific problems. Twenty guides are

currently available and many more are planned ([www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)) When using research from overseas, you may have to explain that, because criminals everywhere tend to have similar motives and use the same methods, the findings are likely to apply to your local situation.

You must also become an expert on situational crime prevention, the science of reducing opportunities for crime. Situational prevention uses the same action-research methodology as problem-oriented policing and has dozens of evaluated successes to its credit. Much of the knowledge about displacement, diffusion of benefits, repeat victimisation, and many other concepts discussed in this manual have been developed by situational prevention researchers. The next five steps discuss the 25 techniques of situational crime prevention, which fall into five main groups (see the box). These are defined by what Nick Tilley calls the *mechanism* through which the techniques achieve their preventive effect: increasing the effort of crime, increasing the risks, reducing the rewards, reducing provocations and removing excuses.

At this point, you might be asking yourself why you should assume this responsibility for identifying solutions. Isn't it enough that you carry most of the burden at the scanning, analysis and assessment stages? And even if you did take on this role, why should anyone pay attention to you? But to become a problem-solving analyst you must go beyond your traditional analytic function. You must become a full and equal member of the problem-solving team. You may be relatively junior, but your authority comes from your expert knowledge, not your position. People will listen if you make novel suggestions, or if you provide supporting evidence for other people's good ideas.

You should always opt for solutions that could bring a rapid reduction in the problem. This means that you must focus on the immediate, direct causes of a problem rather than the more distant, indirect ones. This important distinction has been developed by Paul Ekblom and

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can be illustrated by the problem of bar fight injuries caused by broken bottles and glasses. Distant ‘root’ causes might include racial discrimination producing a generation of disaffected minority youths, lack of local employment opportunities resulting in widespread social exclusion, and the premium placed on a ‘tough’ reputation in a deprived and lawless community. More immediate, situational causes might include irresponsible serving practices promoting drunkenness in local pubs, and the immediate availability of bottles and glasses that can easily be used as deadly weapons.

Rapid and sustained reductions in crime can only result from addressing situational causes; addressing root causes, even if we knew what to do about them, can only pay off in the comparatively distant future – long after the current stakeholders have any remaining interest in the problem. Meanwhile, unless the immediate causes are dealt with, broken glasses and bottles will continue to claim victims.

Some situational solutions can also take a long time to implement. For example, the danger posed by glasses and bottles could be addressed by national legislation requiring pubs to use only toughened glasses and bottles that disintegrate into crumbs when broken. This would probably take years to accomplish. Much more realistic would be to bring community pressure to bear on local pubs to serve beer only in toughened or plastic glasses and to refuse to sell bottles at the bar. This ought to be achievable in a much shorter time. You might have a particular analytic role in promoting this solution by assembling data about the likely costs for the pubs and the reduced costs of injuries and emergency care. In fact, it will probably fall to you (who else?) to collect data about the feasibility, costs and the public acceptability of any of the measures that are being seriously considered by the problem-solving partnership.

The bottom line is that unless you acquire knowledge of a broad range of solutions and

unless you are prepared to fight for good ideas, all your careful analytic work may come to nothing.

### Read more

Ronald Clarke (1997). *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Derek Cornish and Ronald Clarke (2003). Opportunities, Precipitators and Criminal Decisions: A Reply to Wortley’s Critique of Situational Crime Prevention. In *Theory for Situational Crime Prevention. Crime Prevention Studies*, vol. 16, edited by Martha Smith and Derek Cornish. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press (and Willan Publishing, UK).

### Twenty-five techniques of situational crime prevention

#### Increase the effort

1. Harden targets
2. Control access to facilities
3. Screen exits
4. Deflect offenders
5. Control tools/weapons

#### Increase the risks

6. Extend guardianship
7. Assist natural surveillance
8. Reduce anonymity
9. Utilise place managers
10. Strengthen formal surveillance

#### Reduce the rewards

11. Conceal targets
12. Remove targets
13. Identify property
14. Disrupt markets
15. Deny benefits

#### Reduce provocations

16. Reduce frustrations and stress
17. Avoid disputes
18. Reduce emotional arousal
19. Neutralise peer pressure
20. Discourage imitation

#### Remove excuses

21. Set rules
22. Post instructions
23. Alert conscience
24. Assist compliance
25. Control drugs and alcohol

Here we describe the most basic category of situational measures – those designed to increase the difficulties of crime – beginning with target hardening. Situational prevention is sometimes dismissed as being nothing more than this, though it is only one of the 25 techniques that the approach encompasses. Note that there is considerable overlap between the techniques (for example, target hardening can slow up offenders and increase the risks of their getting caught) and that some measures can serve more than one purpose. When using this classification, do not spend time worrying where a particular measure fits. Use the classification only to ensure that you consider the widest possible repertoire of situational responses to a particular problem.

**Harden targets.** An obvious, often highly effective way to obstruct the vandal or the thief is through physical barriers such as locks, screens, or reinforced materials. Improved design of London Underground ticket machines substantially reduced the use of slugs. Screens to shield bus drivers have significantly reduced assaults and anti-bandit screens in London post offices reduced robberies by 40%. Strengthened coin boxes have reduced theft and damage to public telephones in Britain and Australia. The introduction more than 30 years ago of steering locks in Germany, Britain and America produced substantial reductions in theft of cars and immobilisers are currently achieving the same result.

**Control access to facilities.** Stopping people from entering places where they have no right to be, such as offices, factories and apartment blocks, has a long pedigree – think only of the portcullises, moats and drawbridges of medieval castles. It is also a central component of defensible space, arguably the start of scientific interest in situational prevention. Barry Poyner and Barry Webb found that a combination of entry phones, fencing around apartment blocks and electronic access to the parking garage achieved a significant reduction in vandalism and theft in one London council estate. Poyner has also demonstrated that the installation of entryphones and the demolition of walkways linking buildings significantly reduced muggings at another London estate (Step 22). In some cases, access controls

are intended to detect prohibited objects or to ensure the possession of tickets and documents. Automatic ticket gates on the central zone stations of the London Underground reduced fare evasion by two-thirds throughout the system, while redesigning tickets to make them easier to check produced a similar result on Vancouver ferries. In the most famous example, baggage and passenger screening at major airports in the early 1970s contributed to a major reduction in the number of airline hijackings worldwide from about 70 to 15 per year.

**Screen exits.** The purpose of exit screening is to ensure that those leaving a building, a facility or some other place have not stolen anything or have paid all fees and taxes. This technique includes the requirement to surrender tickets on leaving a train, border controls on leaving a country and the use of electronic tags in library books and shops. These tags activate an alarm if books have not been checked out or if a thief tries to remove a tagged item from the shop. Studies have shown that they significantly reduce shoplifting and theft of library books.

**Deflect offenders.** Rival groups of soccer fans are segregated in the stadium to reduce fighting, and their arrival and departure has been scheduled to avoid the waiting periods that promote trouble. Scheduling the last bus to leave immediately after pub closing time is intended to interfere with another of Britain's less admirable traditions, the closing time brawl. Reducing congestion around stalls substantially reduced thefts from shopping bags at markets in Birmingham because this increased the difficulty of pick-pocketing and other 'stealth' thefts. Roger Matthews has shown that a road closure scheme to deflect kerb crawling contributed to the rehabilitation of a red light district in a North London suburb. These are all examples of deflecting offenders away from crime targets, a situational technique suggested by routine activity theory.

**Control tools and weapons.** Saloons in the Wild West routinely required customers to surrender their pistols on entry because of the risk of drunken gunfights. More recently,

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'safer' handguns have been developed that can only be fired by the owner or which shoot wax bullets or tranquillisers. To prevent glasses being used as weapons when broken, many pubs in this country now use 'toughened' beer glasses. The first commercial use of Caller-ID (in New Jersey at the end of the 1980s) led to a reduction of one quarter in obscene telephone calls. Step 30 lists the different ways in which US cities have attempted to control the use of public phones in drug dealing, including blocks on incoming calls and banning them from specific locations. Re-programming of public phones at the Manhattan bus terminal prevented illegal access to the international phone service and wiped out a multi-million dollar scam perpetrated by hustlers. The introduction of identification procedures in Sweden produced a dramatic decline in cheque frauds, while improved security procedures for delivering credit cards produced a substantial drop in credit card frauds in this country in the mid-1990s (Step 12).

### Increase the effort of crime

#### Harden targets

- Steering column locks, immobilisers and the 'club'.
- Anti-robbery screens at banks and post offices.
- Plastic shields for bus drivers.

#### Control access to facilities

- Entry phones for blocks of flats.
- Electronic card access to garages and offices.
- Fenced backyards and the alley-gating scheme.

#### Screen exits

- Ticket needed to exit.
- Export documents.
- Electronic tags for shops and libraries.

#### Deflect offenders

- Street closures in red-light districts.
- Separate toilets for women.
- Disperse pubs from city centre.

#### Control tools and weapons

- Restrict spray-can sales to juveniles.
- Toughened beer glasses.
- Stop incoming calls to public phones to foil drug dealers.
- Photos on credit cards and thumbprints on cheques.

### Seven criticisms of situational crime prevention – and rebuttals

Criticism	Rebuttal
1 It is atheoretical and simplistic	It is based on three crime opportunity theories: routine activity, crime pattern and rational choice.
2 It does not work; it displaces crime and often makes it worse	Many dozens of case studies show that it can reduce crime, usually with little displacement.
3 It blames the victim	It empowers victims by providing them with information about crime risks and how to avoid them.
4 It promotes a selfish, exclusionary society	Defensible space designs for council housing and CCTV on public transport are just two examples of protection given to vulnerable sections of the population.
5 It promotes Big Brother and is a servant of repression	Situational remedies are often barely visible or improve the general quality of life. Prevention is generally less discriminatory than law enforcement.
6 It diverts attention from the root causes of crime	It achieves immediate results and allows time for finding longer-term solutions to crime.
7 It is a conservative, managerial approach to the crime problem	It promises no more than it can deliver. It requires that solutions be economic and socially acceptable.

Read more: Andrew von Hirsch, David Garland and Alison Wakefield (2000). *Ethical and Social Perspectives on Situational Crime Prevention*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

According to interviews with offenders, they worry more about the *risks* of being apprehended than about the *consequences* if they are caught. This makes sense from their point of view since they can do little to avoid punishment if caught, but they can do a lot to reduce the risks of capture by being careful. This is why situational prevention seeks to increase the risks of being caught and makes no attempt to manipulate punishment.

**Extend guardianship.** Cohen and Felson showed that the increase in residential burglary in America during the 1960s and 1970s was partly due to the increasing numbers of women working outside the home. This meant that for much of the day many houses, if not entire suburbs, had no 'capable guardians'. Other research has found that burglars prefer to commit their crimes on weekday afternoons when people are likely to be out. This explains why householders should cancel newspapers and inform their neighbours when they go away on holiday. Carrying a cell phone or going out at night in a group are other ways to extend guardianship. Little is known about the effectiveness of these routine precautions and evaluations of neighbourhood watch, the only systematic effort to extend guardianship, have not been encouraging. However, cocoon neighbourhood watch, under which surrounding homes were alerted after a burglary, was an important element of the successful Kirkholt project.

**Assist natural surveillance.** Householders trim bushes outside their homes and banks illuminate their interiors at night to capitalise upon the 'natural' surveillance provided by people going about their everyday business. Enhancing natural surveillance is also the prime objective of improved street lighting and defensible space architecture. Oscar Newman has recently reported some successes in reducing crime in American public housing through the application of defensible space principles. Improved lighting in a Dudley council estate produced crime reductions with little evidence of displacement.

Robbery rates of convenience stores in Florida were lower when they were located in areas with busy evening activity and when the view of their interiors was unobstructed. Informant hotlines and crime stopper programmes are attempts to capitalise upon the natural surveillance provided by the public.

**Reduce anonymity.** Expanded car ownership has allowed people to work in places distant from their homes. The development of out-of-town retail malls has contributed to the demise of local high-street shopping. Low-cost travel has led to increased tourism both at home and overseas. As a result, people spend increasing periods of time among anonymous strangers. The building of large schools is part of this trend because pupils are less well known to staff and other pupils. Reducing anonymity is a promising but rarely used situational technique. Some American schools are now requiring uniforms to reduce the anonymity of pupils on their way to and from school. 'How's my driving?' signs with 0800 telephone numbers on lorries, and taxi driver IDs displayed for passengers, are two further attempts to reduce anonymity.

**Utilise place managers.** In addition to their primary function, some employees also perform a surveillance role. These 'place managers' include shop assistants, hotel doormen, car park attendants and bus conductors. Less vandalism has been found on buses with conductors and on council housing estates with resident caretakers. Public telephones sited in pubs or railway stations where they receive some oversight from workers also suffer fewer attacks. Canadian research has found that apartment blocks with doormen are less vulnerable to burglary. Rewarding cashiers for detection of forged or stolen credit cards helped to reduce annual fraud losses by nearly \$1 million dollars at an electronics retailer in New Jersey. Vandalism on a fleet of 80 double-decker buses in northern England was substantially reduced when some of the buses were fitted with CCTV for drivers. Having two shop assistants on duty, especially

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at night, has been found effective in preventing robbery of convenience stores in the United States.

**Strengthen formal surveillance.** Formal surveillance is provided by police, security guards and store detectives whose main function is to furnish a deterrent threat to potential offenders. Burglar alarms and CCTV can enhance this surveillance. Vandalism, assaults

and fare dodging were substantially reduced on public transport in Holland when a new force of inspectors was employed. A bike patrol succeeded in curbing car thefts from commuter parking lots in Vancouver. A Home Office study found appreciable reductions in a variety of crimes following installation of CCTV in three British cities. New ways of enhancing formal surveillance are provided by linking data sets on individuals (see box).

### A better way to prevent welfare frauds

Parliamentary rows are periodically sparked when governments try to crack down on fraudulent welfare claimants by asking the public to turn them in. A few years ago, an opposition MP denounced the government's 'Beat-a-cheat' campaign. He said that, 'Encouraging your next-door neighbour to snoop on you is the sort of community values we now expect in Britain.' Eckhart Kuhlhorn has documented a better way of reducing welfare fraud, which involved a new computer system in Sweden that allowed crosschecking of statements made about personal income. When people claimed for rent allowance they were tempted to understate income, but when they claimed sickness benefits, they were tempted to overstate it. Linking the two sets of statements reduced this temptation and Kuhlhorn found two results: (1) a 75% increase in voluntary statements made to the rent allowance authorities about raised incomes; and (2) a 55% reduction in the numbers of households who lost rent allowances as a result of false statements about income. Both were desirable results and they illustrate the value of computerised crosschecking of data, not just in the welfare system but elsewhere. It is even possible that had death certificates been routinely checked against patient data, Harold Shipman might never have embarked on his homicidal career.

### Increase the risks of crime

#### Extend guardianship

- Promote routine precautions such as leaving signs of occupancy when away from the house, carrying a cell phone and going out at night in a group.
- Cocoon neighbourhood watch.

#### Assist natural surveillance

- Improved street lighting.
- Defensible space design.
- Neighbourhood watch and informant hotlines.

#### Reduce anonymity

- Taxi driver IDs.
- 'How's my driving?' signs.
- School uniforms.

#### Utilise place managers

- Train employees to prevent crime.
- Reward vigilance.
- Support whistleblowers.

#### Strengthen formal surveillance

- Speed cameras and random breath testing.
- CCTV in town centres.
- Focused bike patrols in parking lots.

Rational choice theory holds that offenders are always seeking to benefit themselves by their crimes. These benefits may not simply be material as in theft because there are many other rewards of crime, including sexual release, intoxication, excitement, revenge, respect from peers and so forth. An important strand of situational crime prevention is therefore to understand the rewards of any particular category of offending and to find ways of reducing or removing them.

**Conceal targets.** Householders often try to foil burglars by hiding jewellery or other valuables. They also keep their curtains drawn to stop thieves from looking through the windows to see what they own. Some people don't wear gold chains in public, and others avoid leaving their cars overnight on the streets if these are models attractive to joyriders, such as souped-up Fords and Vauxhalls (see box). These are all ways to conceal targets and reduce temptation. Some other concealment strategies are less obvious. For example, gender-neutral phone lists can help protect women from obscene phone calls and unmarked bullion trucks can reduce the risk of in-transit robbery.

**Remove targets.** The installation of a machine in a Spanish church that accepted plastic cards brought several benefits: donors received receipts for tax purposes, the church received larger gifts and, since money was not deposited, the church reduced its theft risk through removing targets. An earlier application of this same situational technique comes from the days of the Californian Gold Rush. Plagued by robberies of stage coaches, one mine started casting in 400-pound cubes. These were too heavy for robbers to carry away on horseback. More up-to-date examples of target removal are provided by changes made to public telephones. To stop people smashing glass, kiosks in high-risk locations have been replaced by booths. Phonecards that dispense with the need to store large sums of cash have removed an important target for theft. The package of measures that prevented repeat victimisation of houses on the Kirkholt council estate included the removal of gas and electric coin meters which were frequently targeted by burglars. Perhaps the most striking success is the introduction of exact fare systems and safes on buses, which dramatically reduced

bus robberies in New York and in 18 other cities in the late 1960s.

**Identify property.** Motor vehicles in developed countries must be registered and must carry a unique Vehicle Identification Number (or VIN). This is to assist taxation, but these measures also reduce theft. One of the last US states to require vehicle registration was Illinois in 1934, whereupon vehicle thefts declined from 28,000 in the previous year to about 13,000. More recently, the US Motor Vehicle Theft Law Enforcement Act 1984 has mandated the marking of all major body parts of 'high-risk' automobiles with VINs. Police 'operation identification' programmes have had a chequered history in the United States, but Gloria Laycock found that property marking undertaken in three small communities in Wales, combined with extensive media publicity, halved the number of reported domestic burglaries.

**Disrupt markets.** Criminologists and police have devoted remarkably little attention to understanding and disrupting markets for stolen goods. Criminologists have found it difficult to obtain data about these markets and the police have preferred to pay more attention to catching thieves and burglars than fences, partly because the penalties for dealing in stolen goods are relatively light. However, if there were no market for stolen goods there would be few persistent burglars and few thefts of lorries carrying large loads of tobacco and alcohol. Recent work for the Home Office by Mike Sutton has awakened interest in disrupting markets for stolen goods. The disruptive measures need to be tailored to the nature of the market and include systematic monitoring of pawn shop transactions by the police, crackdowns on illegal street vendors and monitoring of small ad sales in newspapers to detect repeat vendors. Police 'sting' operations – such as bogus second-hand shops – should be avoided because research has found these may stimulate theft in the area around the sting.

**Deny benefits.** Installing 'sleeping policemen' or road humps is a sure way to deny the benefits of speeding. Security-coded car radios and ink tags provide further illustrations of crime prevention techniques. Security-coded radios cannot be

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used unless the thief knows the PIN and, according to studies undertaken in Australia and the United States, cars with these radios have lower theft rates. Ink tags are used in clothing stores to prevent shoplifting. They release ink if tampered with and indelibly stain the garment to which they are attached. The thief cannot wear the garment or sell it, which removes the incentive to theft. The remarkable success achieved by the New York Transit Authority in ridding its subway cars of graffiti was due to a policy of immediate cleansing, which denied offenders the gratification of seeing their work on public display.

### Locking the stable door

Nick Ross reminds us in the *Foreword* that POP is about locking the stable door rather than, as in conventional policing, chasing after the horse. We may no longer have horses but most of us have cars. Many of us also have garages though we do not always use them. However, if we have models that are at high risk of theft (see the Home Office's Car Theft Index), we would be well advised to conceal them in the garage. As the table shows leaving them in the driveway or in the street outside the house greatly increases the risks of vandalism and theft.

### Reduce rewards

#### Conceal targets

- Off-street parking for cars attractive to joyriders.
- Gender-neutral phone directories.
- Unmarked bullion trucks.

#### Remove targets

- Removable car radios.
- Women's refuges.
- Pre-paid phonecards for public phones.

#### Identify property

- Property marking.
- Vehicle licensing and car parts marking.
- Cattle branding.

#### Disrupt markets

- Checks on pawn shops.
- Controls on classified ads.
- Licensed street vendors.

#### Deny benefits

- Ink merchandise tags.
- Graffiti cleaning.
- Disable stolen mobile phones.

### Read more

Mike Sutton, Jacqueline Schneider and Sarah Hetherington (2001). *Tackling Stolen Goods with the Market Reduction Approach*. Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 8. London: Home Office.

### Car thefts and parking place, England and Wales, British Crime Survey

Where parked	Car crimes per 100,000 cars per 24 hours
Garage at home	2
Drive/carport	40
Street outside home	117
Housing estate garage	38
Housing estate car park	101
Garage at work	48
Car park at work	37
Street near work	118
Other street	327
Public car park	454

Source: Ronald Clarke and Pat Mayhew (1998). Preventing Crime in Parking Lots: What We Know and What We Need to Know. In *Reducing Crime through Real Estate Development and Management*, edited by Marcus Felson and Richard Peiser. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute

When studying prisons and pubs, Richard Wortley noticed that crowding, discomfort and rude treatment provoked violence in both settings. This led him to argue that situational prevention had focused too exclusively on opportunities for crime and had neglected features of the situation that precipitate or induce crime. As a result of his work, Clarke and Cornish have included five techniques to reduce what they called 'provocations' in their new classification of situational techniques. These techniques are explained below, drawing on Wortley's examples.

**Reduce frustration and stress.** Everyone gets angry when treated rudely by waiters, when people jump queues or when trains are delayed with no explanation. Sometimes they get so angry they become violent. This could be avoided by improved service, which is increasingly being demanded and delivered. However, complaints may be ignored when those mistreated have little power. For example, prisoners are often ignored when they complain that they cannot eat when hungry or choose their TV programmes, even though these complaints could be met quite easily by staggering meal times and providing more TVs. Queuing for phones, another source of frustration for prisoners, can be reduced by computerised systems to ration phone use (see box). Outbursts of anger and violence can also result from people being subjected to extreme discomfort – too much noise, being jostled and having nowhere to sit. These conditions exist in many clubs and pubs and have consistently been found to induce trouble. More seating, soothing music and muted lighting are all ways to reduce stress in these settings.

**Avoid disputes.** Rival groups of fans are segregated in football stadiums and their arrival and departure has been scheduled to avoid the periods of waiting around that promote trouble. Taxi fares from Kennedy airport to Manhattan are now fixed at a standard \$30 to prevent cheating and disputes over fares. In an attempt to produce consensual crowd management at the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix, riders were permitted to operate campsites for their fellow motorcyclists and were encouraged to develop rules for use of the

facilities. This helped to eliminate the brawls between police and motorcyclists, which had marred the event in previous years.

**Reduce emotional arousal.** Male doctors should not conduct detailed physical examinations of female patients without a nurse or receptionist present. This protects the doctor from false accusations, but it also reduces the temptation to sexually abuse the patient or make inappropriate advances. Laws that prohibit convicted paedophiles from taking jobs involving contact with children not only protect children, but also help adults to manage their sexual desires. That the very sight of a gun has been found to trigger feelings of aggression provides one good reason for gun control laws. Similarly, the fact that high proportions of sex offenders own or use violent pornography provides a rationale for controlling these materials. Finally, reducing temptation is the basis for advice about being careful with one's money in public as well as advice to young women about being careful when out alone at night.

**Neutralise peer pressure.** Many parents discourage friends who are a 'bad influence' on their children and schools disperse groups of troublemakers into different classes. But adults as well as children are subject to peer pressure. Existing staff may induct new workers into stealing from their employers, and young men are often encouraged to drink too much by friends. One publicity campaign mounted in Australia to reinforce the powerful deterrent impact of random breath testing made use of the slogan, 'Good mates don't let mates drink and drive'.

**Discourage imitation.** All television sets now sold in America must contain a 'V-Chip' so that parents can programme their TVs to prevent children from viewing violent programmes. Though the link between violent movies and violence in society is much disputed, there is some evidence of 'copycat' crimes because media reports of unusual crimes sometimes provoke imitation elsewhere. It has also been shown, for example, that students who see

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their teachers engaging in illegal computer activity are more likely to commit computer crimes themselves, and that other pedestrians will follow someone crossing against a red light. Indeed, how often have you ‘run the red’ only to find when glancing in your rear view mirror that so has the car behind you? It has also been shown that picnic tables in parks that had been scratched and carved are more than twice as likely to attract further damage. Findings such as these provide the rationale for ‘rapid repair’ programmes to deal with vandalism. Wilson and Kelling extended this principle in their famous ‘broken windows’ article by arguing that the failure to deal promptly with minor signs of decay in a community, such as panhandling or soliciting by prostitutes, can result in a quickly deteriorating situation as hardened offenders move into the area to exploit the breakdown in control.

### Phone fraud, slot time and Victoria Secrets at Rikers Island

Rikers Island, a stone’s throw from La Guardia airport, is a huge system of 10 jails. These house different categories of inmates, whose phone privileges vary with their status. Corrections officers were supposed to use logbooks to record phone use and to regulate the amount of time each inmate spent on the phone. In the early 1990s, this system had broken down. Inmates had developed their own system, known as ‘slot time’, and the annual cost of calls had escalated to over \$3 million. The most powerful inmates controlled the phones, which they often used to access their beepers and maintain their drug businesses in the outside world. Inmates were also accessing ‘sex lines’ and were using stolen credit card numbers to make long distance calls and purchases. As Nancy La Vigne notes, who studied this problem as a graduate student at Rutgers, ‘The female inmates did just this, accessing the Victoria Secrets catalogue, which resulted in a jail that could boast the best-dressed inmates in the country – until officials caught on.’

The officials introduced a high security computerized phone system that put strict limits on phone use, in line with the status of the caller. Detainees gained access to the phones through bar codes on their ID cards and by entering a PIN. This system immediately cut phone costs in half, but it was also noticed that fewer fights were erupting over access to the phones. In fact, Nancy La Vigne’s study showed that the monthly rate of these fights dropped from 6.7 per 1,000 inmates in the year before the new phone system to 3.6 per 1,000 after its introduction.

We don’t know whether the female inmates remained the best dressed in the country.

Source: Nancy La Vigne (1994). Rational Choice and Inmate Disputes over Phone Use on Rikers Island. In *Crime Prevention Studies*, vol. 3, edited by Ronald Clarke. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

### Reduce provocations

#### Reduce frustration and stress

- Efficient queues and polite service.
- Expanded seating capacity.
- Soothing music and muted lighting.

#### Avoid disputes

- Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans.
- Reduced crowding in pubs.
- Fixed cab fares.

#### Reduce arousal and temptation

- Controls on violent pornography.
- Prohibitions on paedophiles working with children.
- Advice about avoiding sexual victimisation.

#### Neutralise peer pressure

- ‘Idiots drink and drive’.
- ‘It’s OK to say No’.
- Disperse troublemakers at school.

#### Discourage imitation

- Rapid repair of vandalism.
- V-chips in TVs.
- Avoidance of ‘copycat’ crimes by censoring details of *modus operandi*.

### Read more

Richard Wortley (2001). A Classification of Techniques for Controlling Situational Precipitators of Crime. *Security Journal*, 14: 63–82.

This fifth category of situational techniques recognises that offenders make moral judgments about their behaviour and that they often rationalise their conduct to ‘neutralise’ what would otherwise be incapacitating feelings of guilt or shame. They make such excuses as: ‘He deserved it,’ ‘I was just borrowing it’ and ‘I only slapped her’. These excuses may be especially important for ordinary people responding to everyday temptations to evade taxes, drive when drunk, sexually harass junior employees and steal employers’ property.

**Set rules.** All organisations make rules about conduct in their fields of governance. For example, businesses regulate employees’ time keeping and shops require sales assistants to follow strict cash-handling procedures. Organisations such as hospitals, transport systems and hotels must, in addition, regulate the conduct of the clients they serve. Any ambiguity in these regulations will be exploited if it benefits the client. One important strand of situational prevention, therefore, is rule setting – the introduction of new rules or procedures (and the clarification of those already in place) to remove any ambiguity concerning the acceptability of conduct. For example, in attempting to reduce ‘no-shows’, many restaurants will now only accept reservations if callers leave a telephone number where they can be reached. Some are also requiring that reservations be accompanied by a credit card number so that a charge can then be made for no-shows. Requiring anglers in California to wear their licences was successful in getting more of them to comply with licence purchase rules.

**Post instructions.** Work rules are often set out in employment contracts and rules established by credit card companies, telephone providers and insurance companies are contained in the service contracts. Regulations governing public places or facilities may be publicly posted, either to prevent people claiming ignorance of the rules or to show precisely where these apply. The roads, in particular, make extensive use of signs governing driving or parking. Studies have found that warning signs significantly reduce illegal parking in bays reserved for disabled drivers. Many other facilities – parks, libraries, colleges, transport systems, council estates – also post

signs to govern a wide range of behaviours. Despite their wide use, there have been few evaluations of the preventive effectiveness of posted instructions – but they are an essential tool of law enforcement and are often used in problem-solving efforts.

**Alert conscience.** This situational technique differs from ‘informal social control’ in two important respects. First, the focus is on specific forms of crime occurring in discrete, highly limited settings and, second, the purpose is to alert conscience at the point of committing a specific kind of offence rather than attempting to bring about lasting changes in generalised attitudes to law breaking. For example, signs at store entrances announce that ‘Shoplifting is stealing’ and in the Manhattan Bus Terminal signs proclaim that ‘Smoking here is illegal, selfish and rude’. Roadside speed boards are widely used to give immediate feedback (without issuing fines) to motorists travelling above the speed limit. Finally, government television campaigns that accompany crackdowns on TV licence evasion show those detected being treated by the courts as ‘common criminals’. There is no published evidence on the success of these campaigns but they have been repeated for more than three decades.

**Assist compliance.** When Lombroso suggested in the 19th century that people should be locked up for urinating in the streets, his pupil Ferri suggested a more practical way to solve the problem: build public loos. This constitutes an example of facilitating compliance, a technique of wide application. It includes subsidised taxi rides for those who have been drinking, litter bins and ‘graffiti boards’ (the latter of which are supplied for people’s public messages), and improved checkout procedures in libraries, which reduce delay and thus excuses for failing to comply with rules for book borrowing. In a classic little paper on Disney World, Shearing and Stenning provide a fascinating glimpse into the ways in which sophisticated crowd control and management – involving the use of pavement markings, signs, physical barriers (which make it difficult to take a wrong turn) and instructions from cheerful Disney employees – greatly reduce the potential for crime and incivility in the theme park (see box).

## FIND A PRACTICAL RESPONSE

**Control drugs and alcohol.** Crime is facilitated by alcohol and drugs, which undermine inhibitions, or impair perception and cognition so that offenders are less aware of breaking the law. The value of situational controls on drinking has often been demonstrated. Johannes Knutsson has shown that limiting the amount of alcohol that individuals could bring into a Swedish resort town on Midsummer Eve helped to reduce drunkenness and disorderly conduct. A local ordinance banning alcohol consumption in public in the centre of Coventry achieved large reductions in complaints of insulting behaviour. Voluntary agreements reached among local drinking establishments to promote responsible drinking have reduced alcohol-related crime in numerous nightlife areas in Australia. Rutgers University has decreed that beer must be served from kegs not cases at dorm parties because cases are easier to hide and, as one student said: 'If you have one keg and a line of 20 people behind it, people will get less alcohol than if you had a refrigerator and people were throwing out beer.'

### Remove excuses

#### Set rules

- Rental agreements.
- Harassment codes.
- Hotel registration.

#### Post instructions

- 'No Parking'.
- 'Private Property'.
- 'Extinguish camp fires'.

#### Alert conscience

- Roadside speed display boards.
- Signatures for customs declarations.
- 'Shoplifting is stealing'.

#### Assist compliance

- Easy library checkout.
- Public lavatories.
- Litter bins.

#### Control drugs and alcohol

- Breathalysers in pubs.
- Server intervention training.
- Alcohol-free events.

### Arriving at Disney World

- Signs tell visitors arriving by car to tune into Disney radio for information
- Signs direct them to the parking lot they must use and road markings show the way
- Smiling parking attendants direct visitors to their space and loudspeakers remind them to lock their cars
- They are directed to rubber-wheeled trains to take them to the monorail
- Recorded announcements direct them to stand safely behind guardrails
- They are reminded about the location of their parking space (e.g. Donald Duck 1)
- They are (politely) asked to sit, to keep their arms and legs within the confines of the carriage, and to make sure children do the same
- Before disembarking, they are told how to get to the monorail and barriers stop them going the wrong way
- On the platform, attendants guide them into corrals the right size to fill one compartment of the monorail

- Safety gates at the platform edge open only when the monorail arrives
- Any delays in service are announced and expected times of arrival are given
- On board, passengers are asked to remain seated 'for their own safety'
- Passengers are told how to disembark and how to move to the first entertainment
- They are once again reminded to look after their children and to take their possessions
- While waiting to enter each exhibit, visitors are marshalled in queues, which indicate waiting times; those in line are entertained by Disney characters
- On leaving the exhibit, they are guided by signs, barriers and attendants to the next one

Source: Clifford Shearing and Phillip Stenning (1997). From the Panopticon to Disney World: The Development of Discipline. In *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies*, edited by Ronald V. Clarke. Monsey, New York: Criminal Justice Press.

Many problems arise through the failure of some institution – business, government agency, or other organisation – to conduct its business in a way that prevents crime rather than causing it. In short, many problems occur because one or more institutions are unable or unwilling to undertake a preventive strategy, or because these institutions have intentionally established a circumstance that stimulates crimes or disorder. This creates risky facilities (Step 26) and other concentrations of crime.

Solving problems usually requires the active cooperation of the people and institutions that have failed to take into account the conditions that lead to the problem. These people and institutions have shifted the ownership of the problem from their shoulders to the shoulders of the police. Consequently, an important objective of any problem-solving process is to get them to assume ownership. So in developing a response, you need to answer three questions regarding ownership:

- Who should have ownership of the problem?
- Why has the owner allowed the problem to develop?
- What is required to get the owner to undertake prevention?

**Who should have ownership of the problem?** When a problem is located at a specific place, it is usually easy to identify who is responsible. The owner of the problem is the owner of the location. A problem in a park, for example, is the body with the responsibility for operating the park – usually a local authority or some private agency.

It is more difficult to identify those responsible for problems that are spread over larger areas. If a widespread problem is focused on a specific location, then that location may be the source for the events in the surrounding area, and the owner of the central location may be responsible. A Lancashire scrap yard functioning as a criminal receiver, for example, facilitated property crime in the surrounding village.

If there are agencies charged with seeing to the well-being of a special group of individuals – the elderly, children with special needs, or victims of domestic violence – and these individuals are targets of crime or disorder, then the service agency is a candidate for an owner of the problem.

**Why has the owner allowed the problem to develop?** There are four generic explanations that alone or in combination fit most problems:

1. An institution may be **unable** to prevent crime. This might be due to *ignorance* as to the effect of its operations on crime or ignorance as to how to prevent crime. Or this may be due to *lack of resources*, even when the institution knows its operations help create crime. It is also important to recognise the importance of institution-alised *procedures*. Changing procedures can be time consuming and costly in both monetary resources and staffing. A new inventory control procedure to prevent shoplifting and internal theft may be difficult to implement because it requires disruptive changes in the ways employees conduct their normal business.
2. Some institutions may be **unwilling** to prevent crime facilitated by their operations. Rather than recognise the role of opportunity in creating crime, some people dwell exclusively on the role of offenders. From this perspective, it is the function of police to reduce crime by stricter enforcement. The limitations of this approach have been noted in Step 4. Another source of unwillingness is the belief that the police are intruding on their rights. A retailer might claim that he has the right to display goods any way he wants, and that the police should not compel, or even suggest, alternative displays that might reduce shoplifting.
3. Some institutions are unwilling because they **gain** more by ignoring crime than they lose. They may perceive that the costs of prevention outweigh any benefits to

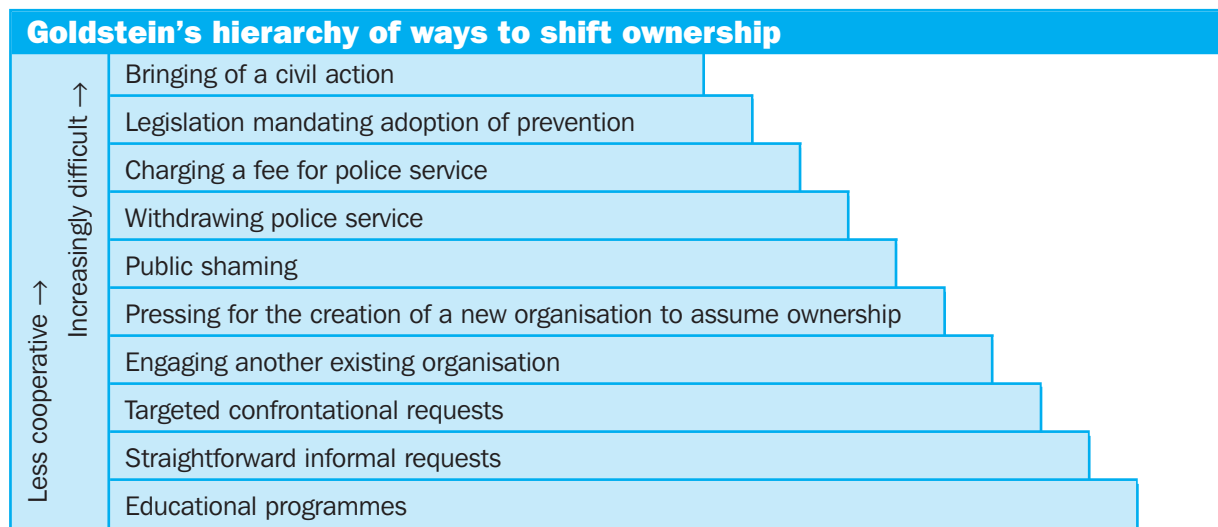
## FIND A PRACTICAL RESPONSE

them. Security personnel at an entertainment venue are costly, and quality security personnel are more costly. If the costs of the problem are not borne by the facility, then there is little perceived need to bear the costs of prevention. In essence, such facilities are exporting the costs of crime and prevention onto others, and thereby reducing their costs.

4. Some institutions may **profit** from the crimes, as can happen when a second-hand goods shop does little to verify legitimate ownership of the merchandise they display. Garages can purchase stolen car parts cheaper than legal car parts, thus increasing their profit margin.

**What is required to get the owner to undertake prevention?** Herman Goldstein has outlined a rough hierarchy of interventions designed to shift ownership of problems from the police back to the institutions that are responsible for them. These are shown in the figure.

Moving from the bottom to the top of the list, interventions become less cooperative and increasingly coercive. Because of this, as one moves up the list, the difficulty of intervention increases, along with the costs of failure to the police. Consequently, the value of information and thorough analysis increases from the bottom to the top. As Goldstein notes, this hierarchy is a rough indicator of these trends, rather than an exact description. Nevertheless, it is useful for planning a layered set of responses to a problem – beginning with the most cooperative and working upward only if needed and only when supported by information.



RESPOND

### Read more

Herman Goldstein (1997). The Pattern of Emerging Tactics for Shifting the Ownership of Prevention Strategies in the Current Wave of Change in Policing: Their Implications for Both Environmental Criminology and the Police. Paper presented at the 6th International Seminar on Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis. Oslo, Norway. (Download from: [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org))

It can be a long and troublesome process finding a suitable response. You may be repeatedly disappointed when promising interventions are vetoed because of expense or difficulty, or because a crucial partner won't cooperate. But there is never just one way to solve a problem and it is always possible to find an acceptable response among the available range of situational measures. So, eventually your team will agree on a response that meets some basic requirements:

- It is not too ambitious or costly.
- It focuses on near, direct causes rather than on distant, more indirect ones, which gives it a good chance of making an immediate impact.
- The mechanism through which each measure should impact the problem has been clearly articulated.

So, at last your worries are over and you can relax, right? Wrong! Even more difficult than agreeing on a promising response is to make sure that, once selected, it is actually implemented. As an analyst, you cannot ensure this on your own, but if you know the pitfalls of implementation, you can steer the partnership away from choosing responses that can fall prey to these. Tim Hope and Dan Murphy identified these pitfalls when studying a Home Office vandalism prevention project in eleven schools in Manchester.

The measures to be implemented at each school were selected by local council officials, school staff and police. Much of the damage was more inadvertent than malicious. For example, many windows had been broken by footballs and much of the damage to the outside of buildings had been caused by children climbing about. This suggested two different solutions: situational measures to protect the buildings or leisure provision to divert children into less harmful activities. Only one of the eleven groups recommended improved leisure provision. The situational measures recommended were mostly basic target-hardening

(window grills, toughened glass and high fences), though proposals also included a scheme to encourage local residents to keep an eye on two adjacent schools and a plan to move a playground to a less vulnerable area.

At only two schools were all the recommendations implemented. In three, none was put in place and at the remaining six schools one or more measures failed to materialise. The failure to implement measures meant there was little impact on vandalism. Hope and Murphy identified five main obstacles to implementation, all of which have since been encountered in other problem-solving projects:

- 1. Unanticipated technical difficulties.** For eight schools, the groups recommended the replacement of vulnerable windows with polycarbonate glazing or toughened glass. However, not a single pane of either type was installed. Polycarbonate glazing had been prohibited by the city architects because it would prevent escape in case of fire and might give off toxic fumes. Toughened glass had to be cut to size before it was toughened, but the panes came in many sizes and it would have been difficult to store a few of each size in readiness. The alternative of supplying a pane to order was ruled out by the long time (six weeks) it would take to do this.
- 2. Inadequate supervision of implementation.** At one school it was agreed to move the playground to a less vulnerable area. The original playground was to be replaced with flower-beds, but this had to be done by a council department that got no further than providing an estimate for the work. The relocation of the playground was subcontracted to a private builder, but due to a misunderstanding only half the proposed area was resurfaced. After two years, therefore, vandalism was unchanged, there were no flower-beds, and the school had acquired a useless, narrow strip of tarmac.
- 3. Failure to coordinate action among different agencies.** Every recommendation

that was the sole responsibility of the buildings branch of the education department was implemented, while none of those involving other departments or agencies ever materialised. For example, it was recommended that people living near two schools should be encouraged to keep an eye on them after hours and report anything suspicious to the police. The scheme required the cooperation of the education department, the head teacher, staff and pupils of the schools and three branches of the police – crime prevention, community relations and local police. All seemed keen on the idea, but no one would take the lead.

- 4. Competing priorities.** During the implementation period many other demands were placed on the education department as a result of widespread industrial action by council employees and a substantial reorganisation made necessary by a declining school-age population. The department was also undergoing staff changes that resulted in the reassignment of staff who had been involved in the vandalism project. It is therefore not surprising that the Home Office vandalism project was given little priority, especially when there was no obvious advantage for officials to spend time on it.
- 5. Unanticipated costs.** In some cases, the wider consequences of a particular course of action outweighed its immediate benefits. For example, at the school with the most serious vandalism problem it was decided to mount a security patrol for the impending holiday period. The school caretakers were employed to patrol the school for payment during their spare time. This measure was immediately successful in reducing vandalism and was extended beyond school holidays to provide coverage at evenings and weekends. Other schools began to demand the same protection and more caretakers wanted the additional overtime opportunities. Ultimately the cost became too high and the scheme was scrapped.

You can see from the list above that some implementation problems cannot be anticipated and that a proportion of all measures selected will never be implemented. However, it is also clear that certain kinds of measures can be expected to encounter problems and these are summarised in the box. In some cases, of course, a measure may be so promising that it is worth pursuing despite the risks of implementation failure. But being forewarned is to be forearmed.

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### **Expect implementation problems when a measure.....**

- ...requires coordinated action among a number of separate agencies
- ...will take a long time to introduce and involves a number of steps to be completed in sequence
- ...must be implemented by staff with little understanding of its purpose
- ...has no major supporter among the partnership team
- ...lacks the support of senior administrators

### **Also expect problems when the measure must be implemented by an agency...**

- ...that is outside the partnership
- ...that is poorly resourced or in turmoil
- ...that will gain little direct benefit from the solution

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#### **Read more**

Tim Hope and Daniel Murphy (1983). Problems of Implementing Crime Prevention: The Experience of a Demonstration Project. *The Howard Journal*, XXII, 38–50.

Gloria Laycock and Nick Tilley (1995). Implementing Crime Prevention. In *Building a Safer Society*, edited by Michael Tonry and David Farrington. University of Chicago Press.