# MANAGING CRIME AND QUALITY OF LIFE USING COMPSTAT: SPECIFIC ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTATION AND PRACTICE

*By Dr. Vincent E. Henry**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The highly effective management model or paradigm that has come to be known as Compstat was first developed within the New York Police Department in 1994 as a process for managing crime and quality of life in New York City. Compstat was developed in response to a very specific set of immediate needs confronting the NYPD at that time: the compelling need to bring spiralling rates of crime and disorder to within manageable bounds and to refocus the NYPD on its primary mission of effectively ensuring public safety by reducing crime and violence.

Since its introduction in early 1994, Compstat has proven to be highly effective in achieving the goals for which it was initially intended. Over time it has also evolved and grown from a basic and fairly rudimentary process involving the collection and analysis of crime data as well as a mechanism for ensuring accountability and information-sharing into a more complex, more nuanced, and eminently more effective management paradigm. As Compstat grew and changed over time, so too did the issues and problems challenging the NYPD. As crime and public disorder offences declined to within more manageable limits, the agency had the luxury of turning its attention to a range of other management problems and issues.

While reducing crime and disorder and increasing public safety have never lost their prominence or their importance on the NYPD's set of post-1994 priorities, the relative ease with which Compstat has permitted the agency to fulfil its primary mission has concomitantly resulted in the capacity to identify and address a host of other new, emerging, or longstanding management issues. The Compstat management model has become a fairly complex yet eminently adaptable paradigm that can be (and has been) applied to resolve a range of problems and to manage a range of police functions.

This paper addresses a number of specific issues that may be encountered in the implementation and practices of a Compstat-based management model, and in large measure it focuses upon the way the practical and implementation issues were manifest in the early NYPD experience. Because Compstat is, concomitantly and perhaps paradoxically, a management model that is simple to grasp and use yet at the same time somewhat difficult to explain in detail, this paper does not provide tremendous background on the basics of Compstat. Indeed, this paper should properly be regarded as the second (and more narrowly focused) phase or instalment of a two-part paper — the first part being the paper presented at the UNAFEI Public Lecture. That paper provided a more general overview of Compstat suitable to a diverse public audience, and this paper focuses on four specific issues I have been asked to address for the practitioner audience of participants at the 129th UNAFEI International Senior Seminar. Those four issues are: the details and actual situation of Compstat; details about technology; difficulties with the utilization of Compstat, and the future prospects of Compstat and Community Policing in the NYPD.

## II. DETAILS AND ACTUAL SITUATION OF COMPSTAT

As detailed more extensively in the first phase or instalment of this two-part paper, Compstat is a remarkably effective, adaptable and flexible management model or paradigm developed in the NYPD and applied with great success in controlling crime and disorder. Many have credited the tremendous reductions in crime and disorder in New York City over the past decade to the implementation of the Compstat process and the principles of Compstat management in the NYPD, and this management model has undeniably refocused that agency and revitalized its management cadre.

While Compstat has gained renown as a method used by police for reducing crime, its overall flexibility and adaptability make it a suitable tool for managing virtually any organizational function in many types of organizations. Compstat is a multifaceted approach to management that derives many of its guiding principles from sound business practice, including its emphasis on collecting and analyzing data that is used

* Associate Professor and Director, Homeland Security Management Institute, Long Island University.

for strategic decision-making. Compstat management emphasizes and establishes exceptionally high levels of performance accountability at every level of the organization, and this is largely accomplished through interactions between executives, managers, and other key agency personnel that take place at the Compstat meetings.

The Compstat paradigm may be best explained or understood through a review of its basic principles or premises.

The first principle of the Compstat paradigm is that police can and do make a difference. While some may reflexively accept this proposition as true, others are less receptive to it: they are willing to accept poor results and attribute them to the idea that external forces (such as economics, unemployment, social conditions, poor education, etc.) are the engines that drives crime, and that police can really do little to influence crime. Clearly, the police manager who does not wholeheartedly believe in the capacity of the police organization and the individual officer to make a difference is in the wrong line of work. A lack of faith in this basic premise also undermines the respect and legitimacy he or she needs from rank-and-file officers.

The second principle of the Comsptat paradigm is that four principles underlie effective crime reduction and quality of life problem abatement. Those principles (timely and accurate intelligence; effective tactics; rapid deployment of personnel and resources; and relentless follow-up and assessment to ensure that the problem has been solved) have been discussed at length in the first part of this paper.

Third, the Compstat paradigm recognizes that in the majority of instances, middle managers are in a far better position to make everyday operational decisions than headquarters executives. Middle managers are (or should be) far better acquainted with the crime and quality of life problems within their jurisdiction, and they are better acquainted with the strengths and abilities of the individual officers working for them. In order to make cogent operational decisions, middle managers need crime intelligence, practical police experience and problem-solving skills. Middle managers also make more accurate and effective decisions when they incorporate the wealth of information, tactical knowledge and experience residing within members of their commands. To operationalize this precept, Middle managers must be given the authority to make important decisions without prior review by administrative higher-ups. Careful selection and assignment processes and a viable accountability system will tend to ensure that middle managers make appropriate decisions.

The fourth precept of the Compstat management model is recognition that the police occupation's culture is not a singular, unchanging and monolithic entity. The occupational culture is the heart and soul of the police organization, the glue that often holds the agency together, and one of its greatest strengths. The executive who understands how to manage culture can achieve tremendous results. If the executive does not manage the organizational culture, it will manage him or her. In many dysfunctional police organizations, two distinct cultures can be discerned: a 'street-cop' culture and a 'management-cop' culture. When the ideas, attitudes, belief systems, values and goals that characterize these cultures are disparate or contradictory, the agency's executives and managers face formidable challenges and the agency is unlikely to approach its full potential. There occurs, in essence, an internal culture clash with a host of attendant conflicts and animosities. Compstat also recognizes that in many or most cases, the values, belief systems and goals espoused by the 'street cop culture' are more in line with effective policing and crime reduction than those of 'management cop' culture. Especially in larger agencies, executives are often accurately characterized as out of touch with the culture of rank-and-file officers and the world they inhabit. Effective management demands that the differences between cultures be diminished, usually in favour of the 'street cop' culture's best attributes. Police executives must manage the organization's culture as they would manage any other valuable resource, but few police executives pay adequate attention to nurturing and developing the organization's culture.

The fifth principle is that accountability is the key to performance. Transparent accountability systems — systems in which performance objectives are clear and objectively measurable and in which accountability processes take place in public - must be used to identify and either reward or discipline the organization's members.

Sixth, the Compstat model recognizes that in a high-performance police organization (and many or most other organizations), the lines and boxes on an organizational chart are largely irrelevant. They are most

useful for budget and administrative purposes — a tiny portion of the agency's overall activities — and have less bearing on the important operational aspects of police work. Typically, strict adherence to the communications systems prescribed by a hierarchical organizational chart impede effective communications and information sharing.

If executives are to be successful, the Compstat paradigm holds, they must engage in measured risk-taking and reward it within the middle and upper-management ranks. Operational officers are, by temperament and by the nature of their work, generally risk-takers, and middle managers who take reasonable and measured risks will gain the respect of the rank-and-file. In practice, encouraging risk-taking means that executives must be highly tolerant of well-intentioned and sensible experiments that nevertheless fail. These well-intentioned failures must be seen as opportunities to develop a tactical and operational knowledge base, and they should be carefully analyzed to identify the reasons why they failed to achieve the expected results. Repeated failures, however, indicate poor judgment or poor management skills and point to the need for accountability systems. Managers and executives must recognize that the entire organization can learn as much from experiments that fail as from experiments that succeed.

Finally, there is little room in an organization run according to the Compstat model for managers or executives who are timid or indecisive, or who are afraid to honestly seek out and assess the work-related attitudes prevailing in the organization. They probably will not like to hear what the rank-and-file have to say. On the other hand, the manager or executive who consults with subordinates and with the rank-and-file - honestly seeking input and opinions as to how the agency could be better managed - does not in any way compromise his or her power or authority. The executive who consults with the rank-and-file in developing policies, strategies and organizational goals but does not follow through on implementing a significant number of those recommendations will engender cynicism, suffer a loss of legitimacy and respect, and undermine his or her own power within the agency.

## III. DETAILS ABOUT COMPSTAT TECHNOLOGY

### A. The Basic Compstat Technology Package: Collecting the Data

The primary data component of Compstat is a database that contains daily crime counts, by precinct, for each of the seven major crimes (murder, rape, robbery, felonious assault, burglary, grand larceny and grand larceny-auto) that comprise the FBI's UCR Index.[1] In addition, the database contains daily counts of such statistics as the number of shooting incidents and the number of shooting victims (again, by precinct) as well as daily summons tallies. The databases the NYPD and other Compstat-driven agencies use are not proprietary software developed entirely by in-house programmers or special consultants. Instead, they are off-the-shelf software packages any agency can purchase and use. Similarly, Compstat technology does not require highly sophisticated hardware. A couple of basic stand-alone PCs or a small networked LAN system can generally run even the largest agency's Compstat initiative.

Prior to the development of Compstat, NYPD's executives and managers had no quick access to crime data. Under the crime and arrest reporting system that existed, officers prepared handwritten copies of crime complaint reports that were then typed by precinct clerical personnel and reviewed by supervisors. They were then distributed, with one copy forwarded to headquarters for manual keypunch entry into a mainframe computer database. Importantly, not every item listed on the complaint report was entered into the database - the precise address or location of the crime, for example, was not entered into the computer. Eventually, the resulting dataset would be audited for keypunch errors and necessary revisions would be made, and eventually it would be statistically analyzed.

This prolonged process resulted in statistical reports and analyses prepared several months after the crimes had occurred, making them virtually useless as deployment and strategy tools. The structure of the

[1] It should be noted that the NYPD's Compstat system does not use the FBI's UCR definitions per se, but rather each offence's associated definition from the New York State Penal Law. Because the New York State Penal Law applies in New York City, and because any criminal charges that will ultimately be filed will be based on the Penal Law, NYPD crime complaint reports (known as UF 61s) capture the Penal Law offence that was violated. Although there are slight differences between the UCR definitions and the NYSPL definitions of the seven major crimes, the differences are negligible. For example, in practice the UCR offence of 'Murder and Non-Negligent Manslaughter' conforms very closely to the NYSPL definition of "Murder," and the UCR's "Vehicle Theft" is practically the same as the NYSPL category of Grand Larceny – Auto.

database and the limited number of data fields it contained allowed only a very rudimentary statistical analysis. It told managers how many offences occurred within a given precinct during a given month, but not the precise time or location these offences were occurring. They certainly could not use the months-old analyses to predict or respond to immediate crime trends.

To make Compstat effective - to utilize real-time data - required a new approach. The NYPD did not have the time to completely redesign and implement an entirely new crime data collection system, so it utilized existing resources in new ways. Because most precincts had old and very poor computers, a simple database programme was written to allow each command to enter a daily tally of the seven major crimes and corresponding arrests occurring within its jurisdiction. During Compstat's first year, each precinct was also directed to research its paper files to determine the number of Index offences (and arrests for those offences) reported during the previous year's corresponding period. This created a dataset that would enable immediate comparison of the current period's crime and arrest figures to those of the same period in the previous year. Each week, every precinct copied the current week's data onto a floppy disk and delivered it to the Compstat Unit at Headquarters, where the individual precinct files were appended to a city-wide database. In just a few weeks, sufficient data was collected to begin printing a simple report comparing the weekly, monthly and year-to-date changes in crime rates on a precinct-by-precinct and a city-wide basis.

The numbers included in the Compstat report are preliminary counts that are intended to give managers and executives a close approximation of actual crime statistics as quickly as possible. The Compstat report is an early warning system that alerts police managers and executives to rapidly changing conditions and allows them to deploy and re-allocate resources, and for this reason the report does not require extremely precise statistics. As an early warning system, it matters little whether an apparent five percent increase in robberies from one week to the next is in actuality a four-point-eight percent increase or a five-point-two percent increase: managers and executives still know they have an emerging spike in crime that requires immediate attention.

Although the Compstat data collection process has undergone many refinements and improvement over time, the basic concept of collecting daily tallies of reported crimes and arrests and submitting them each week remains the same. These data are still compiled into a city-wide database each Monday morning, subjected to computer analysis, and used to prepare the Compstat Report. Sufficient copies of the Compstat Report are printed and delivered to all recipients by Tuesday morning, and the data this report contains is current through Sunday midnight. By the time the first Compstat meeting of the week is convened (usually on Wednesday morning at 7:00 A.M.), all the participants have had time to review the report and to learn how well each precinct is performing.

**B. The Compstat Report**

The weekly Compstat Report is printed on legal-sized paper and is about an inch thick. It contains a page for each precinct, Housing PSA and Transit District, as well as a page for each Patrol Borough and a City-wide page. The pages follow a standard format with columns detailing the crime and arrest statistics (both the actual number in each category and the percentage increase or decrease) for the past week, the past month, and the year-to-date period. Currently, NYPD Compstat Reports recapitulate these statistics from 1993 to the present and thus permit analysis of short and long-term trends. Examples of modified Compstat Report pages (albeit with arrest, shooting and summons activity figures redacted) can be found on the NYPD website (www.nyc.gov/html/pct/cspdf.html).

The report was designed to be simple, straightforward, and user-friendly, so it does not contain sophisticated statistics or difficult formulas. The good reasons to keep the Compstat Report pages as simple as possible include the fact that the more complicated the report, the fewer the people who will actually read and understand it. Second, although the report is an essential part of New York's crime-fighting efforts, most police executives simply do not have a great deal of time on their hands to spend deciphering complicated statistical reports. Third, the basic statistics provided in the Compstat Report are easily interpreted and sufficient to understand whether a trend is taking place, while more complex statistical analyses are often beyond the average police manager's level of comprehension.

The weekly Compstat Report also includes pages that rank, in descending order, all precinct commands by the number of crimes committed and arrests effected. Separate pages are prepared for each of the seven major crimes as well as for overall crime, and they permit users to easily determine which precinct

commands lead the city in reported crimes and arrests. Every commander therefore knows exactly where his or her precinct stands in relation to all others, and as importantly every executive knows where commands stand in relation to each other. By ranking commands in this way, everyone knows precisely which precincts have the highest levels of crime.

The important point is that a Compstat database permits an agency to develop simple statistical reports that suit their particular needs. In other jurisdictions, police agencies might want to rank different geographic areas according to the number of crimes committed, the number of arrests made, the average response time to calls for service, the number of summonses issued, or any other type of performance indicator. It is important that executives, managers and supervisors know who is doing the most work so that high performers can be identified and rewarded and so that low performers can be identified and motivated. The number and type of performance indicators in the database should be determined by the specific needs of the individual agency.

The NYPD Compstat Report provides executives with data in a variety of formats, including pie charts, bar charts and tables that summarize and visually depict performance data. The simplicity and versatility of many off-the-shelf software packages available today make data-basing and report generating a simple matter that does not require exceptional computer skills. These software programmes make the basic concept of the Compstat process - collecting data that is important to manage the agency and achieve its goals, statistically analyzing the data in a way that will quickly identify new trends and patterns, and presenting this data in a format managers and executives can easily understand - a relatively simple task.

**C. The Commander Profile Report**

An important adjunct to the weekly Compstat Report is the Commander Profile. This report provides detailed information on patrol and investigative units as well as their Commanding Officers. In smaller agencies, it might provide data on shift supervisors or specialized units. By consolidating data in a single report, the Commander Profile permits top executives as well as other middle managers to be generally familiar with conditions and issues in every unit and command, and it also serves as a kind of 'report card' for the way commanders manage non-crime management issues. Because it is widely circulated within the NYPD, the monthly Commander Profile (like the weekly Compstat Report) enhances the transparency of the agency's management: almost everyone knows exactly how well they are performing in relation to others.

The concise Commander Profile report contains a page for each precinct command as well as for each detective squad and specialized investigative unit. The data include population and demographics, the number and ranks of personnel assigned the number and categorized type of civilian complaints made against officers, the number of vehicle accidents involving Department vehicles, and a host of other information by which the commander can be assessed. These include sick rates, the number of line-of-duty injuries suffered by officers, response time to various types of calls for service, overtime expenditures, and the number of calls for domestic violence. These data give executives important insights into the state of a command, and because commanders are expected to manage each of these issues the statistics are important indicators of the manager's abilities. While the NYPD uses its own specific criteria in assessing managers, other agencies should substitute variables appropriate to managing their agency and achieving its overall goals.

**D. Crime Mapping**

The Compstat Report's statistical summaries provide considerable information about the number of crimes, arrests and other enforcement actions taking place within a given geographic area (i.e., a precinct, Patrol Borough or the city as a whole), but it says nothing about *where* or *when* those crimes are taking place. This kind of aggregated information it important, but it is also insufficient if we are to strategically deploy resources to address crime. As in any strategic intelligence system, we certainly need to know our opponent's strength, but we also need to know where our opponent will be and what he will be doing at a given time. Compstat uses crime mapping technology to determine the time and location crimes are most likely to take place.

Like many police agencies, the NYPD had long employed simple pin maps to ascertain where crime had taken place. These traditional maps required constant attention to ensure they were up-to-date and accurate, there was no standardization of mapping or updating throughout the department, and they provided a fairly

limited view of crime's temporal dimension. That is, a pin map of robberies might depict the spatial distribution of these crimes over the previous month, but gave no insight into robberies occurring the previous month or over the course of the previous year. One precinct might update its maps each month, while another updated the maps every six weeks. The lack of standardization meant that every precinct might not have a separate map for each crime — robberies, burglaries and car thefts could conceivably be depicted on the same map. Different coloured pins were typically used to denote different types of crime (or, if separate maps were prepared for each of the major crimes, for different times of day), but especially in high crime precincts the range of colours could be confusing. The traditional push-pin maps were rarely used for any strategic purpose, and they did not permit sophisticated analysis of multiple variables or relationships between causative factors in the crime equation.

The first crime maps used at the early Compstat meetings were the conventional kind: commanders were instructed to bring large precinct maps with clear acetate overlays depicting the distribution of major crimes. Colour-coded dots on the acetates indicated the location of individual crimes and by placing several acetates atop the precinct map the areas of highest crime could be identified and some spatial relationships between crimes could be discerned. These crude maps did not permit the analysis of temporal relationships, though.

These problems were largely overcome when, in the summer of 1994, the Compstat Unit began using an off-the-shelf mapping programme that generated computer-based maps of every precinct in the city. These computerized maps, which could be viewed on a computer screen or printed out on paper, were capable of interfacing with the Compstat database and generating layers to depict each of the seven major crimes. They could also depict those crimes by time of day or day of the week — all that was required was expanding the existing Compstat database to include information fields for the address, time of occurrence and day of the week. All this information was readily available to the precinct personnel who compiled the weekly crime recapitulation from paper crime reports.

Eventually, computerized layers were developed to include a wide range of related map information such as the locations of schools, parks or playgrounds, transit facilities, houses of worship, banks, automated teller machines (ATMs), and past and current drug arrests - all locations or facilities that could conceivably impact the crime equation. These maps and layers permitted an exploration of the relationships between crime, time and place, immediately identifying 'hot-spot' crime clusters and the times those crimes were most likely to occur. This information helped predict when and where crimes were likely to occur next, and it therefore helped to determine deployment decisions.

The flexibility and ease of analysis afforded by mapping software facilitated an in-depth examination of the causes of crime: the kind of exploratory analysis of the relationship between shootings, robberies and drug sale locations mentioned above, for example, - an analysis that was scarcely possible with conventional push-pin maps - became a simple matter through technology. Commanders could also explore whether certain locations or facilities were attracting crime at particular times and develop effective strategies to prevent the offences. A precinct map that depicted the locations of schools as well as robberies, for example, might not reveal crime clusters unless the robberies were filtered to include only those robberies taking place during school hours. In this example, it would be worth exploring whether many of the robbery victims and/or robbery perpetrators were teens - information (age of victim, age of suspect) that is also now contained in the Compstat database and can therefore be immediately analyzed. If they were in fact teens, the appropriate way to address the robbery problem might be through enhanced truancy enforcement that would reduce the number of victims and perpetrators on the street.

The mapping technology also made it a relatively simple matter to focus enforcement efforts when and where crime was actually taking place. By plotting the locations where crimes were being committed and superimposing the locations where arrests for the same crimes were being effected, commanders can ensure that their personnel are properly deployed and working effectively to have the greatest immediate impact. The specific strategy is often less important than the fact that something is being done to remedy the problem, and no effective remedy can be prescribed unless the specific symptoms are known.

**E. Summary: The Compstat Technology Package**

The technology that makes Compstat possible is not very complicated, but its impact has been formidable. The ability to quickly gather, process and analyze large amounts of crime information creates many new opportunities for examining crime and crime trends, for developing effective strategies to reduce crime and improve quality of life, and for focusing personnel deployment and enforcement activities. Commanders have the technological capacity to analyze events on practically a real-time basis, and a wealth of crime intelligence can be rapidly communicated. These technological advancements dramatically altered the way the NYPD deals with crime. Deployment strategies have been refined and carefully focused, and members of the department learned how detailed crime pattern analysis can point to appropriate strategies to reduce crime. Personnel at every level of the organization also saw how detailed analysis could be used to test the effectiveness of crime reduction strategies worked under specific conditions. In other words, the technology utilized in Compstat revolutionized the way members of the NYPD think about crime, crime control, and strategic policing.

**F. The Compstat Meeting — Also known as the Crime Control Strategy Meeting**

Like all the other technological and organizational elements of the Compstat process and the Compstat paradigm, the Compstat meetings developed and changed as part of a rapid evolutionary process. Because the NYPD faced a serious problem of information flow, a clear need existed for a method that would ensure more timely communication of ideas, information, policies and directives throughout the agency.

Prior to Compstat, the NYPD's only institutionalized crime meetings were the relatively small monthly robbery meetings chaired by Patrol Borough commanders and attended by precinct commanders and the separate monthly meeting attended by each of the seven Borough commanders and chaired by the Chief of Patrol. None of the other high-ranking executives usually attended the meetings, and they rarely, if ever, met formally with precinct commanders to discuss crime statistics or crime control issues. As a result they had little interaction to help determine their leadership and crime-fighting skills.

The problems that plagued the robbery meetings began to change with the first Crime Control Strategy Meetings — the formal name for what have come to be known as Compstat Meetings. Unlike the vague and subjective assessment standards of leadership and crime-fighting ability that previously existed, Compstat put extremely objective standards in place, basing them on clear goals that effective and energetic managers could reasonably achieve.

The first Compstat meetings were rather simple but they were a tremendous improvement over the earlier robbery meetings insofar as they brought high-ranking executives and precinct commanders together in the same room at the same time. Everyone at the meeting is armed with the same basic information and statistics (i.e., the Compstat Report) and specific questions regarding crime can be directed to the person with the immediate responsibility for controlling crime in the precinct - its commander. The commander can respond directly and publicly to the executive asking the question, and an atmosphere of transparency and fairness is created because everyone in the room is privy to the same information and everyone is held to the same standard. The system of hierarchical communication (that is, communication up and down the established linear channels of a traditional organizational chart) was transformed into a communications model that resembled what Bratton has called a "seamless web" (Henry, 2000): every individual (or node in the network) can communicate immediately and directly with every other individual. As commanders respond to questions they also have the opportunity to educate executives about the specific crime and quality of life conditions existing at particular locations or within particular neighbourhoods; executives thus gain a deeper knowledge of the precinct as well as of the city and all its neighbourhoods.

The communication methods employed at the early Compstat meetings were unusual for a police agency, and they immediately attracted attention within the department as well as outside it. A *New York Times* article noted that

> such meetings, which are much like those regularly held by major corporations, may seem a little thing, but they are new to the New York City Police Department and they are rare among departments around the country ... Perhaps more than any other single thing the department is doing, the meetings reflect the Commissioner's intent to mobilize the tools of corporate management as he searches for "creative ways to reduce crime and the fear of crime" (Treaster, 1994, p. B3).

The early Crime Control Strategy meetings were held in a small room that did not offer any of the amenities or technology that would later be associated with Compstat meetings, but it still offered the opportunity for an unprecedented level of interaction between the agency's top leadership and its middle managers. From the beginning, the meetings permitted executives to communicate ideas and objectives directly to the people responsible for implementing them. Similarly, precinct commanders had a forum to communicate the crime and quality of life conditions they faced and the organizational obstacles and problems they encountered, directly to the executives who had the resources to help them resolve these issues. By introducing a transparent peer-to-peer (or, in other terms, competitor-to-competitor) system of transmitting information, Compstat meetings put additional pressure to perform on commanders. Some precinct commanders were initially reluctant to speak candidly to the top brass or in front of their peers and competitors, but in time their they took the opportunity to communicate openly.

The executive staff also benefited from the new arrangement, since it was able to formally and informally assess each middle manager's knowledge and leadership ability on a monthly basis and to monitor the individual's career progress as additional challenges and responsibilities were taken on. As each precinct commander responded to questions or addressed the group, it became apparent which ones had natural leadership talent, who showed promise as motivators and problem solvers, and who presented himself or herself as a competent manager capable of moving the department forward to achieve its goals. In this sense, the meetings served as a showcase for managerial talent.

The Crime Control Strategy meetings are convened twice each week from 7 A.M. to 10 A.M. As the meetings grew and the technology evolved, they were soon moved to the Command and Control Centre, a high tech conference room. The meetings are attended by practically all the NYPD's top executives, as well as Borough Commanders and precinct commanders within a particular geographic area that is determined on a rotating basis — usually about six or seven precinct commanders in adjoining precincts attend each meeting. In addition, the heads of the investigative and enforcement units working within these precincts also attend.

The Compstat meeting's primary participants are seated around conference tables set up in a horseshoe arrangement, with microphones placed every few feet. At the top of the table, executives sit at a kind of dais, while precinct and investigative unit commanders sit along the sides of the horseshoe. Facing the executives at the open end is a podium, and mounted high on the wall behind the podium is a large video projection screen measuring perhaps ten feet by thirty feet. Additional video monitors and projection screens are arranged nearby. Other meeting participants - including visitors and representatives from support and ancillary units - sit on folding chairs in a gallery behind the executives.

One by one, precinct commanders and the heads of investigative units operating within the precinct's jurisdiction are called to step up to the podium and brief the assembled group on current crime and quality of life conditions as well as the activities and strategies being used to address those conditions. Commanders are expected to present a candid and fairly detailed overview of the state of the command, the priority crime and quality of life conditions it faces, and the strategies and tactics being employed to manage those conditions. Commanders typically review the changes in crime and quality of life conditions as well as arrest and enforcement statistics since their last Compstat appearance, and they usually brief the group on current major cases and initiatives. Commanders can have statistical data from the Compstat Report (as well as prepared charts and tables depicting various crime analyses) projected on the screens. The briefing is a comprehensive and informative recapitulation of criminal activity and police activity within the command, showcasing what the commander is doing to identify and solve problems. Executives may interrupt and direct the presenter to focus more closely on a particular issue, or they may interrupt to focus on a particular case. The overall process of interaction is fluid and flexible, with few fixed rules.

Commanders draw attention to emerging crime and quality of life problems, explain what strategies and tactics they are pursuing to address them, demonstrate a thorough grasp of the issues facing the command, and communicate the overall state of the command's management. Following this state-of-command briefing, executives begin questioning the commander. Although virtually any issue related to the command's management is fair game for the executives' inquiries, crime reduction and quality of life improvement issues are usually given the highest priority. Based on their earlier review of the Compstat Report, the Chiefs and Deputy Commissioners are likely to have questions about statistical increases in any crime category.

**G. Interactions at the Compstat Meeting**

The give-and-take between Precinct Commanders and executives at Compstat meetings can at times become adversarial, but they also emphasize executive approval and public commendation for high-performers. Astute executives are as generous in lavishing praise as they are in censure. George Kelling (1995) described the type of interaction that takes place at the sessions when they are conducted properly:

> Another commander steps to the podium. "You had eight rapes this month, four above last year," Maple says, "What's going on?" The commander begins disaggregating: "Four rapes involved friends and family, one was a date rape, and three were stranger rapes two of those appear to be the work of one person." Maple turns to the detective lieutenant assigned to the precinct and standing beside the commander. "Tell me about the investigation." The lieutenant moves to the podium and describes the investigation. Maple interrupts and addresses another precinct commander seated at the table: "You had a similar problem a couple of months ago, didn't you? How did you handle it?" Later in the presentation, while discussing auto theft, the commander asks if it's legal to stop tow trucks towing cars (a common method of theft). Several people call out a jumble of opinions. Maple cuts them off. Nodding to the head of the legal department, he guarantees the captain a quick response: "We're not sure. Legal will get back to you with an answer by the end of the day." (Kelling, 1995, p. 44)

Kelling goes on to note how the precinct commander finishes his presentation by introducing two patrol officers brought with him to the meeting. He describes how the officers' initiative led to the solution of a series of robberies occurring across two patrol boroughs as well as within the jurisdiction of a suburban police agency outside the city. "Along with the rest of the participants and the audience, chiefs, *super-chiefs*, rise and applaud - applaud patrol officers. The officers have been assigned to a month of special duty in the detective unit, a career-enhancing honour (Kelling, 1995, p. 44; emphasis in original)."

**H. Summary and Conclusion**

The weekly Compstat Crime Control Strategy Meetings are one facet of the Department's comprehensive system by which the NYPD monitors and evaluates the performance of individual commanders and the agency as a whole. As the Compstat meetings developed and achieved results, similar or related evaluation systems and processes were instituted at all levels of the organization. These systems and processes include the pre-Compstat briefings at which precinct commanders make their presentations to their Patrol Borough Commander in preparation for the Headquarters meeting and the precinct-based Compstat meetings convened by precinct commanders to ensure the performance and accountability of the line supervisors who report to them. Each of these structures follows the general outline and process of the Compstat Crime Control Strategy Meetings.

The Compstat process is a radical departure from the management and problem-solving processes that have traditionally been used in American police agencies, and perhaps the principal difference lies in its intensity and the extent to which it focuses upon the uncompromising fulfilment of the agency's core mission. The process truly represents a revolution in the way police agencies are managed. Although this has become a revolutionary process, it continues to evolve insofar as it is sufficiently flexible to permit continual adjustment, refinement and enhancement in order to effectively respond to changing demands.

## IV. DIFFICULTIES WITH THE UTILIZATION OF COMPSTAT

Overall, there have been few difficulties encountered with the implementation of Compstat. Most of the difficulties, in fact, occurred during the early days before the majority of members of the NYPD (the critical 'tipping point' referenced in the first part of this paper) became convinced that this new system for holding personnel accountable and for reducing crime and disorder would actually be effective. As its effectiveness became apparent, members of the NYPD accepted it and incorporated Compstat-style systems throughout the organization.

Admittedly, there was some initial fear about Compstat and the accountability it brought, but that fear was largely confined to those timid supervisors, managers and executives who also feared being held accountable themselves. Many of these individuals had good reason to be fearful, since they had risen through the bureaucracy to positions of rank and authority but had few real skills in the area of managing crime. Because they lacked the skills to manage crime, they were unsuitable for the commanding officers assignments they held. Compstat soon revealed their inadequacies, and they were reassigned to units (typically lower-status

positions) better suited to their particular skill set. In many cases, these individuals chose to retire from the NYPD rather than take a transfer. The particulars of NYPD's generous retirement system permitted many managers and executives to exit the agency without incurring a significant personal financial impact.

In line with this fear of accountability, Compstat encountered fairly significant early resistance from managers and executives who were locked into an established and anachronistic management mindset. A particular management style known as the Professional Model had been the prevailing management model in the United States from at least the 1940s through the 1980s, when the Community Policing Model began to take hold — particularly among the more progressive managers. Nevertheless, many of the NYPD's executives and managers remained rooted in the concepts and principles of the rigid Professional Model, which emphasized bureaucracy, limited discretion for those in lower ranks, strict adherence to written rules and procedures, and the centralization of power, authority and discretion among the top ranks. These ideologies were, of course, at odds with Compstat principles, and proponents of the Professional Model had great difficulty accepting Compstat and adjusting to it. Again, many of the 'old dogs' chose to retire rather than to adjust their thinking and points of view, and some of those who remained subtly or overtly resisted Compstat's implementation. They too, were identified as lacking the management skills, insights, and flexibility required under a Compstat system, and for the most part were reassigned to less influential positions where they could not create substantial interference.

Another related problem during the early phases of implementation was also related to the previous management mindset. Compstat required rapid action, and speedy response has never been a characteristic of highly bureaucratized organizations. Those individuals involved in developing Compstat were often in conflict with the entrenched bureaucrats who were set in their ways and who required that all personnel follow procedures without exception. An example was the experience of Sergeant John Yohe, one of the prime architects of Compstat and the man who put together its computer technology systems.

Yohe needed a particular database software that the NYPD did not use as well as some GIS mapping software, and he needed it quickly. He prepared a purchase order for the products and brought the purchase order to the purchasing office in order to acquire the software as quickly as possible. The bureaucrats told him that because the department had never purchased this particular product before, procedures required several additional reviews and approvals. Accountants would have to review his request and decide if he really needed the products he wanted. In addition, they said, Sergeant Yohe did not have sufficient rank to authorize the purchase: he would have to prepare a new purchase order and receive endorsements from higher-ranking officers. Finally, the purchase would have to wait until the next time the purchasing office was buying software, since it bought in bulk and would not purchase individual items. The bottom line was that several months would elapse before Sergeant Yohe got the software he needed to help reduce crime. Although he argued with the bureaucrats, they held firm.

Instead of arguing further, John Yohe left Police Headquarters and walked down the street to a computer shop where he bought the software and paid for it with his personal credit card. He began using the software that day — using it for the purpose of fighting crime. When he tried to submit his credit card receipt for reimbursement, the bureaucrats were outraged: not only was there no procedure in place to reimburse emergency purchases on personal credit cards, but Yohe had offended the bureaucrats and their sense of authority by ignoring the procedures they told him he must follow. In their view, he had been impertinent and possibly insubordinate because he did not follow procedures, and they refused to reimburse him. The fact that in this case the procedures were absurd did not matter to the bureaucrats; they were concerned with only with procedures and did not perceive that these procedures were insignificant in comparison to the overall mission of fighting crime. Only when a ranking chief intervened did John Yohe receive reimbursement, but the chief's intervention also identified the offending bureaucrats as obstructionists.

This anecdote is one of many that effected the implementation of Compstat, and it illustrates a common problem in rapidly changing organizations: the reluctance or inability of some personnel to change the way they think and act in response to a changing environment.

## V. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF COMPSTAT AND COMMUNITY POLICING IN NYPD

So far, we've seen the Compstat paradigm's impact on the agency as well as the fundamental changes it effected and the powerful results it achieved. As evidenced by the number of police and other public service agencies that continue to adapt and/or adopt the paradigm and implement its methods and principles, it is clear that Compstat has made its mark and that it is fairly well entrenched across the broad landscape of public sector management. But because the Compstat paradigm continues to evolve, to adapt, and to find new areas of application, it would be premature to end our exploration without some speculation about its future.

There is a great deal to be optimistic about concerning Compstat and the Compstat paradigm, since the paradigm's greatest strength lies in its capacity for flexible response to new and emerging trends. Just as Compstat has proven its effectiveness in rapidly responding to new crime trends and rapidly changing crime conditions, it is likely to be effective in overcoming any other complicated exigencies the future may hold.

We will briefly explore some of the directions Compstat has taken and some of the directions it may take as it continues to evolve.

**Variations on the Compstat Theme**

It was noted earlier that over the past several years hundreds of police agencies across the United States and throughout the world have visited the NYPD to learn about Compstat (Gootman, 2000). Many of these visitors returned to their agencies and implemented some variant of what they learned and observed, and it was suggested that the rapid wholesale importation of unfamiliar management methods and strategies might ultimately damage their organizations and organizational cultures. We should also recognize the potential societal damage this powerful management tool could do in the hands of inept or unethical executives. Compstat management empowers executives, managers, supervisors and line officers, and that power could easily be subverted - especially by unethical or self-serving executives - to corruptly suppress the ideals of democratic policing, to intimidate or harass personnel, or to diminish human rights and democratic freedoms.

Despite a wealth of superficially descriptive material about Compstat in the academic sphere and in the general news media, there have been few real research studies about Compstat and its impact on the police agency and its culture. We simply do not know how many police departments are currently practicing a variant of Compstat. We do not know how thoroughly the paradigm has infiltrated the management mindset or how significant its impact has been on police operations and strategies, and we do not know how its implementation has affected the agencies' organizational cultures. There have been many success stories, however, and these examples provide an optimistic picture of Compstat's future. What many of these positive examples have in common is that the Compstat management processes and techniques were introduced to the agencies by individuals who were part of its development in New York - by individuals who thoroughly understood the subtleties of its philosophy and practice.

One of the most notable and most ambitious variations on the Compstat theme is Baltimore's Citistat. In Baltimore, every city agency was re-tooled to operate according to Compstat paradigm principles, and every agency developed statistical measurement and reporting systems for key performance data. Every city agency gathers performance data and conducts a weekly in-house management meeting modelled after the NYPD's Compstat Crime Control Strategy meetings, and every agency head attends a citywide meeting chaired by Mayor Martin O'Malley every two weeks.

While Compstat in police agencies usually focuses on the seven major crimes as well as other indicators of violence, disorder and quality of life, agencies operating under Citistat focus on issues of concern to their particular mandate. Baltimore's Department of Health, for example, includes statistical measures of the number of food establishments inspected and the number of violations found, the number of HIV tests conducted and the number of positive results, the number of active clients in methadone treatment programmes, and even the number of animal carcasses removed from city streets. Among the data items Baltimore's Housing Authority collects are the number and percentage of vacant public housing units, the number of work orders issued for apartment repairs, and the number of apartments inspected, as well as overtime earned by staff at each housing project. The Bureau of Recreation and Parks captures data on attendance and revenues generated at public swimming pools as well as skating rinks and golf courses, the number of youths participating in various city-sponsored sports leagues, and the number of senior citizens

participating in sponsored bus trips, as well as numerous other performance indicators.

In line with the Compstat paradigm's emphasis on public accountability through transparency, Baltimore's municipal agencies make these and other key performance data available on the city's web site - www. Baltimorecity.gov/news/citistat/index.html. The web site also contains an excellent description of the Citistat process and a number of links to related news articles and press releases. In addition, the Baltimore Police Department's website (www. Baltimorepdonline.org) has a searchable database of reported crime - users can enter an address or neighbourhood and call up a detailed pin map showing the spatial distribution of various crimes. The Philadelphia and New Orleans Police Departments also have extensive crime and quality of life data available on their websites (www. Ppdonline.org/ppd_compstat.htm). Although the NYPD makes some data (including modified Compstat reports for each precinct and for the city as a whole) available on its website (www. Nyc.gov/html/nypd/pct/cspdf.html), the site currently has no mapping capability.

Baltimore realized substantial declines in crime since implementing Citistat, and Citistat has paid off in other ways as well: by monitoring overtime, sick leave and other expenses Baltimore saved more than $13 million in its first year of operation. Citistat's technology is inexpensive and highly cost-effective, according to the city of Baltimore: the computers and construction of a special conference room for Citistat meetings cost about $20,000 (www. Baltimorecity.gov/ news/citistat/index.html).

A host of other municipalities have followed the Compstat model. Houston, for example, has implemented ServiceStat. In an August 2001 press release, Mayor Lee Brown - the NYPD's former Police Commissioner - noted that the initiative was based on the NYPD Compstat model and described it in this familiar way:

> "The ServiceStat module is built on a four-block foundation," Mayor Brown added, "First, accurate and timely intelligence to ensure the most complete analysis possible; second, rapid deployment of resources to quickly address City problems; third, effective tactics and strategies to ensure proactive solutions; and fourth, relentless follow-up and assessment to ensure that problems do not reoccur.

Although it is based on Compstat and is quite similar to Citistat's inclusion of multiple agencies, ServiceStat is linked to Houston's 3-1-1 Service Hotline, a kind of central hotline system for non-emergency matters. By tying the 3-1-1 Service Hotline to a Compstat accountability system, every citizen complaint about service can be tracked and monitored to ensure that the complaint is resolved to the caller's satisfaction. Aggregated and categorized statistics can also help identify the issues of greatest public concern - have the overall number of inquiries about trash pickups increased, or have complaints about potholes tapered off? And permit executives to identify emerging trends. Once these trends are identified, agency heads can be held accountable for resolving the issues.

The Compstat model was successfully adapted to manage New York City's jail system. Bernard Kerik, who was at that time New York's Corrections Commissioner and was later appointed Police Commissioner, developed the Total Efficiency Accountability Management System (TEAMS) initiative to measure, track and control incidents of inmate violence as well as other critical management problems. Once again, the results were remarkable: in the initiative's first four years, inmate violence was reduced by an astounding ninety percent, overtime expenses were reduced by half, sick time among corrections officers declined by 25 percent, and morale improved tremendously (O'Connell & Straub, 1999).

In 2001 Compstat was brought to bear in managing New York City's highly bureaucratized Board of Education. Given the nature and scope of the Board of Education's extensive management problems, its long history of institutionalized resistance to accountability, and overall lack of internal motivation for change, this initiative continues to present a significant challenge. Since practically every other effort in recent history to rein in the Board of Education bureaucrats, to break up fiefdoms of power and influence, and to hold educators accountable for the performance of students has largely failed, Compstat's success or failure will depend greatly upon the commitment and perseverance of the Schools Chancellor and middle management superintendents.

Clearly, the Compstat paradigm is beginning to take hold in municipal government. New applications for the paradigm are being developed, and it is a fairly safe prediction that the paradigm will continue to develop

and grow. It is also a safe prediction that it will continue to achieve outstanding results in agencies headed by committed executives who properly implement it and wisely use its transformational power.

## VI. COMPSTAT AND TERRORISM

One of the most significant impediments to effective law enforcement response to terrorism is the problem of competing interests between and among law enforcement agencies - in other words, 'turf wars' based on the control of crime intelligence information. This is an issue for coordinating a strategy against terrorism, as well as a problem for any sort of multi-agency strategy against practically any crime or social problem. The American system of law enforcement is incredibly complicated and incredibly decentralized: there are more than 19,000 separate local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in the United States (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001; Reeves, 2001), and for the most part there is little real interaction or sharing of crime intelligence between and among them. In the United States, there is no centralized authority that establishes and enforces standardized policies and practices for these agencies. No central authority holds these agencies accountable for cooperation or for sharing information.

This decentralization and the autonomy of the 17,000 agencies has always been an important and ultimately desirable feature of American law enforcement - decentralization and independence tends to ensure that police power will not be consolidated and amassed under the control of a few people who might abuse that power. Totalitarian regimes tend to have highly centralized and very powerful national police forces (as well as a tendency to use these police forces to coerce and control the public and to suppress human rights), but with a few notable exceptions democracies tend to have decentralized and fairly weak systems of law enforcement.

Along with this decentralization, though, is the tendency toward competition and the withholding of information. Turf wars over information occur between and among (as well as within) law enforcement agencies for a variety of reasons, but primarily because the control of organizational information translates into the control of organizational power. If one agency (or one unit or even an individual within an agency) withholds critical information from others, it impedes others' ability to perform their functions and, ultimately diminishes others' opportunities to be recognized for performing their function well. In the long run, withholding intelligence information diminishes the likelihood that crimes will ever be solved.

There has always been a kind of tension or rivalry between federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, as well as reluctance to share information. This historic reluctance has caused many conflicts and has been the subject of much debate over the years, but the issue reached an unprecedented level of public awareness in the immediate aftermath of the 2001 World Trade Center attack. The American public demanded to know how and why the nation's vaunted intelligence community - including the CIA, the FBI and the NSA - had failed to uncover and prevent the terrorist plot. Significant media attention was devoted to the fact that not only did the various federal law enforcement agencies fail to share information among themselves, but they failed to share it with state and local law enforcement.

As Heather MacDonald (2001) notes, Joint Terrorist Task Forces (JTTFs), comprised of federal, state and local officers and overseen by the FBI, exist in New York City and several other large municipalities. The idea behind the JTTFs is simple: use the resources of local law enforcement, which typically has significantly more investigative personnel and often more or better sources of information than the federal agencies, to cooperatively gather terrorist intelligence. By agreement, the JTTFs have exclusive jurisdiction over terrorism investigations, a situation that gives the FBI *de facto* control over the collection and dissemination of intelligence. As MacDonald described, however, the FBI has not shared that intelligence - at least not to the satisfaction of local police officials. Interagency turf wars - not unlike the internal turf wars that once prevented the NYPD from effectively fighting crime - were inhibiting the investigation and prevention of terrorism.

The solution Macdonald (2001) proposes is Fedstat - regularly scheduled meetings of agency heads to monitor ongoing terrorist investigations and other intelligence-gathering operations, to share intelligence information, and to better utilize the resources each agency brings to the table.

> The FBI's anti-terrorism efforts should be Compstated in every city where the bureau operates. Where a Joint Terrorist Task Force exists, the commanders of the agencies represented should meet

> on a bi-weekly basis to interrogate taskforce members about the progress of their investigations. Where JTTFs don't exist, the FBI should assemble cooperative meetings with all relevant agency heads. The new Fedstat meetings would have two purposes: to ensure that each ongoing investigation is competently pursued, and to share intelligence. The only fail-safe defense against terrorism is information, but it must be made available to those who can best use it. In many cases, that will be local law enforcement (MacDonald, 2001, p. 42).

Can Compstat principles be applied in the fight against terrorism? MacDonald (2001) makes a persuasive case that it can, but once again Compstat's effectiveness in managing terrorism will be a test of the skill, commitment and philosophy of those who apply it. Based upon Compstat's previous track record as well as its inherent capability to disseminate information and to serve as an early warning system, it is a fairly safe prediction that a series of Fedstat processes would be effective in preventing or responding to terrorist acts. If properly implemented, Fedstats would not only help share critical intelligence data, they would empower the various agencies involved just as Compstat has empowered middle managers in the NYPD. Agencies could better utilize and better coordinate their resources, and they could focus their investigative and enforcement activities in the most productive areas. The same strengths that make Compstat work to reduce crime or to manage an entire city can easily be brought to bear on the threat of terrorism, with the same potential for success.

## VII. A FINAL NOTE

In December 2001, the Manhattan Institute's Centre for Civic Innovation released a comprehensive study by George Kelling and William Sousa that addresses one of the primary tenets of the Compstat paradigm. The study, entitled "Do Police Matter? An Analysis of the Impact of New York's Police Reforms," addresses the question of whether the sharp crime declines that occurred in New York City during the 1990s were the result of economic factors, demographic factors, a reduction in drug abuse, police activities, or some combination of these factors. After reviewing and statistically analyzing a host of empirical data the authors concluded that police activities - in particular, the NYPD's operationalization of 'Broken Windows' policing strategies - played a major role in reducing crime.

More specifically, Kelling and Sousa (2001) conclude that 'Broken Windows' policing is significantly and consistently linked to declines in violent crime and that 'Broken Windows' policing prevented over 60,000 violent crimes between 1989 and 1998. In terms of demographic arguments about crime causation, they determined there was no statistical association between changes in the number of young men of high-school age, and neither was the decrease in the use of crack cocaine associated with a decline in violence. Case studies conducted in six NYPD precincts showed that the new tactics and strategies the department employed had an impact in reducing crime: Compstat, which the authors describe as "perhaps the single most important organizational/administrative innovation in policing during the latter half of the 20$^{th}$ century (p. 2), permitted commanders to identify and address specific crime patterns, and the statistical frequency of these crimes declined when commanders employed carefully devised strategies and tactics.

Is Compstat, along with the timely and accurate intelligence, effective tactics, rapid deployment and relentless follow-up it entails solely responsible for the decline in crime? No, say Kelling and Sousa (2001), but Compstat and the cops who use it make a critical difference. In an Op-Ed piece in the New York *Post*, Kelling and Sousa (2001a) wrote:

> Make no mistake, we did not find that police did it all. New York City's drop in crime was also the result of the actions of community groups, business improvement districts (BIDs), the faith community, the evolution of community courts and prosecution - and, yes, in some neighbourhoods, changing demography, economics or drug-use patterns. But police remain a critical factor. The strength and direction of crime rates is always dependent upon their local context, and police activities help shape that context.

Kelling and Sousa's (2001) study is a thorough and comprehensive analysis of crime's decline in New York — far too thorough and comprehensive to completely analyze here. The study's findings are important, though, because they dispel many criminological suppositions about crime and disorder and advance the ideas - central to the Compstat paradigm - that police *do* matter and police *do* make a difference. Further, the study suggests that the difference police make is substantial.

In their conclusion, Kelling and Sousa (2001) make the following observations:

> First, despite the root-cause theories that have dominated criminological, criminal justice and much popular thinking about crime control, police can have a significant impact on crime levels in neighbourhoods and communities. One singularly important way of doing this is by restoring and maintaining order, through 'broken windows' policing. While this may come as a shock to many criminologists and media elites, it is nothing new to citizens and residents of neighbourhoods... (p. 18)
>
> Second, basic shifts in policing strategies - especially the decentralization of problem analysis and problem solving - have had a significant impact. Because crime has been increasingly deemed a local phenomenon that requires localized analysis, considerable organizational pressure now exists to move away from stock and "cookie cutter" responses... (p. 18)
>
> All of which argues, of course, for establishing a baseline expectation of public order through "broken windows" policing, and for the kind of planning and accountability that is entailed in Compstat when it is rigorously conducted (p. 19).

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