

INDIANA POLICE DEPARTMENT RECOVERS MILLIONS IN STOLEN PROPERTY WITH LEADSONLINE™

Agency Type

City Police Department

Agency Size

480 sworn officers

Agency Need

A fast, reliable method for pawn shop compliance reporting and monitoring to identify and prosecute property theft

Product Offering

LeadsOnline Solution to digitize secondhand marketplace records, helping identify potential suspects, stolen property, and criminal activity patterns

Results at a Glance

- Recovered \$2+ million in stolen property
- Increased compliance and improved cooperation among pawn shops
- Enhanced cross-jurisdictional collaboration to facilitate property recovery and arrests in other states
- Proved successful in solving cases in other divisions, including child exploitation

ABOUT THE FORT WAYNE POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Fort Wayne Police Department (FWPD) serves the second-largest city in Indiana. Established in 1829 with a single “village marshal,” today the FWPD’s sworn officers and civilian employees strive to protect the life, property and personal liberties of all individuals. As a full-service law-enforcement agency, it believes the quality of life for all residents improves through the deterrence of criminal activity and an understanding of the diversity of cultures within the community.

CHALLENGES

A city ordinance requires pawn shops and other secondhand marketplaces in Fort Wayne to report their transactions, a time-consuming process for both these types of businesses and local investigators. Lack of timely information caused critical leads to be missed or come too late, stalling cases or even preventing them from being solved.

SOLUTION

Detective Joseph Lyon began using **LeadsOnline** in 2008 as part of a specialized unit focused on burglaries and theft sprees. He and three other investigators used the software to help them solve a number of high-profile cases, recovering stolen property and improving quality of life within the city because of deterrence. His contributions continued to grow when he took over the Pawn Detail in 2011, a standalone unit in the FWPD’s Property Crimes Division. Under his leadership, more than \$2 million in stolen property has been recovered, and he continues to leverage **LeadsOnline** to assist other divisions in closing their cases.



FROM MANUAL WORK TO MODERN EFFICIENCY

Before **LeadsOnline**, Lyon and other investigators had to visit each pawn shop in person to collect their tickets. Today, all that data is centralized and searchable within **LeadsOnline**, including photos, serial numbers, and seller information. With these details, especially images of unique items like jewelry, available in near real time, Lyon can quickly identify stolen property, link suspects, and coordinate recovery—often within 24 hours. “I find a lot of joy in my job, reuniting people with their property,” Lyon says. “It never ceases to put a smile on my face.”

CASES BUILT ON RELATIONSHIPS

Fort Wayne’s pawn shops are partners in crime fighting. When Detective Lyon assumed command of the Pawn Detail, he introduced himself to all of them and explained the benefits of working together not only to meet compliance requirements but also to improve community safety. Now, they call him directly to report suspicious items. “I get calls from my businesses to say, ‘we just took in something we’re pretty sure is hot so we’re holding it for you.’ That trust and the information I get out of **LeadsOnline** solves our cases for us.”

OPERATION IPHONE DISRUPTED ORGANIZED RETAIL THEFT

A tip from EcoATM, a service that buys mobile phones for cash to reduce electronic waste, triggered what Detective Lyon called “Operation iPhone.” Suspicious transactions involving a large amount of iPhone 15s led to multiple warrants issued for employees of a large retailer for allegedly stealing the phones and selling them to EcoATM, which reports all transactions with **LeadsOnline**. The value of all the stolen phones was estimated at more than \$156,000, with the total recovered valued at almost \$55,000.

ONE TOOL, MULTIPLE DIVISIONS

Although based in the Property Crimes Division, Detective Lyon uses **LeadsOnline** to support all the divisions within the detective bureau—from robbery to domestic violence to homicide. “It’s a tool that doesn’t just impact property crimes. It covers a variety.” For example, Lyon got a tip from one of his pawn shops that led to a man being prosecuted for sex crimes based on images found on a computer he neglected to recover.

CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL COLLABORATION

Detective Lyon often assists law enforcement agencies near and far that don’t have **LeadsOnline**. “They call me because I can search nationwide,” he said. In one case, he helped a church two counties away recover stolen musical instruments. In another, he used two specific features of the software, Resident Outside Jurisdiction and Person of Interest Alerts, to arrest a repeat offender. The man stole property in Fort Wayne and then fled to New Orleans where he was captured and the items recovered. Four years later when he was released from prison, he began using the same MO and was eventually arrested in Tampa after Detective Lyon coordinated his takedown with a local investigator.

“You’re only as good as the tools you have access to, and I think I’ve got the best tool in the world with LeadsOnline. It’s a time-saver and literally something I can’t live without. Plus the defense attorneys are afraid of it—when they see LeadsOnline, they say ‘we’re done.’”

Detective Joseph Lyon
Fort Wayne Police Department