



Ottawa Police Answers Call, Democratizes Learning with Degreed

Client



Head Offices

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Industry

Government

Staff

2,100

Features Used

LXP, Content Sharing, Content Recommendations

Use Cases

Employee Development, Leadership Development, Self-Directed Growth, Learning Communities

Challenge

Learning at the Ottawa Police Service focused largely on executive development, and even then access was limited. Most people including frontline officers across the service had access to a limited number of online courses through an LMS. The learning team had no data on skill gaps. And a 15-year-old competency model was applied inconsistently. Not quite an emergency, but close!

Solution

The service chose Degreed for its intuitive user experience, easy integrations, mobile access and ability to function as a “front door” to learning. In addition, learning leaders were drawn to the solution because it enabled them to easily associate skills with new, simplified competencies introduced to guide development across the organization.

Results

Six months after the launch of Degreed, 1,600 people across the agency used the platform every month, exceeding the Degreed benchmark for success by nearly 50%. Sworn officers and civilian personnel are exploring a wide range of topics — anytime and anywhere, on mobile devices and in collaborative ways. Lifelong learning is a priority, and learning leaders are reimagining leadership development programs.



Summary

Founded in 1995 when several long-standing law enforcement agencies merged, the Ottawa Police Service is committed to protecting the safety and security of neighborhoods across the Canadian capital of more than a million people.

In recent years, the service's lean learning team realized it could improve workforce development for all sworn and civilian staff members, who lacked access to a wide range of content, personalized learning opportunities and more. Complicating matters, frameworks relied upon by learning leaders were outdated, and L&D had no information on the specific skills people needed to support the organization and advance their careers more effectively.

To meet these challenges, Ottawa Police deployed Degreed. Early adoption was strong, and significant improvements to the L&D landscape occurred almost immediately.

Leaders, frontline officers and civilian professionals of all ranks and roles now have access to a wide range of internal and external content they can access anytime and anywhere — including on the go from a police cruiser. Collaborative development has replaced learning silos. And learning including leadership training continues to become more and more personalized, meaning people are consistently getting exactly what they need to succeed.



Challenge

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— Joshua Abraham
Learning & Development Manager

Democratizing Learning

Historically, learning programs at the Ottawa Police Service prioritized the organization’s approximately 50 senior and executive leaders, always mindful of succession planning.

“Access to a course, a formal course, either internally at our professional development center or if you got sent somewhere, that was gold,” said Joshua Abraham, Learning and Development Manager. “But there was no equity. And the way courses were delivered was usually based on who you know. There was a lot of feedback that people weren’t getting the courses they needed.”

The vast majority of the rank-driven service’s roughly 1,000 frontline officers, 400 managers and 600 civilian personnel had access to a limited catalogue of learning items through an LMS. The learning team had no data on skill gaps across the organization and no reliable way to get it. And while the service had a competency model for interviewing, managing and promoting people and more, it was 15 years old — and “all of the different HR programs were using these competencies differently,” Abraham said.

The lean learning team knew it could improve people’s learning experiences — through collaborative peer-to-peer learning that reduces one-way development and silos, by reorganizing content and by promoting learning journeys that support people’s precise development goals.

The Ottawa Police Service needed a way to combine its existing learning content with new content and connect it all to empowering, personalized, everyday development — so people knew “if I want to do this, I have to do this, this and this,” Abraham said.

The agency needed a solution that could not only track skill-building and make tailored content recommendations but also help HR move away from its reliance on outdated competencies.

“We needed to build proper foundations,” Abraham said. “We really needed to democratize learning and become a learning organization. When you build that foundation, then you can start moving up to the top because you have a group of learners that you’re building as leaders. And when they reach the executive level, there’s less you need to do because you’ve been building that pipeline.”

Solution

Degreed

With other law enforcement agencies equally traditional in their approaches to L&D, Abraham sought fresh perspectives on best practices from top private-sector employers. During one visit to an area tech company (and after a trip down the slide in the dining room), he found out learning leaders there had recently launched Degreed.

More research followed. And as the learning team discovered more about the Degreed LXP, interest grew. Still, “being a municipality, we can’t experiment. Whatever we did, we had to get it right because this was a long-term investment and we have budget restrictions,” Abraham said, describing a procurement process that required employee and community feedback, additional conversations with employers, executive buy-in and, critically, objective evaluations of competitive platforms through a request for tender (RFT) process.

“We had to build a set of requirements and whichever vendor met all of those requirements, we had to give it to them,” Abraham said, adding that, ultimately, “Degreed was the only company that could provide what we wanted at the time.”

Ottawa Police was the first law enforcement agency in the world to purchase Degreed, which was

chosen based on its intuitive user experience, easy integrations, mobile access and ability to function as a “front door” to learning.

Ottawa Police launched the platform to all staff members with emails, videos, contests, swag, mandatory logins, an online launch party — and help from proven, Degreed-created engagement campaigns and from industry experts on the Degreed Customer Experience team. Ongoing engagement strategies include embedding learning team members in the business to spread the word at departmental meetings, how-to-use-Degreed workshops and all-staff events. The team even uses Degreed to manage return-to-work plans affecting people who’ve been away from work on a prolonged leave.

When it launched Degreed, HR concurrently introduced a simplified framework prioritizing three core competencies — selfless leadership, emotional intelligence, and integrity-driven work — for all staff members, Abraham said. “We always intended to have skills be the language for these because we were moving away from a per-job to an everybody model. Using Degreed, we provided a little how-to video and skills for each competency, and then Plans and Pathways to support the learning for those skills.”





Results

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— **Joshua Abraham**
Learning & Development Manager

Learning Is More Than Courses

Accessibility to learning at the Ottawa Police Service now means more than attending a course. It encompasses collaborative learning at events like lunch-and-learns featuring content from TED@Work for Degreed, which provides TED Talks built natively into the platform. Furthermore, accessibility now means learning on the go — and perhaps nothing illustrates this change better than police officers engaging with their own development.

“Half of our workforce is in a cruiser, and they’re using Degreed on their phones,” Abraham said, noting that officers are finding time to learn by prioritizing bite-size content and using custom “Patrol Friendly” Pathways that can be completed in fewer than five minutes.

Six months after the launch of Degreed, 1,600 people across the agency used the platform every month, exceeding the Degreed benchmark for success by nearly 50%. People at all levels explore leadership, wellness and resiliency, oftentimes together or using Degreed social learning features. Inclusion, cultural awareness, communication, self-awareness and community engagement — these are all top-ranking topics across the service.

“When else would someone have the opportunity to connect with a police officer in a completely



different unit and learn together?” Abraham said. “Degreed is bringing us closer together, as peers, to learn from each other as an organization. We were all doing our own thing before, but now we’re doing one thing together, and it’s a positive thing. And I think that’s a big win for us.”

Superintendent David Zackrias uses Degreed as an everyday, on-the-go professional development tool.

“Degreed is a gamechanger for L&D,” Zackrias said. “As a passionate champion for equity in the workplace, Degreed is levelling the playing field when it comes to upskilling and professional development. Through the LXP, Ottawa Police Service members can now get learning plans and pathways 24/7, which is a huge benefit for frontline staff working shift work.”

In addition, the agency seamlessly integrated content from the Canadian Police Knowledge Network (CPKN), a leader in law enforcement training. As a result, the discovery and usage of industry content from that organization has soared at the Ottawa Police Service.

Even during prolonged emergencies, when people were less likely to be using Degreed, the service used the platform to engage its people — to communicate changes in legislation, policy and more.



Results

Lifelong Learning Prioritized

Degreed helps workers across the Ottawa Police Service build skills so they're ready for whatever's next.

"No matter how our members are learning—one thing remains constant: In order to thrive in today's policing world, learning has to happen all the time." Interim Chief Steve Bell said. "Gone are the days when we could ask people to set aside one week a year for a classroom training experience and then check 'learning' off their lists. Continuous learning is important, and it's not going anywhere.

"Degreed allows us to achieve our goal of creating an entire end-to-end learning experience for our members — all while keeping one eye on the future."

Policing is a lifelong career, and it's easy for people to think "I'm always going to be here," Abraham added. "The feedback that we've gotten is

that Degreed gives people hope there's something else to work toward, and that's because of the learning journeys we're mapping out. It's helping people feel better about the lifelong career that they chose."

And it's not just police officers who benefit.

Civilian Demian Seiden, a Canadian Police Information Centre Operator, uses Degreed to read articles and share interesting content with his colleagues.

"In this day of social media and algorithms serving us up content, it's easy to get caught up in our own biased feedback loop," Seiden said. "By sharing what we read with each other, we get a broader selection of information and are exposed to different opinions than we would have been otherwise."



Looking Ahead

As learning there evolves, leadership development at Ottawa Police is changing for the better — into a high-touch, cohort experience set in the flow of work at each stage of someone’s career.

“Degreed is going to be the mothership to drive the experience for each rank, so people know exactly what to be learning when,” Abraham said. “It’s not just online content. It’s everything from when their next event is, doing a task with their cohorts, doing an assessment or doing some brainstorming. Degreed is going to drive that.”

In addition, learning leaders foresee an organization-wide mentorship program that uses an internal opportunity marketplace powered by Degreed Experiential Learning to connect people. Furthermore, “We have a future integration plan for Microsoft Teams to catch people where they already are every day,” Abraham said. “That’s going to be a big thing for us, especially for our officers on the front lines.”

About Degreed

Degreed is the everyday learning platform relied on by millions of employees from hundreds of global companies to build skills for today and tomorrow.

We bring self-directed learning and deep skilling together with required training so organizations can continuously meet company goals and evolve quickly as your business demands.

With Degreed, organizations drive agile talent development with better insights and skill data, and employees own their upward mobility through learning experiences personalized to their expertise and interests.

Founded in 2012, Degreed is headquartered in Pleasanton, California, with additional offices in Salt Lake City, New York, London, Amsterdam, and Brisbane.

Learn more about Degreed: [Website](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#)

