

DRILLING DOWN AND SCALING UP

How Polaris Manufacturing
Powers Personalized Learning



CLIENT



FOUNDED

1954

HEAD OFFICES

Medina, MN

INDUSTRY

Motorsports, Automotive,
and Defense

EMPLOYEES

11,000

FEATURES USED

Pathways, Plans, Directories,
Groups, Provider Integrations, Skill
Ratings, and Reporting API

USE CASES

Performance Management,
Compliance/Functional/
Product Training, Safety Training,
Knowledge Sharing, Change
Management, Career Mobility,
Onboarding, Developing High
Performers, and Manager/
Leadership Development

CHALLENGE

Polaris needed a flexible, unified system to help formalize and drive a dynamic manufacturing team.

SOLUTION

The company integrated a range of resources through its new learning platform with customization to ensure that workers would always see the most relevant content.

RESULTS

L&D leaders saw 70% activation within the first month, enabling a new Skill Rating system and greater access to leadership development programs.

SUMMARY

Polaris builds vehicles to navigate every environment. That means their manufacturing team has to be just as progressive and versatile. Their preexisting learning tools weren't flexible, so Polaris got Degreed to engineer a new L&D platform. Now employees receive guidance and personally-relevant opportunities to build skills that also align with the company's strategic priorities. The impact has been immediate, particularly for performance reviews, leadership development, and discovering the right resources for just-in-time learning. Polaris has arrived at a long-term strategy for staying ahead in their fast-paced industry.



CHALLENGE

Since inventing the recreational snowmobile in 1954, Polaris Industries has grown steadily. Today, the company manufactures a wide range of vehicles for snow, water, roads, and off-roading, for both companies and governments.

To compete across these sectors, their manufacturing team needs to keep up their specialized skills. Polaris needed to support and develop 1,500 employees, who lead a division of 5,000 manufacturing employees.

The old ways of sharing knowledge were not supportive of their global strategy nor did they reflect the growth that Polaris had undergone. Their current integration software was dispersed and the learning management system was too rigid. “In manufacturing, we operate very lean,” explains Naomee Lazo, the Global Manufacturing Training Manager at Polaris. “So that means we want to make sure we have the right people with the right skills at the right time.”

Formalized training and sporadic file-sharing wouldn’t get the job done, nor did it support their just-in-time training model. Polaris decided to fine-tune their learning strategy and kicked their upskilling strategy into a higher gear.

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Polaris Global Manufacturing Training Manager

SOLUTION

Naomee Lazo had a very specific vision for accelerating the learning strategy at Polaris: “I needed to be able to align Pathways to our existing curriculum. I needed to develop role-specific plans. I needed to formalize a comprehensive catalog of Polaris knowledge resources. I needed our internal systems linked. And I needed to ensure a successful end-user experience for our learners.”

To accomplish all these objectives, Polaris launched Degreed. Through this platform, they could integrate different systems, build unique Pathways, and compile the company’s knowledge. Plus, the user experience looked beautiful.



POLARIS + DEGREED

- Integrate different systems
- Build unique Pathways
- Compile the company’s knowledge
- Create a beautiful user experience

Compared to the old tools, like SharePoint and the LMS, “Degreed has provided a nice middle ground,” says Mike Sevcik, the Lean Manager for Corporate Rollouts for Polaris. “Now we’re able to take all of our existing training, put it together, and assign Pathways or Skills based on the job profiles that we control.”

The most important employees for this project were Polaris’ specialized hourly roles. Too often,



manufacturing companies forget to offer learning opportunities to their hourly workers. Polaris recognized that this audience was comprised of valuable experts and leaders of the manufacturing division. So they made a smart investment.

“Our team members need to be trained in their roles so they can work more efficiently,” explains Lazo. “And we have existing leadership programs that many of them are in. We were able to build into those leadership programs.”

But what would training the specialized hourly workforce actually look like? To figure that out, the learning team at Polaris started by sharing the plan and then listening to the workforce.

“We came up with a list of influencers across manufacturing of about 85 different employees,” recalls Lazo. “We brought those people in, went over Degreed with them, asked them, ‘What do you like? What do you not like? What would you change? How do you think this is going to grow?’”

Josh Lemieux, the Operations Trainer for Polaris, led many of those feedback sessions. “With those frontline

leaders, we talked about how Degreed could help them specifically in certain Pathways,” Lemieux recollects. “Then they could take that back, bring that to the broader group, and continue the conversation after our one-hour meeting.” Clear and proactive communication was essential to get everyone committed.

After those meetings, Lazo and her team knew what they needed to do with Degreed. Along with Degreed’s client engagement partner, Lazo outlined which Skills applied to specific job profiles. “So when they logged in, these Skills would pop up,” Lazo explains. “That information needs to be very relevant, or you’re going to lose them very quickly. We had to map out what was in it for every different user group. We couldn’t just leave it wide open.”

Degreed’s personalized learning technology made this customized experience possible. Now Polaris’ specialized hourly and professional roles get the unique benefits of personalized learning and the company has the foundation in place for training to match the pace of Polaris’ growth. “When we look at the manufacturing organization, we are looking to move into the next phase of maturity,” declares Lazo. “We are empowering the leadership at each one of the facilities to identify the skills and what needs to be prioritized.”

As Polaris accelerates, they are riding momentum from a strong launch campaign. Workers got free swag and hands-on training at a “Degreed Day” event. Polaris leaders sent out encouraging emails to explain why learning is crucial for the company’s strategy. To target specific audiences, Polaris is also offering optional webinars to explain how certain employees — like quality engineers or plant directors — can use Degreed most effectively. And to reward those who start strong, Lazo’s team is throwing pizza parties for the sites with the most learning activity.

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RESULTS

The new learning strategy is off to a fast start. Within the first month, activation reached 70%. Already, over 1,000 Polaris employees are learning on Degreed. They are rating their Skills, completing new Pathways, and sharing resources with each other. And the instant impact goes beyond the promising usage numbers.



POLARIS' FIRST MONTH

- 70% Activation
- 1,000+ employees learning on Degreed
- Skill Ratings
- Pathway Completions
- Resource Sharing

Skill Ratings have strengthened Polaris' manager-employee relationships. With hundreds of workers scoring themselves on their Skills, managers are able to have informed and candid conversations about personal improvement.


Lazo and the learning team are guiding that dialogue. "The next conversation [we have with managers] is, 'Okay, here's the information that I have for you based off people rating themselves,'" she says. "'Where do you think your people should be? And how do we bring it together?'"

Pathways have also paid off for Polaris. Processes such as performance reviews, for example, have already been transformed by this consolidated and self-led feature. Instead of costly in-person training for supervisors, the training is now all in a Degreed Pathway. This means supervisors can move at their own pace, whenever and wherever they want to review the material.

Not only was this more convenient for everyone but it also allowed easy access to all the necessary resources. If a supervisor needs to retrieve a resource in the future, there's no need to email the instructor, haggle with an LMS, or search through SharePoint files. Everything is right there in the Pathway.

Polaris has big plans for the future, too. The company hopes that Degreed can scale up its popular leadership program and roll out additional internal certifications for technical skills. The ability to efficiently scale certificate programs is a benefit that Polaris hasn't had prior to Degreed.

Lazo also anticipates a long-term shift in strategy as Polaris analyzes its skills to navigate uncertainty. "Long-term, the goal starts with skills," she reports. "We're in a volatile industry. Everything is complex and it's ambiguous. We need a plan that can be fluid and move with the way the business changes."

With the tools and insights that Degreed has delivered, the unpredictable journey into the future should be an exciting adventure. 

Want to get started? Need more info?

We want to meet you! Visit us at degreed.com
or email us today at info@degreed.com.

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