

POLICE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Graduates Praise Relevance, Outstanding Quality and Applicability of Police Leadership Program

A recent, in-depth survey of Police Leadership Program (PLP) graduates conducted by an independent survey group supports the notion that the Rotman School of Management, in partnership with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, are providing an outstanding and focused program that is assisting graduates to gain relevant skills leading directly to promotions.

In October 2002, 19 graduates from the program completed a written questionnaire and one-on-one interviews. Those surveyed were from a mix of police services, had an average of 24 years of service. Most had a university degree or police college education.

Below is a summary of the responses provided on the written questionnaire and during interviews.

Objectives

- Respondents felt that PLP objectives were relevant to the challenges of their job to a great extent, and the program pacing was perceived as "just right". Participants felt they were able to eliminate distractions, even though, on average, they had 3.5 contacts per week with their force while on the course.

Methodologies & Content

- Methodologies within the program were favourably viewed, with the use of in-class video falling slightly below "just right".
- In program content, leadership, strategy and communications were all considered very useful. The only areas that fell slightly below the mark were Health & Wellness and Police Service Delivery. The level of difficulty was judged "just right" by nearly every respondent, and the learning materials were considered helpful to a great extent.

Outcomes

- In terms of program outcomes, all respondents felt their on-the-job skills benefited from attending PLP. No one cited limited benefit.
- One-third of respondents have been promoted since attending PLP, and they felt that PLP helped play a role in their promotion.
- Half the respondents have had other members of their police service attend PLP sessions, almost all following their attendance.

Learning Recall/Transfer/Relevance/Sharing/Benefit

- All graduates agreed that PLP has had positive impact in their approach to police leadership – a majority could cite areas where they now are able to approach their leadership role differently, but a minority felt that at the very minimum, PLP reinforced good leadership practices that they already possessed. Most emerged with greater confidence in their leadership abilities.
- Most were able to apply their learning on-the-job and cite instances where it impacted their approach or widened their perspective to a situation (e.g. formulating strategy/vision, navigating media scrums, the politics of budgeting, applying political astuteness to sensitive issues), or helped them in presenting their ideas more effectively (through written reports or slide presentations).



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- The networking benefit of PLP was cited throughout interviews as participants grew to appreciate the contact and relationships developed with their colleagues (other attendees, academics and guest speakers) in similar leadership roles.
- When it came to sharing learning, interviewees all felt that they learned from their classmates and were able to reciprocate by sharing experiences, skills (e.g. Powerpoint, Excel) and unique perspectives. Once back on the job, many graduates structured pass-along learning, whether by way of information-sharing, coaching or leading by example.

Personal Improvement/Impact/Expectation Satisfaction

- Most participants were able to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses before attending PLP, and felt that the program helped improve on these shortcomings or weaknesses.
- While not all had clear expectations before attending PLP, the program met and exceeded expectations for those that did. The formation of expectations was often influenced by previous PLP graduates, who prepared the new attendees more for the intensity and “gruelling” rigour that they would endure, rather than the subject matter.

Curriculum & Experience Impact Change/Improvement/Suggestions

- Generally, participants were pleased with the mix, flow, timing and content of PLP, and cited few areas needing improvement. The four-week intense in-residence aspect was seen as beneficial by removing distractions and packing as much learning into the experience as possible.
- Interviewees consistently praised the impact of the curriculum in strategy, budgeting, communications/media savvy, political astuteness, change management, human resource management/emotional intelligence.
- Many felt that the teaching of the Police Services Act needed to be brought to a higher level, or eliminated altogether.
- Participants from outside Ontario cited too much focus on Ontario-specific subject matter and perspectives. It was also suggested that the curriculum be more international.
- Several graduates spoke about the need to have PLP accredited within university/college police sciences degree programs, recognizing the need for some form of evaluation to go with it.
- While guest speakers were highly valued, there was some caution raised around the focus of speakers.
- Limited concerns were raised about the emphasis on Powerpoint and Excel (“you have support to help you”), although this was also cited as an area of shared learning.
- Graduates felt that Rotman had done a superb job in keeping them up-to-date and informed, but they want more networking and curriculum updates. Many cited the value they would gain from learning the “golden nuggets” of following sessions.

Approval Process & Comparison to Competition

- Awareness of PLP was mostly through OACP, and zone meetings were cited by many graduates as where they first learned about the program. If not directly involved in OACP, the participants learned of the program via their Chief/Deputy.
- Most required approvals at least one-up, usually involving the Chief or Deputy Chief, and sometimes involving the Police Services Board.



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- The relatively high cost of PLP (versus other programs) was cited by many participants as an obstacle to more attendees from their service, although all felt the PLP experience was worth the price paid.
- All participants felt that PLP was a superior learning experience when compared to other police leadership programs. Roughly half had been on the FBI 3-month program, and most cited other Canadian college offerings – Rotman is seen as the NHL to other 'minor leagues'.

Perceptions of PLP

- "It carries more weight to say, at Rotman..."
- In interviews, it became clear that virtually all graduates would or had recommended PLP to colleagues. All felt that attending PLP would benefit their career in the long run. When asked how to describe the program to a colleague considering attending PLP, graduates said the following:
 - A horizon-broadening experience.
 - Very intense, with highly qualified speakers and students.
 - A once-in-a-career opportunity.
 - Eye opening, worthwhile. Grab with both hands and take it.
 - I say if you want to be the best police leader you can be, you have to take this.
 - It's a fantastic course that will challenge you and change the way you think about police leadership.
 - An excellent curriculum in strategy, political astuteness, communications and HR for a Police Chief/Deputy.
 - I would highly recommend it to anybody as being highly worthwhile.
 - PLP helps to prepare and equip a person for leadership in policing.
 - A high-level senior management program that delves into community, budget, strategic thinking, and service delivery.
 - Learn more tools for your belt.
 - Excellent, a must-have.



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