



**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICE
SERVICE DE POLICE D'OTTAWA**

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La sécurité de notre communauté, un travail d'équipe*

**REPORT
RAPPORT**

DATE: 21 June 2006

TO: Executive Director, Ottawa Police Services Board

FROM: Chief of Police, Ottawa Police Service

SUBJECT: POLICE MENTAL READINESS AND PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE

RECOMMENDATION

That the Ottawa Police Services Board receive this report and presentation for information.

BACKGROUND

The Police Mental Readiness and Performance Excellence project began in earnest in 2002 with the core belief that the best patrol-based first response police officers would have identifiable performance characteristics. It was also believed that these same characteristics and experiences would be transferable to less-experienced police officers as tools they could use to enhance their own performance. At the same time, this first-of-a-kind police research would serve to raise the profile of first response police officers, not only within the Ottawa Police Service, but elsewhere.

A partnership was fashioned, involving the City of Ottawa (Ms. Judy McDonald, the principle investigator and study's author), the University of Ottawa (recognized and ethical research base), and the Ottawa Police Service (primary funding and research material provider). This partnership has survived many challenges, such as changes in City management, Ottawa University leadership changes and departmental shifts, delays in the actual research process, and secondment continuation issues. During the course of the project, two additional partners joined to make significant contributions: the Canadian Police Research Centre and the Institute of Population Health.

As described in the resulting report's abstract, the bulk of the work involved conducting a study to identify and confirm the importance of mental readiness and related success elements for performance excellence in front-line policing. The sample included 48 highly respected Ottawa Police officers involved in six specialty units: Patrol, Neighbourhood, School Resource, Tactical, Canine and Traffic Escort. A framework developed by researchers in athletics was used to examine how police officers perform at their best in challenging situations. Individual in-depth interviews were carried out to determine their mental readiness before, during and after successful and disappointing performances. This provided a quantitative and qualitative analysis of mental readiness. These findings were compared with Orlick's "Model of Excellence," which is based on results from world-class athletics and other high-performance domains. It provides a framework of seven common success elements—

Commitment, Self Belief, Positive Imagery, Mental Preparation, Full Focus, Distraction Control, and Constructive Evaluation.

Four years after it began, the groundbreaking piece of research is being released publicly and presented in a book called *Gold Medal Policing: Mental Readiness and Performance Excellence*. In addition to confirming that there are many similarities in mental preparedness engaged in by top police officers and top athletes, the study also provides practical recommendations for recruitment, self-assessment tools, career development, e-learning, recognition, curriculum design, training, role-modeling, publications and future research benchmarks.

DISCUSSION

The project was conducted under the auspices of the University of Ottawa. The research was vetted through the university's complex ethics process to ensure that it was conducted in an appropriate manner. As such, the findings are considered legally to be the property of the University and the author, Judy McDonald. Nonetheless, the benefits for the Ottawa Police Service are many:

- Official recognition of the importance of front-line "readiness" as a valued contribution to the organization.
- Hybrid research report with a formal assessment of Ottawa Police Service best practices and practical direction for recruitment, training, supervising, performance enhancement and productivity.
 - Standardized operational assessment of best practices of Ottawa Police Service frontline officers.
 - Direction for better targeted training and preparation through solutions to enhance performance and productivity.
 - Creation of benchmarks of effective responses from informal front-line leaders. A collection of candid mental preparation "performance stories" from front-line leaders.
 - A clear commitment by senior police management to objectively, anonymously and confidentially obtain a front-line perspective on operational excellence.
 - Bridging the management – front-line gap through a mutually respected fact-finding approach to determine front-line best practices.
 - Completion of a first-of-its-kind "Operational Readiness Assessment" tailored to superior service delivery in a police work environment.

Best of all, the future research potential is vast. Now that the study is complete and public, the Police Service and its partners will evaluate and prioritize the ten recommendations to strengthen performance, productivity and morale for front-line policing. The abridged version of the recommendations:

1. Customize recruitment, selection and retention to arm recruiters with tools to systematically target recruits based on skill-sets of high performers.
2. Create multi-level self-assessment tools based on the attitudes, work techniques and approaches of "excellent" officers in difficult or routine situations.
3. Target career and succession planning using specialty unit skill profiles and a "Supervisor's Guide" to strategically align mental training skills with desired career paths.
4. Create a web-based learning program to address the interests of future recruits and younger officers.
5. Establish organizational curriculum to achieve high performance depending on officers' background, experience and training.

6. Develop a front-line recognition plan, including formal recognition and front-line buy-in procedures.
7. Create a high performance mental training program.
8. Enrich the internal role-model function to maximize experience and knowledge transfer within the organization.
9. Pursue publication opportunities using the findings of this detailed investigation to clearly define performance excellence from a front-line policing perspective.
10. Promote further related research in the area of mental readiness for policing and other emergency first-responder disciplines. Suggested areas include: senior police management readiness, incident command decision making, cultural competency issues, and coach officer blocks and benefits.

Results are being shared widely in the form of the publication *Gold Medal Policing: Mental Readiness and Performance Excellence* — distributed to Police Service Board members and available in book-stores. Sloan Associate Press of New York publishes the book. As well, copies of the book have been distributed to a number of people in the Ottawa Police Service who assisted with the project. A few copies are on hold and available to any Police Service member who wishes to view the work. Lastly, some communications work has started to provide police members with general information on the mental readiness and performance excellence, and the significance of the study.

CONSULTATION

Internal consultation was at the core of the research, and that consultation was done in two stages. First, the lead investigator gathered anonymous front-line officer recommendations of "excellent street cops" during 27 full-shift ride-alongs, plus 13 training day presentations and many interactions with Staff Sergeants. Once the best of the best were identified, the 48 officers went through an in-depth interview.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The Police Mental Readiness Project was funded jointly by the Ottawa Police Service, University of Ottawa and the Canadian Police Research Centre. This unique consortium leveraged significant in-kind support to ensure that the costs associated with the three and a half year formal research study were well below standard expenses for a study of this scope.

It should be noted that the University of Ottawa did not impose the normal 65 percent overhead fees in relation to the research because of how highly it values the community-based collaboration with the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Service. Cost savings in waiving of the overhead costs, combined with grant access, resulted in the contribution of \$315,000 versus the standard \$1 or \$2 million worth of funding needed for similar studies.

REVENUE SUMMARY: 22 September 2002 – 31 December 2005

Ottawa Police Service	\$315,000
University of Ottawa	\$ 5,000
Canadian Police Research Centre	\$ 80,000
 Total	 \$400,000

EXPENSE SUMMARY: 22 September 2002 – 31 December 2005

Professional fees, research costs and administrative staff:

2002	\$ 39,000
2003	\$100,000
2004	\$100,000
2005	\$100,000
Equipment:	\$ 10,000
Operating supplies:	\$ 51,000
Total:	\$400,000

CONCLUSION

The release of *Gold Medal Policing: Mental Readiness and Performance Excellence* is a significant achievement on many fronts. In addition to confirming that there are many similarities in mental preparedness engaged in by top police officers and high performance athletes, the study also provides practical recommendations for recruitment, self-assessment tools, career development, e-learning, recognition, curriculum design, training, role-modeling, publications and future research benchmarks. As well, the endurance of the partnership for over three years is a testament to the vision and collaboration of the Ottawa Police Service, the City of Ottawa and the University of Ottawa.

The completion of a report based on the extensive and original research conducted is only the beginning. Current and future Ottawa Police members need to have tools that they can easily access to enhance their performance. In addition, there are many more potential positive interests in the areas of recruitment and retention, in-service training, performance assessments, front-line decision-making, international recognition and awards - to name but a few. The Ottawa Police will explore ways to build on this research and share the learning widely.

Original signed by

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