



Culture Transformation Blazes the Trail to Modern Culture

In a climate of increased social pressures and awareness about diversity, inclusion and officer wellness, York Regional Police (YRP), a leading model of excellence in Canadian policing, proactively up-leveled their culture. The passion and dedication to realize YRP’s breakthrough vision led to an unsurpassed level of leadership development, change leadership capability building and employee participation to embed and sustain a new, progressive culture that will take the organization mindfully into the future.

BREAKTHROUGHS

- Culture Change
- Organizational Transformation
- Police Culture

In 2018, York Regional Police proactively commenced a journey that involved taking a much-needed look at culture. Our partnership with Being First unlocked the tools, language and especially the strategic direction that propelled our transformation into a model that other police services are now adapting for their own success. Our members continue to move the organization forward by perpetuating the tremendous work done under our transformational umbrella.”

Jim MacSween, Chief of York Regional Police



“Being First understands the nuances of paramilitary and emergency organizations which allows them to provide industry-specific advice.

Partnering with Being First catapulted YRP toward realizing its wellness and inclusion-focused transformational vision: Inspiring positive change to support and include all members.”

Kathleen MacDonald, Sr. Legal Counsel and Change Process Leader

Challenge

Traditional paramilitary organizations, including many law enforcement agencies, have inherited cultural norms that are not in synch with modern expectations of diversity, inclusion and respect in the workplace. This not only influences how members of these agencies interact with one another, it impacts their wellness and the relationship between police and the community. Systems and processes within these organizations may be influenced by residual unconscious bias, inadvertently disadvantaging certain members. Wellness resources and tools may be underutilized due to residual stigma associated with occupational stress injuries and PTSD, leaving members vulnerable to significant life-long struggle or even fatal outcomes.

As a leader in the promotion of member well-

ness, diversity and inclusion, YRP recognized the need to take proactive action to continuously evolve and keep pace with the needs of its members and society. In 2018 they commenced internal research to identify areas for improvement and any unintended factors that could contribute to wellness challenges or disadvantages for certain groups, including women, racialized members and members living with disabilities. The inquiry generated multiple recommendations. As a 24/7 emergency response government organization on a limited budget, spread across multiple sites from rural to urban, YRP needed to solidify and accelerate this comprehensive culture transformation and know that it would stick. For assistance, they reached out to Being First.



Solution

We tailored our Culture Change Strategy to YRP's size, budget and application. We started by partnering with the Executive Command Team to name two Change Process Leaders, a sworn superintendent and the senior legal counsel, a civilian. Together, we developed a comprehensive change strategy to guide YRP's two-year culture transformation, which they named "Breakthrough."

We began by putting the top 80 leaders and several police organization and union leaders through *Leadership Breakthrough: Walk the Talk of Change*, our flagship development program to build transformational leadership effectiveness through self-mastery, modeling, communication, and relationship skills.

Simultaneously, YRP's Change Process Leaders and two other project leaders attended Being First's Advanced Change Leadership Program—*4Sight*—to strengthen their capabilities, mindsets, relationships and strategies to work within the YRP's paramilitary constraints and make progress on the overall strategy. We coached them throughout to model their desired culture and adapt and revise their change strategy and plan as needed.

Other key components of YRP's successful transformation included:

- ▶ 70 project team members attended our *Leading Transformation* course to develop core change leadership skills, including how to use our Change Leader's Roadmap methodology to design and implement their projects and address the human dynamics of change.
- ▶ We coached the Change Process Leaders to shape their high-level strategy and support their project teams.
- ▶ We established a Change Leadership Team to guide each of the six change projects prioritized to achieve the Breakthrough objectives.
- ▶ We guided YRP to create a Culture Champion Network of over 100 members to sustain ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders throughout the organization.
- ▶ We supported an organization-wide culture assessment to provide YRP with a snapshot of its current culture as well as insight into what an ideal culture looked like to its members.



Results

Leadership commitment and alignment and high engagement throughout the ranks produced a culture transformation that positions York Regional Police as a model for modern policing culture across North America. Through its transformation, York Regional Police has:

- ▶ Ignited an unprecedented level of member engagement with over 400 volunteers working on the transformation
- ▶ Increased Conscious Change Leadership capability in over 160 sworn and civilian personnel
- ▶ Significant changes to the cadet onboarding process increased training success rate from 77% to 94%
- ▶ Attrition rates reduced by approximately 50% for the second consecutive year
- ▶ Created and is currently implementing YRP's first Inclusive Policing Action Plan aimed at promoting equity and inclusion throughout YRP and to preventing discrimination and harassment in the workplace and in the community
- ▶ Launched an organizational Anti-Racism Action Plan, which includes a multi-year, anti-racism training program
- ▶ Used a diversity-sensitive analysis tool to review and improve uniform and civilian recruiting and hiring processes
- ▶ Based upon its existing Wellness Strategy, developed a comprehensive Wellness support platform to provide easy access to information, support and services across four wellness segments— Biological, Psychological, Social and Spiritual health, including a personalized Wellness BI dashboard to promote self-awareness, work/life balance and more
- ▶ Organized and launched multiple member-engagement initiatives including the Middle Management Advisory Committee to ensure insights to decision-making are conveyed up and down the organization, and member-led District Enhancement Committees across the region to address members' concerns at a district level
- ▶ Developed a member-centric workplace conflict response model to improve management of workplace conflict reports with awareness on psychological safety and inclusion and to prevent conflict from escalating to the level of harassment
- ▶ Completed the initial certification of 30 members to serve in a newly-forming Return to Work Reintegration program to help members reintegrate into the workplace after they have been involved in a critical incident or after a lengthy absence



ABOUT YORK REGIONAL POLICE

Following the amalgamation of 14 municipal police departments and the York County Security Police, York Regional Police was formed on January 1, 1971. Upon its inception, the service adopted the motto Deeds Speak, proudly declaring that their actions speak louder than words. Moving forward, Deeds Speak has served as the foundation for all of their endeavors.

Today, more than 1,600 sworn officers and 600 civilians are proud members of York Regional Police, a 2021 Greater Toronto Top Employer and internationally recognized policing leader. Their members are honored to serve one of the most diverse and fastest-growing communities in Canada, patrolling areas ranging from serene rural landscapes to urban cityscapes, and ensuring the safety and security of residents who identify with more than 200 ethnic origins, practice more than 10 different religions and speak more than 16 unique languages.

ABOUT BEING FIRST

Being First is a Breakthrough company, providing advanced expertise in personal and organizational transformation since 1988. We open leader's minds, develop their self-mastery and equip them with the advanced Conscious Change Leadership skills to transform themselves, their organizations, communities and cultures.

As Strategic Advisors to the C-Suite, we provide an integrated System of Transformation that builds transformational leadership capability by providing your leaders with the consulting, training and development, coaching, methodology, tools and assessments to perform optimally and Achieve Breakthrough.

For more information, BeingFirst.com or call us at +1 970.385.5100.
