



500 Royal Lancers to uncover hidden digital potential

Addressing the digital skills gap

The Royal Lancers, the British Army's leading reconnaissance Regiment, is undertaking an innovative technology capability building program that could serve as a blueprint for how the entire British Army addresses its digital skills gap.

This June, 500 Royal Lancers participated in a groundbreaking skills mapping and digital training program with WithYouWithMe, a veteran-led Software as a Service (SaaS) company that partners with Defence agencies around the world to build technology capability.

The program is designed to help unit level commanders leverage the invisible digital talent within the force, identifying soldiers with natural abilities to excel in key digital roles such as cyber, software engineering and data analytics.

The software platform – called Potential – uses innovative psychometric testing to identify Soldiers with the aptitude to thrive in tech-based roles, then builds their skills in under 200 hours through accredited digital training so they are ready to deliver critical tech-led capabilities.

The program will support the Royal Lancers in identifying the correct candidates to shape the development of Perseus Troop – the Royal Lancers' hub facilitating bottom-up efficiencies through digitisation. It will also serve the four Sabre Squadrons and the Troops within them.

With new technology on the horizon, the training will establish a sophisticated data analytics capability, which will eventually leverage data feeds from drones, satellites and radio transmissions. This in turn will feedback critical insights to support commanders to make faster and better-informed decisions.

In camp, Soldiers are developing coding skills to build apps for everyday Regimental business. So far, the Royal Lancers have built tools to support career management, reporting of bullying and harassment, to inform Soldiers of training opportunities as well as going paperless on car pass and military clothing requests. Their main priority has now switched to supporting commanders monitor the fitness and recovery of their soldiers.



Captain Guy Parker, Regimental Signals Officer and Officer Commanding Perseus Troop at the Royal Lancers, said the pilot exercise would equip the force with the agility to react to the future requirements of the modern battlefield and to day-to-day work in barracks. Through driving efficiency in camp, we will gain time to focus on lethality.

"To ensure we're strongly placed to take advantage of emerging digital technologies, we must adopt a forward-looking approach to capability building," said Captain Parker. "With the changing character of the modern battlefield, soldiers need to analyse more information than ever to provide intelligence. Modern technologies – including artificial intelligence, Cyber and augmented reality – are inevitably becoming more prevalent in training and in war. The Army that adjusts fastest will ultimately have the fighting edge over adversaries and the enemy. There is an abundance of untapped potential within the British Army – as seen with the Royal Lancers – the challenge now is harnessing it."

"This includes providing our Soldiers with the opportunities and abilities to identify those emerging digital technologies that can strengthen us on operations and become rapidly proficient.

"Our partnership with WithYouWithMe will enable Soldiers to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses, identify areas for development and upskill in critical capability gaps.

“It will also help us identify positions that can leverage skills outside of their usual employment stream, which we hope will result in a more rewarding career path within the Army.”

The first WithYouWithMe program started in May and will be completed by the end of June. 10% of the 200 soldiers initially screened have undertaken the first of several planned "bootcamps" run by WYWM. These bootcamps are a 200-hour blended learning course with instructor led lessons conducted during working hours consolidating the lessons from the online modules completed at the students' own pace. Capt Parker continues to work as the Royal Lancers lead, providing the proof of concept and creating data. This will inform future decisions by the Digital Academy (Defence Digital) to recognise the training and distribute skills learnt more widely across Defence.

Edward Plunkett, Defence Lead at WithYouWithMe, said while the approach is already used by the Australian and Canadian Armies, the Royal Lancers are the first unit in the UK's Ministry of Defence to embark on the innovative program.

"In a military environment where digital capabilities are vital, we want to make a difference by providing a route for serving members be part of the solution to the force's skills gap," said Edward Plunkett, Defence Lead at WithYouWithMe.

"When serving in combat the Royal Lancers are relied upon to provide a continuous stream of timely, accurate information to commanders to support important tactical and operational decisions. The potential to increase the efficiency and lethality of this capability through fast and effective processing and analysis of the data is a huge force multiplier.

"This means that every Soldier should have the digital skills required to exploit the full range of technologies at their disposal, from handheld devices that capture information in the field through to processing the collection from multiple sensors on their Armoured Reconnaissance Vehicles.

"WithYouWithMe's digital skills program will hold a critical role in ensuring Soldiers are equipped to fight on the digital battlefield, particularly in terms of cyber capabilities."

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