



About the Emergent Series

This episode is part of the Learning Uncut Emergent series where we talk about rapidly changing business models, and how Learning and Development can support organisations to adapt. Exploring how learning professionals can emerge from disruption as relevant and effective. The series is co-hosted by Michelle Ockers, Laura Overton and Shannon Tipton.

Laura Overton:

Hello everyone, my name is Laura Overton and I'm thrilled to be a guest host on Michelle Ockers Learning Uncut podcast and today I am so excited on this global podcast to welcome two incredible contributors from opposite sides of the world with a 12 hour time difference. We'd like to welcome Brandon Carson, he's a global learning leader, author of Learning in the Age of Immediacy and has built his leadership in learning through a wide range of businesses including Yahoo and Microsoft, Home Depot and currently director of learning at Delta Airlines. So Brandon, I have to say good morning to you.

Brandon Carson

Thank you, Laura. It's great to be here. I really enjoy coming together in such a wide time zone.

Laura Overton:

Yeah, it's fantastic. And Paul Dunn has been a fellow of one of the world's leading business think tanks. He's currently a fellow of Singapore's Social Innovation Forum, he's a four times TEDx speaker. And he's the chairman of Buy One Give One. Paul, good evening to you in Singapore.

Paul Dunn:

Oh good evening. Yes. Let's see, we're afternoon in the United Kingdom right now, right? So good afternoon to you and wherever you are listening to us. Thank you for taking your time, whatever time it is where you are. We're thrilled you're here.

Laura Overton:

This emergent series is all about how, as businesses were emerging from the pandemic situation that we've been in and also what are the implications for learning professionals. And one of the things that the three of us, Shannon, Michelle, and I really wanted to do is to say how do we anchor ourselves in business reality as learning professionals? So I'm really looking forward to this conversation today about the business reality that we're finding ourselves in. So Brandon, perhaps I can turn to you first and say for you personally, what have you seen changing in the world of business? What's this disruption meant to you in the last couple of months?

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Brandon Carson:

Good question. Just to set the stage a bit, we at Delta celebrated our best year ever. For 2019 in our almost 96 year history was our best year ever. There was one day where we

transported over 700,000 people from point A to point B wherever they were going, right? And so in February, we were celebrating that and then in March, we were pivoting really quickly to realize that 97% of our business just evaporated. And so when a world pandemic unleashes itself is really a good core reflection on what your value really is. And so we pivoted really quickly to put certain aspects of the business to rest if you will because we had a lot of other things we were focused on doing in the communities we serve, free flights for health workers to hotspots around the country, flying to get our folks that were trapped from country closings and other countries, get them back over to America, that kind of thing. So the biggest thing that's coming out of this for us and for what I think, impact in L&D is just this how to pivot and lead through a crisis and really take a hold of the situation and keep things moving forward.

In training, we have been busier than ever at Delta quite frankly, because you still have a business to run. We were key and critical in the business continuity planning. So I think a lot of what comes out of this is still to be determined as it applies to what's normal, but are definitely one of the key learnings coming for us is we have to start thinking differently about things, we have to be more open to flexible work structures, much more empathetic to our people's work lives. So it's been exhausting in some degree because it's been a complete reorientation and reimagination of what this business is. And one thing on the other side of this we know is, it will be a different airline, it will be a different world of transportation. It will not be the same as it was in the first parts of March. So it's been quite an interesting few months.

Laura Overton:

It's quite a journey that you've been on. And also it's just the beginning I think of these journeys, isn't it? So Paul, what have you been observing in business from your side of the world? What has disruption meant for business in Asia at the moment?

Paul Dunn:

But I think, Brandon said it very well or you said it actually, when you talked about Brandon's book, it's got a beautiful line in it in the title, which is this word called immediacy. And I don't think any of us could have imagined immediacy at the scale that we imagined it right now, right? And we need to give a shout out obviously to those people whose lives, health and so on has been incredibly impacted in ways that we could not imagine. But in the things that I do, immediacy and scale have been amazing. And what I think is interesting too, and Brandon said it that, you have to really act quickly and when you act quickly, where you go to is your values. And if the values have strengths, then your leadership and your team can have strength. I talk about ... you may remember Cindy Lauper ... does that show my age that I mentioned Cindy Lauper? Had this brilliant song called True Colors, remember the True Colors song?

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Laura Overton:

Yes.

Brandon Carson:

I love that song.

Paul Dunn:

Yeah, it's a great song, isn't it? And we have seen that, both good and bad. And I've seen three types of leaders. I've seen those and they all begin with P which is interesting. So I see those who it's panic, which shows us up either as freeze. In other words, we don't know what they had to do or running around like a chicken with its head cut off trying various things.

The other one I call passive, which is, imagine a sine wave, going from here to tomorrow or three years out. It's up and down, up and down, it's fine. And of course, typically those leaders who are passive when you look at their business now, when you look at their business in three years time, it's in exactly the same place.

I mean, I was so impressed when Brandon said, of course, we in L&D have been busier than ever before. What a cool sign that is?

And then the final one that I see, which I'm sure is happening at Delta and to many of you joining us is, again, it begins with P is what I call purpose driven leadership. And I started to think, what was that all about? What is it that makes somebody accelerate as you were saying? And I think there are all sorts of things and one of them is the values, we're very clear at what our North Star is, it shines like never before but by also aware of what's happening minute by minute.

And I was thinking about what is it that leaders ... because leaders at this time need to be consistently at their best, so that whatever you throw at them it's like boom, it's there. And the thing that I came up with and I need to qualify what I mean by this, is that every single one of us, every single one of us listening to this, every single one of us that has the privilege of talking right now, we are all at our best when we're giving. It's pretty simple. We all are at our best when we're giving, whether that's helping someone across the road or whatever it is, we're all at our best. And so what I find that leaders do is they integrate that philosophy. Sometimes, Brandon, we used to call it servant leadership and all that sort of thing, right?

Brandon Carson:

Exactly.

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Paul Dunn:

Which is the whole thing about giving and they do that, it's part of who they are. And one of the things ... I loved what you said, Brandon, when you said it's going to be a different us, when we ... it's going to be different. And so we've heard that word, there are all those words that we've heard, unprecedented, and people are going to scream if they use it again. Yeah like pivots. But if you think about pivot, what I am finding is that those class organizations, which obviously Delta is one of them, is it's not just pivoting, it's transforming. It's transforming. It's taking this moment to say, "Oh, look at that, who can we really be?" And I loved what you said too, there are so many pundits, another P word other who say, "Well, this is what the new normal is going to be." I don't think anybody really knows. I mean what we know is, it's different.

Laura Overton:

Paul, I think you're absolutely right there. I think the pivot word is very interesting. I was writing in one of my own research reports about two years ago about the pivot point of change and some of the challenges that we were seeing for the learning profession and to say, okay, change is happening all around us, and what do we need to let go of? And I want to try to bring some more perspectives from the business angle, what you've observed in industry as well as in your own fields of work. And to look at some of those pivot points have changed for businesses right now. I know certainly for ... yesterday for example, I was involved in a small group conversation with CLOs and talking about each of their businesses.

One business was flying in the Pharma side, absolutely flying. Another 200 year old business, certain aspects were absolutely on the floor whilst other aspects of their business were flying. Another business, nothing was flying at all in the retail side. And all of those organizations were at pivotal points, what do we do about this? How do we respond?

I mean, Brandon, if we take a look at business first and different types of business models, the reality of chaos, what's it meaning for business? What are some of the things that you're actually seeing the businesses structure themselves, their role?

Brandon Carson:

Yeah, I think some things are becoming painfully obvious and painfully clear, that have always been there bubbling underneath over the last several years and I think the pandemic and the reaction to that and the rise of nationalism that's been occurring and this impact to globalization. There's a lot of forces, dynamic forces that were bubbling underneath, and that have been exposed a bit more because of the rapid impact that this pandemic has had on us. And I would say right now there are some underlying fundamentals that are driving this, what Paul says is a transformation and it's truly a global transformation where we're undergoing and it's really hard for us. It's definitely challenging for humans to have too much perspective in the moment, right? So we're all very reactive right now. But what you can see is, we really are in the largest scale job transition since the Industrial Revolution. And this transition is going to ... there's some argument going on between the two camps if you will, that this transition is going to be, one camp says very revolutionary, the displacement will be astronomical.

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Brandon Carson:

There will be revolution, you can see some of that bubbling up with the rise of nationalism right now, the anti-intellectualism that's going on, the rising wage inequality is a big driver behind that. And then there's the other camp that thinks, okay, humans have always had transitions with what we call work throughout the years. So we'll figure it out. And I would say the argument here is, we're being exposed to a lot of this, the rapidness if you will, of what's happening because of the pandemic. And so that's why you see the business shifts being exposed for their vulnerabilities. And if you look at the globalization, if you look at China, and it's interesting in the pharma world well, the large majority of medicine is not created here. And so it's reliant upon a supply chain, when a pandemic happens or something happens in one part of the country and the vulnerability is exposed.

Brandon Carson:

So I think we have a lot of these broader dynamics that are affecting us. And it's really hard for business leaders sometimes especially American business leaders, quite frankly, because we are so focused on a quarter or the results of two quarters. And other companies around the world take a broader, longer term look at things when it comes to business. And we don't have that mindset here. And our CEO was saying, not too long ago that he looks at us as needing to become a learning business. And I think right now I would argue that your L&D function or however you do learning inside of your business or your company is probably going to be seen as one of the most critical functions in the business. And yet it's at best having little to no investment at worst de-investment.

And this is where I say we generally have a CEO problem especially with American companies, they are radically and significantly investing in technology, because they don't know what will drive necessarily their competitive advantage but they know it's going to be technology driven.

And we know that there is no such thing as a knowledge worker anymore, because every worker at every level is going to be interacting with technology. So companies are investing significantly in that space, yet they're not investing in the people part of it.

The investment isn't matching that and this is going to come to meet them at some point with implications. And I think we might be seeing the genesis of that in some of these businesses who are doing well, some of these businesses who aren't doing well. So our CEOs like, "We have to keep the humanity in work, we have to educate our people, we have to train our people, we have to train them not just on the task they're doing now, but we have to train them on future skills." And he's no longer doing three year strategies. He said, "I don't know what three ..." especially now, right? So I think we're at that really tough point where it's hard to tell, work is not going to get less complex. Work is not going to be less technological.

Every aspect of work has technology embedded into it. As we move forward, there will be displacement of workers and that will happen. A lot of what we're having conversations about within our company right now is well, how does this change how we want to work? What does work mean? And I think humanity has an opportunity to have that discussion right now. And what I would say for business leaders right now it's not the time to shrink, it

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is the time to optimize but it is the time to do more investment in learning, more investment in innovation. I'm not sure if that message is really hitting home yet.

Paul Dunn:

I love what you said there about us needing to be a learning organization, that's such a crucial point, it really is. And the other thing, if I just go this Laura, just very quickly on this, you mentioned retail before, and here's an interesting thing. A couple of weeks ago, I got an email and the subject line was this, COVID-19 is the best thing to happen to retail. That was the subject line, that seriously was the subject line. So well ouch, if you are a retailer and you got that, you go, whoever wrote this is not on my Christmas card list, right? But then when you read it, it was from a guy called Tien Tzuo who is the CEO of Zuora. And he said this and there's so much truth in this but you miss it if you're not a learning organization. He said this, "The old way of retail has been dying for years, and COVID-19 finally pushed it off the cliff but a more resilient retail industry is shaping up right in front of our eyes. The future of retail is already here. It's just hiding in plain sight."

Brandon Carson:

Yeah. That's fantastic. I like that. It's a catalyst.

Paul Dunn:

Do you like that? Yeah, exactly. Yeah. You can change and put anything you like and place the word retail, and you get it.

Laura Overton:

This is what has been discussed, hasn't it? For so long. I've been preparing on writing my own book towards the end of last year and looking at all of the different changes and I know, Brandon, you address a lot of the technological changes in your book, which are driving through the age of immediacy, we've got the cloud, we've got robotics, we've got AI, all these technologies, all the stuff that's coming out of the World Economic Forum about the jobs that we have today aren't going to be in place tomorrow.

It's just that we didn't realize that we would experience that in such a short space of time. And I think that that redefining of the business model is ... we're all seeing examples of it all the way through. I mean, you talked before Paul, a little bit about leaders and the 'P's' of leadership within having to make those decisions right at the very top.

Where does our business go? And I'd love to perhaps explore the mindset of leaders at the moment. The decisions that they are having to face at the top of the business, because we automatically want to tune into what does that mean for learning? But I'd really like to keep us in the business, trying to get inside the head of what keeps business leaders awake at night and what do you what are the decisions you think they're facing right now? You've given us a way that you think they're responding, but what do you think of the decisions that they're actually facing right now?

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Paul Dunn:

Well, it's interesting you ask that question and it's almost like we prepared for this which we didn't [inaudible 00:20:07] but it's very easy because ... Brandon a while ago talked about humanity and that to me is fascinating for a number of reasons.

For example, Laura you may know that last week, the prime minister in your country, Mr. Johnson, got a letter on the ninth of June actually, he got it from a number of really, really cool business leaders. And one of those leaders happened to be the president of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales which is like ... they're numbers people, right? That's what they are. This guy, Michael Israel is his name. And he said this, listen to this because this is where I think ... I love what you said, Brandon about human.

He said this in the letter to Boris, he said, "As chartered accountants know ... " just with chartered accountants,(think of your typical chartered accountants so you get the image!) He said, "We think it's vital," listen to this, "Vital businesses look beyond profit and have a wider social purpose. And we're pleased to have so many organizations joining our call to government to put these goals front and center." And then he talks about the sustainable development goals as being a pathway to do that. And one of the things, another way of thinking about values is purpose and meaning and they were the words of the year last year almost, but now I think I'd be struggling still to say, "Okay, we've got another four or five years of trying to get that message out there." But instantly, literally instantly, on this timescale, bang, we got it ... and so I think I've been on this curve, I call it a path to purpose since 2008. And in 2008, we learned something interesting, we learned that greed is not good. And so we needed to find something else.

So we found this thing sometimes called the North Star, sometimes or just simply called values, what is it we believe in? And what we know is that organizations that have that are the people that are the magnets for talent, as well as ... and by that I mean, right across the organization because we want to go and work for those organizations, right? By the way we happen to like the global goals because they're pretty important because that's about the future of humanity right there, and we are a learning organization. And if you want to come along on this journey, then come.

I mean, I think it's that togetherness that is so important. And Brandon too, I love what your CEO said about we're not even thinking out three years now and right now that's true. But one of the reasons that I love being in Singapore and it's interesting, there's a building here which is called the Urban Redevelopment Authority. And it talks about how Singapore did not exist 54 years ago. I mean, we're a new country, right? And yet, when you go to this particular building called the Urban Redevelopment Authority, you come face to face with a plaque, it's this huge thing and right across the top of it, it says, "Our 50 year vision." I love that. I love that. Now, we can't determine what it means from a pure business sense but we can determine a whole set of values that are going to carry us through there.

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Brandon Carson:

Yeah.

Paul Dunn:

And that's the crucial part of it. And how do we make sure that everybody is ... if this is like new business, how do we make sure that everybody is really understanding that? L&D, that's where it is right there.

Laura Overton:

I think you're absolutely right there. So I think one of the challenges that we have, is that we also have to practically get on board with what's going on. And I was reading an article in Forbes, it was so long ago at the end of April it was such a long time ago, where they were talking about business trends already emerging then and they were talking there about the fact that we're going to be going contactless payments, going online in the cloud, speed of delivery, automation. The things that we're used to having people doing, more technology and we can see as our high streets are opening up and the social distancing, and how we're going to be ordering food and what cafe life is going to be about.

There's some really practical issues for business leaders and for managers to be getting their heads around. I mean Brandon, I would love to get your perspective as well. This is big picture of what we could get back to the practical realities of business models unfolding, as we speak are places safe to work. And the pressure or even at managerial level of getting by this week, next week, and I just wondered what you're seeing bubbling up in terms of what's going on in the heads of managers right now.

Brandon Carson:

Yeah, it's very complex. So if you look at the bigger shift ... so we were undergoing a shift anyway into the digital, right? So we know we've been moving from one age to another during this. A company like Zoom is now worth more than all the major US airlines combined. Netflix is now worth more than Exxon. So we know that there's a fundamental shift going on. I think this transition is going to be fundamentally different, though.

And I think when we moved from the Industrial Revolution, markets shifted a bit and supply chains rose, obviously and then globalization occurred. I have a funny feeling that the whole way capital flows will change from this. And I really honestly think that new business models will emerge.

And those business models that will emerge will be based on what Paul's talking about, and I'll use the word networks and so now you have this hierarchical corporate structure. And what do we deal with on a day to day basis? We deal with, as the pandemic has shown, the ecosystems that we have generated, the decision making process within the counter reaction ... a lot of processes within corporations are actual counter reactions to network effects, right?

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And so we're seeing the shackles being taken off of that. And so what will become critically important as tasks are displaced to automation and as we redefine work within the confines of these networks now ... and we have a little bit of that in the airline world, right? We actually just before the pandemic erupted, we had set an alliance with LATAM which was a Latin American airline conglomeration, right? So we're really big on setting these alliances with the global airline industry obviously but those types of alliances will become even more important, more deliberate. And then as tasks get more automated to Paul's point, the

leadership within the organization is going to completely have to change and to your point on management and leadership, keeping that humanity, they're giving people the skill sets that they need to be able to lead both humans and intelligent machinery, because they will be working together.

So we're going to need that sensibility, that complex thinking skill that's required to navigate that and the ability to coordinate others, the emotional intelligence or whatever word or term we want to come up with that.

Leadership will become critical and people are going to have to transition from these rote manual jobs or tasks because any task that is rote or manual is going to be automated. That's going to happen, right? And so what's left for the humanity aspect of it. And so that judgment, decision making, negotiation, cognitive flexibility, all those skill sets that quite frankly L&D and most corporate organizations are not focused on, those are going to be

incumbent and so important and necessary for business to succeed in the new operating model. And I think that's where we in L&D need to get in front of that, and do the upskilling, rescaling, retraining, that's necessary because that talent's not out there.

Laura Overton:

I think that's so powerful because there's such a role that potentially we can play. But Paul, how do you ... you work with business leaders in your day to day job all the time. Genuinely ... it'll be a little bit challenging here I think. We've talked a lot about the learning organization and the need for humanity and we are good at rhetoric and particularly right now, there's a lot of rhetoric that's going on but genuinely, how do you think business leaders see the learning professionals? (Shut your ears Brandon here!) Do they genuinely see them as being as useful as Brandon has articulated? Or is there something that we need to overcome from a business leaders perspective?

Paul Dunn:

Sure, I think that perhaps the way I'm explaining it is that it's something we have to do. That's how it's seen. It's almost like in some ways a grudge purchase if that makes sense. We've got to do it because the manual says it sort of thing.

But here's the point, we ... and there's obviously some need for this, but all the while Brandon said a minute ago, all the while we're training people to follow processes, then that's only a small

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part of the jobs that we need to do. And I think some ... I mean seriously, I think there's some business leaders that are going ... I mean, they go, oh, my God ... oh, and realizing ... so for them here's the thing, right? I think in a sense, everything seems to be lost, right? You cannot say, "Well, let's get back on track." Because that track didn't go anywhere.

So I think the really smart leaders are saying, "Oh, how do we get on a different track? What's that look like? And what do we need to make this business work?" And it's not necessarily perfect processes, although that's part of it, right? I mean, that's obviously part

of it. But it's something beyond that, that is evolving right now but more than evolving, is desperately needed. I think we're going to see so many ... as you said earlier on Brandon, we're going to see so many different solutions but for sure, for absolute sure, what we know is sticking with that which we know doesn't go anywhere. I mean we really know that, right? So I think it's a huge opportunity to open up and say, "What do we need to learn?" That's really the question.

Laura Overton:

Yeah, Brandon, I know that you wanted to ... you were flagging there that business leaders don't see things in the same way that you see things. I'd love to get your perspective on that.

Brandon Carson:

Yeah, sometimes I refer to this as the dark ages of training in some respect, right? And we have to come out of the dark ages. And I think what a lot of ... especially at my company for example, I've been there a couple of years now and I was brought in because there was an

understanding that we needed more from the business people, needed more from the learning organization. And I think the inflection point is on L&D's side right now. I think business leaders are standing there not totally ... they understand that people are the driving force, they get that.

Any business leader worth their salt, they understand that. But they don't understand the very complex and complicated process of transferring knowledge from one human to another. It is probably the most difficult thing ever because we don't know how it works. We have all sorts of research theories and all sorts of ideas about how people learn something but it is very complicated.

So the business leaders are standing there, waiting for the learning leader to come forward, or the learning organization to come forward with what needs to be done. And I think that's the challenge. And that to me, and why I call it the dark ages of training in corporate America, is too many people in positions of leadership and learning functions don't understand what they should be doing to get that knowledge transfer to happen.

I'm sorry, it is what it is. We are where we are as an industry. And I think the pandemic ... I was talking to Elliott the other day about this, Elliot Maisie, where some of us are having a discussion



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about fundamentally our industry needs to change. We have become a cost center. I think Paul mentioned something earlier about that. We're just this function, usually buried within an HR hierarchy that's just producing process manuals and checklists and things to do.

Paul Dunn:

There you go.

Brandon Carson:

And I don't mean to belittle it, but what I'm saying is we are the ones that have to come out of the dark ages and grasp onto the perspective of what needs to happen to drive the business forward. As the shift keeps occurring, and quite frankly, to Paul's point on retail, at an even more accelerated pace and exponential pace than before which was quite frankly, just ... when we were talking about, just the shift into the digital age was going quite rapidly anyway. And it's really chaotic in some regards inside of companies. I mean, the very simple process of trying to subscribe to a SaaS model, software program within a corporate hierarchy that doesn't even understand how to process a PO like that. All of these things have to be dismantled. And we need learning leaders that are really willing to step up and go, wait a minute, we've got to stop doing it this way. We have to try some other things and so I think it's both.

I think we have a CEO problem, a C-suite problem where they don't see the value there. But I think it's a two way dialogue where I should not have to be going to my senior leadership and trying to justify why they need to invest in training. I should not have to be doing that. I should be coming forward going, this is why ... I actually even now with businesses downsizing, I'm putting together a plan for more investment in the learning function

because here's why we need ... I need to be able to tell the story. And I think that's where our learning leaders have to step up and become more like business leaders.

Laura Overton:

And I don't think it's a corporate America issue because certainly the kind of world where I've been working mainly from Europe and through to Asia, Australia, it is echoed what you've just said is absolutely echoed. I think what from my perspective, what's been really interesting is that those learning teams who are starting to say, not what can I produce for you as an organization, my curriculum, my training courses, but how can we play a different role in enabling learning in your organization? Those types of learning teams seem to have adapted faster and have stronger relationships through, with business leaders in their organization and working more as one against the challenges. I think there's some great things to be learned from our past as a learning function that can help us.

Not everyone was in the dark ages, and some have actually got their torch out, and are finding a new route through. So I would love your views because the whole of the rest of this emergent series is going to be about emerging more useful and more powerful.



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Paul Dunn:

Otherwise, it's a great title. You already said that, right? It is a great title. Wonderful title.

Laura Overton:

Yeah, Michelle came up with that, and we wouldn't expect anything less from her.

Laura Overton:

Absolutely. So I'd like to just close off in the last few minutes here. Your advice for learning professionals in teams at the moment, they might be under pressure, they might be under stress, leaders might even be followed right now, but I think all of us here believes that learning should and could become business critical in the future.

So Paul, I'm going to come to you first. What do you think that learning and development needs to stop right now, needs to start and to borrow from McKinsey, needs to accelerate right now. So what would be your quick fire pieces of advice?

Paul Dunn:

I see the wisdom of this and it's going from what I call the wisdom of one, to the wisdom of many. So that there is a collective wisdom that we can tap into as leaders. And once we really get into that, so everybody feels that they're listened to, and they're playing a part in sculpting what's going ahead. And I think that's critically important going forward.

Laura Overton:

So what would you stop? So you want to stop the wisdom of one?

Paul Dunn:

Yeah.

Laura Overton:

Brandon, what would you stop, L&D?

Brandon Carson:

What would I stop?

Laura Overton:

Yes, stop. We're tough talking first, okay?

Brandon Carson:

Yeah. It's a good question. And this is one thing I've actually done with my team. We've stopped taking orders from the business, we literally will get phone calls, "I need a three day classroom

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training program." And I think we are ... we, and I think that that speaks for L&D. I'd like to see us become less as a support function just waiting and taking orders from the business. I think every learning leader should ask themselves a simple question. People want to work where they can be developed. What are we doing in that area? So I'd like us to stop taking orders and stop being just that cost center function that waits for work to come to them.

Paul Dunn:

Yeah, based on what you just said, I think we should stop quote unquote, delivering and regarding that as the be all and end all. We delivered as opposed to moving to be transformed.

Brandon Carson:

Yes.

Paul Dunn:

And that's a whole different ball game. As you said, it's not about oh, well, we can do a three day, it's not about, oh, we got this two hour program. It's not about that. It's really about ... And by the way, the most interesting thing is that the senior leadership may not ask you to come and transform someone, right? I mean, they're going to say, "Oh, no, we need to do this. Oh, well yeah, we can do that." But a much better thing is we see our role.

Laura Overton:

They are very comfortable with us being being order takers

Brandon Carson:

Yeah. That's where you have to have the courage to step forward. Yeah. Yeah. Good point.

Laura Overton:

So gentlemen, very briefly, what do you think we should start doing as learning professionals in organizations?

Brandon Carson:

I think we need to become more strategic advisors to the business. And quite frankly, I don't mean to beat up on anyone, right? We all try to do our best but a lot of business people think that most things can be solved through training because they don't know, right? And so I think that's where the learning organization has to become more of that strategic advisor. To do that optimally though, we have to be in the conversations. And so that's why you have to get up and go claim that seat at the table, build those relationships at the more senior levels, so that you can be a part of the conversation.

Laura Overton:

Brandon thank you so much. And Paul, finally, what do you think of what people are doing in learning and development? They should be accelerating right now. Some of the behaviors that you're seeing, they need to be accelerated.

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Paul Dunn:

Yeah, I think ... well, it's an old thing that I've been talking about for a long, long time. And if it sounds cliché-ish, it's not meant to because it's absolutely vital for now, and it's this whole thing about how do you judge leaders? You judge them not by the followers they have by the number of leaders they create. And so once you mix that with transform, then you get a very powerful piece. And you're no longer seen as the cost center, you're no longer seen that way. You are seen as the very core of where this business can go.

Brandon Carson:

I love that. It's a great line. I'd like to steal that but I'll credit you. Judge leaders by the leaders they create, Paul Dunn. I love that.

Laura Overon:

And Brandon, what would you like to see accelerated in our profession right now?

Brandon Carson:

I will go back to Ed, our CEO, his statement because that resonated with me. I think we should be consistently seeking new methods to lift the workforce up, keep the humanity in work. And right now especially on the frontline, there are a lot of folks who are nervous, who are , if I can use that word] that are uncertain, who are worried, they're worried about their job. They're worried about their livelihoods, they're worried about the communities, their families, the world because of all of this that's going on. And I think we can play a central role in being more empathetic and being more humane. And really having the conversation about keeping that in as a part of what work is. I'd like to see us accelerate those conversations from L&D's perspective.

Laura Overton:

Gentlemen, this has been an absolutely fascinating conversation. I've thoroughly enjoyed your views and perspectives on our rapidly changing business world, the purpose of leadership within that world, and the role that we can play as learning professionals in genuinely adding value in the transformative and innovative new environment and some of the challenges that you've laid out to us. I think it's been a great start to this emergent series where we want to be digging in and exploring more. So on behalf of the listeners, I want to say thank you so much for sharing with us today.

Brandon Carson:

Thank you.

Paul Dunn:

Thank you Laura. It's been great to be with you.



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