

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value
Conversation with Michelle Ockers published on 25 June



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.

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to this episode of the Learning Uncut Emergent Series. Today, I have two guests and we're talking about new business models for learning and development. It is of course, your regular host, Michelle here. Our first guest is Jos Arets who's the co-founder of Tulser Global. Jos has worked for more than 30 years in the field of learning and development and human performance improvement and this involves 15 years as the CLO of a university hospital in the Netherlands, where he reported directly to the board of directors, which is an unusual reporting arrangement. His work through Tulser is focused on supporting L&D departments to create added business value. He is also a prolific author and is currently working on a new book called Show Me The Value: Creating Value-Based L&D. Welcome, Jos.

Jos Arets:

Thank you.

Michelle Ockers:

Our second guest today is Geraldine Voost, who has over 20 years L&D experience in a range of roles, which included 10 years in L&D leadership and technology roles at HeidelbergCement. Geraldine is now responsible for global and development for customers, distributors and partners and workforce at Bronkhurst, who are a high technology manufacturer. She's also a member of the organization's COVID-19's crisis team. So welcome Geraldine and thank you for taking time out of what must be a very busy schedule for you at the moment to speak with us.

Geraldine Voost:

It is but I'm looking forward to talk with you.

Michelle Ockers:

Well, let's start with you then, because I know you'll have some stories to tell us about life in this current period. What has the change and disruption meant to you on a day to day basis working in L&D in an organization at the moment, Geraldine?

Geraldine Voost:

Well actually for us, for the training department, the whole crisis has worked in our advantage really. We were already working on changing our business model of the learning and development department and we were already having conversations with those on getting started with the 70:20:10 methodology and making plans and then the crisis happens which meant that all the classroom trainings that were taking place and scheduled of course, stopped because that could no longer continue. We all of the sudden had more time to focus on learning new skills and apply them to our plans for the future. So it has really worked in

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

our advantage and also of course, like so many other companies, we have moved part of our classroom training online but now we can do that, taking into account everything that we are learning as part of our current journey.

Michelle Ockers:

So a period of rapid change, accelerating things you're already working on and really shifting the pace at which you're building skills in the organization and your business model, Geraldine, by the sound of it?

Geraldine Voost:

Yeah. Yes, when I joined Bronkhurst, the training department, they had implemented an LMS but the LMS was used mainly as an administration tool, that had one e-learning module in it and for the rest, it was only used to register classroom training attendance. That did mainly classroom training, so one of the reasons they hired me is to help the training department move to a more modern way of working.

Michelle Ockers:

That's only been 10 months you've been at Bronkhurst, is that right?

Geraldine Voost:

That's right, but it feels longer, yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I think all the days feel longer to all of us at the moment but it sounds like you're making a big shift at the moment and that the current period is helping you to shape that future more rapidly.

Geraldine Voost:

Yes.

Michelle Ockers:

Jos, how about ... You work with a range of organizations, what are you seeing in terms of the impact of change and disruption on learning and development for the organizations you're working with?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, we see two different patterns. The first pattern is dominant that people are moving from offline to online and they're very, very busy. We've also worked with some clients, international clients and some of them are using our methodology and they see a clear difference between moving from offline to online and to moving from learning-based to performance-based. So these conversations, these L&D departments who were already aligned with the business, they are able to support the business even more in this moment. So that's really a nice experience for us because we think that business alignment is a vital factor for L&D and that's also the reason why I started thinking about changing business models for L&D.

Michelle Ockers:

Right. So when you talk about business models, what do you mean? What's a business model?

Learning Uncut Emergent Series

Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost

How L&D Can Create Business Value

Jos Arets:

A business model is something really strange, it's like a process, you are working in it but you don't see it and so many people, they work processes and they just can't describe it. So many L&D departments are working in the business model and they just don't know it. They don't see it but they are acting like it. So I always use the business canvas from Alex Osterwalder to visualize the value you can create with a business model. So a business model is, let's say, to visualize the offering or the value proposition to your clients or stakeholders and it also makes visible the patterns of capabilities and partners and resources you need to create that same value proposition. In the end, you are, let's say, a value creator or you are a cost centre and I think learning is so vital these times for organizations, that learning should be in the core of the business of each organization.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. When you talk about the shift from learning-based to performance-based, as part of looking at your value proposition, what does that mean, moving from being learning-based to performance-based? What is the difference between them?

Jos Arets:

The main difference is, I think about the value proposition. So I have those four boxes, let's say four business models which are archetypes and the first two are the left-hand side. They are directed to HR and the core business is learning. That's formal learning. While working, let's say informal learning or organization learning and L&D doesn't offer services to that. So my idea was to create business models to move beyond formal learning and go also to informal learning and also organization learning. Then in that case you are aligned with the business because formal learning is providing a license to operate to individuals and informal learning is developing expertise of individuals and teams and organizational learning is only taking part when the organization is learning as well. So it's about groups or teams and organization.

Jos Arets:

So when you are involved in those type of learning, you are always involved, or aligned with the business. So the business models on the right-hand side, they are directed to the core business and they are, I think, business critical.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so we are going to put in the show notes a couple of the resources you mention. You mentioned the business canvas model, which I think many people will know as the Strategyzer Business Canvas Model that you've used to help define learning and development business models. And the four business models, the four-quadrant model you talk about. We'll put both of those in the show notes so people can take a look at those while they listen to you describe the models.

Michelle Ockers:

So Jos, let's do our best to walk through the model knowing that people can't see it. So they're going to have to visualise it or they can go to the white paper in the resources and get a copy of the model. And as you walk through it so they can understand, they can visualise what we're talking about here, when you talk about the four different business models in the four-quadrant model. So it's got two axes. Do you want to start by describing the axes in the model?

Jos Arets:



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Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

So I think the most important axes is the continuum between HR and business. So on the left-hand side, you see a focus in the business model on HR. Let's put it very practical. If you are working in the business model of and you're serving HR, you will be on the HR scorecard. So you will offering all kinds of services that will strengthen HR, and that's I think it's a good thing to do that. There's a dream and L&D, and most of the people that are dreaming about being business critical. So the business is the other end of this continuum. But then you really have to change your thinking. You have to change your services. Because if you like to be business critical, you have to be very much aligned to the business, because otherwise, you won't be on the balanced scorecard. So that will require new capabilities and also new business models. And then the other axes will be the continuum between operational, so the focus on on the operation, or be more strategic. Both business models and into learning and also into business. They have one business model being more strategic, and I think that's important as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so we've got the x axis on the left-hand side of the x axis is the HRD. Focus on the right-hand side is business focus, and we've got the Y axis at the bottom is tactical operations, operationally focused, and at the top is strategic. So in effect, you've got four quadrants there. And we're going to look at what's in each of those quadrants. But basically that bottom left quadrant where you're talking the HRD ad operations focus, that's our order taker. And then the top right, you're talking about business with a strategic focus, which is value creator, right?

Jos Arets:

Yes.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So hopefully, people are still with us. So if we start in that bottom left quadrant, which is HRD focus and operations. Can you tell us what that quadrant is, and describe a little about what L&D is doing and the impact in that quadrant?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, I think this is a really most well-known business model of reality. This is the order taker. So many people that feel that they are, in a way present by being an order taker. So the whole mindset of this business model about L&D, but also about stakeholders and customers, is that they require training. So management will order for training and people in this business model, they think they only have one option, just delivering, if they don't deliver, they will be out of business. And in a way, this is good business model because we started this as an L&D function being order taker. But you know, if there's an economic crisis, you will be hit very hard, because then they will say, we can survive as a business without any training. And then really the challenge of this business model - the channel challenges are two. The first one is you don't have evidence-informed learning solutions, because most of the learning is off the shelf learning. You have to be very quick you have to be very service oriented. And the second challenge is that you are not able to prove any value then activity based, so you will report to your Board there are so many people doing this eLearning or classroom training, and you are really in deep trouble if you have to prove the value of this type of learning. And that's why so many people feel trapped in being order taker, and they are looking for better solutions. So if you stick to the to these quadrants, and you said, Okay, I'd like to improve it, or I'd like to innovate or, you know, be a better learning provider, you'll start being a Learning Enabler. So there you're more strategic and you're still focused on HRD. Say, top left,

Michelle Ockers:



Learning Uncut Emergent Series Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost How L&D Can Create Business Value

So top left corner in the four-quadrant model now - we've moved up into strategic but still focused on HRD.

Jos Arets:

Yes. And I think the main difference is that we are starting in our profession with evidence-informed learning solutions. So if you have evidence-informed learning solutions, you know, that will that will work. So I think it's much easier to prove any value. So, you have really professional learning. You do really professional learning consulting. So, when you get a question or request about training or E learning or whatever, you will say, "Okay, I take a look and will do a learning needs analysis." And then you can say, "No, in this situation, I would prefer not to, not to do learning but something else."

Jos Arets:

And, in this quadrant people are very aware about the fact that we should connect our profession with also with science and they innovate, they renew, and they have, I think, a really good view about how can we design How can we distribute formal learning, and I think this is important. Most of the L&D people are looking at, how can we improve formal learning You see in this quadrant, it and if you take a look to the state of industry reports of the ATD, you see, let's say in general, 34 working hours are spent on formal learning. So you do a lot, but you only have 34 hours in general, for each worker to deliver formal learning. And that's a little bit painful because you need more hours to create more impact. And if you don't have more hours, so if you don't support, informal learning, you have to do a wonderful job to create really valuable learning, but it's still not enough connected online to the business. So here's a challenge. How can you expand this excellent formal learning, for instance, with supporting informal learning?

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, and so now we're moving over to the right-hand side of the model.

Jos Arets:

Yes.

Michelle Ockers:

So take us through - where do you want to start - the bottom right hand side of the model then which is business focus, but still quite operational in focus as well.

Jos Arets:

And this is the box about the business model Performance Enabler. And what you see is we include the formal learning business solutions, evidence informed from the Learning Enabler. So we take this with us because there's really good work. And what we like to do is expand our services with supporting informal learning while working. We should say formal learning and informal learning should be the core business of L&D. So, we should include it and not bring formal or informal learning in competition with each other.

And some examples of this L&D business model is for instance supporting improvement teams while working with the PDCA cycle or lean or agile, and also performance support is very important because in this business model you are not trying to get people for a licence to operate. You are supporting individuals and also teams and developing expertise and so, you start not with thinking about competency development, but you start thinking about what kind of results do you like to achieve, what are the work processes, and then very important, which critical tasks are necessary to achieve those results. And if you focus on this critical task, then you can start developing informal learning solutions because people are working, and they don't always have the right knowledge or the right information while working. So,

Learning Uncut Emergent Series

Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost

How L&D Can Create Business Value

performance support can come in. Or they are working on improvement teams so you can do some sessions with them or guide them to improve this, this way of working and improving teams or agile working or lean, whatever.

Jos Arets:

So in this business model L&D function will also collaborate with continuous improvement or with quality or risk management. And that's a really new way of thinking, because then you can support really learning at work, because we know from academic research that almost 20 to 25% of the time, people are learning. And that's a good thing to know. There's also very interesting for us to find alternative ways and solutions to support that kind of learning.

Michelle Ockers:

Right. And when you were talking about the Learning Enabler, Jos, you said the kind of analysis that they do when they're asked to provide a learning solution, they do a learning needs analysis. What is the Performance Enabler doing right up front instead of a learning needs analysis? It's obvious the solutions are a lot more broader and a lot more is happening in the workplace. But in terms of analysis, how do they approach it differently to the Learning Enabler?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, I think this is the classic approach of performance consulting, so they do a business, the businesses and the performance needs analysis, and also a bit of learning needs analysis.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And so then we have the final quadrant, the Value Creator, where you're focused on this at the strategic level on what's happening in the business. What is Learning and Development doing in that Value Creator model.

Jos Arets:

So the Performance Enabler is focusing on formal learning with more on informal learning, and the value creator, I am designing right now, what I call value-based learning. That's the holistic and let's say it inclusive way of looking at organisation learning, informal learning and also formal learning. And what we are doing there is trying to find out how can we support organisational learning? How can we support informal learning, and also support formal learning? And in my view, if learning is a core business, it should include all forms of learning in conversations. And this is really an opportunity for L&D to expand the services. So not in competition again, but really expand their services because we know a lot about learning and people are learning a lot while working not only informally but also, they do a lot of organisation learning. The organisational learning part is not focused on the individual. It's more focused on teams and also on the organisation.

Jos Arets:

Okay, I can provide you with an example. We see a really steep organisational learning curve for instance in surgery. If you have to perform a really complex procedure, the first time, it's really difficult. But if you do it, at least in average 100 times a year, we see this learning curve and that will, that will demonstrate that you are doing it quicker so you need less time. If you see less complications, you will see a better health recovery of patients.

Jos Arets:

And this is really, I think, making it visible in a way that we as an L&D profession, should say, this is also our core business so we can support people and how to learn even better or

Learning Uncut Emergent Series

Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost

How L&D Can Create Business Value

faster. We should capture that knowledge and see how it can be transferred within the same organisation. And this is all about organisational learning. And that is always business critical because this is really related to the core business. It's about safety. It's about quality. It's about better connecting with your, with your customers, and you have to learn as an organisation. And if you are business critical, you're always at the table of the business, because you don't have to request it. They will really advise you because they know that organisations they have to adapt, and you have to learn faster.

Michelle Ockers:

So Geraldine, can you talk in practical terms about what these business models mean when you translate it into the organization you're working with at the moment, Bronkhurst? You've been there 10 months, you're taking them on a journey of shifting from a learning-based model to performance-based model. What do you see at the start of that journey and how will it look different? What will you see that's different once you know you've made that shift in business models?

Geraldine Voost:

So when we started the journey, we were really in the order taker quadrant, which meant I would say it's like going to a fast food restaurant and ordering a burger and fries and everything and we prepared it for you, we deliver it. We may ask you, "Did it taste well?" But that's it. We did also a little bit more than that with some of the newer programs, where we did a proper analysis, evaluation and intake et cetera, but the organization had changed. The organization, Bronkhurst, is a family company and it has grown from a small family company into an international business. So that also means that you go from a company where everybody knows each other and knows what the skillsets are of everyone and who you should go to to ask a question. We have now grown into a company where we are much more diverse, much more widespread, knowledge is everywhere.

Geraldine Voost:

We also had a new general manager who started, I think three years ago, and he asked me a question when I had just joined like, "Okay, so we have these training programs, but how do I know that they have been effective? What kind of changes will I see in the organization and in the way people work that prove me that this was worth the investment?" That, combined with what I already knew about the methodology led me to say, "Okay, well I know at the moment that is a question that I find very difficult to answer but what we will need to do is we will need link what we are doing to the strategic goals. We will have to make sure that we can measure the outcomes, that we can do a proper gap analysis and really work with the business." That was also the wish of the people in the training department, the training department was very young. I think it started four or five years ago and there was one person in it who had an L&D background and the other people came from within the business, they were technical experts who are now delivering classroom training around their expertise but they were also looking at ways to be more visible in the organization and to have more value to the organization.

Geraldine Voost:

So it was really a question of everything came together at the right time and now every project that we are starting up, we are looking at what are the strategic goals and how can we link our project to the strategic goals and it helps us prioritizing. So that doesn't mean that things go completely awry, we still do what we used to do as well, but we are definitely making a shift to proving our value more.

Michelle Ockers:



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Learning Uncut Emergent Series

Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost

How L&D Can Create Business Value

Okay, so prioritization and demonstrating value and being able to answer the question when you're asked by a business leader what is the value you're adding, sounds like key signs that you've shifted your business model.

Geraldine Voost:

Well, we're in the process.

Michelle Ockers:

I know, you're in the process and its exciting journey to take, isn't it? So you're right in the thrust of that. Jos, do you have an example you could share of an organization that has gone further along that journey, that shift and what that has meant for them, for instance during the pandemic? You talked earlier that it was exciting to see organizations who'd already made this shift and what that meant for them in terms of responding to the disruption. Do you have an example you can share?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, I would like to share a great example because we are working with somebody, great L&D departments, and most of them, they feel not always comfortable when they only stick to formal learning. They know that they have to go beyond because there's so much learning around while working and they want to be visible as well. So a very nice and practical example is a campaign which worked with Brian Murphy and his team at AstraZeneca. Brian was so convinced that learning at AstraZeneca should go beyond formal learning, so he started a campaign and he asked our team to assist him and support him with a new design. So I came up with a design which is called, Make Learning Visible because most of the informal learning is invisible for people. So the social learning, and also the informal learning while learning, people learn a lot when they just ... they don't think it's learning because they think it's learning, it's improving, it's complex problem-solving, it's innovating. So we designed this campaign, together with him, to make aware for everyone at AstraZeneca, if you work you also learn and you should try to capture that learning because it's really valuable for you and for your team.

Jos Arets:

I can also share a typical example if you like, moving from the order taker to the value creator. We had a client, they ask us to support them with team development and as an order taker, they just say, "Please provide the e-learning solution with some training, blended learning." We said, "No, no, no. We would like to do some learning consulting." So then we became, let's say, the learning enabler and as a learning enabler, you only use evidence from formal learning. So we did this analysis, learning needs analysis, and then we just take the constants which are really evidence-informed and we create a really great learning journey.

Jos Arets:

At the end, we could prove competency development and we could also see the clients are really satisfied but over time, they think, "We'd like to show some more business impact." So then we used our methodology as a performance enabler, which is more business-focused and then we designed together with this client, a team improvement project. So this team was working with PDCA Cycle and they were working on real life projects and they demonstrate business impact by improving and we could support it, for instance, with also performance support. So as a performance enabler, we think that not only the individual is

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

the knowledge carrier in organizations, but you also need the repositories, like performance support.

Jos Arets:

Then from a value creator point of view, you can go on and work as improvement teams and then you can support improvement teams with the organization learning curve. The organization learning curve is really cool because if you are working on the same process and the same product for instance, you can learn a lot when making this learning curve visible. So for instance, if you want to reduce infections in the hospital, or if were in the supply chain working, you can learn by measuring the time you need to perform a certain task, or your cost-oriented visit. For instance in hospitals, surgical teams, they really use the organization learning curve because after, let's say, 100 surgical procedures, they really see a decrease in complications, they see a decrease in cost, they see an increase in patient health, so it's really powerful.

Jos Arets:

So you can really go from the learning enabler, to the performance enabler, and also the value creator and these business model are really inclusive, so when you are a value creator you take a part of the performance enabler and also a part of the learning enabler, because I really think we need formal learning, informal learning and organization learning together.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so once you're operating then in that value creator space, you're actually in the workplace starting with workplace metrics, workplace performance and building learning into work. In effect, you may not even be calling it learning to your point, you may be calling it problem-solving, innovating, just getting better at the work.

Jos Arets:

Yeah, because so many people confuse learning with training. When you ask people while working what they can learn, they will always refer to formal learning but when you ask, "How did you solve this problem?" Then they will tell you how they did it and then sometimes they will refer to, "Oh yeah, I learned a lot by solving this complex problem." A very nice example is the video of the Tesla team and during this pandemic, they thought it was good idea to build a ventilator and they just start doing it without, I think, any formal education, so there was a lot of informal learning and organization learning. They reused their own products for the Model 3 and the Model S and I'm really sure that they also used also learned some formal learning as well. The process was very structured, if you see the video, you see they had a very process-oriented approach, so it was in a way, very structured and then my view, the difference between formal and informal learning is fading away because formal learning is always referred as very structured and I think learning while working is structured by goals, work processes and targets.

Michelle Ockers:

So just structured by different things.

Jos Arets:

Yeah, yes. There's a complex social practice, a different context but it's still learning.

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

Michelle Ockers:

Geraldine, where do you think you are at at the moment out of those four business models, the order taker, learning enabler, performance enabler, value creator? Where do you think you are operating most frequently now?

Geraldine Voost:

I think right now we will probably be between learning enabler and performance enabler, whereas when we started the journey, we were between order taker and learning enabler. So we're making progress.

Michelle Ockers:

What are some of the key things, when you think about the progress you've made so far, what are the key things that you've done that have helped you to make progress? If others are trying to think, "How do I make progress on these shifts?" What have you done to make that kind of progress?

Geraldine Voost:

Looking at the bigger picture, that is an important one. What I said before, linking it to the organizational goals, okay, what are we trying to achieve here, what are we trying to get out of this? And looking at the bigger picture. What is involved? What are the critical tasks that somebody is performing? Look at somebody who is doing it really well and somebody who is doing it not so well but we would like to get to the same level. Okay, what's the difference and what can we do to help people grow and develop? What kind of performance support can we implement? Whereas before, somebody would come to us and say, "Okay, I have a problem in my department. I need to train my people so that the problem goes away." Now we say, "Okay, hang on a minute. Let's look at this from a different perspective. What are you trying to achieve? Why are you trying to achieve it? What are the processes that are in use? Do people have the resources that they need? The knowledge that they need. Are the processes efficient?"

Geraldine Voost:

So you're really looking at the bigger picture rather than just saying, "Okay, you asked for training, we'll develop something, we'll deliver it," and whatever the outcome is, you don't know. You might not fix the problem.

Michelle Ockers:

So you're expecting different people to have a different kind of conversation with you right up front, right?

Geraldine Voost:

Yes. Plus that we involve the people from the department themselves, so you're really co-creating with the people from the business, rather than they drop the problem in the training department and the training department creates a solution on their own and they roll it out and you find out, "Hey, this doesn't fix the problem."

Michelle Ockers:

Look at that, nothing's changed, go figure. So what are the key challenges you've had to grapple with and continue to face on this journey to shift to a more value-based L&D model?

Geraldine Voost:



Learning Uncut Emergent Series

Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost

How L&D Can Create Business Value

Well, it's a very different approach, so people have to get used to hearing different questions and not just saying, "Okay, we'll do that and, in a few weeks, we'll come back and we'll deliver this training." So now they're all of a sudden, confronted with questions that have to be answered and that people have to think about. We also use the Lean Six Sigma approach within Bronkhurst and when you're analysing the situation, a problem or a challenge in that way, people might think, "Okay, well we already have a methodology in use to make our processes more efficient, why are you not coming with these types of questions rather than just creating a solution for us?" So that is a conversation we have to have and we actually have people with Six Sigma backgrounds who are taking part in these projects because I think that you can make each other stronger.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, very much.

Geraldine Voost:

It doesn't have to bite each other, you can help each other very much and it will only help in collaborating with the business more if you use the knowledge and the people who have those skills, you don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Michelle Ockers:

When I was working at Coca-Cola Amatil in Australia for a number of years and I did work with Charles Jennings who's one of your colleagues at Tulsar, of course Jos, at the time. What I've found was as we shifted away from the order taker and certainly more towards the performance enabler and started having different conversations, finding the right language for my business was very important and the fact that it was a manufacturing business, who had a continuous improvement process and everybody understood root cause analysis. If I talked about, "Well, this is like a root cause analysis, that we're doing here before we prescribe the right solution, you would do a root cause analysis, wouldn't you?" I think that helps, is understanding the language of the business and what resonates.

Michelle Ockers:

In your experience Jos, what else gets in the way. What else stops learning teams moving from being learning-based to performance-based and adding more value?

Jos Arets:

I think more in general, I'm really a big fan of evidence-informed learning because you should improve formal learning. We shouldn't think three different boxes because we only see the formal learning box, we see a glimpse of the informal learning box, but we don't offer that many solutions there and we don't see organization learning. So most of the learning is taking place while working and the offering of L&D is just ... we don't offer that much while working. So my idea is that if we want to change the L&D department, first of all, they should be aware of their business model because then they know which value they are generating. If you want to change your business model, that will take a systemic change and most of the L&D departments, they just take a deep dive into formal learning and they do a great job in improving it, renewing it with technology, evidence-informed, see also some really great work on the evaluation parts so like Will Thalheimer with LTEM, but those are the most important boxes L&D is ticking from the business canvas, but if you want to change your value proposition, you have to change this whole pattern.

Jos Arets:

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

You have to change your whole different way of value proposition, value creation ... I'm sorry, we have to change this whole value creation process. This different ways of moving from learning analysis to business analysis. Moving from formal learning to organizational learning and informal learning and also moving from learning value to business value. I think this is a two or three year process and it will really strengthen L&D because knowledge and learning are so vital these days, and it's such a pity that L&D is not involved in all of learning that is taking place because from an organization point of view, it's really important that when we have ... simply if we have teams that are really performing very well, they most of the times are isolated and I think L&D should assist organizations in spreading the knowledge through this whole organization, also through the industry.

Michelle Ockers:

So Jos, you've touched on something interesting there, you've talked about something that L&D should be doing that perhaps they're not doing at the moment, which is spreading knowledge, sharing knowledge, perhaps detecting where learning is happening, where we don't know, so surfacing learning as well. How do you think the roles of learning professionals need to change to shift business models?

Jos Arets:

I think the most important shift is that you don't start with competency development because people who are working, they already have a license to operate so you are starting with the organizational results and work processes and then you are starting working at the critical task, because the critical task is a guarantee for business alignment and from there on, you just have to take a really close look at what kind of learning's taking place and what are smart ways to support the learning and that can be organization learning, informal learning or formal learning. So we just tick all these boxes instead of one and we just have to take a good look at all kinds of learning and I think that will make an immediate change.

Michelle Ockers:

So do we need to introduce new positions in our learning teams? Do we need to restructure our learning teams in some way? Or can we do all this without that kind of change?

Jos Arets:

I think each learning approach, each evidence informed learning approach, will require a methodology. So we should include the formal learning methodology but they should also include a performance-based or value-based methodology. Then you should try to combine it in a good way and then we serve the client with the type of learning they really need at most to achieve best results.

Michelle Ockers:

So one role I've often seen being introduced in the last couple of years is a performance partner role, who does a lot of this consulting work that you've talked about and does almost the brokering and negotiation before you then go and look at what's the solution. Geraldine, have you introduced any new roles at this point in time or changed the structure of your team, or are you anticipating doing any of that?

Geraldine Voost:

I'm anticipating doing that. I don't think all the roles have to be within the training or the learning and development department because sometimes you can find people with the relevant backgrounds and competencies elsewhere in your organization but yes, I think that

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
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having a performance role within the learning and development department is going to be essential in the future.

Michelle Ockers:

So you talked there about maybe you can find some of these people or some of the skills you need in other parts of the organization, so who might you look at working with differently, or partnering with differently in your organization to make this shift?

Geraldine Voost:

Well, the management to start with, because you really need to bring them in from the start, to have that support and also to find out what's important to them and what their strategic goals are of course, but also, like I mentioned before, if you have business analysts, or people with a Lean Six Sigma background, that can be very, very useful in this process, people in the IT departments, the communications department are very important business partners to me already in making sure that we can implement the right solutions. You don't need to have all the skills and capabilities within your own team.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah and I ... Go ahead Jos.

Jos Arets:

No, maybe I can add something? In our practice, we see many L&D departments right now working with us and they also like to collaborate with, for instance, quality, safety, because if you are business critical and you have a repository for performance support, to keep for instance the hospital that you can maintain safety and quality, that's really important. So we are shifting the role from training people in safety and quality and assessing teams to performance support and the performance support is so business critical because that's the information that a professional needs to act in a safe way in accordance to the standards of the hospital and that's a big shift. We see this multi-disciplinary approach, from learning, finance, communication, continued improvement et cetera, so working all together on the same purpose, trying to develop teams and organization in the right way, in order to achieve results.

Michelle Ockers:

So I have probably a final question before we do a wrap-up with a rapid round of advice to people. Jos, you mentioned before that the kind of change we're looking at is a systemic change, which means it's not only a change within the learning team, but it's also a change with the way we interact with the business and people across different parts of the business. I have had conversations with learning leaders before who say, "I want to work in this way. I want the business to see me differently. I want to be able to contribute in different ways. However, I am really struggling to get my senior leaders, to get managers, to accept that I have this different role and I can make this different contribution. They just want me to keep delivering formal training. They think that's my job and I'm really having trouble making that shift. Because we are part of that system and it's not just about how we operate but how others interact with us and operate with us."

Michelle Ockers:

So what advice do you have for people who are struggling with this? How can we make the case for change to our business leaders and our business partners?

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

Jos Arets:

Yeah, the first and I think easy answer, is don't talk about this stage, but demonstrate in really small pilot projects that you're doing this. So demonstrating business value, let's say keep it under the radar and then from this real demonstration, you can convince management that this is the way to go. The other way is that the business model approach is really a cool thing because you can change your business model, also when clients doesn't like it. I can give you an example. The banks, they change the business models and are going from offline to online and the people didn't like it, the clients didn't like it at the beginning, but they just change it and this is really something nice of a business model approach. You can change your business model and prove that you are more valuable than before, but then you have to prove it. So don't talk about it to leaders, but just demonstrate that you can assist them and support them in creating business value and then you are at the table.

Michelle Ockers:

It reminds me of the story about Henry Ford and the conversation around, "If I'd asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses and not cars," right?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

Because they don't know any different. Geraldine, what sort of conversations have you needed to have with your team about making this kind of change and how have they responded to you leading them through this kind of change?

Geraldine Voost:

Well, when I first started to talk about this approach, they were really already ... I didn't have much difficulty in getting them to agree that this was the right direction to take. When we started working on the methodology initially, they were a little bit shocked by everything else that becomes part of the role and that is, at the same time, a tip that I can give to anyone that wants to roll this out. You will meet some resistance in the beginning and some objections from your own team and also from the business but carry on and start with your project and make that impact because as soon as you've had the first success and you've proven that this works, then the world will become open.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, yes. I often talk about finding your friends of learning. Find someone who is willing to give something a go and then you can use that as proof to other parts of the business, or they can become your champions as well, right?

Geraldine Voost:

Yeah, I'm a strong believer that this is the right way to go and the right methodology and I'm creating ambassadors within the organization who have the same opinion, and even people who are initially a little bit sceptical are now saying, "Yes, this is the way to go."

Michelle Ockers:

Jos, would you like to add something to that?

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

Jos Arets:

Yeah, we have a great example from a client. This CLO, he thought it was really good to start with performance support to help healthcare more safety and he said, "I just don't talk about this with the management, because they will not understand me." So we were in a process, a three-year process, building performance support for all the critical task for nurses in that hospital and after two years, many, many people were saying, "Oh, we want also more performance support and they want more and they want more." So it really grew very fast. Then in the end, the board was really surprised because the performance support was for them a guarantee to check the governance because all the nurses had the right information, customized to their own wards, to provide safety healthcare and that's such an important twist in thinking so you are assisting learning while working and you are creating better healthcare and more safe healthcare and this, I think is an output generated by the L&D department which they never had before.

Michelle Ockers:

So get on and do it and improve the value through the results, right?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so rapid round then of advice for L&D in the shift in business models, to a more value-based approach. Can I get one thing from each of you and I'll start with yourself Geraldine, what should learning and development stop doing?

Geraldine Voost:

Taking orders and implementing it without asking any questions.

Michelle Ockers:

Yourself, Jos? Would you like to add another one to that?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, be aware in which business model you are acting.

Michelle Ockers:

Jos, what should L&D start doing?

Jos Arets:

Really take a deliberate choice and changing your business model to create sustainable change and business value.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, Geraldine, what would you suggest L&D start doing?

Geraldine Voost:

Focusing on the other departments and on the business goals of the organization and see if you can connect what you're doing to those business goals.

Michelle Ockers:

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
How L&D Can Create Business Value

Great advice, and is there something you think we should keep doing and do more of, accelerate doing, that we're already heading down the path of?

Jos Arets:

Yeah, I think the movement from evidence-informed formal learning will really boost our profession, we really need it, so we should do everything in learning evidence-informed. So I would say, go from formal, informal and also organizational learning and make everything evidence-informed, because that is really helpful for our profession.

Michelle Ockers:

Is there anything you'd like to add to that, Geraldine?

Geraldine Voost:

Well, I think that people who are working in L&D are generally very creative and open-minded people and I think that is definitely something that we should continue to do because it helps and it makes great and fun things.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. An impact as well.

Geraldine Voost:

Yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

So there were a few things mentioned there that we'll put into the resources in the show notes and I think there were a couple of episodes that are relevant from the Special Disruption series of the podcast that was recorded earlier this year, only three months ago, particularly around performance support and learning in the flow of work, which we'll also add to the show notes if people would like to explore this topic further. Thank you so much for sharing your time, your insights and the great work you're both doing, Jos and Geraldine.

Jos Arets:

Thank you for having us on the show.

Geraldine Voost:

Yeah, thank you. It was fun to be part of this.

Michelle Ockers:

Fantastic, a pleasure, thank you.

Learning Uncut Emergent Series
Jos Arets & Geraldine Voost
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