

**Michelle Ockers**

Claire Seldon joins me today. Claire is a learning designer and gamification consultant who works for the Department of Education, New South Wales, leading a team of learning designers to create gamified, student-centered digital interactives. Claire is also a casual academic at the University of Technology, Sydney, in the area of gamification and AR, VR in education. Welcome to Learning Uncut, Claire.

**Claire Seldon**

Thank you, my friend. Lovely to be here.

**Michelle Ockers**

It's very nice to have you here. And there's something that listeners can't see that I can see that I want to talk about. It's about a fun fact. Tell us about. I'm looking at you with a beautiful, beautiful specimen of a frog or a toad in the background on your Zoom background.

**Claire Seldon**

He is a South American horned toad. I am. I don't know what the Latin term is, but I am a frogger phile. Ever since Kermit the Frog, it's crazy, I love frogs. I have a very indulgent husband and our house is full of frog stuff.

**Michelle Ockers**

That is indulgent. So tell me, the frog thing, is there any link between that and your degree in genetics and evolution?

**Claire Seldon**

No, frogs came first. So, the degree is an undergrad science degree with a grad diploma in education. I had the best biology teacher in high school ever. Shout out to Mrs. Agland. I became a teacher in part because great teachers are the best thing that a person can ever have and I was a difficult, challenging student and I had a couple of fantastic teachers in my life who just changed my trajectory of my whole life and Mrs. Agland was one of them. So I got to uni, I was going to chase serial killers for the FBI I know, right? Silence of the Lambs. I saw that at a very formative stage in my life. I had it all planned out. Was it Clarice? Clarice Starling. Oh, yes. Yes, I was. 100%. And so I started out doing a BA psych. Then I didn't really like the BA bit. So I swapped to a BSC psych And then I didn't really like the psych bit But I was working with computers. So actually I dropped out of uni and up until the dot-com boom I was working in IT different areas of IT and then I was sort of like I did not like the IT back then was very very male-dominated industry and I did not enjoy that atmosphere very much. So, I decided, well, you know what, I'll go back to uni, finish my degree. And I like the science bit, just not the psych bit. So I finished the science degree. And because of good old Mrs. Agland, biology was always my thing. So and just genetics and evolution, it's just really interesting, basically. I did a lot of very cool stuff in second year. But the things I really wanted to do was I did a lot of

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

evolution of Australian biota plants and animals just because it's so different. And I've always liked things that are different, I guess. But I, yeah, I did do in my final years some subjects on the, actually, chytridomycosis, which is a fungus that's killing frog species worldwide. But it wasn't really genetics or evolution, it was just more about looking at the impact of the fungus on frog and salamander species worldwide. I probably could have gone on and done that, but I wanted to be a teacher very much. I've always wanted to teach. So that's what I ended up doing.

**Michelle Ockers**

So did Mrs. Agland, was she one of your inspirations for wanting to teach?

**Claire Seldon**

Yes, 100 percent.

**Michelle Ockers**

What was it about her that you found so inspiring?

**Claire Seldon**

Oh, well, like I said, I was a naughty, like as a teacher now, I look back and I was very difficult. I was bright and stubborn and not very good at doing what I was told, which is a terrible combination.

**Michelle Ockers**

For whom?

**Claire Seldon**

For whom? Well, pretty much for everybody because I didn't necessarily get everything I could have gotten out of the education system and I was definitely a nightmare for my teachers, but I had a bunch of them. Mrs. Stone was my ancient history teacher, and she refused to give me more...

**Michelle Ockers**

Hang on a moment, Mrs. Stone was your ancient history teacher? That's so appropriate, isn't it?

**Claire Seldon**

I know, right? She's the bomb. So she and Mrs. Agland, they're the only two subjects that I did really well in for the HSC, was biology and ancient history. And it's because they didn't let me get away with crap, basically. So Mrs. Stone wouldn't give me good marks. She only gave me 14 out of 20 and I was used to getting 90% with no work. And so, in the end, I slammed the essay down on her desk. Why do I keep getting 14 out of 20? I'm so glad you asked, Claire. If she told me what to do, I would not have done it. But I was furious. and you know what, I spent my weekends going to Macquarie University digging through the ancient history section to get the references I needed to get 90 out of 100 and Mrs. Agland she said to me, she took me aside very quietly and she said to me Claire you could be really really good at this if you just put in a little bit of effort and I don't know I just I needed to be believed in. I

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

needed a grown-up to see past all the dyed black hair and piercings and angry, stubborn little girl, because I was. I'm 17, you think you're all that, but no, you're still a baby. And she was like, you could do something great. And I hadn't heard that very often.

### **Michelle Ockers**

Yeah. Yeah. I love that. You need to be believed in. And I will say, I saw you speak at EduTech. So we've not known each other very long. EduTech was only a couple of months ago, as at the time we're having this conversation. And you were very poised under pressure. The tech did not work at the session that I went to. You had nothing happening with the slides or anything. So you got the tech guys up and you just kept talking and it wasn't tap dancing. You started your session without the slides and full respect for you. Where did you develop that sort of resilience and grace under pressure? Where does that come from?

### **Claire Seldon**

So there are complicated, there's a complicated answer to that. Not going into my deep dark family history, I had a loud voice and a really good memory. And as a consequence, I was the lead in the school play every year in primary school. And so from five or six years old, I have been able to stand up in front of a large group of people and say my lines without forgetting them and say them loud enough without a mic back in the 70s and well, not 70s, but the early 80s. And I think for me, it was it was. You know, sink or swim, so I'm going to swim. And when I got to high school, I went to a completely different high school from my primary school. I didn't know anybody. And they do all these things in year seven where they're like, oh, let's get to know you. And they asked us for one word and everyone was like, oh, bubbly, friendly. And I am like, my name is Claire and I am melancholy.

### **Michelle Ockers**

That's so precious.

### **Claire Seldon**

I was just, I just was, I've always been like that. I just, if I'm, I think in my heart of hearts, I figured if people are going to hate me for who I am, I might as well be my best self.

### **Michelle Ockers**

Yes.

### **Claire Seldon**

And so I just was and am. And if I've committed to stand on a stage and speak for 20 minutes and the slides aren't going to work well, Everyone wants to hear something and they don't want to hear me apologize for 20 minutes that the slides don't work. So what I need to do is remember my slides in my head and imagine that they're there and you can see them. and say approximately what I was going to say.

**Michelle Ockers**

Well, you did a cracking job. You had us all on your side. But I almost didn't come to your session, I have to confess. And that's because of the topic, gamification. I had this visceral reaction when I was scanning down the agenda like, Which sessions am I going to go to? Which sessions am I not going to go to? It's just like, oh, gamification. Oh, what a turn off. Yet, and that led me to go, you know what? Challenge yourself here. Every now and then you have to go, where's that coming from? And what might I learn? but by opening my mind a little bit here. And I was so pleased I did come to your session, Claire. I just found myself nodding along with your perspective on gamification. And that's led to this conversation today because I think it's an opportunity for others, whether they're already into gamification and use it or not, to rethink a little deeper how they view gamification and how it might be helpful in learning design. So how do you define gamification?

**Claire Seldon**

So there's a bunch of different definitions and I just came up with my own. I literally define it as the act of redesigning lessons, activities, units of work, a learning object, to incorporate elements of good game design in order to improve engagement and learning outcomes. And the thing about that, right, is that, like, yay, engagement, but what we need to say, and if I had my slides in front of you, what you would see is that it would be engagement in little letters and then and learning outcomes in huge letters. And your rejection of the term gamification or the concept of gamification is not unusual. I've been talking about gamification since about 2017 and towards the end of 2017, firstly to teachers and then more broadly to educators and in the last couple of years to people in the HR industry in particular. And the truth is there's a really good reason, a valid reason for that visceral rejection that you have and it's that the hype cycle hyped the crud out of gamification and people did it badly and it didn't work and they went oh whatever and they were right to say oh whatever because honestly if you do it badly it's no better than all the things I'm constantly railing about in learning design, like terrible PowerPoint presentations turned into videos and multiple choice questions, which is like the bane of my learning design existence. It's cruel to a learner, and I don't care whether that learner is 4 or 40, it's boring. If you want those learning outcomes, if you want change, if you want your learners to adopt a new skill, try a new strategy, trust your organization, whatever it is you're trying to get out of that, then you need to engage them. And bad gamification is not engaging. What's worse is that the context of your learners really matters. So, for example, many years ago now, I think 2018, I was giving a presentation at a maths conference to a whole bunch of teachers about gamification and why they should be using it in the maths classroom, particularly because adolescents, humans, sadly, my husband's a maths teacher, and so not everyone, but a lot of people find maths very, very boring at school for good reason. It's not engaging. the way it's taught. So she said to me, oh, because I was saying, look, points, competition, badges, they are really not good gamification and they will not get you what you want. They are not engaging and you will not get good learning outcomes out of it. Oh, oh, said this teacher, I work at an all boys selective high school. My kids love gamification. Okay. You know what? Probably some of them

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

genuinely do. The kids who always come last, I guarantee you they do not. Yeah. But sure, in that context, I can see how it could be motivating for most of your students most of the time. But for most people, see, when you think about the different elements of game, they're engaging. Right. So. You've got things like. Competition can be engaging for some people some of the time. Rewards can be engaging for some people some of the time. But is a badge genuinely a reward? Is a point? Like, what does that point do for me? What does that, like, does it give me anything tangible or meaningful? Does it come from a place that I'm really proud of? Like, if you look at, so coming back to say, because people go, okay, but sport, Right? Points in sport are so exciting. Think about how excited you are when your team scores a goal or whatever. But the thing is, is the actual point itself engaging or is it the action that got you to getting that point engaging?

### **Michelle Ockers**

Yes, the point's almost like the exclamation mark.

### **Claire Seldon**

Yes. The point is literally scoring. that excitement, that build up of excitement that it's like, OK, that happened. But there are games where the score is ten ten. That is boring. And you can have games where the score is zero zero. I mean, think about that recent Matilda's game, you know, and they got to the penalty shootout. And yes, so exciting. Now, you can 100% motivate kids and adults, quite frankly, with food. That is a tangible reward. You do this thing, I will give you a chocolate or a tasty thing or whatever. 100%. Now, What's interesting, again, is that for some people that won't be, oh, I'll get fat. It comes with shame. It comes with allergies. You've got to pick your reward carefully. I would argue, and we mentioned this briefly as part of my presentation, and generally whenever I'm talking about gamification to any audience, one of the things I would do is bring up a slide that I created with a colleague of mine, Stephen Colbert, really amazing educator. And what we were trying to do originally was actually map gamification to the SAMR model. And we sort of discarded that, although recently I was thinking I might go back to that. But what we ended up doing was looking at all the different elements of game, choice, reward, competition, discovery, story, chance, problem solving, feedback, etc. and figure out how they rated in terms of their bang for the buck

### **Michelle Ockers**

I'm looking at that slide at the moment. I took a lot of photos of your slides. You rated them in terms of level of transformation change and right down the bottom are the things you've been talking about so far about rewards and competition. They were at the bottom, sort of surface level of gamification to an activity, some short-term extrinsic motivation potentially. Move us up that hierarchy if you like. So if we move from rewards and competition and chance, the next level there.

### **Claire Seldon**

So you get into things like choice, right? So if you think about this, the best reward often that I can give you is a choice. Now, a lot of my work has been with adolescents, right? Kids get very little choice in their lives. Adults are always like, oh,



## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

you're so free, you've got so few responsibilities. Sure, but there are very few actual choices either. And so if you are, and the benefit of giving choices as a reward is that then every child, every learner can choose the reward that really motivates or works for them, right? But if you come and think about, your adult learners in a company, how much choice do they have? Often very little.

### **Michelle Ockers**

What's some examples of a good use of choice for adult learners and the kind of choices you offer people that actually support the achievement of learning outcomes?

### **Claire Seldon**

So a choice in that kind of situation might be how you work through the learning experience, how you dive into it, the order that you do things, what you need to do to earn that mandatory learning credential, etc. A really basic example I've seen of this, which is really cool, is let's say every year you are required to refresh your workforce on a particular bit of legislation on safety, whatever. One of the things that you can do is give them some kind of scenario or questionnaire or sequence that allows them to demonstrate that they literally know everything you need them to do. In which case, do they need to do the learning? No. Now, if they don't succeed, if they get something wrong, then that's a wake-up call to them to go into the learning module going, I don't actually know all this. And then their engagement will be far greater because you have activated in them a consciousness that they don't actually know what they thought they knew. I've seen Kathy Moore's really amazing scenario creator. She works in America. She does training in how to write scenarios. She's just a really smart, talented lady and she has some very cool examples of how if you take nurses who know how to do a medical procedure a certain way and you just give them PL that tells them the new way and then ask some questions to see if they paid attention, three weeks later, they are not using that new thing because they they've been doing it this way for 20 years. If you create a scenario or a situation where you allow them to apply the old learning. And then they get it wrong. And then it's like, what? Why is that wrong? You create that cognitive dissonance in them and then give them the peel. It will stick. Now, all of those are gamification, but they are using those higher level. They are using discovery. They are using a narrative. They are using some problem solving. Potentially, depending on how you're doing it, they're using some collaboration. You might have them working together to work through a problem and have that moment. There's a very awesome maths educator called Dan Meyer, and he talks about this with maths education, where he says so often in maths education, and I think this is true for all education, but particularly mandatory professional learning, that we give the learners the solution or the panadol before they have a headache. So let's say you're change management in a big organization. You know that you're changing a system and you go through and you do all your work to figure out what change needs to happen, what learning that I need to give my learners, blah, blah, blah. You build some PL and you roll it out.

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

**Michelle Ockers**

Can you just clarify for me, PL, what do you mean by that?

**Claire Seldon**

Professional learning.

**Michelle Ockers**

OK, all good, Claire.

**Claire Seldon**

So then what happens is that you might roll out that professional learning to, I don't know, 10,000 workers who all need to know this thing is changing. But unless they have to use that instantly, straight away, it won't stick.

**Michelle Ockers**

Oh, they'll forget it.

**Claire Seldon**

Absolutely. So on the other hand, if you ask them all to go through a scenario or a situation where they need to know this, you give them, as Dan Meyer would say, you give them the headache. You give them the reason that their old skill or knowledge doesn't work anymore. You need to put them in a situation where they're like, wait, what? Why doesn't that work? Hang on. And then you say to them, aha, here, I would like you to learn about this new thing. Yeah. Makes such, such a difference. Now, there's different ways you can do that. But. And this would come back to. My pyramid charts, even to my pyramid chart, which is that of all the things that human beings love, that is universal across culture, across time, is a good story. Yes. Something that grabs you, that pulls you in, that makes you feel part of that. And a really great scenario will give you a story and it will give you choice, a problem to solve, something to discover. And that act that is far, far more engaging and therefore leads to learning outcomes. Now, it does not need to be fun. And this is something that I have been struggling with a lot, is that somewhere along the line, engagement began to equal fun and gamification. So let's say I've read all the recent literature. I know that I'm moving away from points and badges and competition because that's really low level and not very engaging to a lot of people. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to make my learning experience really fun. My learners are going to have a great time. And yet two months later, Did they learn anything? No. If I asked them to rate the professional learning, if I asked them to rate the workshop, five out of five, I had a great time. Food was good. The presenter was charming. I had a really awesome time. Three months later, did I change my behavior? Do I remember what I learned? I might even remember, literally remember the presenter and what I ate. the people I chatted to, but not the content of the course or the workshop or whatever it was.

**Michelle Ockers**

I might not have built any skills, right?

**Claire Seldon**

Right. Exactly.

**Michelle Ockers**

So Claire, I'm going to pop a link in the show notes to a few things. I'm making a bit of a list as we go along. But one of the things is a link to a conversation I started on LinkedIn actually very recently, like only like one working day prior. We're talking on a Monday. It was on Friday. And have you come across Dr. Will Talheimer's work at all? Is his name familiar to you? He does a lot of work on evidence-informed approaches to learning design, and in particular, he's done a lot around evaluation. And this question around, should we be evaluating learner satisfaction? And more specifically, should we use NPS, Net Promoter Score? And he warns very strongly against using it. And one of the reasons he warns against using it is that there is no evidence linking learner satisfaction with a learning experience with the learning effectiveness of that experience, which in a nutshell is what you've just said, right? And a lot of the arguments he uses and there was a lot of interest in that thread and he sort of pitched in a few comments. So I'll link into that because I think it's relevant as well that it's not just about creating fun. It's not just about did people have a good time and would they recommend it to others? You talked about cognitive dissonance earlier. Cognitive dissonance is challenging, right? Yeah, 100%. But necessary for learning.

**Claire Seldon**

Absolutely. Absolutely. So I don't know whether I remember his name, but it might be his work. There was some very interesting work done, because in America a lot of university lecturers get paid or keep their jobs based on their satisfaction score. And what happened was they did a study that discovered that if the teacher is tough and mean and holds high standards they get lower scores and satisfaction scores. But then when those students the next year doing second year, they get higher marks because they actually learnt something. So, I would agree. I mean, what you need to do is build trust with your learner.

**Michelle Ockers**

Oh, that's interesting.

**Claire Seldon**

Yeah. And that's easier, much easier to do face to face than it is in a digital space. With You Can, so I like to think of, I have a Montessori teaching background, right? Maria Montessori was a really famous, amazing doctor and educator. She was, I think she was she was born before World War II because she was working against Italian government during World War II. And she believed that learners, children in particular, but people in general, are much more capable than we give them credit for. And that learning should be, it's a form of work, important work. And she talks



## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

about creating what we call a prepared environment, which is a space within which the student is encouraged to and supported to learn. But you as the teacher are not there pouring knowledge into the child's head or the adult's head. You are creating a safe space for them to explore and learn. And as a learning designer, when you're creating a piece of digital content for learners you may never meet and never see, you can still plan and create space that is a prepared environment. That instead of saying to your learners, you must go down one path, you must do everything one way, and you must deliver or prove what you know one way, you can instead create for them a learning environment that allows them to make choices. And that's one of the things I love about scenarios in general is a good scenario will give your learners multiple ways of getting to the right situation, will give them chances to be challenged, but in a safe space so that the challenge is not so far above their level of learning. Coming back to video games, right? If the video game requires you to have fantastic hand-eye coordination and play with people who've been playing for 20 years, like some of those shooter games, like no, I'm terrible at games like that. On the other hand, if the game is really easy and there's no choice and you're just clicking and then getting pretty colors, that's not exciting either. Needs to be the right level of challenge for your learners and where they're at. But it doesn't necessarily have to be fun. It might be threatening or scary. So a really interesting example is using scenarios in prison guard training. So my boss at UTS, Keith Heggett, who's amazing, I might add, he runs the Graduate Certificate of Learning Design at UTS. Shout out to Keith because it's an amazing course. Couldn't recommend it more highly. He and I went and worked, did a session with the Department of Corrections to talk about how we might use gamification and virtual reality prison guard training. One of the things that they try and do is role-playing sessions, but the problem with that is that to make that work, you either need an actor, which is very expensive, or you need the trainees to take on the roles. And the thing is, it's not necessarily, it's either that they can't, like it's embarrassing to commit and whatever, but You can create a scenario or a situation using music and movement and visuals that actually makes your learners tense and frightened. You can add flashing timers. Put them under pressure, because in situations like that, you actually need to trigger your learner's fight or flight response to give them practice at overcoming that and making the right choice in a really high stress situation. And it's doable. I know they've done similar sorts of training for learners working on mental health call lines, you know. where you want to create a safe environment, but if it involves another person, either that is very, very expensive to do and possibly not consistent across every experience as well, or in some cases it doesn't work because they know they're an actor, whereas you can use, I mean, that's not fair because you can use sound effects and all sorts of cool stuff with actors to do cool stuff. So mostly it's just more expensive. But creating a situation where the learner doesn't know what's going to happen and they get to practice making responses, it can be really, really powerful and important and safe. Which is a key thing in a situation like that, because you don't want somebody learning in an environment where they or somebody else could get hurt. So, I've sort of deviated a little from that idea, but coming back to the professor, the idea that, yes, we want to keep our learners safe, But we also want to challenge them. We want to push them We need to create And so it doesn't have to be fun but you do need to respect them And I know that seems a bit odd when

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

you're talking about a digital space, but you don't talk down to them in the words that you use, in the actions. You don't make it so easy that I can read the transcript of the video and guess the multiple choice questions and then I'm done. Because I didn't learn anything. Now maybe in that situation, I already knew all the answers, in which case you should respect me by giving me a chance to prove that to you. So I don't need to waste 20 minutes clicking through something as fast as possible. But on the other hand, if you create a scenario or a story or a space for me to explore and make choices and realize for myself I do need to learn this. I do need to refresh that. I don't know everything. I thought, oh, the legislation has changed.

### **Michelle Ockers**

The policy is different. It's a really good example because it's something most learning designers in organizations need to tackle is this mandatory learning. We actually did an episode earlier this year. I'll pop a link in the show notes with Deb Van Rensburg from National Australia Bank about a big body of work they've done and refreshing and redesigning all of their, I think she called it regulatory learning, was the term we settled on. And it's very much scenario based, doing similar things to what you've described there, where people can go in and partake in a scenario. They refresh the scenarios every year. They link it to what issues are coming up that are higher risk now for the organization. And if you can get through the scenarios and you don't need to do the learning piece, right? As you say, it's very respectful. So a lot of what you're talking about, Claire, seems like more broadly about good learning design practice. What makes something an element of gamification? When are we using gamification? When are we not?

### **Claire Seldon**

The distinction between them. One of the things is that there's a very blurry line between gamification and game-based learning. Game-based learning is not my thing. I mean, I think it's cool, don't get me wrong, but it's not my area of expertise. I would argue that a lot of the time as learning designers we are in fact using elements of gamification, we just don't call it that. Because we think gamification either has to have points and competition or we think we're actually thinking about game-based learning where we think the learning object itself should be a game. And that's not the case. So if the bank is using scenarios. They are gamifying their learning, 100%. They are using story, they are using choice, they are using discovery. That's gamification. Nobody would disagree with that, regardless of what their definition was. And as you said, I mean, it matches my definition perfectly because they are literally redesigning a thing that didn't have elements of game into something that did to give their learners a better learning outcome.

### **Michelle Ockers**

And a better experience along the way as well, right?

### **Claire Seldon**

Yes, yes. But truthfully, if they learn what they need to learn to do their job well, then you are giving them a good experience. Because they actually

**Michelle Ockers**

It may not feel good at the time, though, because of the cognitive dissonance. And if we think about the conscious competence and unconscious incompetence and so on, what do we call it? The conscious competence model. People start thinking they know how to do something. And then we have to take them through this process of recognizing where the gaps are and make them uncomfortable. Before they then like learning is not necessarily, in fact, good quality learning is often a little uncomfortable.

**Claire Seldon**

Which is why the key term here is engagement, not fun, because a really difficult math problem, a really difficult, challenging story that involves emotion. You know, things that that really grab you, that may not be fun. But it's engaging. And that's this key definition.

**Michelle Ockers**

It's something to be tackled and mastered and that sense of mastery and achievement.

**Claire Seldon**

You're into it. Exactly. So when I talk about gamification being engaging, I mean your learners' minds are actively working. And sometimes when something is fun, they're not actively working. They're like, yeah, this is chill. I'm having a good time. This is great. Are their minds engaged? Are they making choices? Are they thinking? Are they challenging themselves? And you can absolutely make something too hard and then that's not engaging either. People don't stop reading a book, playing a game, cooking a fancy French five-course dinner, whatever, just because, oh, it's too hard. Like some things are just, like, it's really, really too difficult. You know, we need to, so you need to be conscious that you're challenging your learners, you're not throwing them in the deep end and making them drown, because that's not okay. But if a learner comes out of that going, oh, that was really hard work, then they were engaged.

**Michelle Ockers**

Yes. Yeah. I love that take on engagement. I've written down it's when your learner's minds are actively working. I love that take on engagement. Yeah. It's brilliant. Thank you. So we've talked a lot about scenarios and the use of gamification in scenarios. So let's just stick with that for a moment. If we think about what skills are needed. So if I'm an L&D leader and I've got a team and I'm like, yeah, this sounds good. I like what Claire's saying here and we could do with a bit of this. I want to get into some scenarios, use more scenarios with gamification. What skills would their team need to effectively implement gamification in scenarios?

**Claire Seldon**

So it depends how you're going to do it, obviously. I mean, I'm biased. I'm madly into virtual reality. Or even augmented reality situations where you actually place things

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

in the real world. But you don't need to. I've made some really fun digital escape rooms using Google. So, a Google site and a whole bunch of Google forms and stuff. You need somebody, realistically, you need, well, no, there's two possibilities. You need someone who can write a great story or you need a whole bunch of genuine examples that you can de-identify. But that's the thing, you don't actually, the scenario could literally be based around stuff HR knows those terrible things that happen where everyone's running around going, oh no, oh no, oh no. You can de-identify them and use them as the basis for your story.

**Michelle Ockers**

That makes it real as well, right?

**Claire Seldon**

A hundred percent. But you can also, somebody with a writing background who can be a little bit creative can come up with a really, Anybody who's had, people who've had experience playing video games that have stories are generally pretty great about that. Anybody with a role-playing background, so like Dungeons and Dragons sort of thing, but if you look at Cathy Moore's work and most of the people who talk about stories and scenarios and stuff. The key bit is not actually the story. It's actually the choices that you give the learners, how you word them, and then the feedback or consequences that the learner gets as a result of those choices. Because you can't, like, if you write your scenario choices the same way you write bad multiple choice questions, where there's three cruddy answers and one really obvious answer, that's not much of a choice. Yes. So in terms of, say, creating your cognitive dissonance, you need to make choices that you know are the things that learners get wrong, for example.

**Michelle Ockers**

Yeah, because you have to be grounded enough in the reality of what goes wrong. What are the common errors? What are the common traps people fall into?

**Claire Seldon**

100 percent. Yes. And then depending on how scaffolded it is, so if it's a situation where, so there's two different versions of scenarios, right? You've got versions of scenarios where you are creating a situation where your learner discovers they don't know how to, and is challenged by consequences, or you might use a scenario to teach them something novel and new. And in that, you'd want to be a bit more scaffolded. So, in that situation, you might want to include links to the policy document, to a tool that they would be using in that situation to support them going through that new situation. So, a really cool example of this, last time I was teaching at UTS, one of my students was a learning designer working for an organization that ran a really big call center. And often the people calling in, they needed help. They didn't know what their rights were. But there's things that the call center people can say and can't say. And so what she created was a series of small scenarios within a bigger one that were little calls where Because although you've got this situation where there's a legal thing that you need the learner to say, but if they say it to their learner in fancy legalese language, sorry, in the caller, the caller isn't going to

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

understand. Yes. So, they need to be able to interpret it, but then in understandable plain English without butchering what they need to say. So a whole bunch of her time, like what she made didn't look fancy. But what she'd spent a ton of time on was the different choices. And when they said the thing that wasn't quite right, they were instantly given feedback. And what they did is this was training before you got anywhere near the phones? This was when you had maybe had like a tiny bit of onboarding, but it wasn't for people who'd been on the phones for five years teaching them about new stuff. This was for new people. These are the kinds of calls. And then this is the kind of language that you need to use. So on one hand, you're modelling to them in that story. But on the other hand, you're really guiding them through making those choices. Again, it's a prepared, safe environment to support those learners so that when they get to the real call, it's not the first time they've heard that or had to think about what's the right thing to say in this situation.

### **Michelle Ockers**

And we know that realistic practice is one of those things that the evidence tells us actually builds skill and aids in application, right?

### **Claire Seldon**

Yeah, and I mean look, so very, very interesting, cool example I saw of this was done for Canadian nursing home visits and what they had done was shot video with actors and the wife is a victim of domestic violence and so they shot I think it's about 30 minutes of video and the way the situation works is that you watch the video so you're seeing everything, you're seeing the body language, you're seeing the house, all the things that they want the home nursing visits to see But then you have to make choices and depending on what you say jumps you to the next bit of video. And so you see, you know, if you say the wrong thing and you can play it as many times as you like. And what they found with a lot of those things is that even if learners do instinctively know what they should say, the right thing to say, often they will go back and do it again and see the wrong things. Now, they can't do that in the real world and that using the actors in that situation is really cost effective because you're getting the same experience for every learner and you're giving them more than just the written stuff. And I guess this, speaking to the hypothetical HR learning design team lead who wants to incorporate some of this, good gamification is not as cheap and easy as bad gamification. And it's not a quick solution. And so when you say, what do you need? What skills do your staff need? Well, one of the things is you will need to convince the bigwigs, the people ticking the budget, that this is either going to take a little bit longer, or it's going to need more resources, or whatever it is. Because to do it well, takes time. You need time to write that story. You might need time to decide, do we need a video? Do we need some kind of virtual reality? Do we need to record audio? What do we need to do to make this feel real? What do my learners need to feel engaged, challenged? And the thing is, though, is that and all the stuff we've been talking about so far, it will give you I hate this phrase, but it will give you your return on investment.



**Michelle Ockers**

In a way... Oh, there's a can of worms.

**Claire Seldon**

I know. I'm a teacher. I am a classroom teacher. To me, education is like a social good. It should be free. Every company should pay all the money for good quality education for everybody.

**Michelle Ockers**

But we live in the real world, right? There are realities around budgets and resource constraints. So what guidance can you give to people in organizational L&D teams as to when they should use gamification? Maybe let's just stick with the scenario-based stuff. When they should use it and when they shouldn't. When is it worth it in a nutshell?

**Claire Seldon**

When is it worth it? Well, let's say you and I have had a lot of experiences where I have zero budget. So if you have zero budget, the thing you have is time. And then what you can say is to do something really great, I need a bit more time. As for when, I can't answer that question because it's so dependent on learners and context. So, if you're trying to do, I guess the thing would be the more important the learning is, the more reason there is for doing it well. So if it's a ticker box thing where same old, same old is fun, don't bother. If it's a big organizational change that really, really matters and that buy-in and interest is vital, it'd be a go-to as far as I'm concerned. So, cool example, there's a company, I can't remember now, I feel so bad I've forgotten their name. I'll give you the link later. There's a really cool VR company that does work on training electrical safety, right? And it's situations where you create an environment where an emergency has happened, something has gone wrong, and the learner needs to potentially save their colleague's life. Now, so that kind of learning, where it's the difference between life and death, and the learner having that chance to practice that chance to make a mistake and not have a negative consequence. Yes, they could read something or watch a video and ticks and boxes, reflect on their feelings then that is not going to get you that visceral. Oh my goodness My colleague has passed out and I need to figure out whether I should hit that switch or that switch. Yep so a situation, the more important the situation is, the better I think your learning should be. And my genuine personal belief is that scenario-based gamification in learning will give you a better outcome for your learners.

**Michelle Ockers**

Yeah, I think scale, and you've alluded to that scale matters as well. So your regulatory training, your mandatory learning, I think generally it needs more love than it gets. And I think we need to reframe how we think about it. It's not like, well, everybody has to do it. So why would I put the effort in? to there's a huge investment in this in the organization. So we need to make it as effective as possible. And this is a touch point that everyone has with learning every year. So we want them coming



## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

away going, gosh, it was a great experience. Or I really I really did get something out of that. I want to come back for more.

### **Claire Seldon**

Yes. And don't recycle. Don't think that you can because you said this about the bank, which I thought was really great, was that they were changing them. Because I've seen that happen, where you go, well, I invested a whole chunk of money in this scenario last year. Therefore, to get my money's worth, I better use it five years in a row. It's like, no. I mean, yes, sometimes people love a book and read it five or six times. But your mandatory training is not as good as a world-class novel that people are going to want. the world changes. You know, we watch a movie that's five years old and it's dated and you can tell it's dated. Your training dates too. Your scenario should be up to date with the things that are happening around your learners. Yeah, I think there's this idea, right, that Mandatory training, you have to be there and you're paid to be there. But I don't think mandatory training is any different from trying to teach 15-year-old science on a Friday afternoon. They have to be there, but they don't want to be. If you try and force them to do something in that time, like they will sit there, they will be in the space, you know? Your learner will be in front of the computer ticking off the mandatory training. Is their brain there?

### **Michelle Ockers**

No, they're just getting through it with a beer in their hand on a Friday afternoon. Right. Wondering how quickly they can get to the quiz and gain the quiz, like figure out what the right answer is. Shall we stop our rant on mandatory training? Let's move into wrap up. So you've given lots of great tips along the way, and you've mentioned some good quality resources as well, which I've desperately been taking a note of some of those for the podcast notes. It would be wonderful if we could share that pyramid, the upside down pyramid diagram from yourself and Steven.

### **Claire Seldon**

It's actually on my website.

### **Michelle Ockers**

I will put a link to your website. Do you want to mention it now?

### **Claire Seldon**

I'm a bit, it's a bit old. It's a bit embarrassing. I haven't updated it. It looks, you can tell.

### **Michelle Ockers**

I have had a peek at it and I think there's some really good quality stuff on there. There is. Regardless of look and feel, there's good quality content there, Claire.

### **Claire Seldon**

It's a compilation of a lot of really great stuff that I found and one of the pages has the pyramid So, I'll give you the link to the website.

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon

### **Michelle Ockers**

I've got a link to the website already. It's in your LinkedIn profile, I think. I found it on LinkedIn somewhere, which is great. Kathy Moore, it would be great to, and I don't know if you've got, if you're able to grab it quickly, if not, I will do a little bit of research around some of your stuff around how to write scenarios and that use example.

### **Claire Seldon**

Yeah, I'm pretty sure if I Google, Yeah, she's just a legend. She's great, isn't she? I've never been able to pay to do the training, tragically, but a bunch of my colleagues did. And to be fair, I am a nerdy role player and game master from way back, so I didn't need as much help on that, but that's excellent.

### **Michelle Ockers**

We've got a great link to share for that. So let's, I want to turn over to you for the last word here. Key takeaway or mantra you live by in your advocacy for gamification. If there was just one thing you want everybody to go away with kind of embedded in their brain here. What would it be?

### **Claire Seldon**

Oh, man. I don't know. That's so hard.

### **Michelle Ockers**

What if I make it two or three things? Claire, is that easier for you?

### **Claire Seldon**

Maybe. Look, I guess I see it depends on the audience. Right. So. A lot of people are already doing it. A lot of people are already incorporating gamification. So I guess my takeaway would be. Do it consciously. Instead of unconsciously incorporating gamification in what you're doing, make it a conscious decision and therefore get the best out of it.

### **Michelle Ockers**

I think that's a nice point to end on. Thank you so much, Claire. There were lots of great, I know this was a little bit different from our normal episodes, which were a deep dive on one case study, but I think there were lots of really good examples that you shared there to bring this whole area to life. I love your enthusiasm for good quality learning design and for the use of gamification. And I hope our paths continue to cross in the future, Claire. Thank you.

### **Claire Seldon**

Thanks so much, Michelle. I had a really lovely time.

## Learning Uncut Episode 135 Gamification and Scenario-Based Learning – Claire Seldon



Learning Uncut are learning and development consultants that help Learning and Development leaders and their teams become a strategic enabler so that their businesses can thrive. We work in evidence-informed ways to drive tangible outcomes and business impact and are strong believers in the power of collaboration and community. We specialise in helping to build or refresh organisational learning strategy, update their L&D Operating Model, enable skills development, and conduct learning evaluation. We also offer workshops to shift learning mindset and practices for both L&D teams and the broader workforce – as well as speaking at public and internal events.

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### About your host, Michelle Ockers



Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experienced, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

- Australian Institute of Training and Development Dr Alastair Rylatt Award for L&D *Professional of the Year – for outstanding contribution to the practice of learning and development*
- *Internet Time Alliance Jay Cross Memorial Award – for outstanding contribution to the field of informal learning*



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