

LEARNING UNCUT EPISODE 36: LESSONS IN DATA-DRIVEN LEARNING – CLAY SHEARAN AND JOSH HUMPHRIES

- Karen Moloney: Hi, and welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. I'm Karen Moloney.
- Michelle Ockers: And I'm Michelle Ockers.
- Karen Moloney: And today we have two guests joining us to share a case study full of data-driven learning, innovation, risk-taking, dynamic dashboards, and blended learning, all within a three week project timeline. So, I'd like to extend a warm Learning Uncut welcome to Clay Shearan from Woolworths Group and Josh Humphries from Guroo Producer. Thanks for joining us, guys.
- Josh Humphries: Thank you for having us.
- Clay Shearan: Thank you.
- Karen Moloney: Now, Michelle, I know there's lots you're dying to dive into here, so would you like to kick us off?
- Michelle Ockers: Yeah, thanks, Karen. So, Clay, perhaps if we can start with you. I think our Australian and potentially New Zealand viewers will be familiar with Woolworths, but for the benefit of people who tune in from all over the world, can you please explain a little bit about who Woolworths is and what they do?
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, sure. So, Woolworths Supermarkets is a part of the large organisation Woolworths Group. So, Woolworths Supermarkets is the largest supermarket retailer in Australia. We have around 120,000 team members and around 950 supermarket stores throughout the country.
- Michelle Ockers: That's a fairly sizeable operation. And you've been working at Woolworths for a year and four months at the point of this conversation happening.
- Clay Shearan: Yeah.
- Michelle Ockers: Can you tell us briefly about your role?
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, sure. So I'm in the Food Academy, which is the learning function that supports Woolworths Supermarkets. So, in the Food Academy we have learning designers, capability partners, a partner with the different business units or support functions within supermarkets. My role specifically at the moment is leading our digital transformation strategy, so how do we do learning differently is where I am at the moment.
- Michelle Ockers: An interesting space to be playing in no doubt, Clay. And that's going to tie in with the discussion today about a project that you've been working on, which is tied to leadership, and you have been doing some work to build your capability framework, or update a capability framework for your leaders, which included

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technical capabilities as well as some of the more traditional leadership capabilities. Why was this piece of work to create the framework and update your leadership program important in the business?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think Woolworths has been on a bit of a journey of... from turn around into transformation and what that means for the capabilities of our store teams. It was about two years ago that we launched our refreshed store leadership pathway which is how our leaders in our supermarket stores grow and learn all things in leadership, and how to run a successful supermarket.

And we're just in the phase now where we're reviewing those pathways, reviewing the learning, reviewing the capabilities and the skills our team needs. We knew we needed to refresh that, but we wanted to understand: where are our team members at now? Can we do some sort of benchmarking, get people to a consistent level, so that we can move forward in growing and moving our capability of our teams to the next level?

Michelle Ockers: Okay. And as part of the program, there were a stack of things that you started doing differently with rollout of the program, some of which we're going to be digging into. But it was one of your first forays into blended learning rather than either wholly face-to-face or wholly e-learning. You moved beyond event-based learning, you were engaging managers very widely in the learning process. You provided the dynamic dashboard with operations data to be used as part of the program. That's a whole stack of change to introduce all at once. What was driving all of these changes being introduced into learning, and specifically into this program?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think we're in the fortunate position where this was led, or I guess came about, from a request from the operations team, our operations leadership team, in coming to us in, "How can we do something differently? We know that the capabilities and our team feeling confident to execute is a big driver for us to move forward, and for our strategy."

So it was really looking at: what can learning do differently? Three things around your changing or shifting the learning experience, like you said, so just beyond the event. So, what comes before? What comes after? What is the journey or the transfer of learning beyond that one event?

And the other piece really being: how can we connect our managers to the learning? Because we know that anything to be successful there needs to be that our ownership and connection by our store teams' leaders to embed that back in store. And lastly: how do we quickly get some actionable insights and data to give back to the store teams to give to the managers, so they can actually do something with that back in store?

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Michelle Ockers: Yeah, what's really interesting is that this request came from your operations area because a lot of learning teams, learning professionals, want to adopt different approaches but face a bit of cultural resistance, so people kind of have, in their mind, that training equals learning, and they find it hard to engage the business and bring them down different pathways. But you've got this situation where your operations team is coming to you. Did they have clear ideas of what this alternative approach might look like, or were they just open to your ideas? How did that conversation unfold?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, they came to us with, I guess, an idea of where they believed the gaps from an operational point of view may be, from a skills, knowledge, competency level, and really it was in our hands to come back to, "Okay, well how can we do this differently in the short time frame?"

So, they were definitely open to what that could look like, and open to us trying something different if it meant that we could show that we could really do a step change or an uplift in those three things around the experience, really connecting the manager, that was a big one for them, and then also how we can quickly get actionable data.

So, we knew that that's what we were tasked with. So, then it was: how can we find the solution or do something that would meet those needs and help the operations team bring that to life?

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, really exciting to have such a willing stakeholder to work with, right?

Clay Shearan: Yeah. Wonderful, yeah.

Michelle Ockers: So, where did you go to draw your inspiration and ideas to make these kind of changes? Was this something that had been bubbling along and just waiting for an opportunity? Did you have to sort of put your thinking cap on and go out and look for ideas? How did you source your inspiration and ideas?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think there was a few aspects to it. Definitely from our overall Food Academy team looking at, drawing from previous roles or experiences, of when we've built different learning journeys before.

I know myself personally with a different organisation it was really all about that blended experience and what happens back in store or back in your work environment is the key to knowing or making sure that learning actually results in something different. So, I guess that's where we were drawing our inspiration from, and that was our north star.

Michelle Ockers: Great, so there was a stack of pre-existing experience that people brought to the table and you could build on. And I know we're going to talk a bit more about how you worked with Josh and his team as well on the data part of the

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solution, and that's where we're going to head next, is really focusing on how you used data operation data as part of the solution. But to give that discussion some sort of context can you give us an overview of the learning program that you piloted, who it was for, the objective, the program, how it flowed?

Clay Shearan: Yeah. So, like we said, this was a bit of a different, a standalone program that wasn't a part of a embedded curriculum or ways of working with us. So, yeah, it was a standalone program that was, I guess, designed to get us to a point, like I said before, to then look at how we can build upon that in our standard curriculum programs.

So, the journey for this particular program was we needed to focus on technical skill and our leadership skill. So, it was designed in a way over eight weeks that there'd be some pre-learning, and some pre-assessment, and knowledge and confidence ratings. And then there would be an event or a workshop, and then post that there were some blended activities as well. And that was where the action plan, one of those activities was to complete an action plan, and that's where we used xAPI data and technology a little bit differently.

And then we went into getting ready for the second workshop which was our leadership event, and once again after that what was the... there was learning activities in a blended way for the leadership as well. So it was an eight week journey with some pre and post, some action plans and two events.

Michelle Ockers: Nice.

Michelle Ockers: Karen, over to you to dig into the data side of the program.

Karen Moloney: Yes, I think the technology that kind of gets that program to hang all together, I understand, so that's where you had a conversation with Josh. So maybe I'll get Josh to tell me, how did that conversation come about and how did you start working with Clay on this project?

Josh Humphries: Yeah, well, initially it started more as a conversation around getting some advice on xAPI and how Woolowrths might be able to use it within their existing environment. But I think what became very clear in that conversation was because of the timeframes that perhaps we needed to find a solution it was a bit more discreet and didn't need to be plugged into all of the existing corporate environments.

And so, having listened to the journey that Clay and his team are trying to make, I recalled a recent project we'd worked on where we'd had designed a blended program for a traditionally sort of facilitated environment, where we collected some data about people's capabilities and gave it to a facilitator. But that was sort of for 30 participants and one facilitator. What we were talking about here was 120 facilitators and 1100 participants.

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- Josh Humphries: So, we knew that we had a bit of a gap in terms of scale, but we felt like we had a bit of a solution that could be extended upon to meet the needs. So, we basically demoed that solution that we previously used, and then started nutting out what changes we might need to make to it to make it bring the journey that Clay mentioned alive.
- Karen Moloney: I think it's important to understand here as well with this relationship, you guys had worked together on previous projects and you were already working with Woolworths and other jobs as well. So, this wasn't just a pick up the phone cold call-
- Josh Humphries: No.
- Karen Moloney: ... random, which I think it's important to understand, like in terms of that relationship that you had, I think that working with a solution partner like yourself, people often don't necessarily use you in the way that they could, in as much as you have a wealth of experience and ideas that you can bring to the table-
- Josh Humphries: Yeah.
- Karen Moloney: ... as like a trusted advisor almost, and people quite often think they have to have the solution before they go out and talk to providers. So, I think understanding that relationship that already existed was quite important to actually achieving what you did in the timeframe that you did.
- Josh Humphries: Yeah, we wouldn't have been able to like... if it was a new relationship we would have had to do your traditional scoping to make sure we all understood. Instead, what we knew is we had a common goal and a set of existing capabilities between both of our teams, because this is completely collaborative. Clay and his team were doing as much of the work as we were, and we all kind of knew what we were heading for, and we were both willing to make sort of sacrifices in order to meet the timeframe. So, yeah.
- Josh Humphries: So, without that sort of trust it's not possible to work in an agile way, and that's what we're able to do because we're, like you said, we were an existing provider and we had a good knowledge of the Woolworths business.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah, totally. I think the other interesting point about this as well is that something that holds people back, I think, a lot from trying new things is that they think that they have to implement a solution which is ultimately going to plug into everything, and they have to take all of those things into account. And while you're saying this is something that potentially could be scaled you didn't actually need to work out exactly how that was going to happen at the time. And I-

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- Josh Humphries: Yeah.
- Karen Moloney: We suffer from analysis paralysis, I think, in L&D where we try and make it all perfect, and polished, and shiny, whereas sometimes you just need to do the rough and ready minimum viable product solution to test the theory about whether this concept is going to work or not. Would you agree?
- Josh Humphries: Yeah. Yeah, I totally agree, and we say 1100 people and it sounds scary, but in a total addressable audience of 220,000 people at Woolworths Group it is still a prototype.
- Josh Humphries: And so, it certainly had some scale issues about it, but in the whole scheme of things it was as much an experiment to try something new. And we've, I'm sure Clay can touch on this later, but we learned a lot of lessons that we can take forward and apply elsewhere.
- Karen Moloney: Yes, we will definitely be picking up on those lessons. Yep. And I think just from... We talked about having a three week timeframe to deliver this solution. I love a good deadline. I think one of the best projects we ever did and one of the ones we won the most awards for was the one that we'd done in the smallest amount of time. But what were the key challenges for you about this solution from a technical perspective in terms of...
- Josh Humphries: Yeah, so we had sort of the bones of a solution in place, as I mentioned, from a previous project that we'd worked on, but what we had to figure out was how to scale that to 120 facilitators.
- So essentially, as Clay mentioned before, each of the managers were delivering the learning to their team, and so we had to figure out a way that we could do that without creating 120 separate courses, if that makes sense.
- Karen Moloney: Yes.
- Josh Humphries: It was just not feasible to do that. So, we had to add a whole bunch of relationships into the data between manager and employee. You'd think that would be easy, but we always know that getting that kind of data particularly in a retail environment, where it's set up around stores rather than management relationships, was certainly a challenge.
- We knew that we had to create some pretty significant dashboards. We're talking about asking people a lot of questions and rolling up those answers from 1100 people, and we had quite a complicated sort of seven part capability framework that's set within that. So, we were concerned about what the performance would be like when we tried to roll up all of that data. Luckily we were using sort of an off the shelf learning records system that we were pretty

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confident in, but as the program progressed we did need to make some tweaks to make it go faster.

- Josh Humphries: And I think that one of the blessings we had was that Woolworths is a Google House, so it uses Google to authenticate login to applications, so from that perspective the usual problem of, "Well, how am I going to get my people into this solution if it's not integrated into everything?" was relatively easy to solve because we just put the Google login into the front of the solution and kind of all of that normal headache of data feeds and stuff was sort of taken care of.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah, and I think in just reducing that friction and just like one more step to getting people in there because I understand, Clay, people's kind of perception of anything e-learning hadn't been fantastic in the past?
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think was a critical step in this being... the business being really early adopters and the users going in, understanding the journey, and staying through the process and keep using the technology, because we just wanted to make it the simplest way to get people into it. Because we know, like you mentioned, that there's a bit of a mindset or thought around e-learning, or technology, or learning that's done online isn't great. So, we knew the first step was: how do we just get people in there? And we trusted that once people were in there they'd see the benefit, and it was very intuitive and clear to them.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah.
- Clay Shearan: So, yeah. Step one was definitely: how do we get them in there
- Karen Moloney: How do we get them in?!
- Clay Shearan: How do we get them in
- Karen Moloney: What were the other challenges for you in terms of from a business side of things, in terms of implementing and getting this thing up and running in the three weeks?
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think besides... Josh definitely tackled the main ones around the data and having clean data to do that. So there was some, I guess, manual processing there on our end. But from a business point of view because it was, I guess, sponsored by the operational leadership team there was a framework around this whole program from communications, tapping into normal operating rhythms in our stores. So, we had some good support in how we communicate this message and what actions people need to take.
- So from a implementation point of view that was not as much of a worry or a burden as you would think. Funnily enough we were meant to be doing it state by state and then once we went to New South Wales, once we went live and

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people could get in we sent out the communications. I think it was within an hour we're getting emails going, "Oh, I want to try and get in. Why can't I login?"

So then we had the issue, "Oh, everyone wants to get in. How do we now turn everybody on?" We thought we had, in our three week timeframe, in our implementation that we at least had a day to bring each state onboard, but as soon as it went out everybody wanted to get in, which is a good problem to have, but that's something we didn't think about straight away.

Karen Moloney: Okay, so just thinking about the actual program then, so we've got people in. It's all good, we know they can get in there. So, they were invited to do some... like a pre-assessment, pre-work assessment and then attend a workshop?

Clay Shearan: Yeah. So there was... once they were in there was, I guess, the learning journey that was once they got into the portal, there was their learning journey that unlocked sequentially once they completed each path.

And yeah, the first part of it was around some e-learning on introducing the program, what it's going to be like, explaining it, creating that why and how it's going to benefit them, and then, yeah, it was the assessment questions around the capabilities that we were looking to move, or to get a level playing field on, and also some confidence questions to understand where they were feeling from a confidence level to execute this.

Karen Moloney: Okay, and then they had the live workshop which was actually run by managers, and that was-

Clay Shearan: Yeah.

Karen Moloney: ... a new thing for managers as facilitators?

Clay Shearan: It was, yeah. We tap into the cascade of information and cascade of learning when we have a team the size of Woolworths. So they're used to, I guess, sharing information and sharing knowledge, but not taking on the role, as such, as the facilitator. So, that was definitely different for the managers of our store leaders.

Karen Moloney: Okay, and what did you do to support them in terms of prepping them for that experience?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, so before it went live, before the workshops happened, we knew that these guys were the operational experts, that wasn't a problem. It was: how can we help them feel confident to facilitate? So, we used an external facilitation provider to spend two days with them on all things facilitation. So moving from being the person that is there to give all the answers and to be the SME to, "How do I facilitate a room and how do I feel confident to do that?"

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- Karen Moloney: Hmm. That's a really interesting point actually because I think a lot of people assume in an organization, because somebody is in that managerial role and potentially has done those roles underneath them beforehand that they are the SME and the SME's the best person to help people through that process, but there are some skillsets that go along with that. And a different mindset in terms of sharing the information and helping develop those employees.
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, yeah.
- Karen Moloney: So, getting a bit more into the data now, Josh. Maybe if I can direct this to you around... so we've done the pre-work, and so we've done some assessment there against that capability framework, and then there's the workshop, and then they do go and do a post-workshop assessment, is that right?
- Josh Humphries: Yeah, so I think first of all stepping back one the pre-assessment we mapped to the seven capabilities, both the confidence questions and the knowledge and skills questions. We created some dashboards to give to the managers as facilitators to personalize that facilitation.
- Karen Moloney: Okay.
- Josh Humphries: So, firstly they had a view of the strengths and weaknesses of everyone in the room.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah.
- Josh Humphries: And they could look at what they felt confident in, what they didn't feel confident in, et cetera, and personalise that facilitation. So that was the first was that we used data, and we kind of wrapped it up in a way that was easy for them to use on the fly as well. So, they could actually pull up these dashboards as part of their facilitation and go, "It looks like this is where we need to focus."
- Karen Moloney: Okay, that's a really interesting point, actually. Sorry to cut in there, because I think people, when they're talking about using data in our world of L&D, it's kind of normally like after the fact, so it's looking about what happened so that what we can dictate future behaviour, but I think then taking that and feeding that into a live workshop process for the facilitators is something I haven't heard of before.
- Josh Humphries: Yeah, I mean these people potentially were quite strong at these capabilities. What we were looking for is where the gaps were and these gaps are not universal. And we're talking about a room of seven to ten people, I think, was in each room. So there's quite... it needs to be personalized in each of the sort of 120 sessions that we're running.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah.

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- Josh Humphries: And this was about leveling, so we just needed to understand where those gaps were. And so, that meant the conversations that could be happening though was quite targeted and in the end quite effective.
- Then post that we asked them to do two things: reassess those capabilities and confidence so we could determine if there was a shift, which there was, and I'm sure Clay can talk to the results in a moment. But the other thing we asked them to do was identify as a result of the facilitation five actions that they would take back and action over the rest of the learning journey.
- So it was really about saying, "Well, okay, we've addressed what the capability gaps are. What are we going to do to actually fill them other than what we just did in the room?" But also what... so that's sort of like a personal development actions, but they could also be actions which were around actually changing things in the business.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah, okay.
- Josh Humphries: And so, "I need to go back and change this particular way that I'm executing a particular procedure," et cetera.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah.
- Josh Humphries: So, we were able to actually get that embedding by immediately asking them after the event what they were going to do, and we captured that in data and gave it back to their managers so that it could be put back into the operational rhythm of the organization to make sure it was executed.
- Karen Moloney: Okay. And so, then back in the workplace the managers then have access to the dashboard, so there's kind of some different views of that dashboard depending on your role when you login?
- Josh Humphries: Yeah. That's correct. The manager can see each of their people's actions, and they were actually asked to confirm that action as something that the person should do. So, we put a little button on the dashboard that said, "Yes, go ahead and do this."
- Josh Humphries: And then the learner could see... we could see what they had said they were going to do, to make sure that they kept it front of mind. And then we also rolled it up throughout the organization so that sponsors could also see how many actions had been completed, they could see what the overall capability gaps before and after were. So we made sure, and that was probably one of the things, in terms of the three week timeframe, they were the dashboards that we built post-launch. We knew we had to sacrifice something. So, it was the sponsor's dashboards that had to wait a couple of weeks. But-

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Karen Moloney: I'm sure they were happy once they got them, hey?

Josh Humphries: Yeah, it was actually good because it actually created that, "Well, I want to see what's going on." The fact that people were asking for them meant that we were obviously having success because people wanted to see what was going on.

Clay Shearan: Yeah, and I think from an internal point of view and thinking about it in an agile way to get the minimum viable product and get it to the people that needed it, we were first of all we're solving for the learner and their manager, because they were the key people in all of this.

And then we knew that we needed to do some more work afterwards to then share that. But I think it was... we went into it knowing that that was what we're solving for and that was the important thing to get that actual data to those guys straight away. And then once that was solved for, how could we then roll this up and give the views to sponsors and the wider organization?

Karen Moloney: Yeah, and so the outcome of that program is that you ended up with 6000 actions that were out in the business – so what happened?

Clay Shearan: Yeah, there was lots of actions which I think, yeah, I think, and that was a real key thing, a learning theme for us as well is: how can we put the impact and the return on investment as a part of the journey?

So, instead of typical learning programs that you'd create you'd do some learning that... we get these learning outcomes and hope to measure how that would change. We walked away from this eight week program with actionable and tangible things that our team could go and do.

So, that was a really big learning and really helped us understand what we'd want to do moving forward. But I guess for this project, what it enabled us to do is help the manager really hone in on what their team need help with and put that back in to, like I mentioned before, the operational rhythm that happens in stores.

We have weekly one-on-ones and daily catch-ups and all these conversations happening, and all these things that our team need to do. So this enabled them to have a plan and make those conversations, make those interactions, meaningful. And the manager really knew how to support their team leads.

Karen Moloney: Okay. So six thousand actions is quite a lot, would you be able to just give us maybe one example of how an action from that program was then used in the business, just to give people some practical ideas?

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- Clay Shearan: Yeah, I think the main point of the actions were around: what can they go back and do immediately to either help themselves work in a better way, or work smarter, or what can they do straight away to improve execution?
- So we saw some good examples of using those datas we could also pull to see: were there any key themes? Which, I guess, from our point of view helped us understand from our capability framework what our leaders needed to learn moving forward, what we could see trend. So we're saying, "Okay, well these 5000 people, these 5000 actions," there was actually 20% or 30%, or whatever it might be, "... are saying they all need to work on this," whether that be stock loss or other things. "So what we can do to help them moving forward?" So, that was actually from our point of view helpful.
- But I guess from a learner point of view we saw some examples of being able to tick these off and make some improvement, but we saw an improvement in our BAU, well, what we call My Plan, which is where we put our professional development goals that go over the year. And what we saw was an uplift in people actioning and really putting some personal development goals in their My Plan.
- So, we saw straight away people actioning operational needs. We could quickly see large... when you have 5000 actions, what are some trends? So, we could help embed that in our curriculum moving forward. But I guess we saw an uplift in people taking seriously what it means to invest in my personal development to continue growing.
- Karen Moloney: That's really interesting actually and just thinking about that data, like what's in my head is kind of like 3D uses for data, so it's not just about getting a bit of information off of a spreadsheet and then going and doing something with it. Depending on which lens you're looking at that data through it's having different effects around different parts of the company.
- So you're going from the learners, to the managers, and the teams, and the stores, and the bigger, wider picture about learning and strategy in the organization. So, it's for something that I'm going to say simple, but I don't mean to downplay the technicality of the solution, but really kind of putting those dashboards on the program and what you did there has just completely changed the way that you can view learning within the organization.
- Clay Shearan: Yeah. Yeah, because it wasn't like to your point saying it's simple, it was just giving the right information to the right people at the right time.
- Karen Moloney: Yeah.
- Clay Shearan: I think in the world of retail there's a lot going on, everything changes every second, and the team in stores have a lot to do to make sure the store's

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running, and then they also have to worry about customers. So, how can we just give them some information, some data, some whatever it may be just to help them put that into their flow of work and make some change?

Karen Moloney: Yeah, awesome. Josh, was there anything else that you wanted to add about the actual solution before we move on to the...

Josh Humphries: Yeah. No, I think that probably just making it clear about sort of... well, it wasn't easy. We put together some pretty regular tools that we have at our disposal to make this happen. So, the data we collected through what would be normally seen as a traditional e-learning module except it was more made up of questions than content. And then we just used xAPI to track that to an off-the-shelf learning records system.

What we really customised was the learning plan that you logged into to make it really simple. And we did create custom dashboards because, as Clay mentioned, dashboards that come out of your typical learning records system are really meant for sponsors, but what we had to do is make a dashboard that was really quick and easy for frontline managers to understand.

And so we needed to customize it and pull it out in a way that was meaningful to them. So, it really wasn't like a hugely customised solution. We were using a whole bunch of tools. One of those is a new tool that's available to people, the other one is a tool that we've been using for 10, 15 years, we just decided to use it as a data collection device rather than a telling device that you would normally see elearning used as.

Michelle Ockers: And could people access their data, their dashboards, via mobile or did they need to be sitting at a computer, at a desk?

Josh Humphries: So, it is mobile responsive. Some of the dashboards obviously look better on a bigger device. But, yeah, it was mobile responsive. And I think Clay can probably talk to more about what devices they have in store to support the process.

Clay Shearan: Yeah, so our store teams, all of our store managers have an iPad. So, it was through the communication it was you could use the iPad to access this and complete this, bring it along to the event, et cetera. But yeah, it was built for more, for both mobile and desktop.

Karen Moloney: Okay. Right, so I'm sure there's some great lessons that you've learned, both learned through this project and nonetheless three weeks is a really short time frame to do something as big as this. Maybe I'll start with you, Josh, in terms of what were your lessons learned from the technical side?

Josh Humphries: Yeah, so I think the lessons we learned out of this was starting to think about learning as a journey and start with the end in mind. So we knew we wanted

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people to do certain things at the end, and we just needed to work back and figure out what data we needed to give people to help them do that.

The other big lesson is we're so often worried about telling people things, and I think the big lesson for me was when we started this project it was made clear that there's a whole bunch of experts already. There's the store managers and their managers know all of these skills. It's about addressing where the gaps are and empowering them to teach each other. It wasn't about content, this project, because there were plenty of experts in the room. It was about discovering which people needed support.

So they were probably the big lessons for me, as a learning designer we so often want to push our content, and maybe all we need is some data to help facilitate the conversations.

Karen Moloney:

Yeah.

Josh Humphries:

From a technical perspective, yeah, like you said, don't try and do it in three weeks. And data is everything in terms of the input. So getting good people data is probably the biggest challenge that we had, making sure that we could establish that relationship between the facilitator and the learner, or in this case the group manager and the store manager, because having that relationship is obviously the key part to the success in this project.

Karen Moloney:

Sure. Clay, what were the big learnings for you?

Clay Shearan:

Yeah, it's similar to what Josh was saying, but I guess ours was around two things. One, from a learner experience point of view, thinking about the journey and what it means when you can connect the manager in a meaningful way, because I guess that's something now that is always on anything we move forward is: how do we enable that? Which is the second point around looking at how we as a learning function in Woolies, want to do it, want to do things differently, around thinking about that manager and what they do. And we're there to facilitate or create an experience that allows that to then take place back in the store as opposed to owning the learning and all... like we own what people know to how do we give it to the people that really do know, and enable them to do that?

Karen Moloney:

Yeah. I'm hearing about that a lot in the stories that we're putting out lately is that real shift from L&D kind of accepting that we are not the kings of content. It's not about the content it's about solving the business problem, and you have to ask the right questions to the right people or listen to the people when they come to you and say, "We think we need this." And then it's about applying the skills and the toolkit that we have to be able to say, "Okay. Right. Well, this is how we can help you solve that problem." And I think this is one that we have a perfect example of that.

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Michelle Ockers: And I think, Karen, that at this point we've probably got a whole stack of listeners who are feeling very inspired and want to get started doing more with data. So Clay, if people come to you and have this conversation and say, "Look, I want to start using data more effectively," what tips would you give them to get started?

Clay Shearan: Great question.

Michelle Ockers: Find an expert?

Clay Shearan: Definitely, yeah. For me it's just about getting curious, and it's okay not to know everything, and there's a lot of people that do know a lot of things. So, yeah, find an expert. Number one, find someone that can help explain how it can work.

I think from an internal point of view look at the Kirkpatrick Model, I think if you flip it and then kind of really understand, don't start with the learning, don't start with the content, really understand, okay, well what kind of information do each of your target audience and personas need? What data is meaningful for them, and what do you want them to be able to action? And then kind of work your way down, okay, well then what does that mean for the journey? What does that mean for the content? What does that mean? Which I think is, I think we didn't realize we were doing that, but we realized half way through but, yeah, definitely start with, okay, what is the output, or what is the data for each of your audiences? Because I think it was different for the learner, it was different for the manager, and it was different for the business.

Michelle Ockers: And I think that echoes the point you made earlier, Josh, about starting with the outcome in mind and then working backwards from that. Are there any other tips you give people who come to you and talk to you about wanting to get started using data more effectively as part of learning solutions?

Josh Humphries: Yeah, I mean my biggest tip is start with a project, don't try and start a revolution out your whole organization. It would be too overwhelming, and I think that's one of the reasons this was successful is because we had an isolated need that we wanted to apply it to.

When people come to me and say, "How do I put xAPI into my organization?" I'm like, "Well, I don't really know what that means." You've got to have a problem that you're trying to solve and then you started to solve that problem as opposed to we hear "data" around and it's like, "Oh, I need data."

"Do you? What do you want it for?"

Karen Moloney: What are you going to do with it?

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- Michelle Ockers: It's a bit like a solution looking for a problem-
- Josh Humphries: It is. Yeah.
- Michelle Ockers: ... and a bit like you think about VR or other things, it's like "I've got to use it." Well, do you? What's the problem you're trying to solve first
- Josh Humphries: Using data isn't about FOMO, it is about solving a problem and you can get overwhelmed with data. So know what you want to collect otherwise you'll have too much, and you won't be able to make sense of it.
- And I think one of the key advantages we had coming into this process was that Woolworths already had a very clearly defined set of capabilities and behaviours they wanted to measure, and that gave us a good place to start in terms of what data we needed to collect. If you don't have that it can be quite challenging because we needed to know what we needed to measure and what those behaviours that were going to have an impact on the organisation were. So, that's what I would say is a good place to start. Start with the behaviours you want to measure, because then we can go up and down from there.
- Karen Moloney: We've got one final question for both of you that we like to ask all our guests. Could you share with us one resource you find valuable for your own professional development? Clay, I'll put that to you first.
- Clay Shearan: Yeah, I've been trying to be more of an avid reader, and one of the books I read this year actually, which I think I still go back to and have bookmarks and it's starting to fall apart is The Design Thinking Playbook which is all around digital transformation for products eco-system teams. And that's really helpful in helping you get the mindset of: how do we start? How do we have minimum viable products? How do we just start with something, start with a project? Because I think Josh's point is right, it can get a little bit overwhelming when you try and say, "How do we change-"
- Karen Moloney: Everything!
- Clay Shearan: ... the way we did learning?" So, if you start with a project, start with a problem and then get in the mindset of: it's probably going to be different to when you've done a project before. If you want to do it different, if you want to use data. Yeah.
- Karen Moloney: Okay. Thank you. Josh?
- Josh Humphries: Yeah, well, I've been listening to two podcasts actually at the moment. One of the is The HBR Ideacast which has a bit of a theme around learning at the moment actually, talking about what automation and data impact is having on the way that we learn off each other.

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Josh Humphries: And then the other one is the FT Start-Up Stories which is really targeted more at not your unicorns, but those people out there trying to do something differently and what lessons they've learnt. So, both of those podcasts I sort of listen to regularly.

Karen Moloney: Awesome. Well, I'll put some links to those in the show notes along with links to both your LinkedIn profiles, if anybody wants to get in touch with either of you guys to have a chat and to find out more about what's been discussed in today's episode.

Thank you so much, Josh and Clay, for taking the time to share your great case study with us.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, thank you.

Josh Humphries: No problem. Thank you for having us.

Clay Shearan: Thanks very much.

Karen Moloney: And to our listeners, if you're finding Learning Uncut valuable could you please take a moment to rate the podcast and leave a review comment for us? We really appreciate your help to ensure that as many learning professionals as possible have an opportunity to learn from the fabulous work of our guests. Thank you.