

Michelle Ockers:

Today we're very, very privileged to have Jane Bozarth here to talk to us about showing your work as part of this Learning Uncut disruption series. Of all the topics we discuss Jane, I think this one will probably be one of the least familiar to learning professionals around the world who are trying to get started with alternative non-face-to-face approaches at the moment. So to start, please introduce yourself.

Jane Bozarth:

Well, I am Jane Bozarth and I have many, many years working as an instructional designer and developer and supporter of new techs and the state government workforce, including things like social media and virtual classroom work. So I have a long background in that. I left that job in 2017 and since then I've been the director of research for the e-learning guild. And one of the reasons I am especially interested in talking with you today and you don't know this, is that at the moment we have a survey open to our members about how they're being affected by the current state of affairs in the world.

Jane Bozarth:

Today is March 25 here in the US and one of our survey questions asks, how have your work practices changed in the last several weeks? A third of our respondents are saying that they are seeing an increased demand for demonstrating or sharing or showing how their work processes go. So we are seeing, we haven't released that data yet. It'll be out probably next week, but I happen to have been able to look at it and because we haven't closed the survey yet. So we're seeing a big uptick in organizations suddenly very interested in this topic, which of course pleases me. I'm sorry for the circumstances, but I think we do have an opportunity here.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. Hence the discussion and thanks for joining us today, Jane. So what is showing your work?

Jane Bozarth:

I got interested in this topic when I was working on my graduate work on my dissertation and how people share their practice. My dissertation was on communities of practice and one of the things that becomes evident is that we are very good at sharing explicit knowledge. We're very good at, for instance, writing down a recipe, but anybody who was ever tried to follow a recipe very diligently and had it fail, will realize there's often little things we don't think to tell anyone else. There's tacit knowledge that can be much, much harder to capture. And I think of showing your work as sometimes it's very explicit. This is exactly how I do that thing, but sometimes it's not so much showing or explaining how I do something as it is how I get things done. Does that make sense?

Michelle Ockers:

It does. So the steps, the process, the thinking behind things, the problems, the challenges and context, of course Jane, matters, right? Which is one of the reasons it's hard to go from one of the differences between explicit and passive.

Jane Bozarth:

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Well, right and I think we sometimes forget the role other people might play in what we're doing. We may forget their requirements of us. For instance, I worked with a guy one time who was fabulous in government at getting things paid for and it's a miracle that anybody who's worked in government knows this, but his name was Grant and he was great at getting me a discount, getting me a coupon and getting a check cut on a day they didn't do that. Getting something advanced when there wasn't any money available. And before he left, his boss had him write down every single thing he did all day long and it was fabulous. But nobody could really pick up where he left off because the things you don't capture is, well, if you want to get a check cut on the day that we don't do that, you better be good friends with Janet up in accounting and she's in a better mood on Wednesdays, right? And make sure you ask about her kids.

Jane Bozarth:

We don't always include the smaller things or the little things that help us get work, right? That help us accomplish what we're doing. So I think we've all been in the position of having someone leave or retire or be out sick, which is something we're dealing with now. Just not being in the workplace and they have all this documentation, but we still can't do what they did or we don't know how to enact what they have been doing. We can't pick up where they left off or step in if they're not there.

Jane Bozarth:

So figuring out ways we can better capture that and share it so that it's useful to others. And sometimes it's more useful to ourselves. I mean, I know if things that I have to do once or twice a year in a tool, like maybe Excel, I don't remember from time to time what that involves and I have to relearn it every time. So figuring out how I can capture something, name it the right thing and save it so I can find it again, is also part of showing your work I think is what you need to capture for yourself.

Michelle Ockers:

I think sometimes there's really fine nuances in how we do things and the process of having to explain that to someone else or record it in some way for someone else can make a big difference. Right? I've started working with a couple of virtual assistants, fortunately three or four months ago, so we're not in a rush to figure out how to do the things we do, but I wanted to get one of my assistants to create a Padlet board, which is a curated collection, actually have the resources for all of these disruption series shows. I want to make them accessible to people in a different way. So I set the board up and created the collection for a couple of the set of episodes in the series and I had the recorder on. I put Zoom on and I recorded myself doing it and there were little steps. I had to pause the recording a couple of times to think, oh, I need this piece of information here.

Jane Bozarth:

Right.

Michelle Ockers:

So you don't know that until you start explaining to someone else. Right?

Jane Bozarth:

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Right. And I think that's a great example. Sometimes just making a video of yourself doing something makes you recognize the things about it that maybe you didn't think to share any other way. It's like my example with the recipe, sometimes writing the recipe down is fine, but until you see a video of the grandma making the biscuits, you don't realize the other little things, that went on that aren't just about measuring two cups of flour and a stick of butter. So, I think that's a wonderful example. But when we talk about showing your work, it can be a lot of things. It may be your process. You may be showing somebody how to set up a Padlet board or how to use a particular feature in Articulate or how to record a podcast.

Jane Bozarth:

It may be a specific technical skill that you talk through that way, but it may be other things. It may be, this is a problem and how I solved it. Very often we see now people turning to YouTube for the solution to any number of problems and YouTube, probably 80% of it, is somebody saying, "Oh look, this is how I fixed that." Right? And they're patching the drywall or they're fixing the tire or they're whatever. And it can be just a quick talk through of something. I find it especially interesting to see people who have found a way to capture, to show me what their process is, to show me how they're getting something done. I remember one time I asked, because I speak at a lot of conferences as you do, I asked friends who are in that business, how they set up coordinating, planning, a big conference that involves, a lot of speakers and a lot of breakout sessions and lunch had keynotes and an evening activities and happy hours and all of that.

Jane Bozarth:

And one person came back to me with a screenshot of software she was using, which is what I expected. I thought there'd be some sophisticated multitasking software people had. Another friend of mine who manages big, big events basically does it with post it notes on the wall that he moves around from spot to spot to spot. And I really had never thought of that and it was exactly the solution for me. If I had been planning something big, that's probably where I would've started too. I saw a great example the other day that I'm sorry I did not see back when I was still doing design work. This was from a person who designs instructional programs, eLearning courses, and he has to meet with stakeholders. And you know what happens when you get to meet with HR and the management and the learners and the safety guy and the regulations guy.

Jane Bozarth:

Everybody's got a voice and you could run into a lot of scope creep a lot of times with everybody wanting to add stuff. And he has started rather than storyboarding on big sheets of paper, like full-size PowerPoint slides, he will only use index cards. So it gives him almost no room to add a bunch of stuff. I mean, it's brilliant and I didn't think of it, right? And he took a picture, he said, "This is what I'm doing now. And it has cut way down on the number of changes and the number of people chiming and a lot of stuff to add that's not to the point." And it's brilliant. So sometimes it's just a quick photograph of a problem. Sometimes it's an example of how you run a process. Sometimes it's an example of a solution.

Jane Bozarth:

It can take a lot of different forms and my guideline for it is, what here would be useful to someone else? Or what will be useful to me that I need to save this for the day I need it again? It's not just capturing every single thing you do all day long, but what is something you had to really struggle with? What's something that took a lot of time? I think one of the biggest frustrations many of us have in the workplace is going through a lot of trouble to teach ourselves something or to finish something or to enact something and then finding out somebody in another building already did that, or a colleague already solved that, or somebody has a degree in that. I think that is one of the things I'm trying to help people get a

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better handle on so we can reduce some of that duplication and some of the frustration. We can help each other out a whole lot better if we could find out what everybody knows and what everybody's doing.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. So I'm wanting to do a check in at this point with you about the different ways people [inaudible 00:10:12]. I don't really like the word capture, record, their processes. You've talked about photographs, you've talked about video. What other methods do people have available to them to be able to capture their processes in a way that they can share them with others?

Jane Bozarth:

Right. And the first thing I would like to say is, it doesn't always have to be technology. I think right now we're hyper focused on that because of the situation with the corona virus that everybody's working remotely or apart. But I have seen excellent examples of people doing things face to face. The guild at their conferences sets aside one night for instance to have what they call Demo Fest where participants have submitted ahead of time and it's a lot of people, it's upwards of a hundred people at little tables with little chairs come and show a project. They come and show an eLearning course they built or a quiz they built or something they did with no money or something they did that solved a problem that's been nagging everyone and it's basically four or five people can gather around and let you show your thing and then they can move from table to table as the night goes on.

Jane Bozarth:

And I think that's a wonderful way to show your work when you have it. I think having that sort of thing in the workplace, having a little demo fair at work would be fabulous if we could do more of that. So use the things you have. But you can do videos, you could take photographs. Some people just do quick little sketches. Some people may blog. There's a wonderful example in the book about a fellow who set aside several weekends and taught himself to code and he blogged about it as he went. He ended up with a new job.

Jane Bozarth:

It can be some just real quick reflective tweet. It can be, let's see, what other kinds of things can I think of? It may just be like I said, a picture of your post it notes on the wall. There are any number of ways you might capture and share what you're doing or what you're working on and different things lend themselves to different formats. I mean you don't need to do a video of Jane sitting there just using Excel if a simple screenshot of a solution would work, right?

Michelle Ockers:

Right. And in terms then of sharing, and I'm thinking in particular for people who want to encourage more visibility of processes within their organization, so learning development professionals looking to leverage this practice within their organizations and get other people started. What are your options for making the things people have recorded or written about for instance, visible to others?

Jane Bozarth:

I have several things to say about that. Of course I do. But the first thing I would say, if I could get people to take one thing away from this conversation, it would be please stop saving everything to your C drive. If you would just put it somewhere where anyone else can see it, put it in the shared drive, put it in SharePoint, put it on a Pinterest board that you're all sharing, put it in Yammer or put it in Slack or put it in whatever tools you're using. I am

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hesitant to recommend email, although I'll say it's still better than just saving it to your hard drive where no one sees it. What happens with email is you ask me for resource and I put it in an email and I send it to Michelle and Michelle thanks me.

Jane Bozarth:

Well then if one of us leaves the company, that's gone. And I would say one of the things we all need to get better at, and this is an opportunity for L&D, this is something we can help where we can teach this, is helping people do a better job of naming the things that they are saving and sharing and not renaming every document with a new name every time.

“Janefinalfinalfinalmeanitthistime.four” is not helpful. So cleaning out old stuff, replacing it with new stuff, naming things better, I think that there's something L&D could be helping with because I don't think we're very good at taxonomies and folksonomies and naming stuff. But the other thing I would like to say, because I know it's a concern is what to share with whom.

Jane Bozarth:

But there are some things that you don't tell anybody. There are some things you may only share with your immediate manager. There are some things you might only share with your team. There are things you might share internally which we see a lot with things like sales or banking or product development and maybe there are things you can tweet out but I think you need to, as we say they in the American South, use good sense and use your organization's communication policies. So I don't mean to say we need to share everything we do all day long with the whole planet, but you need to think about who in the organization would want to access information, who might be interested in that, recognizing that there may be a lot of people who are interested in what you're talking about. And if there's no harm in it, how can we let those things be live and go out into the world and be born? Is this what you're after? Am I being helpful?

Michelle Ockers:

Two angles, I'd like to come at it from in terms of some key tips to leave people with. I think you've given us lots of examples that demonstrates why this is useful and different ways that people can show their work. And you mentioned, I think we have a board of examples to share online board of examples on Pinterest which will be in the show notes. It strikes me, there's two aspects to think about here. One is people and one is technology. So on the people side what you find are some of the common obstacles, the barriers that get in the way of people showing their work that we as learning professionals, if we're to adopt this practice ourselves, we'll have to address for ourselves or we might have to help other people recognize when other people are coming up against these barriers and help them to address them.

Jane Bozarth:

I run into a surprising number of people and again I may get in trouble for this, I find it to be more women than men, that is anecdotal. I admit that. But who are hesitant to do things that make it appear that they are bragging or boasting about their work and that's difficult for me. I think that again, I try to direct people back to the idea of how can we help others or ourselves? How can we make somebody else's job easier? How can we fix it so everybody doesn't have to learn anything the hard way?

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. I think sometimes people don't see that they have anything of value to share. They don't recognize that someone else would find something valuable either. So I like the way you framed it earlier on that sometimes it's about what would be useful to me. You're asking the question-

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Jane Bozarth:

Right. What did you struggle with? What did you have to learn? What did you find out had already been done that you didn't know about? One of the questions I like to ask people who aren't sure what, because we do a lot of workshops on this and people are sort of caught in the headlights trying to think back about last Wednesday and what they were doing and what I say is, think back to your first day of work on your job. Assuming you replaced somebody who had been there before you, what would have been really useful for you that day? What could that person have left for you that would have made your life easier? Because we all have that experience of, gosh if they had just left me how to do this procedure or if they had just told me not to ask Barbara for anything ever because she never, what would have really been helpful to you that day?

Michelle Ockers:

And the good thing here is that the barriers to entry if you like the skills, the technology, the budget, very, very low to be able to show your work. So in this talk about technology and one tip you gave us was stop storing things on your C drive. I think that happens a lot less than it used to because of the move to cloud storage. However, one of the traps I found was the idea of discoverability, if I can put it that way, of making things easy for others to find. And one example, when I was working with Coca Cola [inaudible 00:00:18:13], we were upgrading SharePoint. It wasn't my job, it was an IT project, but I volunteered. I said, "Do you need someone to help with change management for my business unit?" And within the space of three months, I was doing all the governance on new shares [crosstalk 00:18:28] business unit and one change I instituted, everybody wanted to make those sites private so that only the team members could see things.

Jane Bozarth:

Right.

Michelle Ockers:

It's a bit like locking all of your work behind closed doors.

Jane Bozarth:

Silos. They want to build silos.

Michelle Ockers:

That's right. So always thinking about how do I make it easy for others to find things. Unless they absolutely need to be locked down. So open by default was the rule.

Jane Bozarth:

Oh, that's good.

Michelle Ockers:

So Jane, apart from formal storage systems, what other types of technology can we use to share a practice? Show our work?

Jane Bozarth:

Well you mentioned LMS's and you mentioned things like cloud storage. I also think making better use of social tools. Like I said, we can do things in Yammer, we can do things in Slack. One thing I would recommend as a general rule is, and I am not the first person to say this, the name escapes me right now. He's featured in the book. Tullus I think, Tullus and Crumpler, who talk about the fact we need to stop attaching. We need to stop attaching

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and start linking. Wherever it is, link to it. Don't attach it because then you're back to that email problem of a private conversation between you and Jane and then it gets deleted when it's over. So I think wherever it is, find a way to direct people back to it. Encourage them to explore what else is there. To your point about people not knowing what they don't know about where things are, I don't know. Did you have some other things in mind about where other than publicly or-

Michelle Ockers:

I think [crosstalk 00:20:04] is a great idea, a lot of organizations now are using Microsoft Teams.

Jane Bozarth:

Oh yeah. Teams. I forgot. Yeah, I'm sorry. Yes. Yeah, Teams.

Michelle Ockers:

So there's, and as you say, the power of the hyperlink, think hyperlink because it can be reused and shared in all sorts of ways. And I think naming is important as well, right? So when people search for things, they can find them.

Jane Bozarth:

I read something this week about the uptick in Teams in the last 10 days has been phenomenal. So yeah, I'm sorry, I didn't even think about that.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So Jane, let's close out with some key tips. What should you absolutely not do with showing your work?

Jane Bozarth:

Worrying about making perfect. Spending all your time polishing it as if it's a final draft of your college graduation thesis. Most of the time we need a quick screenshot. We need a quick something. This is what I'm doing. This is in process. If you really want to showcase something you've finished and as polished and as beautiful, that's fine. I mean, that might be the sort of thing on the Pinterest board that we're sharing. There's a wonderful example of a visual resume. It's Melissa Mayors from Yahoo. If you've got something polished and finished and perfect, that's a great place for it. If you're showcasing it maybe at a demo fest, maybe that's the place. But if you're just saying, this is how I do this thing in Excel, this is how I did this thing with the storyboarding. This is how I cook the rice. You can't keep sharpening, you can't just keep polishing it forever.

Jane Bozarth:

I'll tell you what's funny, there's a cartoonist, an American cartoonist named Mary Englebright. Do you know her?

Michelle Ockers:

No.

Jane Bozarth:

Well anyway, she's a popular Americana woman's empowerment I guess sort of thing. But she did a cartoon a few months ago where she said, "Just the minute I put something on Instagram, I immediately see the thing that's wrong with it, the thing I needed to correct." And I think that happens to all of us. You're never really going to make it perfect, so

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spending all that time polishing and working on it is probably for not, it's probably not the best use of your time. Also, the point isn't to intimidate other people with how perfect your work is.

Jane Bozarth:

The point is to help them see and sometimes the imperfection and the fact that you had to struggle and the fact that it's still in a draft stage. The fact that there's pencil marks on it, I think speaks to the fact that we're just trying to get something out there that will be useful. I'm not saying do sloppy work or incomplete work, I'm just saying I see a lot of people hesitating to share anything because they're so afraid it will look like they're not perfect. And again, that may be a culture issue in your organization where you're scared to share anything because somebody will come down on you if it's not exactly right. But I would be more interested in helping it be born than shining it anymore.

Michelle Ockers:

So don't be too precious. And one of the most critical things to get right, if you were to give people one or two tips either for their own practice, let's start with their own practice of showing their work.

Jane Bozarth:

I think in terms of getting right, I hesitate to say there's very much there. Again, I'm not very much on rules for this. I would say be authentic. Be genuine. Don't promise things that can be done that can't, don't say something only took you, oh, I just dashed this off in a minute and a half if it really took you six hours. I think be authentic. Be honest with it. And again, I think stay focused on what would be useful to someone else or to you? How could this contribute to our community? How could help your organization? How could this help your peers? What would you appreciate about this if somebody was in your chair and you were struggling with this problem, what would you want somebody else to share for you? And Charles Jennings said this before I did is, if we do this right, then everybody doesn't have to learn everything the hard way.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes. And key tips for learning professionals to encourage others in their organizations show their work.

Jane Bozarth:

I think that we are very good at telling people things. I don't know that we're always good and we've already mentioned this today, that we have access to a big workforce with lots of talent and lots of expertise. I don't know that we're so good at saying, how did you do that? How did you learn to do that? Can you show me how to do that? What did you have to do to get this done? What problems did you run into doing this? What was the easiest thing about doing this? What do you wish you had done first? What do you wish you had known before you started? And I think those are reflective questions we can also teach people to build into their day. I try really hard now. I try, I don't always do it. We're all busy and we're all working and we tend to finish something and then move on to the next thing.

Jane Bozarth:

If we could just take a breath in between tasks and say, gosh, that went better than I thought, or gosh, that took longer than I thought. Or if I do this again tomorrow, what would I do differently? Or what was really surprising? If we would just take a minute and think about

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some of those things, I think it would improve our work whether we share it or not. Just learning to be a bit more reflective and I think L&D can help teach that too. But having people intellectualize their practice a bit more, having people intellectualize that they did have to learn to do something, that it did take a few minutes to do it, that it did take a while to develop that process, I think helping people recognize that build self-esteem and helps them get recognition, but it also helps us achieve some of that reflection.

Michelle Ockers:

I think it's a good way to help people to recognize that they are constantly learning as well as they are and what that actually means. That's something I often hear learning professionals say people think training equals learning. If we can nudge them with what problems did you solve? What processes did you improve? How did you get better today? It shifts perceptions of learning as well. It's very useful. Thank you for a fascinating and helpful conversation, Jane.

Jane Bozarth:

Yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

I really appreciate your time today.

Jane Bozarth:

Yeah, thank you Michelle.

About Michelle Ockers

Michelle Ockers works with business and learning leaders to realise the untapped potential of learning in organisations. She is an organisational learning strategist and modern workplace learning practitioner. Michelle works with organisations to develop and implement transformative organisational learning strategy, and to build the capability of their learning team. She delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events. Michelle also mentors learning professionals at all career stages on career planning and professional development.

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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