

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome back to Elevate Ravina. It's nice to see you again.

Ravina Bhatia:

It's nice to see you again. We're talking about one of our favorite topics today, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

We are indeed, skills development. And two episodes ago, back in episode 20 of Elevate, we walked through seven elements of skills development, and we promised to focus on three of those. We kicked off with goal alignment in our last episode, 21. And today, we're talking about another critical element, multifaceted development approaches. So, what does that mean, Ravina? Some big words in there.

Ravina Bhatia:

Multifaceted development approaches. Absolutely. Quite the tongue twister there. As the words suggest, there's the obvious, right? The variety in learning approaches, the variety in learning methods that include digital courses, workshops, reflection exercises, development activities, and real-world applications. But I'd like to focus our attention on the word that we've used. We've not said multifaceted learning approaches. We've said multifaceted development approaches. And we talk about this, Michelle, in the previous podcast, in the webinar series that's out there, which is shifting the focus from learning to learning and development. And that's key to multifaceted development approaches.

Michelle Ockers:

So, one of the things we need to mention in passing, some of our listeners will be used to using the three E's framework, education, exposure and experiences, or the older fashion version of that 70-20-10, which has often tripped people up, those numbers can be very confusing. But really, the concept is the same, right? We're talking about using a range of development approaches, and not just getting hung up on courses and resources. And one of the things that's interesting, even when we think about the way 702010 was originally framed is the emphasis on experience and application in the workforce, which I know we're going to come back to after we talk a little bit about why offering multifaceted development approaches is important.

Ravina Bhatia:

Right, Michelle. And there's the obvious, the choice and the variety in learning. I'd like to share an example from some feedback that we received to these multi-faceted development approaches as part of a programme of work in skills development, where an employee shared with us how they were working on their own skills in commercial acumen. And what they first did was they went through the article that we'd provided a link for as part of the curated resources. And then the next time when they were working on their own development, they watched a video. and how it

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helped them embed the ideas and give them different perspectives and the fact that there were two different resources that helped them do that was great. So this is hearing from an employee themselves where they're sharing how having a variety allows for higher stickiness. But what I'd also like to point out in addition to the obvious is these resources, these courses and development activities allow a person who is going through the skills development to tailor and choose according to the depth of development that they need. So say, for example, you are in a contact center role. Let's take the same example we took in our last podcast. And you want to better your skills in customer service. Now, customer service is obviously key to the nature of this role. And this is a key focus area for this employee. They might be willing to invest in focus development that could look like a course that runs over weeks versus, say, project management, where they might not need that focus development as a part of their role. Another employee in the contact centre role might need more focus development in, say, troubleshooting. And that's where they might want to focus their development and spend their time on. We know that time is limited. Employees are time poor. All of us are time poor. So this variety in format in development allows employees to choose where they want to spend their time.

Michelle Ockers:

So part of that choice is, I mean, there's so many angles to the choice thing, right? And people really do enjoy the autonomy and being able to be guided by things like What formats or media do they prefer? How much time do they have at any point in time? Are they looking for something short and sharp that just gives them some how to's? Are they looking, you know, do they have a point in time as you're talking before about a video that generally, you know, that can take a longer time than reading some sort of quick tips. So time at any point in time is a variety, is sort of one of the factors that comes into play with choice as well, right? What else do you commonly find governs what resources or what type of resources or what type of development approaches and activities people use at a point in time.

Ravina Bhatia:

The other thing that we see quite often is the skill in question itself. So say, for example, if you look at any of these soft skills, most of them require us to actually do something, to actually put them to practice. Simply reading an article, completing a course is not going to cut it. And that's where you then select, all right, I've gone ahead and I've completed a course, watched the video, so on and so forth. But now I need to put it to practice. And selecting activities that allow you to actually put those skills to practice are essential. It's not even a choice at that point to really be able to embed that skill and change the behavior. Similarly, some skills require you probably lend themselves better to people shadowing or peer learning, learning from others, sometimes simply observing, sometimes asking another peer or a colleague or a more experienced person questions. And in that case, using a development resource or a course, again, it's not going to cut it. And a lot of the skills where you're actually doing things hands-on, tactical skills, need you to do that in order to truly embed the skill. And that's, again, a key factor that plays into the selection of the resource. That's what we mean by multifaceted development. It's not just simply having what is called what may be likened to a Netflix catalog of courses and resources. It's about having development that is thought through, that is selected based on not just your

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organizational preferences, but your own preferences and what your development areas are.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. I'm thinking too around what some of the good quality learning research says about learning in context. And sometimes we wrap ourselves in a twist around learning transfer and how do we take things out of the classroom environment and help people to apply them. But if the multifaceted development approaches include workplace-based activities, that people can actually do the learning, do the practice in the workplace, you address that transfer issue. And if people are learning something in context and then applying it in context, the cues for remembering and applying are actually a lot stronger. There's a really strong body of research around that, which I think speaks to the strength of this approach. But of course, Whilst we no longer think everything has to be done in a classroom, maybe 15 years ago, you and I would be having this discussion around, well, not everything has to be done in a classroom. Courses and resources, we're still pretty fixated in L&D on resources and content and think we've done the job if we've given people good quality resources and they've got a degree of choice. But, you know, you've mentioned there a couple of times experiential. So what do you think in terms of that challenge? Where are the gaps likely to be when people start working with providing their workforce choice in the range of activities and approaches that are offered for development?

Ravina Bhatia:

More often than not, Michelle, and we see this all the time, that what is called a learning pathway or a development pathway in many organizations is a list of programs or courses that employees can complete. And sometimes it'll also include a few videos to pay lip service to the word multifaceted or multiple learning approaches. We've just talked about how that is insufficient. And often employees say, we don't know what we don't know. We've also talked about that fact that some skills lend themselves better to experiential or peer learning. So one of the ways that we do that at Learning Uncut is by creating development activities based on the contextual environment in which the employees work so that they can take those skills out of those courses and resources, away from them rather, and actually practice them on the job. So when you say to someone, OK, now you need to go ahead and apply these skills, how do they go about doing that? Also, a lot of times employees don't have the opportunity to apply those skills because they're not proficient in those yet. So when you give them structured activities such as talk to, let's identify a peer, an experienced peer in your workplace, go and ask them X, Y, Z questions. or create a plan that will help you approach the skill, that will help you actually perform that task and get feedback from a peer. You are giving them activities. You're not restricting them. They've still got a lot of freedom to be creative and do the work, but they're asking the right questions. And there is a bit of structure to their learning while also having the social as well as the experiential element built into it. And we've done that in a number of organizations. Say a financial planning firm that we did some work with, we worked across multiple roles for that particular organization. And we built the skills framework and created development approaches for them. One of the roles that we helped them with was a relationship manager role

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and another role that we helped them with was a lender role. The problem-solving skill was required across both roles. However, the activities that were created for a relationship manager and the scenarios that we created so that they could practice those skills in a simulated environment were quite different for a relationship manager versus a lender, simply for the fact that their working conditions are different. And that was the power of having these highly contextualized development activities that allow you to put these skills into practice and develop them. One of the leaders of an insurance organization that we did some work with after completing this body of work with them said, this is the most meaningful piece of work in development that I have ever seen. Because it truly taps into our working conditions our work and what we actually do versus theoretically telling us what good looks like.

Michelle Ockers:

So you have to make the effort right to get close to people's workplace, to understand the nature of the work environment, to understand also I think from a peer learning or social learning perspective, if you're going to encourage that in digital spaces, what are the digital spaces people are already in, rather than trying to push them into spaces where they're not naturally operating in and to cultivate learning in the spaces they're already in. So you do have to, it's not just a matter of pulling stuff off a shelf somewhere or out of a standard library. You actually have to take the time to do that contextualization with the workforce. That's really important, right?

Ravina Bhatia:

You've hit the nail on the head. Contextualization is everything. Personalization is everything here. And it goes a long way. We talked about goal alignment in the last podcast. This is how, one of the ways in which it comes to life. which is how do you align the skill that people need to have with their personal goals. And something as simple as, we've done this body of work, we've realized we've improved the way that we do it with every single time that we implement this, is sometimes it could be as simple as even where we're curating from. I'll give another example. So for one organization, they already had a content library in the form of LinkedIn Learning. So it made sense to curate videos, resources, and even articles from LinkedIn Learning. There was a mix with other places as well, and that's really important to have that diversity in terms of where you're curating from. But we knew we had to rely and we could pull from LinkedIn Learning to get people using that a lot more as well. And of course, this is in the more structured formal learning space. Versus another organization, which did not have a content library, which had restrictions in terms of which open platforms they could access. So an example was they couldn't access Coursera, but they could access some of the other ones. So keeping that in mind and pulling from those spaces is as important and things that can be easily overlooked when we're curating.

Michelle Ockers:

So tailoring to the organization, really another example of how that's really important. It strikes me just that there's some crossover to some of the work we do in learning strategy as well, Ravina, in that one of the key areas of action we often see come up or one of the kind of principles about how learning should be happening in the

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organization is around continuous learning or self-directed learning. And we tell people that it's important for them to take responsibility for their own learning, but we don't do enough to make it easy for them to do that, to show them what it looks like and to give them really specific examples and ideas around what they can do to learn from and through their work. We just tell them they should be learning from and through their work and give them sort of motherhood guidance, which isn't clear or specific enough. So I think this really fits in nicely with what we're seeing very commonly with the learning strategy work we do.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely, Michelle. I think it goes a long way. It cannot be underestimated in terms of the impact it has on employees' lives.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. So, I think that brings us to the end of our introduction to multifaceted development. And thank you so much for all those great examples, particularly around experiential learning and getting it into the workflow because learning, probably opening up another conversation. Learning in the flow of work does not mean shoving content into spaces and asking people to take five minutes out of their tasks in their workplace to do the learning. You know, what we're really talking about here is really high quality, powerful approaches to people learning through their work. with specific guidance. So thanks for that, Ravina. So we have one more critical element left that we're going to focus on in our next episode, which will be out in another two weeks, and that is accessible development. I look forward to that conversation, Ravina.

Ravina Bhatia:

Likewise, Michelle, I'm looking forward to that conversation as well.

Michelle Ockers:

And we'd be remiss not to mention that we're still going to be kicking off a new webinar series in late January on skills development. But in the meantime, stay with us for these Elevate episodes.

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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.

Learn more about us [at our website](#).

About your host, Michelle Ockers



Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experience, 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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