Learning Uncut Elevate Episode 23
Skills Development Elements – Accessible Development
Hosted by Michelle Ockers and Ravina Bhatia

Michelle Ockers:
Welcome back to Learning Uncut Elevate. Hi, Ravina.

Ravina Bhatia:
Hi, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:
So we are into the third of the critical elements of skills development. We introduced all seven of those back in episode 20. We have covered off goal alignment in episode 21 and multifaceted development approaches in 22. Today, we're digging into accessible development, the third of our most critical elements. So, let's share with people what we mean by accessible development in the context of skills development.

Ravina Bhatia:
I'll put it as like three really simple key points to explain it. And Michelle, I know you'll put it more articulately for all of us.

Michelle Ockers:
I'm not sure about that, Ravina.

Ravina Bhatia:
So we've got the three key points, easy access, easy navigation, use it when you want to and where you want to. And that's accessible development for you.

Michelle Ockers:
So just making it frictionless, right?

Ravina Bhatia:
Absolutely. Making it frictionless where employees can effortlessly find their one skill requirements and two, corresponding development, whether they're working online or offline.

Michelle Ockers:
and not only find it, but get to it. Because sometimes we find that some of those friction points are around, you know, blockages and barriers in the IT environment in the organization. It's so important because, you know, the reality is that these friction points do exist in organizations. What are examples of some of these friction points that you've seen, Ravina?

Ravina Bhatia:
So these would really be the systemic issues that exist in organizations and without going into detail on them, very simply put, depending on the technology, the organization has. Another example of this might be in terms of spaces that the organization has access to. We talked about this a little bit in our last podcast where we were talking about multifaceted development approaches. We said, go or guide

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023

your employees to spaces that they already use. That obviously means that those spaces are accessible to those employees already. Another example of this would be the actual working conditions of your employees. So what that means is if your employees are out in you know, what is called on-field roles. Are they in sales roles?

Michelle Ockers:
Deskless roles is another way I've heard it called. Although on-field, you're talking about people not like, so you can be deskless, but in a company, a physical space owned by a company, like a factory would be a good example, a manufacturing plant or a distribution center where you're not at a desk, but you're actually talking about people who are away from the company's workspace and they're doing their work in other spaces at customer sites or traveling.

Ravina Bhatia:
Yeah, absolutely. And we've even seen situations where people are say in the company premises, again, this goes back to manufacturing, but they have limited connectivity. based on where that manufacturing facility is. Or people have a lot of these roles that are in regional far-flung areas, agricultural areas, where there is limited connectivity and they aren't connected regularly. Keeping all of these employee conditions and infrastructure I don't like to use the word limitations, but well, they're just really facts. This is the working reality of employees. So thinking of them as limitations can be limitations for us when we're thinking of development. But if we think of them as just facts of this is how this organization works, helps us to look at it from an opportunity point of view.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, it's interesting. I did a coaching session around using SWOT, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, as part of learning strategy with an organization yesterday. And your point around this is not something that L&D controls, right? This is a reality and understanding in your organization particularly with digital access and digital friction points, what is the reality? And that is something that you have to accept. You can't influence or control it, or you may be able to have some influence, but it can take a long time to put forward the case for change around some of your organization's tech policies or to try to shift tech infrastructure. But it's more saying, well, that's the reality. It's kind of a threat. But it's something we can counteract or something we can work around with the way we provide access to different development approaches. And it's interesting because we often think just about resources and we can talk about content, But it's also how do we make it easy for people to access other people right across the organization, to your point, to navigate, to find relevant others, and then to be able to access them. Because sometimes the digital spaces in organizations, even today, kind of mimic the physical structure. and different geographies are set up digitally, segregated from each other or siloed. So it's not always easy for people to find other people. So that's something we take very much into account in the work we do through Learning Uncut with client organizations is to understand what the reality is of where people are working, how they might be able to access what we call development toolkits with a range of resources, activities, suggestions for social learning, as well as how

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023

can they use those resources and activities to make sure that they're all accessible and they can actually apply them, right, Ravina?

Ravina Bhatia:
100%. It was interesting in a focus group that I was conducting, I think it was three weeks ago now, I asked this group of people that had gotten together, and they're in a role where they're on the company's premises, but the nature of the role is deskless to that earlier argument we were having. And in saying that, firstly, a lot of people are in those roles because they want to be in a deskless role. And that's a really important point to note. So if they want to be in a desk-less role, they probably don't want development that is desk-oriented as well. And this goes back to, again, the previous podcast, which was around episode 22, which was around multifaceted development approaches. So giving them or leading them to development that requires them to sit at a desk and learn, there's something to think about there. Is that really going to be effective? And then the second part of that is when I asked that group of individuals, how often do you reach out to someone? There were about 15 people in that room. About 12 of them out of the 15 said almost all the time. Our first point of contact when we want to find out how to do something, when we want to learn something, is we reach out to a peer. So very simply put, if you can't find the help, you can't use it. That help or that development could be digital, non-digital, people experiences, just about anything at all. But if you keep that in mind, if your people can't find it, they can't use it.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. So one of the ways we do that with the approach we take is to pull together almost like in a single place. And we can talk about the variety of how that can be done, but to give people a way of getting to one place where a range of different development activities and resources have been pulled together by skill in a really nicely packaged way. such that the finding the right resources, finding the right activities, a lot of the heavy lifting is taken out of that. So we can cut through some of those friction points and then create a space where they can then access without having to know how to navigate, how to access. And of course, with testing, the access along the way to make sure that the access works for different people in the organization. So did you want to talk a little bit about that idea of pulling together into one space and providing people one access point or entry point to a range of really relevant resources that have been put together, relevant activities, their context for the skills they need to develop?

Ravina Bhatia:
Absolutely, Michelle. I think you've brought a really important point to light over here with the introduction of this specific point. Some of the research we've looked at together when we're looking at learning is one of the most common reasons why people don't go back to learning that has been offered to them is because they can't access it at the point of need. And that point of need is really important there. a very common issue in addition with organizations, especially with huge volumes of content. And remember, this is irrespective of the size of the organization. We've seen this in an energy organization based in New Zealand with 350 employees.

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023

We've seen this with a manufacturing global organization, Michelle, I think they had 16,000 employees across the globe.

Michelle Ockers:
It was around 16,000, 17,000, yes, in all sorts of far flung places.

Ravina Bhatia:
Absolutely. As well as a medium-sized organization with about 3,000 employees in a financial organization in Australia. So it's not about the size of the organization. It's just where organizations have huge volumes of content. Employees cannot find what they need to, when they need to, as well as they also don't know what exists. And we've been hearing this time and time again across the body of work we're doing, not just in skills development, but Michelle, also in the research that we do as part of our strategy work. This is a very common issue pointed out by employees. So we know that making resources, development activities accessible to employees in one place is really important. Keeping this in mind, when we talk about in one place, it's not about simply putting it together into a platform. So that might sound like, all right, if you put it all into our learning management system, that works, doesn't it? It doesn't, because it's still in disparate places and different places on your platform. So it's not about making it accessible in one platform. And I want to just call out that difference. We're not talking about a tech ecosystem here. We're talking about physically a tactical space where you can see, I want to, if I decide, Ravina, I want to better my skills in sales. I want to be able to sell better. for me to be able to go to one place which tells me firstly what is the proficiency I need to have, what am I working towards, where identifying where my current skill level is at, so what are the specific areas I'm potentially thinking that all of my skills can't be bad in sales, there might be some areas that I'm doing okay in, so the ability to be able to identify that And then couple that with the right development opportunities, whether that is in terms of experiential activities, peer learning, so on and so forth, or courses that will help me better my skills and sales in one space where I can see them physically in one place, where I can go back and decide, all right, today I've gone through this article. Tomorrow I want to listen to this podcast by this great person who's really good at selling, talking about selling. to be able to do better, and that's what we're talking about. Now, the way that I've just described it to you might make it sound like a digital platform, but we do offer it in more than one way. There are ways to make it available online and offline. It will be digital in terms of where it's available, which is in the form of a system, because, well, that's just the way that the world is right now, but it isn't to say that you need to be connected at all times. So these are the ways that we could bring it together. And when I talk about offline, I'm talking about ways in which we could potentially put into an interactive PDF, for example. It could also be in terms of, say, it is on an online connected platform, but you allow people to download the relevant activities and take it away when you're in an offline environment. So there are a multitude of ways that we could build that single resource or what we call a toolkit for people to be able to develop their skills.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. You know, there's something ironic in the fact that putting things in a learning management system itself can reduce accessibility, right? It can be a friction point,

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023

both because of, you know, just people getting access to the LMS, it not being available from, you know, anywhere, anytime. Some of them still are not available or user-friendly on mobile platforms, for instance. And it's just a different space people have to go to. I think it's important to note that the approach we've taken doesn't require new platforms, doesn't require new tools, doesn't require an LMS for an organisation to work with it, which is, you know, that makes it a lot more scalable and suitable for a wide range of organisations. survey.

Ravina Bhatia:
Oh, sorry, go ahead. That's so right, because the reason that I'm sorry, I interjected there. But it reminded me of an example of an organization that we did work with last year, about a year and a half ago. And this is really interesting, because the issue was, in fact, that they had a skills tech platform. And with that skills tech platform, people firstly didn't know what they're looking for. They had to use the absolutely right search keywords in order to be able to get to the results. So it's interesting that we did eventually in the solution that we created for them, guide people to that platform. However, there was a gateway to that platform. which brought together. It was an interactive PDF. We did create it in a way that people could, with the click of just on that interactive button, get to the resource that they were looking for. But it was presented to them in a way, firstly, where it was contextualized to them, where it was relevant to their role. And they knew this is the resource. And we'd done the looking for them. When you look at any platform, whether it's a talent marketplace, skills tech, LMS, LXP, you name it, Unless you know what you're looking for, you can't get to it. And taking away that problem and making that the L&D team or the organization's problem is really important rather than the employee's problem.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, I'm just going to put it out there, Ravina. You're the tech brains of this outfit, right? I'm very impressed with the way you can, you know, create tech roadmaps, look at what tech might be suitable for what purposes and the really practical approach that you take. So thank you for bringing that to all the organizations we work with. So that brings us to the end of the discussion of those three critical elements from the seven elements of skill development. We've got a little infographic, which will pop into the show notes, which shows those seven elements. And of course, we did talk about them in a webinar we ran back in November. So I'll put the offer out there again, Ravina, if anyone would like access to that webinar recording and intro to skills development, just DM either of us on LinkedIn. We are going to rerun that webinar to kick off our series. in late January and into the new year in 2024. And Ravina, you did an introductory blog post, which is on the Learning Uncut site that we'll link to in the show notes as well, which I think is relevant here, Navigating the Skills Crisis, the Talent Paradox Part One. Did you want to talk a little about that blog post and why people should go and read that?

Ravina Bhatia:
Absolutely. If you've just entered this podcast series at this episode, or if you have been following this series, in either case, for a more overarching look at why we've done this work around skills development, what is happening, across the globe, not just in Australia, but across the globe in the skill space. And some of the key things

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023

that will help you navigate the skills crisis, as we call it, and get to resolve two common issues that we're seeing continuously in every single organization that we work with. How do you retain and how do you attract talent? I'd urge you to go read the blog post. It's the first in a series. There's another one that will come out later this, early next month, not later this month, early next month in November. So keep your eyes peeled for that one as well. Follow it. It will take you a long way and help you understand it better, if not anything else.

Michelle Ockers:
So in the next episode, we're going to talk about the approach from Learning Uncut for end-to-end skills development, a comprehensive approach. So look out for that one in two weeks time.

About Learning Uncut

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*

Find Michelle on LinkedIn

© Learning Uncut IP Pty Limited 2023