

Learning Uncut Elevate Episode 26
Elevate Your Learning Strategy: Join the L&D Strategy Accelerator
Hosted by Michelle Ockers



Michelle Ockers:

Hello and welcome back to Learning Uncut Elevate series for 2024. Happy New Year, everyone. I hope you had a great break and come back to work refreshed, ready to get into the year and perhaps you're thinking about or getting ready to start developing or updating your learning strategy in 2024. This is a solo episode. I'm here just to talk to you to let you know about an opportunity to join Learning Uncut's L&D Strategy Accelerator, where you get access to guidance, tools, and support to do a really great job to develop, implement, and sustain your learning strategy. Just to be clear, I've spoken about this topic several times, both on Elevate and in some of our regular podcast episodes featuring case studies about organizations and L&D leaders who created great learning strategies. But an organizational learning strategy is your overarching approach to learning in your organization aligned with and supporting business goals and delivering great value to all of your stakeholder groups. So we like to distinguish it from the strategy for a specific learning solution. So it's that overarching approach to learning in the organization. It's a really critical, high value undertaking. And we don't do it very often in terms of creating a refreshing, a good, well-thought-out co-designed learning strategy should last you about three years, obviously with checking in on progress, monitoring, evaluating, and adapting and adjusting along the way. And if something significant shifts in the environment, particularly a new business strategy being launched, that would be a trigger to update your learning strategy, but it should last you several years. So it's this critical high value undertaking that we don't do very often. And it's a significant opportunity to lift the influence and impact of L&D and the contribution of learning to your organization. But the other thing it helps us to do is to focus.

Laura Overton joined me in the end of year 2023 wrap for our regular episodes. And when I asked her what she'd noticed with L&D over the course of 2023, she spoke about the busyness and overwhelm, which seems to have been ramped up as a result of the pandemic, the shift in the centrality and importance of L&D in the organization, and the expectation that L&D will make a bigger contribution to a range of priorities in the organization. So focus matters, not just in terms of what skills or programs you're building, but in terms of considering the approaches to learning you're going to use, in terms of considering what your ecosystem should look like, in terms of understanding where to focus your energy and effort, to build your capability in learning and development or to shift approaches and engage people in different ways with learning. A well thought through strategy will help you get that kind of focus and make a bigger impact with learning in the organization. Now, coming up in the next two episodes of Elevate, I speak to two researchers from Mind Tools for Business, Dr. Anna Barnett and Ghent Armitage, who run the Learning Performance Benchmark and published a report series in 2023 to provide insights as to what that body of research is telling them in 2023. Now, part two of that report focuses squarely on strategic and business alignment. It's been one of the six key practices of top performing L&D teams that's run through the 20 years of this body of research. But what their research found in 2023 is not only is it one of the practices, but it is also at the center of connecting the other practices to build high performance. And they say that strategic and business alignment is at the beating heart of everything that top performing L&D teams do.

Now, creating your learning strategy is an opportunity to focus intensively on strategy and business alignment, to build or deepen critical stakeholder relationships and get really clear on what matters most to them and put in place a learning strategy and an action plan that will help them to achieve their highest priorities and you to ensure that the organisation is

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getting an incredible investment and impact from learning activities across the organisation. So the kind of results we're seeing from the organizations we're working with on a well-executed, customized learning strategy are a shift in employee engagement, performance, and innovation. Learning is adding greater value to the business, people are motivated to learn and engage in learning, and learning is much better aligned to business goals, all of which establishes L&D as a more critical business function and increases the influence and impact of the L&D leader and team.

So that's sort of the why, but how do you go about creating a high-impact learning strategy that's just right for your organization and avoiding falling into the pitfall of things being too motherhood or just looking like something that you might try to roll out in any organization and not really being fine-tuned and getting to the heart of what your organization needs? a strategy that has strong buy-in and engagement with business leaders, managers, and your broader workforce. So for several years, Learning Uncut has been guiding L&D leaders and their teams to do justice using our L&D strategy builder process. And what sets this process apart, firstly, is that it's evidence-informed. Secondly, it takes a human-centered design approach. So that means you get under the skin of different stakeholder groups, including your different workforce groups at team member and team leader or frontline manager and senior leader levels. The intent there is you gain a deep understanding of what these groups really are trying to get done in the workplace and how learning can best support them and what kinds of approaches are going to be really attractive to them, they're going to want to engage with and find particularly useful. And then finally, the process is based on co-design with stakeholder input. So where you land with this approach is it's really grounded in reality with strong stakeholder buy-in built up along the way as you create your strategy. For a deeper look at our process and what's in a learning strategy, you can go ahead and download the ebook we've created called Building Agility from the resource page on our website or link in the show notes. And I've also walked through this process at a high level and key elements of a learning strategy in Elevate Episode 8, Introduction to Organizational Learning Strategy back in July of 2021.

So over the past two years, my colleague Ravina Bhatia and I have worked with a wide range of organisations on their learning strategy from across multiple sectors, from a charity with 90 staff to energy and financial services organisations, some with 200 to 300 staff, so at the smaller end of the scale, all the way up to a global manufacturer in the mining sector and a higher Ed provider with a workforce of over 62,000. Some of you may also be aware that I provided support to the Australian Public Service for their first ever whole of organization learning strategy, which we did a case study about with Diane Hickman from the APS, the Australian Public Service, back in Learning Uncut episode 120 in April 2023. In our consulting work with individual organizations, we use a process we call the L&D Strategy Builder, which is supported by a toolkit with templates to support all steps in the process. Since we launched the service in 2021, it's been tried, tested, refined, improved, and we've been looking for a way to scale our strategy where to make it available to more organizations rather than being constrained to working with one organization at a time. I've also had lots of requests to provide a group based version of this service so that you can see the work of your peers on their learning strategy, get peer input, support and learn from each other, as well as from myself and Ravina as experts in learning strategy. And this is why we've launched the L&D Strategy Accelerator, the first one of which kicks off on the 5th of March, 2024.

So here's how it works. The L&D Strategy Accelerator is a six-month expert-guided process supported by our licensed L&D Strategy Builder Toolkit. There'll be a 90-minute weekly session every week at the same time for six months, and that will help guide you through the co-design of your learning strategy and the creation of your implementation plan and your

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plans for governing and sustaining your strategy. Each week, a different type of session will be conducted. So there are three different types of sessions. We will be offering either each week an expert coaching session where we coach you on the steps to develop your learning strategy using the toolkit and we equip you with skills to create, implement, and sustain your strategy. Some weeks we'll run a mastermind session, which is your key opportunity to get feedback on your work in progress. You present that to Ravina and myself, as well as your peers in Accelerator, your work in progress as you build the case for change, do your research, prepare different elements of your strategy and design your action plan and get ready to implement.

So you get feedback on your work through the mastermind sessions. And then in some weeks, we just need to give you enough time to get the work done over a couple of weeks rather than everything being done within the timeframe of one week. So in those weeks, we're running a drop-in session. I'll be available. You can just drop in at any time for additional guidance on the process or the tools or to get additional feedback on the work you are doing from one of our experts. We've kept it to a weekly cadence so that there is a regular pacing so that you're supported to continue to do the work and to be able to get access to us. And of course, you can email us at any time during the program with questions. So all of these sessions are going to be offered in two time slots. So no matter where you are in the world, you should be able to find a session time that works for you.

The other key thing, of course, that you get is the strategy toolkit. So you get a licensed workbook and toolkit that contains all of the tools and templates you need to help you to co-create your bespoke organizational learning strategy. Each tool has detailed guidance on how to use the templates and worked examples. And it's the same robust, well-tested and refined process and tools that we use in our one-on-one consulting work. Now, one thing to be really clear on, while L&D Strategy Accelerator will build strategy knowledge and skills, it's not a course, it's an expert consulting and coaching service. So you're guided through actually doing the work to create your learning strategy and your implementation plan. If for some reason you're not able or not in a position to start the work straight away on your learning strategy, but you still want to join the accelerator. We've got a case study that you can use, but you'll get the most value out of this if you do the work on your real learning strategy in your organization during the six-month period.

Now, providing this service to a group helps us keep the price down. So, at less than half the price of a custom e-learning module here in Australia, this is incredible value given the significant enduring impact that your learning strategy will have on the organisation. I'm really excited about finally being in a position to offer support for people to build their organizational learning strategy in this format through the accelerator. So as I mentioned, our first cohort kicks off on the 5th of March. We're keeping the cohort small to get a really high quality collaborative experience and also personalized support so that Ravina and I can stay close enough to the work each participant is doing. through the mastermind and drop-in sessions to be able to provide you with specific guidance and input. So because the cohorts are small, we are suggesting you getting quick with an expression of interest. So if you are interested, you can either contact me, Michelle Ockers, directly on LinkedIn or via email, michelle@learninguncut.global, or you can see the link in the show notes and go to the website look at the events page for more information on the program. We do have a brochure as well that we can provide if you need to socialize that with a manager or someone else to get access to budget to participate in the program.

So I've reached out personally to many of you who over the years have come to our strategy webinars, use our strategy resources, and we always get great feedback on the value and the practicality of the resources and webinars we provide. So, if you're ready to work on your

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learning strategy, and like the idea of guidance and support in this group-based setting, this is a really affordable way to get our expert consulting service packaged in a way that you can apply it straight away at a lower price point. So I look forward to hearing from you. Do reach out and take advantage of this pretty exciting opportunity to get expert guidance on creating your L&D strategy.



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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