Michelle Ockers:
In the spirit of reconciliation, I'd like to acknowledge the
traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community, including the people of the Brinja Nation on whose lands I sit as I record this podcast episode. I'd like to pay respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be listening to this podcast conversation. Welcome to Learning Uncut. I have two excellent guests today to talk about some interesting new research that's come out about the skills landscape, specifically with a focus on Australia. So first up, I'd like to welcome Kade Brown from RMIT Online. Kade, would you like to give us a sense of who you are and your organization?

Kade Brown:
Yeah, absolutely. And thanks, Michelle. It's such a treat to be here with you. I am the Workforce Solutions Director at RMIT Online, which means I have the privilege of looking after a couple of functions where we partner with organisations, government and enterprise and everything in between. And we look at bringing the voice of industry into our learning design and learning delivery to make sure that we are truly giving industry-embedded learning experiences. And also, I look after the function that actually partners with organizations to support them on their own learning journey. So, a community of L&D practitioners and others partnering with them on supporting their upskilling and reskilling with really relevant and compelling learning experiences.

Michelle Ockers:
Fabulous. And I had the privilege of being part of an extended partnership through a mutual client, Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency on a micro-credential that RMIT Online designed and delivered for communication with storytelling. So we have had an episode on that. I'll pop a link to that in the show notes if people want to see and solve the kind of work that you do and how you work, Kade. And I'd also like to welcome Rhiannon Yetsenga. I hope that I have pronounced your surname correctly, Rhiannon, from Deloitte Access Economics.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah. Hi, Michelle. You've done it justice. Rhiannon Yetsenga. I'm an associate director at Deloitte Access Economics in the Economic Analysis and Policy team. I tend to do a variety of different types of research, but work a lot in the future of work and looking at digital trends and have had the pleasure of partnering with RMIT Online for the past four years to produce our Ready, Set, Upskill series.

Michelle Ockers:
And so this is a four year partnership, as you say. What's the motivation for this research? And maybe if I get you to go first on this one again, Kade, why conduct this research and why on an ongoing basis?

Kade Brown:
Yeah, look, we are members of a community of future of work L&D practitioners, and we see that we have, I guess, a duty and a responsibility to support that community with research and insights to progress, you know, the agenda of upskilling and reskilling in the future of work. And so we do this research really to, you know, provide some point in time and recent sort of data around trends and sort of macro sort of insights around the future of work and how that translates to the skilling context. And actually, if I'm being really honest, we really

use this to refine our proposition in the market as suppliers of learning to organizations. And so, we redefine and redesign our experiences the way that we think about micro-credentials and skilling and the skills that we focus on as we build out a product roadmap of learning solutions as well. So, it's sort of two motivations for us.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, great. And, you know, that practical application that you talked about there, that's something that I hope that our listeners will be on the lookout for in what has we've just agreed will be a short series of episodes based on this body of research. So very practical implications out of this as well. not only for yourselves, but for all of the L&D professionals who are listening. So how about from Deloitte Access Economics perspective, Rhiannon, in terms of the motivation to conduct this research and to partner with RMIT online on the research?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
I think there's a real need and continuous need to have a body of work which speaks to the skills and reskilling landscape in Australia. You know, it's not all of my research would be appropriate to repeat every year, but I think, you know, most of your listeners and certainly Michelle and Kade, you'd both be very well aware of kind of the extent of change. And I think that's been made more prominent by just digital disruption. And that is just changing the skills that are in demand, you know, the roles people are doing. And I think so having a piece of research which can speak to that quite explicitly and kind of map those trends over time is a really useful resource for people to have access to.

Michelle Ockers:
Absolutely. And it's probably no coincidence that this this research series started in the year after the pandemic, right, when there was an incredible upsurge in interest around scaling, rescaling, upscaling and mobility in the workforce.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Absolutely. Hasn't it just been a crazy few years when I think about everything that has happened and what that has meant for skills and working from home? It's certainly been an interesting time.

Michelle Ockers:
It has and continues to be. So let's stick with you, Rhiannon, as the researcher. Were you kind of lead researcher? Was there a research team? Just talk to us a bit about how the research was conducted and who's working on this research.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, no, so definitely not the sole researcher. We've got a team of economists at Deloitte Access Economics, led by John Omani, who kind of drive this work. It's supported by data from a range of different sources. The primary data source we use is a survey of about 400 employers and about 1,000 employees. And we've kept kind of the sample considerations, et cetera, the same across the, you know, the four years we've been doing this research, which means we're really able to identify how things are changing, which has been really useful. The other data sources we use, we use data from Lightcast, which has job advertisements data and it kind of identifies, you know, what skills people are hiring for within their networks. And that's been really useful to analyze. We pull some data from, you know, the ABS and things like that just to look at those broader macro trends. And then the other kind of the other thing we do to help inform this research is we tend to have do a couple of consultations with businesses to understand, you know, what they're doing, how are they thinking about skills and to really bring to life some of the insights from the data. So

this year we spoke to Westpac as well as CultureAmp and kind of got a few of their insights in the research.

Michelle Ockers:
And of course, there's some profiles of those two organizations as part of the report, as well as an outline of your research methodology and the sources, the research sources, the data sources that you've used. So if people want to dig into either of those, they can do that. Let's start to look at the data a little bit. Is it data or data? What do we say? You're the expert here.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
I'm a data gal, but you know, if you want to say data, that's fine.

Michelle Ockers:
I'll see if I can remember to say data with a long A. So the first chapter is on the training environment and economic outlook. That alone is gold and raises so many questions when I was reading through it, scribbling down. Oh, what does this mean? What does that mean? The data on data, the data on both the nature of skills gaps and investment in L&D contains some really interesting contrasts and even some things that look contradictory. in terms of what are people actually doing. For example, four out of the top five skills gaps are in digital skills, but employers are prioritising other skills in their training budgets. So is this a surprise? What other surprises are there in the data or things that you're curious that you kind of looked at and went, this kind of doesn't make sense in a way? And do you have any idea what's driving some of these contradictions?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, there are certainly a lot of nuances in the data. I think a good place to start is that we have Medium and large Australian businesses are expecting to spend about $8 billion on learning and development this year, and that's about a 15% increase per employee year on year. I think what's really interesting about that, I mean, while obviously that's a really positive thing, it's really great to see that businesses seem to be recognising the training imperative and, you know, say they're going to spend more and double down on that. As you mentioned, Michelle, about 45% of businesses aren't prioritising their training to address skills gaps, which is a clear missed opportunity or perhaps a key risk because really what we want this training to be doing is to addressing those critical skills gaps, you know, four out of five in digital skills and really building the human capital and the skills of employees in Australia. I think one other thing I'd mention is just that the extent of change across the labour market in Australia is really clear and really apparent in the data. So, as an example, we had about 70% of businesses say that they were planning on hiring the same, if not more, employees this year as they were last year. At the same time, we have about 29% of businesses who say they're going to make redundancies. And this isn't mutually exclusive. There are some businesses which are going to do both, hire more and make redundancies. And that's just reflective of the fact that just the changing skills landscape, you know, businesses know they need different skills, they know, and they're trying to get those skills quickly. And there's just a huge amount of disruption and change at the moment.

Michelle Ockers:
It's interesting because something I often hear from my podcast guests in the longer case study based episodes is the labour market is tight and we are having to either take people in whose foundational skills for roles are lower than what we're used to taking, or we're having to look to do more internal reskilling and upskilling rather than expecting everything to come from the labour market. So it's a real mixed bag, right, in terms of what people are actually doing to close skills gaps.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, I think sometimes people can think, you know, if I hire externally, I can just very much target that specific skills gap that I want and kind of get it quickly. But obviously, if all businesses are thinking that way, that's really not going to work, because you only have a particular supply of skills. And really, what we want businesses to be doing is increasing the skills of the employees they have on hand. And often that can be a really effective way. I think it can take more thinking and you need to be a bit more intentional about it. It's not the simplest putting up a job advertisement. You know, you need to be really intentionally and strategically thinking about the skills you need in the organisation and how to build that over time. But I think that it's There is very much an imperative for businesses to be thinking more about what they themselves can be doing to increase skills and actually take responsibility for that.

Michelle Ockers:
Absolutely. So, Kade, how about you? Surprises or contradictions in the data?
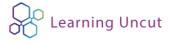
Kade Brown:
Yeah, a couple in there. And I just add to Rhiannon's last point, you know, we know from previous research that we've done with Deloitte Access Economics and through other data points that are really widely available that to reskill or upskill your existing workforce for the purpose of redeployment is a lot more cost effective than going to market for new talent. And we also know that it has really positive benefits in terms of engagement with your existing teams. To tell that story is really powerful. We are a partner to you on your career journey and we're committed to investing in your career growth through re-skilling and up-skilling is just such a powerful message to send to your workforce. So I just think, you know, people are going to reskilling and upskilling partly because they have to, because what the talent market externally is giving them, but partly because it's the right thing to do and it makes economic sense in terms of the new insights in this 2024 report, I think that headline stat that Rhiannon led with, 15% year-on-year increase in L&D spend in Australia in 2024. I think we should celebrate that. That's wonderful to see. It's heading in the right direction and we all have friends and colleagues across the industry who are telling stories around budget cuts, around reorganisation.

Michelle Ockers:
I know. When I read that, I'm like, this is not the word on the street right amongst L&D professionals. This is not what I'm hearing when I'm talking to L&D leaders about what's happening with budget.

Kade Brown:
So this is I think an early indicator of sentiment around intent to grow investment and I think that's really promising and we should all be. I'm feeling pretty sort of uplifted by that. And it's quite a significant increase, 15% year on year is not small wikis. However, diving sort of beneath that headline figure, it's really interesting because we also saw that one in eight Australian businesses are planning on spending less. So whilst overall sort of the tide is rising, We're at risk of a bit of a two-speed economy when it comes to investing in skills across Australian organisations. And those that are looking at pulling spend out from L&D are looking at doing it quite dramatically by around sort of 40 to 50%. So there'll be those that are sort of sailing forward and carrying the average higher, but there'll be those that are sort of really lagging behind in this sort of next 12-month period. And I think that's a real risk. And I think we know also from this data, we got, and I love Deloitte Access Economics thinking and methodology here, But that those businesses that are reducing spending on

L&D, we see that every dollar that is cut from learning and development budgets, businesses are losing skills, which are valued at $3.40 on average. It's interesting.

Michelle Ockers:
So it's not just about it being bad news for the L&D people working the business, it's actually bad news for the businesses and it's bad news for the Australian economy, right?

Kade Brown:
Precisely. So, you're actually not saving when you're stripping investment out of your L&D budget. You're actually costing yourself more by multiple factors of every dollar that you cut out. And so, I think that's a really powerful stat and hopefully one that your listeners could take with them as their flying the flag internally for the rationale for investing in the next sort of upskilling or reskilling program is that there's a real economic case for focusing on this and for being one of the seven out of eight businesses in Australia that are looking at increasing spend and not in that minority that are pulling spend out.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, that is a heartening piece of, I'm thinking about this, data.

Kade Brown:
By the way, I'm a data pronunciation guy, so you've got both your bases covered here, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:
Anything is acceptable. We'll forget that. We'll just get over that and hang up. Did you want to add anything to that, Rhiannon?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, no, I think Kade summarised that so well. The one other thing I'd add is that among those one in eight businesses who are cutting their spending on L&D, they tend to be those businesses who have weaker economic prospects. And in general, we're seeing that specifically in services in consumer service sectors. So things like accommodation or retail trade and even construction. And I think that that is just an interesting nuance when you think that businesses who do, you know, expect weaker economic prospects are cutting their spending. I mean, is that the right thing to be doing when you're expecting, you know, in this uncertain economic climate? Or we know that learning and development has a lot of really fantastic benefits for businesses. You know, Kade's spoken about the value of skills that you get from increasing learning and development. And so is that going to hurt or help the business in the long run? And I think that a lot of businesses perhaps need to reflect on whether learning and development is nice to have or whether it should be considered more as that core, you know, budget line item that maybe we shouldn't cross up when things are getting a bit

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, yeah. Good food for thought for any business leaders or L&D leaders who need to have that conversation with their business leaders. Let's move on to digital skills. So four out of the top five skills gaps this year are digital skills. But the story is not just that one headline, right? Again, more nuanced than that. What trends are you seeing in digital skills over the past few years?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, I think there's a number of different trends. The first, of course, is that digital skills are becoming more and more more and more important. That's unquestionable. We've seen

massive digital disruption, you know, generative AI is one of those and seems to be everywhere I look and everything I hear nowadays, but it is just one of the major sort of critical technologies. Other research we've done has found that Australia will need about 1.3 million additional skills by 2030 to keep pace with the emergence of these critical technologies, so certainly the importance of digital skills can't be overstated. I think that that growth in demand for digital skills brings with it, as you say, the potential for there to for there to be some skills gaps which come through. And certainly four out of the top five skills gaps, according to employers, were in digital. I think the only other thing I'd add with respect to digital skills is just that I think we sort of all need to be reframing what we think about when we think about digital skills. I think for a long time we thought about digital skills workers and that was just they sat very separately to the rest of us. You know, oh, you're in tech. This isn't sort of my problem, but we can't really get away with doing that anymore. You know, everyone to some degree is a digital skills worker. And so there's no such thing as just having a tech worker or not. Everyone needs to be improving their digital literacy and everyone needs digital skills to do their job effectively.

Michelle Ockers:
I did an interesting podcast episode with PWC about their whole of workforce digital upskilling approach a number of years ago, I think around 2021, 2022. I'll put a link to that as well, because it's a really nice example of an organization thinking more broadly about skills development across their whole workforce. And it's not just about tech people who are deep into coding or something like that, right? We're not talking Python here anymore, right?

Kade Brown:
Well, I mean, in some ways you are, in some ways you aren't. I take a sort of more of that T-shaped view when we think about data and technology skills. We know that we're going to need to have deep technical experts in particular digital skills or technology skills, but we also need that kind of broad layer or level of fluency across the organization in certain things. maybe to take data as a sort of skill vertical that we use as an example for that. At RMIT Online, we've sort of built out a portfolio of learning solutions that have that kind of the depth piece where we've got sort of programming for data science in our micro-credential portfolio, but we've also got that kind of foundations of data storytelling and data visualization so that people who aren't data scientists, but have their have data at their fingertips in their world of work and need to lift their game in terms of how they tell a story with the data or make decisions with that data, need some kind of skilling as well. And so, there is a depth and a breadth story with a lot of these digital skills.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, I like that. Thank you for that pickup. It's not either or it's both.

Kade Brown:
Yeah exactly.

Michelle Ockers:
And I think that T shaped framework still serves us very well when we're thinking about this stuff. What about the nature of the skills that are making that that kind of top four list? I think there's been a little bit of a shift in the type of skills that are now on that list of the most like where this where the biggest skills gaps are.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, well, I think what's interesting is that, you know, the number one skills gap is in generative AI. I mean, we certainly didn't see that previously. And I think that that's just been, I mean, generative AI has been such a massive disruptor. 86% of all occupations are

going to be impacted to some degree by generative AI. But what's really interesting is in the survey, we found that 73% of people don't think generative AI is relevant to them. And I think that there's a real risk here that people kind of aren't recognizing the potential impacts of generative AI and what that will mean for their role.

Michelle Ockers:
Kade, are you seeing that as well in your workplace-oriented conversations and work?

Kade Brown:
So, yeah, my conversations are really bearing out some of these data points. I think there's a couple of things driving this. I mean, generative AI has is sort of on what you might call a hype cycle. We've been hearing about it and talking about it. Many of us have perhaps experimented or played around with, say, chat GPT, you know, formally or informally with work or outside of work. But we're waiting. There's a bit of inertia across our workforces because we're waiting for those new applications, those new programs or products that are really specifically focused on our world of work. And I think we're starting to see a lot of those hit the market now. You know, it's not just Microsoft Copilot, which is obviously a big one. People who've spent many years learning how to write formula in Excel now don't need to anymore. They just need to be really good at prompt writing to get really good insights out of an Excel workbook, for example, or other things. But there are new either in-house or off-the-shelf programs that are leveraging generative AI to actually improve productivity and business outcomes. And those are just hitting the market now. And so there's a bit of a, where we're at in that hype cycle with generative AI means that we are just on the precipice of embracing them. So I think there's a bit of a timing thing here, but I'd also flag that there is a role for employers to play in the skill space around generative AI, because we haven't got those programs necessarily in market yet. We need to now upskill our workers on how to use them and how to use them appropriately. But I also think there is a hygiene layer of safety and professionalism around use of generative AI in the workplace. I think there's a lot of people who think, I don't want to dip my toe in this water because they're scared about leaks of sensitive information, factual errors in what they're getting back from these programs, copyright infringement. And so there is work to be done on the kind of training and skill space around that as well, so that our workforces have the confidence to embrace these.

Michelle Ockers:
And yet it's such a productivity, like the potential to improve productivity using Gen AI is phenomenal, right?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
It's massive. It's five hours per week. So for most people, that's almost a day per week. I mean, the productivity potential is just enormous. And I think just building on some of what Kade was saying, I mean, the really interesting thing about Generative AI is that it has been an employee led adoption. I mean, most other technologies are enterprise led. So I think what that means for businesses is that, you know, if you're not providing training on Generative AI, and by the way, in our survey, we had about three quarters of employers say they weren't aware of any training being provided or thought that hadn't been provided. But your employees are already using generative AI, most likely. So the risks that you're talking about, Kade, in terms of privacy, in terms of bias, in terms of all these things are very real. But I think employers can't just say, it's too hard, I won't deal with it, because chances are their employees are using it. And so they really need to step up and actually look at, yes, can I provide training related to generative AI? You know, you can't wait, because your employees are already using it.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. Yeah. I think there's kind of two key. Well, there's probably multiple dimensions to this for the L&D professional, one of which is supporting the workforce to develop the skills they need with Gen AI. But the other is also how do we utilize Gen AI to develop skills? both our own skills and the skills of the workplace. So I would really strongly encourage those L&D professionals listening, if you haven't started looking at Gen AI, or if you're kind of just following the discussion, but not testing and learning using Gen AI, get into it. It's so critical to get across this right now to unlock the potential of it. Right, Kade?

Kade Brown:
Spot on. And there are use cases for Gen AI across the whole value chain of L&D, right? It's not just turbocharging your productivity and learning design. You can use it for skills mapping. You could use it to enhance your approach to capability framework development. You could use it to look at your workforce and infer where skills exist. You can take a curriculum or a set of learning outcomes and pull out a mapping of that sort of module or that content towards the skills that you're looking for. There are just so many ways that you could play around with turbocharging it, not to lose sight of the considerations around security, privacy, just always being careful about what you're putting into an AI model and where that goes. I think when there's proprietary data being put into models that aren't sort of closed in their ecosystem, then there's always a risk. And so just flag to our friends to always make sure that you've got sort of approval to use these tools to do those sorts of things. But the world's your oyster.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, absolutely. Any other points anyone wants to make on GEN AI before we talk briefly about application for people working in organizations?

Kade Brown:
I just had, just broadening the Gen AI conversation into the broader digital skills discussion that we're having. I think it's really interesting to see that when we survey employers, four out of the top five skills that they've said they've got gaps in their workforces are digital. And the top one, yes, is AI and machine learning. But five out of the five skills that employees say they have gaps in are digital. And so, for me, it links back to two things. One of them is the economic story, because we actually know that employers are willing to pay a premium for talent that has digital skills already. And we actually have some numbers in the report that Deloitte provided for us, in that employers are willing to pay an 8% premium on salary for an employee with digital skills. And if you sort of take the average salary across our economy, that's about $5,500 on your annual salary because you come with digital skills. And so, there's a real economic case for digital upskilling. But it also links, Michelle, to that conversation around alignment of overall investment in L&D by employers with the true skills needs that they have. It's sort of this blunt approach to, yes, we're going to invest more, but not necessarily in the things that the research is telling us we have the biggest need for. And so I think there's something around that learning strategy, even, you know, taking a step back into sort of that more strategic workforce planning space. But there's a real imperative for business leaders to think about that strategic approach to investment in the right skills that are most linked to business outcomes.

Michelle Ockers:
Yes. It's interesting you talk about the link to strategic workforce planning. That was my last episode of the Elevate podcast, Learning Uncut Elevate, was unpacking strategic workforce planning with Kath Hume. And what does it mean for L&D? Really important linkage to make, I think, to help us fine tune what we're focusing on developing in organizations. And with that, we're not going to do a deep dive today in the so what for those of us working in

organisations in terms of how we can apply. There's plenty of takeaways here already for those in organisations working in learning and development roles. But the report actually talks very specifically about four key ways that employers can maximise their training and development spend. And we're going to take a closer look at these in the next two episodes of Elevate. I'm not sure which one of you wants to take this one, whether you want to tic-tac on this, but there's four key ways. Let's talk about those key ways of maximizing your investment spend.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Yeah, sure. I can I can dive in on this. So four key takeaways for businesses looking to maximize their return on investment in training. The first is just to measure ROI. So we have about one in five businesses in the survey who aren't measuring return on investment. And I can appreciate there's some complexities here. You know, ROI isn't going to be measured in the same way for every business, every training program. It's going to be quite bespoke and it's going to depend on what you know, why you were implementing the training in the first place, what your objectives were, but you need to be measuring it. So, that's the first one.

Kade Brown:
Can I just jump in there? I look at such a, like, I mean, we're in the presence of Michelle, right, who could speak for days around, kind of, skills impact and thinking about measurement of that sort of learning transfer and that kind of thing. But what jumped out to me about the research was that those employers who were measuring it and talking about the metrics they were using, a lot of them were focused on productivity and a lot of them were focused on revenue growth. So where they're getting it right in a general sense, they're able to really speak the language of business outcomes in a kind of commercial and economic sense, which is really good. And I think there was a data point in the research around Those who could measure that training ROI said productivity increased by 17% from the relevant training programs and revenue growth by 14% on average. Now, my goodness, those are big numbers. So it's really powerful when you get it right.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. I just want to encourage all the professionals who are listening, don't be scared off by the ROI thing, right? We think it's like this massive effort. Let's just put it in lowercase, like lowercase ROI, rather than big capitals where you have to do all sorts of financial modeling and get someone from the finance team involved. You know, when you look at what the report says about measuring, just start going beyond learner satisfaction surveys and use some evidence informed practical approaches to looking at learning transfer, behavior change, impact. It's we're not saying necessarily that every learning initiative has to have full formal return on investment evaluation done. So just get measuring is the key point here. Right, Rhiannon?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
100%. And I think, you know, for some training, even something as simple as compliance training, for example, you're not actually looking to make a productivity impact by implementing that training. You might just capture, for example, some, you know, the number of breaches you had or particular risks which have been mitigated through that training. That would be a really simple example of like you're measuring ROI. How many hours did that spend? What did that mean for the reduction in risk for the business? I mean, I think you're exactly right, Michelle. It's just keep it simple. It doesn't need to be this whole bespoke econometric model. You know, some learning interventions, perhaps that's required. But I think for the most part, we just need something to give you some sense of how effective it's been.

Michelle Ockers:
Beyond bums on seats, right? Beyond completion rates.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Beyond bums on seats and ideally beyond, you know, I was satisfied with this learning.

Michelle Ockers:
Absolutely. There is no evidence whatsoever that learner satisfaction equates to the effectiveness of the learning or impact back in the workplace. By all means, you don't want people to be really unhappy, but let's move beyond that measure. So, all right, that's enough about the high horse run measuring impact. I'll get down off that one. So, that was the first key way employers can maximize training and development spend. What are the other three? We'll try to make them a bit more succinct.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
No dramas. Number two is to match training programs to your skills gaps more explicitly. And as we spoke to earlier in the podcast, about 45% of businesses aren't doing that currently. So, that's a really clear way to maximize your spend. The third way is to implement on-the-job training and implement skill sprints. So, we found in our survey that both employees and employers said on-the-job learning was the most impactful and the most cost-effective form of learning. And what we'd really like to see is that complemented by these really short targeted skill sprints, which enable you to learn something, you know, iterative learning and then apply it on the job and then learn something else. And then together, when you have those skill sprints and that on the job learning, it's a really effective way to build capability over time. And the fourth one, which I'll just touch on quickly, is to leverage new technologies like Gen AI. And I think Kade gave, you know, a really great summary of this last time. The only other thing I'd add is that not just from the L&D perspective, but I think from the employee perspective, you know, Gen AI is a tool that you can use to actually enhance your learning experience. If you have a question about something, you can ping Gen AI and see if they can give you examples. Maybe Gen AI could create a few exercises for you. So I think that role of Gen AI as this sort of on the job, always available mentor from an employee perspective should also balance out all the great applications of Gen AI from the L&D perspective that Kade touched on.

Michelle Ockers:
Absolutely, absolutely. So of those four, Kade, was there any that really captured your interest and attention from the perspective of someone who works with multiple organisations around workforce skill development?

Kade Brown:
Yeah, look, you know, the Gen AI angle is a really interesting one. And by the way, there are also some really cool companies and products that have recently hit the market that look at sort of AI coaching for learning transfer. So, I encourage your audience to look into some of those because a really powerful way of, you know, sort of embedding that competence beyond a learning experience or a training program is really interesting. I think those skill sprints are interesting. For me, what jumps out about the idea of doing short, sharp sprints in somewhat of an agile way, where you've got in parallel, some formal learning, but some opportunity to apply that learning in a work context in parallel with frequent check-ins, milestones, maybe it's an assessment, maybe it's a reflective piece, but the idea that you can build those upon each other and actually lead with behaviour change or skill application at the end of it, I think is really powerful and it's certainly something that influences our thinking around learning solution design at RMIT Online. We really believe in skill application, not just consuming content, and being able to apply that in real time and to be

able to demonstrate evidence of that application in order to be assessed and receive a credential. This skills sprint model is really interesting to unpick.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, it's very powerful. Lots of good evidence-informed practices for what actually works in learning behind that sort of skills sprint idea and one I'm hoping to unpack in more detail in a coming episode. So is there anything else either of you would like to add before we let listeners know how to get in touch with you and also where to get the research?

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
I'm really happy that we've covered everything.

Kade Brown:
I just want to acknowledge that this research is the result of some really excellent work on behalf of Deloitte Access Economics, and they've become real great partners of ours and increasingly thought leaders in the space that we play in. So it's just a really nice annual partnership that we like to revisit. And I'd also welcome input from your audience, Michelle, about what are the types of insights or data that would be most valuable to a learning and development practitioner, because we're always looking to continuously improve the way that we do this research to make it as valuable and applicable as possible.

Michelle Ockers:
We'll find some ways to capture those kind of questions for you, Kade, I'm sure. So thank you both for joining me for this conversation. Really appreciate the insights and the high quality work that's been done on this body of research. It's particularly useful. We'll pop a link to both of your LinkedIn profiles in the show notes if anyone wants to reach out with a follow up question. And I will put a link to the research in the research paper in the show notes for the episode, and I'm sure it'll be available at both of your websites, one website. If people want to go straight to source, where do they go?

Kade Brown:
Yeah, so you could start by Googling Ready, Set, Upskill 2024, if you'd like. Probably enough. The URL that it lives on in our ecosystem is online.rmit.edu.au forward slash insights. And you will find this white paper and a few of our other bits of thought leadership as well at that URL.

Michelle Ockers:
OK, Google it or check the show notes. I'll pop the link to that one as well for other insights. Thank you both very much for your time today. Thanks, Michelle.

Rhiannon Yetsenga:
Thank you so much, Michelle.

 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