



Learning Uncut Elevate 48: Eight Years of Learning Uncut – Michelle Ockers Reflects

Michelle Parry-Slater

Welcome to this Elevate episode of Learning Uncut, where we have the absolute joy of welcoming back from her travels, Michelle Ockers.

So Michelle, you've been away in Europe and we're now here back together to celebrate eight years of Learning Uncut.

Before we begin, in the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

We pay our respects to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples listening here today.

So welcome back. Welcome back to these fair shores and let's just celebrate eight years of this wonderful podcast. I've been speaking to several people recently at things like conferences and events about the podcast and everybody says the same thing, Michelle, that it is so good to have a podcast dedicated to case studies, stories that work, real people in real learning solutions.

The spruiking of the podcast, my favourite Australian word. So, I want to be able to really celebrate that with you today and thanks very much for making the time. Eight years. Shall we look at eight things that you have learned over those eight years?

Michelle, what are your thoughts?

Michelle Ockers

I can have a crack at it.

And I'm just so grateful to everyone who's contributed to the podcast over those eight years.

And I think that's kind of lesson one, community is the engine of the podcast. It's deeply tied into how the podcast got started. I was actually sitting at an AITD (Australian Institute of Training and Development) Awards dinner in 2017, sitting next to Karen Maloney, who of course was the first co-host of the podcast with me.

And we were just kind of talking about what's coming up and what's on your mind. And Karen was running an L&D business at the time. And we both realized we had this idea of starting a podcast. And I'd been sitting with this idea for some time. I was about to do something a little bit unusual, I was about to head off traveling with my then 13-year-old daughter for who knew how long, at the start of 2018.

And I was looking for a way to stay connected to the community as I travelled. It was going to be an Australian trip, but all over the place. And I was looking for a new home. And so staying connected to the community was part of my motivation for setting up the podcast. You know, I was at a community event when Karen and I said, let's do this. And the wonderful Amanda Ashby had been talking to Karen about learning how to produce a podcast. So, we had our little team of three, and we started the podcast while I was traveling, launched it of course in June 2018.

So community then, in the shape of guests. It was very much we always knew, right from the start, what sort of podcast we wanted. And we wanted it to be case study based. We particularly, initially, wanted to showcase the work of Australian and New Zealand L&D practitioners.

Because the time zone difference and the fact we're in the southern hemisphere versus the northern hemisphere, I think often the opportunities to showcase good work and not just the stuff that gets to the awards, Michelle, because there's plenty of good grassroots work being done, it takes a bit to unearth. But really inviting the L&D community, giving them a platform to share their work.

And of course then when you think about this lesson around community being the engine, it became an opportunity during the pandemic to have a platform. I had a network, I reached out to Laura Overton and Shannon Tipton, and we ran right at the start of that very first lockdown what we called the Disruption Series, which was one episode a day for 15 working days, which was like rapid sense-making with people from around the world who were leading practitioners in things that L&D might have to switch to in the absence of face-to-face classrooms, and figure out how to make different approaches work.

So, community is just a way of being for the podcast, I think. Everything that has mattered for the podcast, from its birth to what's made it a success, has come through people in the L&D community.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It remains so true as well, because there's a massive community that's built up around the podcast. The number of listens we get for every episode, the fact that guests are writing to us wanting to come on because they recognize that community is part of the story.

So thank you for that foundation.

It resonates throughout everything, I think. The fact that we've been doing our community webinars every couple of months as well just extends that into a live conversation. So, I look forward to the next one of those and continuing that sense of community.

The engine. So, if that's the engine, what's the heartbeat?

Michelle Ockers

The heartbeat. And this lesson is really about knowing what the heartbeat is. One thing has been consistent, there's been lots of things that have changed, little things. The co-hosting finished after 18 months when Karen shifted her business interests and Amanda had mastered the art of production. So, I continued to be the sole host, got a new producer, been a couple of changes in production teams.

Had different co-hosts for different kinds of episodes, the geography has shifted, now it's global. We reach out to L&D professionals all over the globe to do episodes. I've run some special series. But that heartbeat, what has really made the podcast very special I think, is those real conversations with real practitioners about the real stories of their work. And of course, keeping it real is still the tagline.

From episode one, it's still the tagline today. And no matter what else I kind of played around with or experimented with over the years with others or on my own with these Elevate episodes,

for instance, that fortnightly real-world story, told by the people who made it happen, has really been the heartbeat.

And that clarity, minor tweaks to the format of those episodes, but really it's been very consistent. It's been awesome to know that that's what's landed and that's what makes this podcast really distinctive, I think.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I 100% agree. Knowing that you can come and find all manner of different subjects, speakers and topics, people want to come and really hear those stories because they've actually worked. We hear so many different stories on other podcasts where the advice is you should do this. And it's a word I really don't like, I don't like the word should. It's "we've tried this, it worked in our context, we understood our context, it could work for you."

And it's the sparking of the thought that makes a big difference. And so that puts you in the heartbeat of the community. It certainly does with the podcast.

Now I'm curious we've had two of your eight lessons. What about lesson number three?

Michelle Ockers

Lesson number three is kind of about showing up and being of service and then kind of not quite knowing what's going to return. And this is tied in with community as well, right? I've long thought that if you show up in a space with a spirit of contribution and generosity, with the intent of being of service, you just don't know where it's going to lead. And that's been so true for the podcast and the journey that's taken me and Learning Uncut on.

You know, it started as a way, as I said, of staying connected to the community while traveling, to give back.

The business Learning Uncut did not exist when the podcast was created. And because I was working through my own business, Karen Maloney was working through her own business, it wasn't really, whilst it helped with our profile, because it was kind of owned by two businesses if you like, we didn't really promote the businesses through the podcast. That wasn't what it was intended to be about. It was just a way of staying connected and promoting the good work back then from Australia and New Zealand.

But what's really come back to me has been incredible, come back to Learning Uncut. A business name, for a start. So in 2020, I adopted Learning Uncut from the podcast as the business name. So, the podcast actually came first.

The other thing was that opportunity to be of service to the broader L&D community during the pandemic, and having that platform there to do that. But the third thing — which you alluded to a little bit earlier, is this incredible library that's now been built with case studies about all sorts of different things. And of course you can go onto the landing page for the podcast on the Learning Uncut website and search on any term you want.

You know, you want to know: what are examples of leadership development?

Go and search leadership.

What are examples of people using micro-learning or learning in the flow of work, or whatever? You can find stuff there. So it's a publicly available research base. And it became a body of

evidence and a research base that led to me being able to co-author a book with Laura Overton and bring it as a research base.

It's attracted all sorts of people into my personal network and into the Learning Uncut community. So it's like, just get out there and be of service and who knows where it leads and what collaborations develop off the back of it.

Michelle Parry-Slater

You're certainly speaking my language when you're talking about being of service. It's something that's very important to me. Anyone who is aware of my work over the years will know that giving my time away is very important, and if that time can be given to our learning and development community then even better. So no surprise that we've ended up aligned in this service space. It is a really important lesson and one that I know is captured very much in that research base for your book.

You alluded to it, but I don't want to let it slide by because the podcast and the service of the podcast really has been captured in that book. And for anyone who isn't aware, because they've had their head under a stone for the last six months, Laura Overton and Michelle have produced a lovely book, *The L&D Leader*.

You're holding it up. Good on you.

Michelle Ockers

I am holding it up. So, if anyone's watching on video, yes, *The L&D Leader*. It's just chock-a-block with examples from the podcast. And we did go out and get some other examples because we wanted to make sure we had all sorts of sectors and locations represented in the book.

But I guess this is lesson four, and it's really about the compounding effect of being consistently curious over something. I didn't really view it as a body of research when I started doing the podcast. And I guess this is the way that the lovely Laura Overton, who we both know quite well, and who many listeners will know thinks, everything's a research opportunity. Every conversation is a research opportunity. Get your listening ears on.

So, you know, there are over 170 case study episodes. And just asking the same sort of questions roughly, consistently, what did you do, why, how, what worked well, what did you learn, what did you try that didn't work, really formed the basis of a body of examples we could draw on to really showcase what good practice looks like for creating business value.

So we've got some extended examples in the book, including Vitality's resource-led approach, which Sebastian Tyndall came on and spoke about back in episode 66.

Multiplex's appropriate workplace behaviour program and Multiplex, of course, are an Australian company, Seb is with Vitality in the UK, so that was episode 139.

Plus lots and lots of really small examples, most of which came from the podcast, and a handful from Laura's network and some of the work she'd done. And the very first example we give in the book, a little small example is Damian Woods, which we took from an early episode, his work around contact centre listening and the art of tuning in by getting out into the workplace.

So really, the lesson is consistent curiosity compounds. Which is very alliterative, which I really like.

So the library just kind of built itself over the years as a byproduct of that consistent curiosity.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It's you showing up with that constant curiosity in all aspects of your work really, that's helped alongside the profession that you encourage.

People can feel a bit nervous about being on a podcast, and when you listen to your podcast episodes of old they don't feel nervous. And I can see that that's you rubbing off on them. It's a chat with another person.

And so, I'm curious about your lesson number five, all about humans.

Michelle Ockers

This one really makes my heart sing. What I started noticing was the humans underneath the stories, the people who work in L&D, the people who are shaping L&D. And in particular, I noticed there were some guests whose words really, really stuck with me and touched me. And it wasn't just what they'd done, but the way their language and the way they spoke about things revealed what they really cared about, what really drove them, why they get out of bed in the morning and do this kind of work. And I think that's kind of the secret sauce of L&D at its best.

And when we're working in this age of AI and we're having all this conversation at the moment about what's human versus what's AI, it's really that motivation, that care and connection with others which deeply defines the value of the work.

And some just a couple of little examples to bring it to life, Gareth Collier from Reece, back in episode 39, he actually spoke about falling in love with Reece and his people.

He used those words "I fell in love with Reece and his people". And these were people that he said it's probably fair to say have had a broken user experience with formal education, but they're really smart, talented people to work with and to keep re-engaging them and exciting them about the possibilities and passion for learning and growth.

I thought, here's someone who's coming from a deep place of service. And this really resonated with me, coming from a migrant family, post-World War II European migrant family in Australia. My parents never had the opportunities I've had to complete their education. And I've always felt really strongly, like a core belief, everybody deserves the opportunity to learn and be at their best.

And some people haven't had that opportunity. So Gareth's values there, Michelle, are really coming through.

And another person whose language has always stuck with me is Christina Syriatarkas, who I interviewed first back in episode 56. And she had this beautiful way of looking at tuning in, the work she was doing when she started at Deciem, and almost thinking like a historian or a cultural anthropologist to understand the culture.

And listening to people going, that's so Deciem, or this is Deciem, and what does that mean? And then again just the connection. She's talking about when she's talking about their learning experience platform, she's like it's not our platform, we're just the bridge. We're trying to hold a mirror up to the organization.

There are so many beautiful moments, if you look back through the podcast, where it's clear that people are really motivated in this profession to be of service to others, to support others, to help other human beings to thrive. And it's really exciting. And I think it's why people come on the podcast to share that passion that they bring to their work, Michelle.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I love those stories and I love the fact that they're from such broad bases. You know, we think learning and development, it's about instructional designers or it's about e-learning providers. It isn't. It's a massively broad base.

And I feel that if we even broaden it out, so we get influences from marketing, from sales, all different parts of a business, it's humans shaping L&D. That's your lesson, but it's actually L&D being shaped by human experience as well.

And that broad base is certainly some of the direction I'd love to encourage. Cultural anthropologists, let's find one of them. I know one actually, we'll try and see if we can get them on as well.

All right, so we're sort of halfway through now with your lessons. We've got a few more to go. I want to make sure that you have the opportunity to celebrate, because eight years is such a long time of bringing these stories to the profession.

And I wonder how you knew? Like, how did you know what to bring? How did you decide who's in, who's not in? Whose story is being shared, whose story is not being shared?

What's lesson number six?

Michelle Ockers

Around the craft of curation, really.

And I would say I probably spent as much time, if not more, finding good quality stories and guests.

Very few people self-nominate. And I'm always so appreciative when somebody says, you know, here's my work, here's something I made, what do you think?

I think sometimes people don't see the value of their work, or they're worried about tall poppy syndrome, which is a real thing in Australia, anyway. Like, if I self-nominate, is it going to look like I'm big-noting myself?

But I really appreciate it when people have the courage to self-nominate and say, here's something I did, is it worth sharing?

So, I always have a conversation with people, exploring the story. I'm always curious about: what do you most want to share? What do you think is most special about this work? What did you most enjoy about it? What are you most proud of? What do you think others might want to take away?

So, there's a handful over the years who've self-nominated. I always encourage people to nominate other people's work. Amanda Ashby, who I mentioned before, first podcast listener, she's probably referred more people to me than anyone else. She's stayed very close to the podcast.

And when she's at events or she hears of people's work, she drops me a message and says, look, I've just come across this person or I've heard about this, I want to know more. So, she pretends it's selfish, but it's very generous. So going out to my network, over the years I've reached out to you, to Laura, to Don Taylor.

I look at research reports that are coming out with case studies in them and ask for introductions if something strikes me. I look at conference agendas, even if I'm not going to the conference.

If I am at a conference, one of my goals is always, where are the good case studies? So those are kind of the key things.

You know who does nominate a lot? People who are working in businesses, industry suppliers.

And it took me a little while to get the approach and policy right on this one, because it's not intended as a selling platform, it's here to showcase real work.

And I also, you know, I'm an external supplier. Learning Uncut is part of that ecosystem. And I think there's such value in what external partners can bring to the table.

And in fact, there's a whole chapter on the relationship in The L&D Leader called Journeying Together, a whole chapter highlighting for both those in industry supplier roles and those inside organizations, how we can learn more from each other, how we can lift each other's work.

So, where we eventually ended up on the podcast was, everyone is welcome. If you are an external partner, what's the story? What's the specific example? What's the deep dive on the case study? Back to the heartbeat and please bring a client.

Find the client representative who's willing to come along so we can tell the story together. And it can be a great example of how we journey together in learning and development.

But you know, that exploratory conversation beforehand is always good. There have been a couple of episodes I've looked back on and gone, that wasn't quite where I wanted it to be. It's not that stuff has to be cutting edge, it just has to be something that's had an impact, really, and that we can explore what led to it having an impact and what did you learn along the way?

So how about you? You're now hosting the podcast, Michelle. I don't know if people have picked that up, we've made that decision that you are now the host, and I'm so delighted you are, because I think some of these lessons, some of these values that I've brought to the podcast and have made it successful, I know are part of your DNA as well. But in terms of you've now started curating the episodes and going out and finding guests. What have you found? How have you approached that?

Michelle Parry-Slater

It's difficult when people nominate, or it's difficult when people have got a story and you think it's not quite right. So, there's a little bit of awkwardness. But I am guided by your heartbeat. Your heartbeat is very consistent and very clear, real conversations, real practitioners, real stories. And I'm also guided by being in service of the industry.

Will this help other practitioners? As you know, very practitioner-focused. And so if it can be a practical support for other practitioners in the industry, then you're in. But like you say, it's not a selling platform, because there are lots of other podcasts out there, and I've happily pointed

people towards other podcasts because that's in service of that individual. But we will definitely be staying true to that heartbeat. It is very much around: what are the stories that are working in the industry, particularly in this huge time of change right now, where we've got so much that's up in the air?

You know, if you're an instructional designer, do you know if your job is safe for a year or is it going to get taken over by AI?

If you create compliance training, do you need those voice actors anymore, because you can get an AI robotic voice?

What I want to share is... did anyone want to listen to that AI robotic voice?

Did anyone actually want to go through that learning experience that wasn't crafted by the individuals?

So, there are lots of stories still to tell, and in fact there are lots of stories that are still being written that aren't there yet. So I intend to, and I hope to, not deviate from the DNA of the podcast at all. But I am curious, what lessons can you teach me, particularly around the guest experience, and how you listen to those guests and how you craft those stories?

Michelle Ockers

Yeah, the guest experience is really important. It's always been my goal, no matter how bad the situation was in an organization that prompted them to do a body of work, never to make the organization look bad at any point in the journey.

You know, it can take a lot of courage, both individually and at an organizational level, to lean into some problems and go, "we've really got a problem here". But I've always framed it as, they wanted to do better. There was an opportunity. They wanted something to improve. So that's always been really important. And prepping the guests and making sure they're comfortable and know what to expect has always been an important part of creating a good experience for the guest.

And knowing that it's about the guest and their work, it's not about me, it's not about a big commentary. And sometimes I've caught myself talking for too long in response to something the guest has said, rather than listening and thinking about holding the space for the listener as well, what might they want to know more about? and leaning more into it.

So a lot of the time I don't know that I've consciously worked on my listening. But there was this incredible gift I was given from an unexpected source, an unexpected guide, that helped me, I think, to become more conscious of how well I was listening and find ways of better settling guests in.

I don't know if you're aware of Sagar Nair, who was someone I did not know. He lives in India. He sent me an unsolicited email in mid-2023, asking about doing an unpaid internship with Learning Uncut, the business.

He was between jobs, he wanted to use this chance to do some skill development. And he was very open to whatever that opportunity might look like. And when we had a conversation, it turned out he's a very avid listener of podcasts.

He listened to our podcasts, but he also listened to stacks of other podcasts.

And he had a really well-developed ear for what made a great interview. So, we did these listening sessions. He became a mentor for me on my interviewing style and on that whole process of warming up to a guest, settling them in, refining that early craft of how guests are welcomed and how intimacy is created.

So we listened to a few episodes from Terry Gross from NPR, who's a really well-known broadcaster and interviewer over in the US. And whilst I was doing that mentoring work with Sagar, I very deliberately slowed down my warm-ups.

So rather than going straight into it, it's hard, I've slipped back into it at times, but instead of going "hey, tell me about your organization, tell me about your role", just taking a little bit of time to warm up to the person.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I'm wondering, how did I introduce you on this today? Like, you suddenly start questioning yourself. And I've written down Terry Gross, NPR. I'm getting all these tips. I want to make sure that the podcast, you know...

Michelle Ockers

I'll see if I can find a couple of the specific episodes, I think we can share them on WhatsApp so you can take a listen. But you know, getting back to that point about the humans who shape L&D, the humans who are motivated to be part of the work, just getting to know something personal about the guests, which gets them really comfortable.

So probably the one where I feel like I did it best was episode 131, which is James Kennedy from Australian Rail Track Corporation.

When we had our intro session, like our prep session, he mentioned his Lego collection. He had a big Lego collection. And when he came on for the podcast interview, I could see he had a little red tractor, a Lego tractor, in the cupboard behind him.

And it had been a set he'd had since like the 1970s, he'd pulled it apart and put it back together so many times the knobs had kind of worn off. So, I opened the episode asking about Lego and his childhood curiosity about Lego.

But what that did was open up this line of conversation around his curiosity about the way things work and the way people work and why people do the things they do. And that turned out to be directly relevant to the behavioural science used in the contractor safety management program we talked about.

So, it's like a small detour, but I think it was one of the best moments in the episode and one of the best moments of genuine human connection I've had in that eight years.

So, I don't know that I've always met that standard since that time. But it's beautiful learning to listen better and being open to where that guidance, where the guides and the mentors come from to help us with things.

Michelle Parry-Slater

There's a real sense of serendipity there, isn't there, what you needed with Sagar was not even something you knew you needed it.

Michelle Ockers

No. And it wasn't what he was offering. He was just open, and that's where it led. And it genuinely led to some really lovely, heartfelt moments of connection on the podcast for me at the time.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It really just speaks to, if you have an open mind to any conversation, what can you learn? And that's one of the things I love about having podcast conversations because you can plan it.

And we do, we do have a prep session and we do filter to make sure the stories are valid and we do have that preparation. But when you press that record button, you don't really know where the podcast is going to go. You don't really know what's going to come out.

I love the joy of the serendipity. I love the fact that what comes out is the right thing. I take a little bit of an unconference-type approach to that what happens, happens, and the right people are in the room having the right conversation. But it is definitely true that over the years, Learning Uncut has provided the right conversation, the right inspiration, the right stories for the right people, because we know from all of the feedback, we know from all of the huge numbers of listens, the huge numbers of shares every two weeks, and that's what you've created.

And so let's just pause and say, thank you. Thank you for bringing that to the world. Thank you for bringing that to our profession.

We're missing one final lesson.

So, as we celebrate you having created this body of work, what would your final lesson shape up to be?

Michelle Ockers

Yeah. And I think it's one that bridges into the future, Michelle. I've seen through the podcast, it's given me an incredible lens to look at what's shifting in the profession over those eight years.

So initially when I started the podcast back in 2018, human-centered design felt novel.

And any of the episodes where we discussed human-centered design approaches were really heavily downloaded. It's just mainstream now, I wouldn't shape up a podcast episode in 2026 that started with or headlined around human-centered design.

It's still a part of many of the conversations, but it's more the way we work. Behavioural science as well, there have been points in time where nudge-based approaches and other aspects of behavioural science have been the main point of the conversation in the podcast.

I think we've still got a way to go with applying behavioural science, but it's become increasingly woven into how many L&D practitioners think about learning and change. I think multidisciplinary thinking generally is increasingly valued. And probably the best example of that from the podcast was back in episode 119.

I was speaking to Adam McKinnon, who had actually trained as an epidemiologist. And the conversation was all around people analytics and his work in people analytics. He described borrowing from epidemiology and applying it to the way he designed his research cases for his work. I think AI, of course, arrived almost four years ago, it had been in existence, and I think we talked about AI back in early, early episodes, but ChatGPT arrived in late 2022. We're still figuring out how to reshape our practice using AI. And I think sharing stories is a great way of learning and sense-making, both individually and as a profession, about what lies into the future.

So really it's around the power of stories to help the profession take charge of its own future and shape its own future, and continue to learn and sense-make together.

I think the podcast is kind of a living record of where we've come from over the past eight years, as well as looking forward to where we're moving, where we're going, with the kinds of stories that are surfacing.

The other thing I want to flag is the value of fresh eyes, new people into the profession.

And you know, it's a profession. Gosh, I even gave a conference presentation back in 2019 at Learning Technologies UK questioning "is L&D really a profession?" Because we don't have barriers to entry, we don't have consistent recognized professional standards, but we like to call ourselves a profession. But because we don't have those barriers to entry, it's a very fluid group of people.

So sometimes I feel like, man, we're still having the same conversations over and over. But it's the people we're having them with, and helping to set newer L&D professionals up for success with things we've learned over the years.

So we've got new people coming into the profession all the time and the podcast has created a great opportunity, to showcase some of their work and for us to learn from their fresh eyes, like

Hannah Ryan at Versent who I know you know you loved her episode on crafting a learning culture last year.

We've got James Swift from Leighton, who moved in from a sales role, tried to follow some of the mainstream advice of what L&D should look like, with content and LMS's and went, "you know what, I don't think this is what we need." He adopted a much lighter enablement approach, so we can continue to keep learning from each others stories and keep being open to those who are newer to the profession and that helps us to continue to shape the profession, through this sharing of stories.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I feel very strongly actually about people coming into the profession. And one of the advantages of a podcast is that you can have a bit of an argument, a bit of a lively discussion. So, I actually disagree with some of what you were just saying there.

And we can do that in a polite, human way, which I think... the world has often gotten divisive.

I think this, you think that, therefore we can't talk.

But actually when we disagree and remind people how to have a debate, I think that's part of the joy of being able to have a platform like this. So, you mentioned human-centered design. In

Australia, I totally agree with you, people are all over human-centered design. That isn't necessarily universally true across other parts of the globe. Similarly with AI, some areas are more advanced than others.

And then what happens to those people who haven't jumped on board that gravy train and they're now feeling left behind? But when people ask, are you using AI, you're just going to say yes and nod along, because actually I don't want to be that person that puts their hand in the air and says, I have no idea, but everyone's on it. So I'm just going to pretend.

And so one of the joys I think of being able to put a podcast out there is the invitation for people to experience this by themselves. They can listen by themselves. And therefore when you talk about things like everyone does human-centered design, which is a very valid statement, and they don't, oh, well, what is it?

And there's no embarrassment in that.

So if you're new to the profession and you listen to, I mean, I think this body of work is a fantastic body of work to listen to.

Like you say, it's like a timeline of the profession. It enables people new to the field to leapfrog, they can jump. Okay, we don't need to do that part that we did in 2019 because we've moved on. We know more about behavioural science, about learning science, than we used to.

So, it can spark those thoughts in a way which is really invitational to people new to the profession. So yeah, have a debate, but actually have it on your own whilst listening at home or in your car.

Michelle Ockers

Good idea. It could be really interesting in eight years' time, or sixteen years' worth of Learning Uncut podcasts, to be like, this little time capsule to look back and go, wow, sixteen years ago we thought that was the way to do learning.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Well, interestingly enough, Michelle, 10 or 11 years ago now, I tweeted every day a little bit of advice about what could we do about learning and development. I started to revisit it 10 years on and I was devastated how little the profession had moved on.

Now I say that with tongue in cheek, of course we've moved on, but some of the fundamentals stay the same. So, I would be really curious if in eight years' time, what are we talking about that is different from today? I think AI has certainly shifted things phenomenally fast.

So that's a big shift.

Could you even have imagined eight years ago, generative AI today?

Michelle Ockers

No, absolutely not. And but to your point, Michelle, people are at different stages of adoption. And you know, there are enough different types of episodes, including from three or four years ago when people were first starting to play around with it and going, how do we make it work? And of course things will move on, but there'll still be some people who are back at that point

where some guests were at three or four years ago, and able to learn from where they were at that point in time.

And of course, Michelle, you talked about that beautiful #noplasters Twitter campaign you ran 10 or 11 years ago, which was actually how we first met.

But you're not new to podcasting. You have podcasted before, so you bring that experience. But you also bring your lens as the host. So, what's lesson nine?

What have you learned about podcasting that you're going to bring to Learning Uncut, and how do you see the podcast evolving over time?

Michelle Parry-Slater

That speaks to your massive generosity, that you're asking me, in your celebration, about what's next.

So I appreciate that. Thank you.

I do have a body of work out there called Learning from the Edges, and that was very distinctive.

Unlike Learning Uncut, which is an ongoing evolving story, that body of work was a research project, because I'm hugely interested in friction in work, why do we have it, why do we need it, how can we create ease?

And anything we do in learning has effects across an organization. And that was really what that body of work was about. I was having discussions with people in order to do research for what I haven't yet written up into a book, I will, but I haven't yet. I moved countries instead, and that's kind of taken a little bit of my time, as you won't be surprised to hear.

So, thank you. But what Learning from the Edges taught me was your point about listening, that you can only really take on board the story and make sense of the story if you listen well. So this is why I think as a medium, podcasts are really useful. Because people aren't just having one opportunity to listen to somebody speak at a conference, for example. They can re-listen, they can keep going back. Rethink is a better word than re-record.

They can come to it several times. And I have listened back to podcasts which I might have found really inspirational at the moment I listened to them, and gone back to think, my thinking's moved on from that. So I guess what I'm really saying in bringing lesson nine to the fore is that there's something unique about this medium that doesn't exist in other mediums.

And I really want to use it to explore all the different lenses that are available to us in learning and development. Because there's no longer just one lens.

It's not just what learning do you need, but, what foundation are you building that learning on? What systems do you have that can help you with that learning? What structures are in place in your organization which might bring some barriers or some ease? Add a little bit of friction, we need some friction, it's how the rubber meets the road. It's that energy-giving thing. But we don't need too much friction for our learning settings.

So, those are the sorts of things that are interesting to me, and they're the sorts of things that I know from a values alignment we are very closely linked on. So, lots of things won't change, lots of things will continue the same, but we'll still be having these very much real stories from real

people, real practitioners out there in the world doing learning stuff, whatever that stuff might be.

What final thoughts, what haven't you said, Michelle, that you would like to say as we close today?

Michelle Ockers

That is a good question.

I've never liked it when people respond to a question with that is a good question, just buying myself some time.

I'm just so delighted that the podcast is continuing, that it's in the hands of someone I know is an advocate of learning and development, of being of service, that there are some common values in the heartbeat driving the podcast that are going to continue. You're so community-oriented.

So I just want to say thank you, I guess, for being willing to continue the podcast. I've got some other projects I want to work on. In particular, I'm really keen, off the back of the book, to look at how I can be of service to the community through the book.

So it was time, I think, after eight years. It's just such a fantastic opportunity, the podcast, to reach out to an L&D professional anywhere and say, hey, I'm curious about your work. So, I just feel deeply honoured that people have opened up through the podcast and engaged in these conversations and shared their work. It's a beautiful profession to be part of.

And who knows where it goes in the coming two, three, four, five, six years, it could look very different to what it does now. But I know that the stories and sharing those stories is just going to create ongoing sense-making and value in how the future gets shaped for L&D.

So, for anyone listening, if you've got a story either your own, don't be shy in reaching out to Michelle, to share it. Or if there's something you want to nominate from someone else's work, by all means reach out.

I think it's an amazing platform and way of sharing our stories.

Michelle Parry-Slater

So, nothing is going to change. Nothing's going to change from that firm foundation. We are still sharing the real stories, like I say. But there is one shift. What we are aware of, because we are evidence-based practitioners, Michelle and I and the evidence is suggesting that a lot of people consume podcasts on their desktops or on their laptops whilst they are doing other things.

So years ago, we used to consume podcasts in our cars, driving to and from work, on the train. But of course many of us work from home now. So in order to cater to that shift, we are going onto YouTube and we'll be easily found there, but you can always of course find us through all your usual podcast channels as well.

So that's one little tweak.

Means I've got to put my lipstick on and brush my hair, perhaps that wasn't a thing before, but I'm happy to do that for our listeners, Michelle. I want to make sure that we can reach as many people as we can with these real stories, because we know how useful they are.

I guess the only thing left to say today is thank you, to you, your generosity to the community, your generosity to our profession, whether it is or isn't a profession, is without bounds. And I'm looking forward to being able to fill those very large shoes a little bit. And just to be clear, Michelle's not going anywhere, she is hanging around, she's still involved with Learning Uncut very much so, just not the face of the podcast moving forward.

I had a little taste of hosting while she was abroad, and she had a little taste of lying on a beach and drinking sangria, so that's where we've landed. Things can shift. Thank you so much on behalf of everyone, Michelle, for everything you've offered us through Learning Uncut. We appreciate you.

Michelle Ockers

It's been my delight. And thank you to the community. All the best with the hosting, Michelle, I'm looking forward to listening.

Learning Uncut Elevate Episode 86: 8 years...



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