

**Learning Uncut Episode 28**  
**Taking Bold Action – What we discovered**  
**Hosted by Michelle Ockers**



**Hosted by Laura Overton, Michelle Ockers & Shannon Tipton**

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Welcome to the Learning Uncut Emergent Season 2. Join Michelle Ockers, Laura Overton and Shannon Tipton to explore core strengths that L&D professionals need to take bold action

**Michelle Ockers:**

Hello, I'm Michelle Ockers, welcoming you to the Emergent Season 2 wrap up. I'm joined, as usual, by my Emerging Stronger colleagues, Laura Overton and Shannon Tipton, to explore core strengths that L&D professionals need to take bold action. We are seeing an evergreen opportunity for L&D professionals and teams to see themselves differently, to think differently, to make inner changes and take bold action to increase their impact. Welcome, Laura and Shannon.

**Shannon Tipton:**

Hello.

**Laura Overton:**

Great to be here.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Let's start by recapping the flow of the season. We had a series of guests, and we explored three questions with each of them. We asked them about the opportunities for L&D professionals to create change and impact. We asked them about when the going gets tough, what are the core strengths that help L&D professionals to thrive, and we went quite personal asking them for examples of that. And also, what can we do to build these strengths.

The series consisted of seven episodes. The first five, we posed these questions to five different L&D professionals. Actually, it was four episodes, I think, and five L&D professionals in Australia, the US, the UK and Germany. *(Note from Michelle – it was actually six guests over five episodes ☺)* And then in our final two episodes, we drew on insights from organizational psychology and behavioural science as part of a sense-making exercise to help us look at the responses that our L&D professionals as guests had shared

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regarding core strengths to take bold action.

In this wrap up episode today we're going to outline the themes as we see them that have emerged from these conversations. So Laura, let's start by taking a look at the bigger picture, we've grouped our insights from the L&D professionals into four key aspects. Can you outline what these four aspects are for us?

#### **Laura Overton:**

Yeah. Absolutely. I think what's so interesting when you get so many diverse perspectives, what those underlying common themes are and one was about context and the concept that we are all part of a whole. And I think what equips people to take that bold action is understanding their environment and their context, not working in isolation. The second one, then, was about the attitudes that we bring to our role and our job and that's really an underlying theme that's underpinned all of our work, I think, in Emerging Stronger, how we are confident, our courage, our own personal perspectives and attitude. And also about action, about the way we take risks, or the small actions we take, the speedy action to take, the momentum, the movement gives us in our environment, so action was really important.

And then the final one was a really common theme around safety and how we work in an environment that is safe, so the psychological safety will be a given within that. But also how we create our own safety, the way that we use evidence to inform the risks that we're taking, the way that we just surround ourselves with the people that build our courage and are aware of that. So I think there's a lot that came through in terms of safety nets and how we use them, and the different types of safety nets. So yeah, those four themes, context and environment, the big picture attitude, action, and safety.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Let's talk about, in a little more detail, each of these four aspects and what are the micro-themes, if you like, that we've uncovered in these areas. Shannon, would you like to kick us off with the aspect of context?

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

Well, when we think about context, context is about where you fit in the big picture. And a lot of our guests talked about that idea, about fitting into or understanding your place within your organization's unique ecosystem. When you understand where you're fitting within that ecosystem, then your strategies, your actions then have relevance, and they also align with the overall business goals throughout your organization, which is what we want. We don't want to be siloed in, we want to take that context, understand that context, and then move it into action so that we really are affecting change. And so the conversation around context, I found to be particularly interesting.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Thanks for that, Shannon. It then is about bold action maybe looking a little different in each organization's context.

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

Right. Exactly. So you think about bold action and in particular around context, then it really does become around bold baby steps, which we'll talk about later. But I found that to be very much part and parcel of where we want to go.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Having read the context, Laura, the next aspect is attitude. What are some of the key

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themes we covered in attitude?

#### Laura Overton:

Well, I think some of the really interesting themes that came out were around our personal sense of purpose. I think Adam from the UK, really brought that to life for us. It was almost like every bold action that he took within his entire career was all around his hunger to be connected and engaged with bringing back business value to the organization. So having that clear North Star of picking up on what Shannon said, about really thinking about our role and then owning it, that attitude of really owning, "I'm here to add value, and I am willing to challenge the status quo."

The thing it also picked up on that theme of being able to really say, "Actually, sometimes I will go with what is happening in my organization, even though I am not going to be doing it for very long, but I am willing to take it for a period of time. And then at point in time, once I've encouraged my team, once I've done what the organization has done, I'm then going to rehook back into that purpose." So I think that kind of attitude, that keeping your North Star.

Michelle, it actually really interested me when you were talking, and you were sharing your own experiences as well, particularly when we're faced within injustices, and we're faced with things that have knocked us off balance. It's how we rebalance ourselves that is so critical. And Catherine gave us a fantastic example of how we can rebalance ourselves. I think she was quoted once saying, "You know what? Resilience is about how we build those foundations. What are those foundations in our own personal lives that allow us to not be knocked over when we are faced with tough things?" There's a lot about attitudes.

As for me, it was really exciting because brand new set of people, brand new context, brand new environment, but at the same time, what we're able to see is those thinking habits which are so essential to the Emerging Stronger work really came into play yet again in terms of our attitudes and how critical they are to help us take those kinds of risks. But Michelle, I know that you were really passionate about the kind of action scene that came out of all of this as well. So, I mean, it'd be great to hear what kind of you saw in the action side of things.

#### Michelle Ockers:

To hook into something that Shannon mentioned earlier, the first one is around momentum and movement, and it kind of hooks into both what Shannon was talking about, bold baby steps. I love that term by the way, Shannon. But also into your reflection there, Laura, about having sense of the purpose, having a North Star. What I saw there was, and then you pointed out very eloquently, that little steps count as bold actions too, because they accumulate over time and that it's about taking bold actions, which move us toward that bigger picture North Star. So it's that interplay, I think, between having the bigger picture in mind and then taking small steps and doing experiments.

Damien Woods gave us the example of experimenting with new technology as a bold action and that took courage as he faced resistance to the idea. I think Dr Celine Mullins gave us some insight as well into why experiments fuel us and move us forward. She talked about the brain and body loving novelty and that we learn through novelty and emotional experiences. So the novelty of experimenting, trying new things, I think can be a source of energy and courage even in the face of resistance, so I thought that was a really nice tie in from Celine.

Another thing that I thought was fundamental that came up from several of our guests around being able to maintain the momentum and confidently try experiments is that foundation of our body of knowledge, which we bring to the table. Hayley Curcio spoke about building our knowledge base through study, and she's done quite a bit through her career to further her qualifications. But other guests also talked about the strategy of more continuous development approaches to stay abreast of change so we can be future focused

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in our experiments.

So movement and momentum was one key theme, rolling with risk. And there was a lot in Damien's episode about risk, so I encourage people to go back and listen to his conversation in episode 21 and just learning to work out on a limb. And sometimes that means knowing how to kind of take the punches and rebuild some of our self-confidence as well and build our resilience as a strength. And you spoke, you referred Laura there to resilience as well. Damien told a story about an executive presentation, which went wrong and having to kind of lick his wounds and build himself back up and go back into the ring again and develop a bit of a thick skin in order to take bold action.

The other aspect that we saw come up around this idea of taking action was about being open-minded and flexible. I love when Myra Roland told us that she regularly presents ideas that people maybe are resistant to and we have to expect if we're taking bold action, trying new things, bringing fresh ideas to the table, that we are going to face some resistance. Maybe people aren't ready for the idea or don't want to do it in a particular way, but they're still happy to kind of hook into a direction which keeps us moving towards that North Star. I love the quote from Myra - this was your interview, Shannon - loved the Myra said, "It doesn't mean your ideas aren't valuable still, and that you are wrong, you just need to be able to pivot." So I think there was a lot of rich insight there around how we can actually take bold action, which brings us to the final aspect, Shannon, which you are going to pick up on that all important one of the safety net, which we are really leaning into.

#### Shannon Tipton:

Right. And I'll go back to what you talked about with Myra and part of what she said, which I found was so critical was when we talk about preparing ourselves for things that come. So when you think about your safety net, how are you prepared for that? So what she talks about here is she talks about resilience and I love this, having grit, right? And to me, that was all about building our safety net and making sure that we are prepared and we are prepared as we go ahead, as we prepared to move forward. And the other part of creating that safety net for us, which was something that Catherine stated, which was about preparing yourself, developing yourself. And we spend a lot of time learning about L&D and we learn more about our ecosystem.

And again, if we go back to that contextual part of the conversation, we spend a lot of time trying to understand the context of what is around us, but we don't apply a safety net to ourselves. And what she discusses here is about how can we dig deeper to develop ourselves and why that's so important. And so building that safety net is what will help us all to take those bold action steps. And I found that each of our speakers had a little bit of nuance about how they prepared themselves or how they learned from themselves in order to move forward it again when it came to developing that safety net. So I found that there was just some really interesting conversation around understanding how we can do better and prepare ourselves to do better. So I think that that was a really interesting thread that pulled throughout the conversation.

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#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Absolutely. And I think my reflection as I listen to this conversation, because this is actually the first time we've kind of sat here and unpacked these themes verbally, we've been working on them of course in writing. But there is that thread, that safety net thread that goes right through, Shannon. And then there are other aspects that kind of integrate or other themes that integrate across all of those aspects. Any other observations from either of you or anything that you think we kind of haven't brought out strongly enough in the conversation here around some of the themes?

#### **Laura Overton:**

Actually, one of the things that really struck me was when we are reflecting in this way, the work that we've been doing through Emerging Stronger and the Masterclass and the activities that we've been doing, it's always been about how do we help people to be better prepared. And Andrea Day's perspectives on how we bring behavioural science to our own world was so important, because she talked about their definition of a behaviour has to involve a person, it has to involve an action so that person does something at a particular time. And that for me was really powerful because many of our speakers were talking about not just theories, not just concepts, not just models, but actually how they take action when they are faced with a difficult situation and how they choose to behave.

And so it's all about their choices, it's about their motivation, it's about the fact that their environment may cause them to need to take action, but they're not crushed by their environment, if that makes sense. And I think for me, it just made sense of not just what we've been doing since the pandemic, but actually a whole shed load of work that I've been doing ahead of that time in terms of why our good learning leaders, great learning leaders and that kind, that's really made sense. And I can't wait to dig into that a little bit more when we start to really look at the kind of next phases of what we are doing.

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

If I might build on that, one part of this is stuck out for me, which was Dinye when she said about moving from position-to-position. So she took a transition, she had a job transition. And so rather than shifting immediately from one position or one job role to another, she took a break, she took a break and focused on herself and I thought that was outstanding and certainly there's a certain luxury in being able to do that. But a lot of times we rush from place to place to place and even within a job search now you're rushing from one job to the next, and you're really not stopping to take a breath and learning about who you are and what do we really want out of this particular position? So if you are moving into a learning leadership position, why and how can I learn more about this and how can I better affect where I'm going next? So I loved her perspective on that.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Very useful and that whole idea of taking some time regularly, not just at pivotal change points, but regularly to be reflecting. And we're going to talk about the inner game in a moment and I think that really links into the safety net as well. So Laura, the podcast is one of a range of activities that the three of us have been working on since early 2020. So almost two years, we've been working on this body of work that we're calling Emerging Stronger and it's evolved over time, but we've come up with a really clear sense of what our mission is that binds this body of work together, would you like to talk a little bit about what it is that Emerging Stronger is all about and how we're doing it?



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#### **Laura Overton:**

Well, it's all about how can we equip learning and development professionals to take bold action that delivers business impact. That's it because we all talk about bold action, but we want to take bold action and we want to really make a difference in this exciting and crazy world of work that we are finding ourselves in. So we've been talking about the podcast, but that's just listening about bold action. So we ourselves have been saying, "Okay. Well, how can we help encourage people to change their behaviour?"

So we've been writing, you can see a series of eBooks. We've been doing a series of habit changing campaigns with our publisher, Go1, which you can kind of connect with about how do we talk business? What do we need to do? How do we talk business with ourselves as well as talking business with others? How do we prepare ourselves to become future fit? And how do we prepare our organization? So with whole range of campaigns, eBooks resources, and of course the masterclass, which is about creating, Shannon, you said it's that space. Sometimes we can't stop our jobs, can we? But we can create space in which to give ourselves permission to stop, reflect, change, be surrounded by that safety of individuals of community globally and that's really what the masterclass is about. So a whole range of things that we've been doing, but mainly Michelle, our bold action it's to help you take bold action that delivers business impact.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Absolutely. And I love the way you just put that so simply, and we've been able to get over the course of two years to the heart of what is our North Star, our purpose that's driving this body of work. Laura mentioned a stack of resources we've worked on, some campaigns and in conjunction with Go1, our publishing partner, the Masterclass. There'll be links to all of that in the show notes for anyone who would like to explore further. And we hope that listening to this has really aroused your curiosity. And if so, and we've left you wanting more, we'd like to invite you to join our outcome webinar. Shannon, can you tell our listeners about the webinar?

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

Sure. It's for any L&D professional from any part of the industry with any level of seniority or experience who would like to know more about what they can do to take bold action or to take the bold baby steps, to take action within your organization. We are calling this Playing to Win in 2022, Your Inner Game of L&D.

Now, when you think about that, what is your inner game of L&D and what will it take to succeed? Well, some of the key takeaways that you can expect here is to give you the courage that you need to take the next steps to be bold and to take those next baby bold steps, right? And to identify where you are holding yourself back, because we all have those pivotal moments of putting up barriers. So we're going to help you identify where those barriers are and how to give yourself permission to take the necessary steps to move forward in order to be bold. So what does that look like and what steps does that mean and how do we get there from here?

And those are the areas that we're going to cover in this webinar and I know that you're not going to want to miss out on this. I actually don't want to miss out on this. So I'm sure that everybody here will want to know how to take those steps and how to identify where you are holding yourself back. So where and when you may be asking yourself now, so the date's February 2nd and February 8th. And for the exact dates, because we're holding this in a couple of different time zones so that way we can get everybody involved, go to the emergentmasterclass.com and that's where you're going to find information about this webinar and where you can sign up. So we encourage you to go there to find more information about the dates and times that fit your need locally.

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#### **Michelle Ockers:**

And we will have a link to register in the show notes as well to make it easy for people. So I think it would be very remiss of us not to thank all of our season podcast guests. We've got Damien Woods, Adam Harwood, Hayley Curcio, Myra Roldan, Catherine Tibbs and Dinye Hernanda, Dr. Celine Mullins and Andrea Day. They've all leaned in to tough times and they were very vulnerable in sharing some of their personal experiences in the podcast episodes, so we really thank them for that and for showing us what bold action looks like in different contexts.

So we look forward to you joining us in the webinar. Dig into the resources and if you haven't listened to all of those episodes, you can go back and listen to those from episode 21 - Emergent episode 21 through 27. There are transcripts for each episode as well if you prefer to read either instead of, or as a complement to, your listening.

So Laura, Shannon, thank you for yet another really fascinating series where we've explored one of the really important big questions for L&D and stayed on course with our North Star. Would you like to say goodbye to everyone to wrap up the season?

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

I will say goodbye. I'll say until next time.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yes.

#### **Laura Overton:**

Absolutely. Be bold everyone, make an impact.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yes. Be bold.

#### **Shannon Tipton:**

Be bold.