

Learning Uncut Emergent Episode 29
Taking Bold Action: Being Smart BOLD
Michelle Ockers, Laura Overton, Shannon Tipton
Produced by Michelle Ockers



Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to this special edition of Learning Uncut. This edition is part of the Emergent series, and it's a kind of addendum to season two - Taking Bold Action. The Emergent series kicked off around about two years ago, late in 2020 as I explored a key question alongside my colleagues, Shannon Tipton from Learning Rebels and Laura Overton from Learning Changemakers. Our line of inquiry in the first podcast season was around the idea of, or the question of "How can Learning and Development emerge stronger, more relevant, more effective than ever, out of the pandemic?"

As a result of the insights that we uncovered in that first podcast season we went on to run a public masterclass to apply and take practical action using these insights. We realised through the masterclass that what we had been talking about, this concept of Emerging Stronger, was actually an evergreen topic for Learning and Development professionals who are interested in continuing to grow in their professional practice and their impact, and continuing to evolve and emerge stronger from every experience that they undertake.

We explored this further in a second series of the podcast called Taking Bold Action; Learning Uncut Emergent - Taking Bold Action. We went on to apply our insights around something that we call Smart BOLD, and how Learning and Development professionals can take Smart BOLD action in a public masterclass. So again, we turned our insights into practical application. We evolved the practices that we had developed through the first public masterclass. We ran a second one in 2022. We partnered with a number of organizations across the Learning and Development industry, who share our vision and our interest in supporting Learning and Development to continue to develop as a profession and supporting individual Learning and Development professionals to be stronger and bolder than ever before. And in this episode, we hear from a number of our partners, along with Laura, Shannon and I around a number of themes that have emerged out of our most recent podcast season, and the application during the masterclass.

This is all about why we need to take Smart BOLD action, and indeed what Smart BOLD action is and what it looks like, how Emerging Stronger and the insights from Emerging Stronger support L&D professionals to take smart, bold action that really delivers results and where to next. So we are going to be engaging in a series of roundtables. So you don't have to wait for another masterclass and the commitment that comes with that, but can get involved in exploring some of these concepts and what they look like in a practical way and how to take action, using the practices and processes that we've derived from our line of inquiry in Emerging Stronger, coupled with evidence from other places across the Learning and Development sector, including, of course, the work that Laura has done on longitudinal benchmarking over a couple of decades of her professional practice.

So if you're interested in hearing about these things listened on and you can also check in the show notes, for information about the round tables, and how you can engage with the round tables to support you to take smarter bold action.

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Michelle Ockers:

Welcome back to Emergent season two. It has been a number of months where we've been off taking things that we learn from the balance of the season and exploring, applying them and learning from them. So I'd like to welcome back to Learning Uncut Emergent, my co-founders, Laura Overton. Welcome, Laura.

Laura Overton:

Hello, Michelle. So excited to be back.

Michelle Ockers:

It is good to be back, and Shannon Tipton. Welcome, Shannon.

Shannon Tipton:

Hello. Yes, it is. It's been a minute. Hasn't it?

Michelle Ockers:

It's been a few minutes, in fact, season two of Emerging Stronger, which we call Taking Bold Action, went to air between November 2021 and January 2022. So it's been about eight months since our wrap-up... What we called our wrap-up episode, so it's a bit like the Star Wars franchise isn't it? We're back again with another set of insights, another evolution, having run the 2022 masterclass. The big theme that we explored in the season two, Taking Bold Action series was looking at opportunities for L&D professionals who seek to create change and impact, looking at when the going gets tough, what core strengths help L&D professionals to thrive, and how do we go about building these strengths?

We took insights around the idea of taking smart, bold action, and we use them to do further improvement to our Emerging Stronger masterclass, which we ran for the second time early in 2022, and as part of this ongoing initiative, we continue to learn, to try new things, to run experiments, to figure out what works to help L&D professionals to take bolder action and emerge stronger, and we're continuing to build a community around this as an ongoing initiative for learning and change in the profession. Amongst the people in our community are some incredible partners who share our vision for making change in the industry. I'm going to invite Shannon to introduce the partners whose voices you're going to hear from in this episode as well.

Shannon Tipton:

Yes, and thank you for that. You know, we wouldn't be anywhere without our partners, and our partners really did contribute a massive amount of thought as well as resources to the program as a whole, and really did help scaffold the learning for the participants within the masterclass. And so I'd like to briefly introduce you to those partners.

The first partner, The Capability Group was our or is our platinum partner, and the Capability Group, the reason why they were so important to what we were doing is that, The Capability Group, if you look through their website, they're about changing people through changing lives through creating those ripples of learning and really connecting everybody together, which is essentially what Emerging Stronger was all about, gathering the participants and helping that learning ripple through, so that way we could be stronger together. And so their message and what they stand for really did lift up the community and lift up our participants. Then we had the Dani Johnson from RedThread Research. We can't talk enough about the help that was provided by RedThread Research. It was just such a natural fit because everything that Emerging Stronger does, first and foremost, it's all evidence-based, so it's about creating business impact and it's about doing that in such a

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way where people can take that information and apply it. But that needs to be evidence-informed, and we took really strong lessons from Dani about doing just that.

Then we had Model Thinkers, and Arun from Model Thinkers. That was the foundation; everything that we did seem to go back to Model Thinkers. Emerging Stronger as a practice, we have our safety net, and our safety net was built upon the lattice of work that came out of Model Thinkers. Every time we brought up a new idea or one of the lenses, we drew the participants back to Model Thinkers so that they could continue to build their lattice and build their playbook.

This then ties into everything that Stella Collins brings us from Stellar Labs. And this is also about being research-focused and understanding how people work and understanding the brain science behind this and the learning science behind everything. So Stellar Labs does contribute such a great amount of knowledge and wisdom towards this to, again, help us scaffold that learning for the participants so they can continue to ripple that knowledge on throughout the universe.

This means then that Jayne D'Silva from Blinkist, the contributions there really did help thread that curiosity needle. When you think about Blinkist, it's about those short bites, it's about those 15 minutes of listening, that 15 minutes of reading to help drive curiosity forward, and this is essentially what Emerging Stronger, our initiative, if you will, is all about, and Blinkist was the perfect partner to help drive that curiosity and keep that learning moving forward.

Then to wrap it up, Cheryl Clemons with StoryTagger. Now, how do we wrap this all up in a bow? How do we get people to tell their stories and to share that knowledge? So if we think about the capability Group and their commitment to rippling knowledge, how do we complete this circle? Well, naturally through StoryTagger and we have our participants sharing their stories about what they learned and how they applied it, using that evidence-based knowledge that they gained to be able to move it forward. And our partners shared our vision for change and curiosity and building the learning industry and driving the information forward. And so that means then that Emerging Stronger shifts from, is this just a masterclass? No, no, it's not, it's a movement. It's an initiative. It's an alliance of people and our partners help bring that to life.

Michelle Ockers:

Such a nice, diverse range of partners as well, bound together with a common vision around progressing the industry, around bold action, but all contributing in different ways and not just thinking and talking about it, but taking action themselves to make a difference in the industry. Laura, the thing that ties all of this together is this idea of bold action, which in your usual way, we've done some research, which in this case was through the conversation series, combined with other insights, you've taken this and taken it a step further and generated this idea of Smart BOLD, and we've got an article where you've framed up some of your thinking around Smart BOLD that we'll share in the show notes. Talk to us about Smart BOLD, Laura.

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Laura Overton:

Absolutely, you know what, we've just been learning, ladies, haven't we? On our journey together in that first masterclass. Where we're saying, "What do we do to emerge stronger out all of that disruption?" And it did involve taking some risk. It involved doing things differently than we've done before, and it was scary, wasn't it? And I think one of the big things that really came out for us, and to be honest, one of the things that was really linked into the kind of research into high performing teams is our willingness to try something new. And one of the things that we considered was sometimes some of us, the extroverts amongst us, so kind of like... go for that brassy bold. Shannon, I'm not looking at you, but that kind of rebellious "I'm going to give it some" and go, "I'm just going to try something", but that's not necessarily how all of us roll really. And I think one of the things that we learned from the whole of the Emerging Stronger process is that we need a certain level of boldness. And that was really the glue for this year's study was that Smart BOLD rather than the kind of... Like that kind of bold as brass kind of boldness.

B is about being business first. Everything we've been doing, hasn't it ladies, has been involved in embedding ourselves in what the business needs right now, rather than what we think the business needs. So business first.

O is for open-minded, that we come to our work and our fields with an open mind. Open to community, open to data, open to being able to try something new.

The L for us in Smart BOLD is about leading and learning. It means that we're actually taking a little bit of a risk, maybe we're doing an experiment, we're going to step out and we're willing to actually learn from that process and to share those ideas with ourselves if we need to adapt them and also with others if they've worked, so leading and learning.

And D for Smart BOLD is deliberate. The fact that we are evidence-informed, that we are aware of our situation, we're risk aware and that we're making deliberate action in that space.

That kind of Smart BOLD angle is really was the glue in this year's journey together. And it's so exciting because our partners also had a perspective on this. And we're just going to hear now from Jayne, followed by Drew, then Arun, Stella, Cheryl and Dani. So let's hear what they've got to say about Smart BOLD.

Jayne D'Silva:

At Blinkist, we believe that all learning leaders should be equipped and confident to take bold action that really makes a difference.

Drew McGuire:

I would hope that what those business leaders can expect to see is an L&D function that really ups their game in terms of the kind of impact that they want to have on your business metrics and the performance of your business as a P&L holder in your organization. So what goes with that is actually L&D team members that are really inquisitive and curious about what performance looks like in your part of the business, and they're really interested in the numbers and they're starting to talk the same language that matters to you. The other thing that's become critical, particularly coming out of the last two years, is leadership capability. So your L&D team will, I imagine, at some stage this year will be pulling leadership capability back on the agenda and starting to talk to you about how to start to lift leadership capability in the way that you need to be able to deliver an organizational strategy. Final thing that's already started over the last couple of years, that is your L&D team starting to put future skills on your agenda. Getting you to start to think about, "Okay, what do we need to be

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doing to, one, deliver on our strategy, but what skills do we need to ensure we're future ready and relevant moving forward."

Arun Pradhan:

For me, it's the usual, it's like what business leaders have always had to expect, which is basically results and alignment to strategy. Like really, as people who are involved in capability, we've got to create the right capability so our organizations can win and deliver on the strategy. But in addition, I would say that also business leaders can expect, or should expect, answers and not just more questions. So often in the L&D space and HR space more broadly, we are so focused on asking questions in co-designing and involving. I think some people, more and more just want answers from us. So recommendations and bold recommendations, bold suggestions and evidence-based approaches to move forward rather than just more questions.

So the change I would like to see most in L&D is really about moving away from content, really having a principle of less is more when it comes to content. And just knowing the limitations of content. And instead focusing in on impact and how we can actually shift behaviour and make a difference to organizations we work for.

Stella Collins:

I think we expect our L&D leaders to understand more about the people we work with, to understand more about the science of learning, to have really strong processes in place, to embrace technology, to use technology where it's the right thing to use, and to really start to use data to help us understand what's going on, and to measure the impact of what's happening.

Cheryl Clemons:

The pandemic created a sling shot, which accelerated L&D on its journey to the centre of the business, having a seat at the top table to help support lots of key challenges from the changing world of work. We've all heard the sound bites: hybrid work is here to stay, and digital learning fatigue is real, the Great Resignation. We also have a growing challenge around reaching and engaging both deskless and knowledge workers so there is equity, consistency, and a shared sense of purpose for where everyone accesses learning and career development opportunities. This does mean current solutions need a rethink and business leaders should expect L&D to understand how these challenges impact their own organization and be bolder with how they work with other functions to apply best practices, approaches, strategies, and tech.

Dani Johnson:

I think the short answer to that is that the business leaders should expect more from L&D. For a really long time, L&D has sat on the side of most organizations. They use their own language, they use their own measurements, they use their own methodologies. And while that has gotten us to a certain point in history, I don't think it's going to get us any further. The last few years have been punctuated with all kinds of disruptions, and L&D is one of those functions that sits across the entire organization. They have the ability to make sure that employees have the skills that they need, and they also have the ability to basically change the culture of the organization because they do play more broadly. And so what do business leaders, what should they expect from L&D in the future? They should expect more.

Laura Overton:

You know, what I love about listening to what our partners have to say there is the fact that for Smart BOLD to happen we need our business leaders to expect more, and Dani was saying that. But we also need our L&D leaders, as Jayne was

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commenting, to be more equipped and confident and curious, to be future-ready, Drew was mentioning as well. But I think for us, we are working in a very complex environment, and we need to be able to cut through that. Arun was talking about leading and learning. And just being able to understand that science, the technology, the data that Stella was talking about. And for me, it kind of... Smart BOLD needs us to apply some principles, some lenses in order to step through this process. And Shannon, that's really what we were doing in the Emerging Stronger masterclass, wasn't it? It was, "What do we need to be doing with our lenses to be more deliberate in our actions?" So can you share a little bit more about that?

Shannon Tipton:

Absolutely. And I'm just going to let our partners take that thought and move it forward, about really the process around Emerging Stronger, what did we stand for, what was it all about, and why they were drawn to making this connection with us. So we're going to hear from Drew, Dani, Stella and Arun on how that - on how the program helped participants to deliver the Smart BOLD action that we were looking for.

Drew McGuire:

So why has Capability Group decided to be a gold sponsor of the Emerging Stronger program? It was a pretty simple decision for me really. In my conversations with Michelle, as she took me through the design of the program, I thought, "Okay, this is pretty cool. It's completely aligned with everything we believe here about learning at Capability Group." And I could really see that the program was designed to have a really significant impact on people in Learning and Development teams globally. The fact that the program has participants on it globally I thought was also a very cool thing, because one of the key things we need to do as L&D people is to be a lot more outward-looking. And so the program by itself supports that, and the networks and relationships that will be established as a result of that are going to be enduring and really make a difference, I think, for everybody on the program.

Dani Johnson:

I think two things captured my imagination about the process, and they are both pretty clearly represented in the title that Emerging Stronger is. The first one is 'Emerging.' For two years, we've all been under sort of house arrest as we've tried to figure out new ways of doing things because the pandemic. We've also seen some fairly large social issues and social movements that have changed the way that we think about things. And so this idea of emerging, getting past all the crap and all of the, I don't know, baggage that we've carried with us for a really long time as L&D professionals is sort of a rebirth, a new way of doing things. And then the second part of that is 'Stronger.' We are stronger. We have had to adapt over the last couple years, but there are also so many more tools and different mindsets and ways of doing things than we've ever had before. And so this idea of Emerging Stronger [chuckle] is represented in the title but really is what captured my imagination of this process.

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Stella Collins:

Because we really like the way Emerging Stronger works, it works very much like we work. They have real challenges, they apply things practically to real situations. And they have a learning journey. This isn't just a one-off event, it's a journey. You're taken on it, you're coached through it, you're supported through it. You're supported by the leaders of the program, but you're also supported by the community, the peer learning is really important. And I think for me, the most important thing about Emerging Stronger, it is going to build stronger learning communities, it's going to build our professionalism, and it's going to help organizations actually deal with change, deal with the future that's coming... Well, the future that is here and is continuing to come at us by doing. It's the doing that matters, it's not the thinking. The thinking's important, from the thinking you have to have doing.

Arun Pradhan:

So for Shai and I, as the co-founders of Model Thinkers, it was a no-brainer to be a sponsor of Emerging Stronger. When we were approached about the idea and started discussing what that might look like, we just got really excited. Because for us we're creating these... We're really summarising and capturing these big ideas. But they're pointless if they're not put into action. And for me, people like Michelle, Laura, and Shannon, they're people who have shown that they're deep thinkers, but they're active practitioners. So they look at the data, they work across a number of organizations, and they really bring about change. And so for me, the biggest draw card of this program is really the people, and those three women, who are some of the most impressive women you'll meet in our industry, but also the conversations and community that they're bringing to life just by the way that they work, the way that they are constantly engaging, constantly sharing and working out loud. It's a really... It was a great opportunity for us, and it's a great opportunity for you.

Shannon Tipton:

So this is why these partners were so important to what we were trying to accomplish. If we just think about what Drew was articulating about having participants be in this global space, all of us together lifting everybody up, I think that being able to make a difference on such a scale was really imperative. And it goes right along with the things that Dani was talking about, about getting a hold of all of the ideas and just moving through it and moving through it together, adapting together and moving through everything that we've been through over the last few years. And loving what Stella had to say, about how do we deal with change throughout our organizations and how can Emerging Stronger really embrace that. And the participants within Emerging Stronger really embrace that. And so it's not just settling for what's happening now, it's thinking about what's going to happen in the future and not necessarily the future of what's happening today or tomorrow, but what's going to happen next year and as we continue to move forward.

And the biggest statement I think, comes directly from Arun, where they are talking about, or he was talking about how do we engage, and keep sharing, and keep working out loud. And that is really a premise that we were striving for in our masterclass. Encouraging everybody to work out loud and to share all that they were doing. So the participants and the partners really were working together, and it was a great thing to see. So now, when we take these processes and we think about, "Now what? So what? Now what?" Our partners had some really great thoughts about how we can take the masterclass itself and then applying the lenses as it were, and making all of this happen. So we're moving from theory to application. So again, let's hear from our partners and see what they have to say.

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Jayne D'Silva:

For me, I'm thinking that technology is freeing us up. So it's vital that people move from being unconsciously incompetent to being consciously competent. But that takes process and that's more than we'd ever do in a course, so why don't we experiment with AI, experiment with personalization so that automatically we can take them on that journey. That's kind of what really excites me. And wouldn't it be great if we could experiment with partnering with technology in this masterclass?

Drew McGuire:

There is a need to be able to experiment and explore new digital technologies. Now, sometimes to do that exploration there's going to be a little bit of cost. You're not necessarily going to get a return on investment on that spend, but it's supporting you to be agile, to make really good decisions about the learning ecosystem that you are building within your organization. So I suppose the suggestion is that you find a way to free up some budget that allows you to be agile and adaptable, and pilot and trial different and new solutions in a small scale way so you can test their fit within your environment, without committing to the big rollout, the full rollout that's got a big dollar value assigned to it.

Dani Johnson:

I think they should experiment with everything. I think if there's one place in the organization that could be a gigantic sandbox, it's this idea of Learning and Development and developing new skills. We at RedThread, we do a lot of our research and we wrap it around this framework that we've put together that are the behaviours that L&D should encourage within the organization, encourage their employees to have within the organization.

And those six things are, they should encourage them and enable them to plan what kind of development that they're going to have. They should enable them to find or discover the things that they need, including opportunities. They should help them discover or consume content and opportunities as they come available. They should help them experiment with new knowledge and skills. They should enable them to connect with people that can give them more knowledge and skills, and they should enable them on the job to perform while they're learning. And so as L&D professionals sort of step out behind their desk and get a better sense for what the organization needs, they're going to quit defaulting to courses and they're going to start thinking about those six behaviours and what they can do to enable even if it's a completely different thing than they've ever done before.

Cheryl Clemons:

I'd like to see L&D experiment more and help its people experiment more. There is a vast amount of internal talent, tacit knowledge, subject matter expertise, and skills in every organization which remains largely untapped as a source of learning for others. Which is crazy considering co-workers trust each other more than anyone else except for scientists. Everyone is an SME. And I'd like to see L&D look for better, inclusive, and scalable ways to facilitate how colleagues coach, teach, share stories, and create hyper-relevant content to help each other. From RedThread's recent research it's clear that learning methods, which support experiment as a strong learning culture behaviour, is a missing link. So I'd like to see organizations enable their people to develop skills and improve performance through active learning, reflective practice, and creating their own learning content.

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Stella Collins:

I want to focus on people doing things. I want to focus on behaviour change, habit change, attitude change. The actual doing rather than thinking about it, and the focus on too much content. The huge body out there, and there was so much information out there already. We don't really need more information. What we need is the time to implement things, we need to experience and practice things. And we need to get feedback on that, so that we really know what we're doing works. So I would like L&D to really focus on doing, and getting our learners, the people who work in our businesses, and get them doing things and experiencing and learning from the doing. So less focus on content, more on doing every time. So I really think L&D should experiment with how can they support people to learn more effectively. I'd like to create a revolution of learners so that they are actually starting to stand up and say, "Hey, this training or this learning opportunity isn't working for us. We know how it works better, and we're going to do it in a different way," so that we actually have learners leading the learning rather than L&D leading it.

Shannon Tipton:

So now when we think about application, everything that our partners were talking about, Drew, Dani, Stella, was all about applying the different lenses that we are using within the masterclass. The data lens coming from Dani and Stella, and some conversations about how technology can free us up that comes from Drew, and all of a sudden, you've got information that's coming in about the experiment lens, which was something that we leaned heavily into. And I love the conversations that we were having around the communication lens as well. So all of these processes, all of these lens applications really coming around and being embraced by our partners, and then having our participants take that knowledge and moving it forward. It really was something quite amazing to be a witness to. And I look forward to you hearing all of the rest of what our partners have to say as we continue.

Michelle Ockers:

So, when we think back over, everyone we spoke to as a guest on the podcast in season two, they're a really important part about our ongoing community and movement as well, all of our podcast guests over time through both seasons. But one of the things that really came out strongly when we talked to Damien Woods, Adam Harwood, Hayley Curcio, Dinye Hernanda, Catherine Tibbs, and then wrapped up with Dr. Celine Mullins and Andrea Day. One of the big things that stood out for us when we looked back over all they shared about this idea of when the going gets tough, what core strengths do they draw on, how do they build those strengths, this idea of strength and the inner game and the safety net, was something that really emerged out of those conversations and something we brought forward into the masterclass and really leaned into this year.

And our safety net comes from a wide range of practices, including having a North Star - a sense of strong purpose, guidance from mentors, support from peers was a really critical part of that safety net, giving ourselves permission to try. Of course, we talk a lot in the masterclass about running experiments, but it's one thing to have the theory, to know, to be able to draw in a body of evidence and there's a pretty strong public body of evidence available nowadays about what works in L&D, there's another to take that and to take Smart BOLD action with it. We really do believe that this idea of the inner game, both through a safety net and through thinking habits are a critical mix in the ingredients of what moves us forward to take smart, bold action with courage and also with discipline, and we are going to hear now from Dani, Drew, Arun, Stella, and Jayne about this idea of courage and discipline as being critical to take in Smart BOLD action.

Dani Johnson:

I have basically three recommendations. The first one is just be bold. We need to be bold. If there's ever been a time in history where we have the ability to try

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some new things and get some things down and get rid of the old ways of doing things, now is the time. So the very first one would be, just be bold. The second one is use data. For a lot of years L&D professionals have been using their gut to sort of determine when we're going to invest in something or if something is working, those days are gone. There is so much data available, latent data within organizations, data that exists in systems, your learning systems and other systems, and then your ability to pretty easily collect data to understand what's going on with the systems and processes that you have in place. So be bold, use data, and then the third one is collaborate. As I said, L&D should get out from behind their desks and go make friends with the people, analytics people, and the marketing people, and the communications people, and the leadership development people, and all of the people that have an impact on what learning culture looks like in the organization, because while learning doesn't have a direct sort of responsibility for some of those things, they do have a direct stewardship over the...

Drew McGuire:

I really suggest, step into that leadership role. You actually have that your organizations need of you, be courageous. Quite simply, what I'd like to see is L&D people starting to talk the language of the line managers that they support, so they're starting to use the same language and be curious about the performance of the different business lines or different business units within the organizations that they support. One word for that is business acumen, there is also a personal thing in there around just natural curiosity around what makes your business tick.

Stella Collins:

So I would say really adopt an evidence-based approach. Start to investigate what works, look at positive science, neuro science, even social science, and really start to understand how does learning really happen. How can we make... introduce people to learning opportunities where they have the experience where they are able to try things and practice things and get feedback and fail if they need to but to learn from that failure. So I think the evidence-based approach allows us to design better learning in the first place, but then I think it also enables us to analyse what has gone on and to tweak it and to improve it and continue to improve it.

Arun Pradhan:

So the recommendations I have for L&D colleagues who want to emerge stronger, is really about thinking cross-disciplinary, so really going beyond L&D and looking to lessons from other areas of life and other areas of work. It's about supporting yourself with a community, like you're not in this alone, so just making sure that you're really supporting yourself with connections. And people in the L&D industry are so open, and I think people in the Emerging Stronger, especially are great examples of that. And then to be the person that you're trying to support others to be by being curious. And we talk about being agile learners and everything, but really it's about starting from a place of playful curiosity and just being compassionate with yourself as you're curious and you explore.

Jayne D'Silva:

I think you know, the one good thing that has come out of the pandemic is how we are emerging stronger from it and you know, not just looking at the learning experience anymore but really looking at the person and considering the learner themselves and not just focusing on the the traditional kind of career and knowledge optimization, but also really looking at lifestyle optimization.

I think L&D leaders now have to really look at the whole well-being and mindfulness of the individual learner, and not just what they do at work, but how they turn up to work as well. So it's really about that. Let's take some downtime from the screen

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encouraging people to go out for walks and bring learning into the flow of life rather than just having a capacity for corporate experience.

Michelle Ockers:

So thanks to our partners there for sharing their insights around where we can draw courage from, supporting yourself with community and collaboration, being compassionate with yourself. Jayne talked a bit about lifestyle optimisation for learners, that applies equally to ourselves. This idea of compassion and looking after our well-being, is being important sources of strength to bring our best selves into the game, and to be able to take Smart BOLD action. Also drawing upon evidence. Several of our partners spoke about the value of drawing upon evidence, which relates really strongly to having a discipline and bringing a discipline to our work as Learning and Development professionals. So if we create courage, Laura, using our safety net, using our inner game, our thinking habits, and if we apply Smart BOLD practices, like the lenses that we use in Emergent - community, data, technology - and run experiments, where does all this lead? What can we do through applying a safety net, strong thinking habits, Smart BOLD practices, where does that take us?

Laura Overton:

It takes us to one place, one place which is business impact, which is the thing that's been so exciting about this journey is, it's the small things that can really make a difference in organisations to performance, to the way that teams work, to the way that individuals own their own journey and are able to influence their own careers in this space. So the experiments that all of our participants have really been taking part in have really been leading up to having the courage and that safety net, Michelle, to do the things that most of us talk about just at conferences. But they're starting to actually do them and seeing the difference that it makes. And I think our partners kind of really reflected on this in such an interesting way. And in this next segment we're going to hear from Jayne and Drew, Arun, Stella, and Cheryl about how Smart BOLD action can actually help deliver better business impact.

Jayne D'Silva:

I think, yeah there's still a blurred vision of companies focusing on the quality of the formal training rather than the actual process. And the process for me is really about performance that actually delivers on business objectives.

Drew McGuire:

One of my biggest recommendations for people on the Emerging Stronger programme is, own the leadership space that you've got. So I've had the privilege of talking to all senior execs across three or four significant organisations here in New Zealand. And in every case, every exec I talk to has a passion for learning, they understand the value of learning to their organisation.

Arun Pradhan:

We are literally one task on their busy day and they need us to solve a problem for them. They don't want us to be drawn into more complexity, even if that complexity is there, they want us to cut through it with recommendations and experiments or whatever it takes to find a way.

Stella Collins:

And I really think what business leaders can expect, or what they should expect is the insights from us, inspiration from us, and wise advice about the best way forward, based on what we know about evidence. Leaders want to be influenced, they're looking for solutions, so we can help them find those solutions. And they want us to demonstrate the impact of learning development on their organisation.

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Cheryl Clemons:

Whichever way we turn in L&D, we're presented with opposites pitched against each other. AI versus human, generic versus bespoke, culture versus performance, why versus how. But it's not an either/or. We need both in our strategies to make a difference. I'd like to see a move away from binary opposites to rebalancing how we bring these together, so we play to strength. So for example, L&D often gets bogged down in the how, whereas more focus on the why, purpose, and the context of learning makes it easier to support better solutions, how they're communicated with audiences, and to demonstrate value.

Laura Overton:

So I think the thing that really stands out for me when I'm just listening to our partners there, is the fact that we can take action. And Arun really sums this up for me, about let's cut through the complexity, let's be willing to use that safety net to take Smart BOLD action, to take those... Shannon, you talk about this baby steps, in a regular way with our strong recommendations and our strong experiments, and kind of take that courage and boldness to find a way forward to deliver that business impact. And co-create that business impact together. And Stella sums it up as well, saying about leaders should be expecting insights from us, expecting inspiration from us, expecting Smart BOLD action from us. And when we rise to that expectation, then we've got partners in crime when it comes to co-creating smarter business impacting the organization. So this has been such an interesting journey, Michelle, Shannon, hasn't it? Just in terms of where we've been going with this process and just the participants who've been working with us through the masterclass, we literally have been journeying together.

This year we had a number of participants who came back from last year, and it's almost as though you pick up one thing - one lens, one thinking habit - that made an incredible difference, and now you're ready to pack on and build on that additional insight. So we will be capturing some of the stories of this year and last year's participants through this masterclass process. Because their stories will light a fire in all of us. Yeah. We can't wait to catch up with them to see where some of their actions, some of their Smart BOLD thinking and action has taken them in their organization. And we're going to definitely be sharing some of those stories, aren't we ladies, as part of our ongoing Emerging Stronger movement together?

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, we are, Laura. Stories are a great way to capture and share experiences, and what better way to do it than using the story tag at Cheryl Clemons from StoryTagger.

Cheryl Clemons:

I'm delighted that StoryTagger is a sponsor of Emerging Stronger, to help members reflect on their personal transformation journeys and share their story, lessons learned and future commitments with the cohort and the wider L&D community. It's a brilliant opportunity to increase learning transfer, celebrate what's been achieved and inspire change, and we're delighted to be part of it.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, and talking about taking people places in organizations, we've had the opportunity since the public masterclass this year to start working with an organization in Australia who are rolling out a new business strategy and new People and Culture strategy. And they have a very ambitious change agenda, which is requiring a shift in mindset and practices, not only across the workforce, but also within the People and Culture team themselves. So we're now bringing the Emerging Stronger lenses, practices, the inner game, Smart BOLD practices to help a whole People and Culture group within an organization to be

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at the vanguard of change in the organization in a Smart BOLD way. From amidst the whirlwind of daily activity to help the whole organization to emerge stronger through an ambitious change agenda. So we feel very excited about this body of work and just working more closely with a group of people, Laura and Shannon, to really look at how this stuff hits the ground, helps people in the tumult of the real world to actually apply as a whole group and not just as individuals and to draw on each other as a safety net. But the journey doesn't stop there, Shannon, in terms of the places we're taking this, this whole Emerging Stronger movement. Where to next?

Shannon Tipton:

Where to next? Where does the journey take us all next, right? And this is an idea that we've all been working on for a while, which is, "Now what?" Yeah. Now that we've done the masterclasses. And we've put information into different content, blogs, etcetera, all this thinking that Laura has put a lot of effort into, that we've all put a lot of effort into. And we have decided that this is a movement, that this is an initiative that we feel strongly about carrying forward. And part of that is going to be hosting a series of round tables ourselves, bringing people in, having these round tables around the discussions that we've been having as an Emerging Stronger team, and bringing those conversations to you and getting your ideas, your input about, "What does it take now? Where do we go? When we think about the industry, where does it sit? Where does it need to sit? How do we continue to help the businesses move forward? How do we create those moments of having impact and showing value to what it is that Learning and Development can contribute to businesses everywhere?" And having these round tables will certainly set the bench for more research that we're always looking to get data from. And that data can help inform future thoughts, and we're really excited about this next step for the team here at Emerging Stronger, aren't we?

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. I love that the balance always of the research, the evidence and the action.

Shannon Tipton:

Right.

Michelle Ockers:

So that will be open to anyone, right? The masterclass... I'm sorry, the round tables.

Shannon Tipton:

Yes.

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Michelle Ockers:

The masterclass is of course open to anyone as well, but the round tables will be open to anyone. And it's about, again, living some of the practices from Emerging Stronger, leaning into community, leaning into data, leading into good practice and turning it into action. And of course, people can check the show notes for information about the round tables as well as some of the other resources we referred to. So by way of wrapping up, I'd particularly like to thank our partners for being part of the Emerging Stronger movement this year. You heard from Drew McGuire from Capability Group, Dani Johnson from RedThread Research, Arun Pradhan from ModelThinkers, Stella Collins from Stella Labs, Jayne D'Silva from Blinkist, and Cheryl Clemons from StoryTagger. Shannon, Laura, pleasure being part of this movement with you.

Laura Overton:

Fantastic.

Shannon Tipton:

Absolutely. Look forward to the future.

Laura Overton:

Keeping on learning. [chuckle]

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About Learning Uncut

Learning Uncut are Learning and Development consultants that work with learning teams and/or business leaders to accelerate learning transformation. We specialise in supporting organisations to create or update their learning strategy, enhance their learning team's capabilities, align learning to business value, and implement modern learning approaches.

We are highly collaborative and pragmatic. We partner with organisations to align learning to their business needs, unleash continuous learning, and build capability to help them thrive.

Learn more about us [at our website](#).

About your host, Michelle Ockers



Michelle is the founder of Learning Uncut. She is an experienced, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

- Australian Institute of Training and Development Dr Alastair Rylatt Award for L&D *Professional of the Year – for outstanding contribution to the practice of Learning and Development*
- *Internet Time Alliance Jay Cross Memorial Award – for outstanding contribution to the field of informal learning*



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