

Michelle Ockers:

So welcome, everybody, to our end-of-year Learning Uncut Podcast wrap, I am of course, Michelle Ockers, the host and director and founder of Learning Uncut. And I'm joined today by someone I've done a lot of very enjoyable work with, not only this year, but in the previous year as well, Ravina Bhatia. Welcome, Ravina, would you like to introduce yourself?

Ravina Bhatia:

Thank you, Michelle, I'm so excited to be a part of your very famed podcast. So my name is Ravina, as Michelle introduced me. Michelle and I work a lot together with Learning Uncut and we work with a lot of Learning Uncut clients especially in the space of learning strategy, and we've worked with I think a couple of clients at least three or four clients now, and it's been an interesting journey. Aside to this, I run a company called Learning Tribe, where I'm the director and chief learning officer, and I work in the spaces of learning and development, talent development, and also org design, and to bring together these to be able to solve business challenges for clients. So that's something that I'm really keen to do, that I love doing, and I love that I get the opportunity to do this with my own business, but also with Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

So Ravina, how long has it been since you set up Learning Tribe and started working in it full-time?

Ravina Bhatia:

It's been just over a year and a half, so a very short time, but it's been great with just the number of clients we've worked with, both with yourself, as well as with my own business. So yeah, just over a year and a half.

Michelle Ockers:

And your previous... Your last role as an employee, of course you were leading a learning innovation and design team, so lots of really recent practical transformational experience there as well.

Ravina Bhatia:

Yes, yes, I was leading learning design innovation, as well as learning delivery, so facilitators, etcetera. And we used to liaise with a business partnering team, so essentially all of the design and delivery sat with me, while we liaised with a business partnering team to be able to service the business.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I love the expertise and the pragmatic approach you bring to the table, and of course being practical and pragmatic, one of Learning Uncut's hallmarks. The podcast of course is a series of... At its heart, a series of case studies, a story once a fortnight, where I normally

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Speak with a learning professional from inside an organisation, sometimes with an external partner as well, who's worked on a key initiative, a new approach, a specific solution that's really had an impact in the organisation. So that's at the heart of what Learning Uncut is about, real stories, real solutions told by the people that made them happen.

Today, what we're going to be doing is looking back over those case study episodes for 2022 and will also be reflecting on I think to frame the way we, Ravina, you and I, see the podcast. We'll be reflecting on our own work and interactions with others during the year and what's been happening, what we see has been happening in the learning and development industry. And we've been to a couple of big conferences recently, and I often think, 'If you sit down and talk to people about, 'Having been to the same conference, tell me about the conference', people end up telling you a different story based on their own experience, where they're at, what they're looking for in their work, and what they've engaged with.

So that's why I think this context is important as well, because if we've got other listeners who've listened to everything we've put out this year on the podcast, they may go, 'Ooh no, I got something different out of it.' So context is super important.

We hit a big milestone this year in Learning Uncut, we had our 100th episode, and of course this episode we're recording now is 114, and we did something a little bit different there, and I love that we have enough in the library of case studies to be able to do some thematic analysis. So that was a themed episode for anyone who's interested, who hasn't listened to that one. That was... When did we hit 100 episodes?

Ravina Bhatia: I think in May?

Michelle Ockers:

May, June, yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

I normally... Late May, early June, and that was 10th of May, 10th of May, just under four years with episode 100, 10th of May. We had around 50,000 downloads of the podcast in the past year, which is amazing, the listenership just keeps going up. And I just wanted to read a piece of feedback I got from someone who's a listener, they sent me a message during the year. 'I hope you're well. You probably already know how popular and helpful your podcast is.' I will say, Sometimes stuff goes out into... Gets published, and I don't necessarily know who's listening to it, what they're finding helpful, so it's always nice to get that feedback. Miriam Speidel gave me this feedback. She asked a group of ladies in a learning and development Working Out Loud circle, a peer group basically. If you could only listen to one podcast to maintain and nurture your L&D expertise, what podcast would they choose? All five of them picked Learning Uncut. And one said, 'I love that the conversations are a mixture of the why and the how, have to persuade myself really hard to listen to anything else, and I sometimes do so to add variety, but I tend to go back to Learning Uncut. Please don't stop. So that was really... It's lovely to have that kind of feedback. Right?

Ravina Bhatia:

Yes, and I second that, there is just the work that you do with presenting case studies to the world of learning, and I know we're going to probably talk about our learnings a little bit into the episode, but just learning from each other is so important, you can't possibly try everything out yourself. And we're in a space of learning, and it is about learning from others, and your podcast does that so beautifully. I know we've also used your podcast in the work that we do in helping, directing people to specific episodes. There are times that I bookmark episodes myself to go. I want to hear that again, I'm going to be thinking about that and I want to come back and hear this bit again. And really, re-listening to it to really absorb what's happening. So I second that feedback, and it doesn't

surprise me at all.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, we get... Such a profession where people are really willing to be open and talk about their work, and it's how we get stronger together as a professional. One of the ways that we get stronger as a profession is to learn from good examples of things that have worked in different organisations, knowing of course, context is always different, but I'm really appreciative of all of the guests that have ever joined us. So for the guests, a big thank you right up front. Let's just... Before we get into some of the highlights from the podcast episodes this year, let's talk briefly about our own professional highlights because that, as I said before, shapes what maybe what we're paying attention to. And certainly for me, some of my professional and professional development activities are what brings people's stories to the podcast, makes me aware of examples of work of others as well. So what would you name as a small number of your professional highlights for the year, Ravina?

Ravina Bhatia:

Interesting. The work that I've done has been so varied, right from the space of skills to technology transformation, strategy, of course, organisation redesign and design, so it's been interesting to see that. But I guess what stood out to me firstly was, and this is a common theme across the body of work that I did, the businesses that I worked with, actual people from the business sitting up and taking notice, because of the change in the way L&D presents themselves...

And it's about purposeful learning and development, not learning for the sake of it, not just pushing up learning, and the business coming along in the journey with that and recognising why it's not going to be just another online module. Or why do we need to spend some time talking about strategy? And they see that connect between how learning is trying to make sure that they make a difference to the business, help the business achieve its goals. And that's been a huge shift in the last couple of years, but especially in the last year that I've seen. I also found it interesting about the shift between just using technology and using technology in a meaningful way, especially in the skills space.

So there's a lot of work that I've done around the skills agenda, clearly that's been a hot topic, but really in a meaningful way, not just having these archaic Excel or even beautiful looking skills libraries but making them meaningful in a way that mattered to audiences who are going to access it. And not just having an enterprise skills framework, but making skills tech meaningful, there's a lot of skills tech out there currently. How do you make that meaningful? How do you make sure that people can access it, audiences, our workforce, our staff can access it in a way that they can use, that's practical, that's pragmatic, that is useful to them and not just sitting there because HR or L&D wanted to do it. And the same with strategy, really having a practical strategy that will in fact make a difference. And it's hard, it's not easy to make that connect, so it's not going to just happen, it's got to be meaningful, it's got to have a human-centred design, a design-thinking approach. There are no shortcuts to it. And what I found particularly interesting is...

There's a couple of organisations that I did this work with, where I tried to convince them and bring them along the journey, and they were a little bit wary of using human-centred design methods simply because their workforce wasn't used to it. But when we actually deployed those methods, when we actually heard from the users, the workforce, they saw the difference themselves, the difference that it made to the output, the buy-in that we got from them. And that was telling that we had converted not just people who are in learning and development with people in the business to, 'Yes, this is the right way, in fact, to do it. And one key difference that I found when doing it, and the clients that I worked with also noticed it, that the users, the audience, the workforce employees, they felt heard, which they hadn't.

And that was a huge thing, there were statements such as, 'Nobody's

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ever asked us this.' Or 'It was deployed earlier, this particular thing that we're... This initiative, but really, it wasn't practical or useful. So we're really happy to have an opportunity to comment on it and provide input on it. So yeah, so those I think are definitely some of the highlights from last year.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, and it's interesting that when you talk about the work you've been doing, I think it taps into a lot of what the industry research is uncovering around what's happening in learning and development, and some of these bigger themes in learning and development as well. Certainly, the skills agenda of course is a big topic, but even that point you made about the business leaders getting the value or potential value of learning in the organisation, and not only inviting, but expecting L&D to be providing greater value. When the pandemic hit, a lot of things shifted quickly, and at the time it was like, 'Well, there's this window where we have an opportunity to become higher value, like this is a burning platform.' And I think what we've seen happen since then across L&D... And the LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report, the 2022 report, is one I often refer to that really highlights the data around this is, L&D has become a more strategic and more credible partner, and across the business, there is a greater recognition and because disruption is changing its shape, but it's continuing. Right?

That the pressure on organisations, on people in organisations certainly feels to me, from the organisations that I've worked with and we work with, that it's increased, that pace, it might not be that the pandemic... Although there's that ripple-on effect around remote working. The employee value proposition, you talked about people feeling heard. Lots of organisations working on their employee value proposition because of talent shortages, and L&D playing a critical role in meeting strategic needs such as that in organisations. I sometimes wonder, Ravina, if the likes of you and I get a slightly skewed experience of what's happening in L&D because the kind of organisations that are drawn to us to work with them are organisations that are ready to make a business impact and do think business first. Right? They tend to be either already more mature or ready to step up in their maturity. What do you think about that idea? Do we get a skewed picture of what's going on from our first-hand experience?

Ravina Bhatia:

You're bringing up something very interesting, and I'll answer it in two parts. So very quickly, yes, you're probably right. Having said that, there's the shifts that we're seeing, like the previous... And I talk about this, and you've heard me talk about this, Michelle, where the previous big change, the previous big, so to speak, a work revolution, was brought about by technology, by digitisation, and the need for it. And all of this conversation around AI, Web 2.0, so on and so forth. People aren't talking about that as much, people are talking about the need for talent in their organisation, the need for skills in their organisation, which is why skills have become so important, and having the right people in there. And most organisations are hiring people who are not at the level that they need to be, so this is... We know this is happening across, and we've heard it multiple times from our clients that we've spoken with. Michelle, I think there was a client of ours, where one of the senior leaders talked about the war for talent.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, their words, 'We are in a war for talent.' Certainly a very senior leader. I haven't worked with any organisations this year who haven't said, 'We're having trouble recruiting the skill sets we need.'

Ravina Bhatia:

Exactly. So they have. There's a clear and present need for learning and development to step in, anyone who can help, they're shouting out. So irrespective of whether the organisation is ready to engage with us or not, they recognise this,

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there is a clear need for this because everybody's facing this need. In Australia, I think about 75% of employers aren't able to hire the right talent. Across the globe, there is... I think this was... These were IDC numbers, International Data Corporation, where about 90% of employers aren't unable to find the right talent. So there's data telling us that, people we're speaking with are telling us that, so that's there everywhere. Having said that, so whether they're engaging with us or not, there is a need for learning to step in there. It's almost a matter of time, Are they ready for it? Budgets and so on and so forth.

Then coming to the other side, which is organisations that we work with, they've already recognised the need for it, but I still also do some work with organisations in the design space, and that can be very tactical. What that means is, Where the requests are, I want to create an animation, I want to create an online module. They understand that there is a need for that, however they're not at that space where the organisation is mature enough, like you said, to bring the business along that journey of learning, having a seat at the table, or the importance of a shift needed in learning, we're still talking about some of the methods that we consider traditional. However for those organisations, they're not traditional, those are the shifts that they're making. So in their heads, the shifts that they're making are going from face-to-face learning or even from online, Zoom webinar style-learning, to bringing in more digital forms of learning. So in saying that, what I'm really getting to is that irrespective of where people are at, they are trying to make shifts to their maturity, and they could be in small, but different ways.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, it's about meeting people where they're at and helping to move them along in terms of impact, maturity, value. For me, professionally, obviously the strategy work with organisations is a real delight to do, where organisations are recognising that we have the level of leader support and engagement to actually invest a little time in thinking seriously about, How can we ensure that learning is really well-aligned to business strategy, to business needs, to shifting the approaches, the way we enable learning in our organisation, and to doing a really good job with that? And it's just a joy to do that kind of work with organisations. And for me, personally, at a professional level, one of the things that's a really nice supplement to that is the work I do in the emerging stronger partnership that I have with Shannon Tipton from Learning Rebels, and Laura Overton from Learning Changemakers, and that's both through our master classes and roundtables, where we look at working more effectively with data, community, technology, and experiments, testing and learning, which is something we see a lot more of in learning and development now than we did several years ago.

But also, we put out some great resources which help learning and development professionals no matter where their current stage of maturity is to do things in an evidence-informed way around challenges, topics that matter. So we've just literally released a new e-book around skills, so I will make sure there's a link to that in the agenda as well... Sorry, in the show notes, the agenda. So conferences are the other big highlight for me, we're back at conferences in person, Ravina.

Ravina Bhatia:

Yes!

Michelle Ockers:

It's been wonderful. I've been to three this year, I think, yeah, three. I know you've probably been to a couple more, I think you've been very active with conferences. And it's just great to be back face-to-face. And for me, I use conferences to scout a lot for stories for the podcast as well, so I've got a nice bank of new stories building up out of conferences.

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So let's talk about the podcast and what we've seen in the podcast in 2022. We have had, I want to say 22 episodes, so we started the year at episode 93, and we are now up to episode 114, so I'm pretty sure that makes 22 new case studies this year. So, patterns and themes. I'll swing to you first as a listener. What patterns or themes have you noticed? What stands out for you in the Learning Uncut episodes this year?

Ravina Bhatia:

Definitely the biggest shift for me has been... L&D teams are getting bolder, and just the case studies that we hear, you can see them really make shifts and do things, and a lot more of them, and that's really interesting and that's... L&D teams are willing to take the risk, so I think that's a common theme that I see across, dabbling in new spaces, trying different things. And also with industries that would have not normally tried something so different, and they're seeing results, of course. And that's the biggest shift that I've seen. How do you feel about that?

Michelle Ockers:

I think that is very true. And I'm just thinking there's a lot of... A lot of the stories touched on, for instance, tech enablement, without the primary story being about tech, which I just love, that it's not about the tech itself, but it's about how tech was used as part of a solution, so I think we're seeing a lot of shift there. One of the things that really stood out to me in some of my favourite conversations have been about diversity-related issues. And I know we're going to talk about favourites in a minute, so a few more stories around culture, but particularly within Australian and New Zealand ones, about our indigenous cultures, and integrating indigenous cultures and leveraging the best of indigenous cultures in our work.

One thing that we did a lot more episodes than we normally do on has been leadership development, and that's one space I see a lot of change underway for obvious reasons. With us now working in more remotely distributed teams, and what that's meant for leaders and leadership. So there's been several episodes that talk about that, from Peter Pocock from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, talking about shifts in leadership development since the start of the pandemic... I think it's a really good example of an organisation, where an opportunity created the course of the pandemic to do something differently. So I see we're gathering a lot of stories now which reflect things that people did differently, tried differently, seem to have a sense of permission and necessity and stakeholders got on board with. So that's one example. We also had in terms of leadership a one-hour episode I just loved with Helen Sedcole from Z Energy. Of course, we met when we were in Auckland at the L&D Innovation and Tech Fest. Episode 101 was around leadership development for a different future, and we'll come back to some of what she shared there. And then we had a third episode, I think previously, I had maybe one or two across three years on leadership development. So we had a third episode which was specifically about leadership development with Hannah Conkey from the RACV episode 111. The spin on that was around the use of neuroscience and biopsychology in leadership development.

So apart from tech enablement, something else I've seen bubbling up a lot more in episodes is the importance of peer connection and social learning, and I think we're more conscious of that and willing to learn. There was a time, maybe three or four years ago, we were talking a lot about social learning, and then it drifted away, I think because people were just finding it hard to find ways to bring it to life. But the need for people to feel connected and a sense of belonging, I think people... And people's greater familiarity with collaboration tech has given us more opportunity to do more, so I think there's a lot more good examples of peer-to-peer learning and support as part of blended solutions or as primary strategies as well. Yeah, so they're some of the things I saw coming up, but I like the way you encapsulated in 'people are being bolder'. Were there any specific examples of boldness that got your attention in the episodes?

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Ravina Bhatia:

Take for example, and these are part of my favourites as well, learning in an agile organisation, the one that Damien (Woods) was there with you. Just changing the way that the entire organisation and the learning team operates to an agile way. And having led a design and delivery team, it's no mean task because it's not just about changing the way you work, it's about changing the way you interact with the organisation. So that was definitely one example. I loved your episode with Zoe Freeman on building a learning organisation and talked directly to where you talked about the conversation around diversity. And I think diversity in Australia, and that's a big difference that I see in Australia and New Zealand, present itself in a very different way to other organisations across the globe, to different regions across the globe. And the way it presents itself in Australia, there's a lot of focus on indigenous, there's a lot of other focus areas as well, but it's different in the way that we talk about it. And there's so much culture. And the opportunity that we have here in Australia, in this region, in the Australasian region, to do this is huge.

Michelle Ockers:

It is.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely. And Waka Kotahi has done it beautifully as part of their learning strategy, and I think there's definitely something in there for all of us to learn from, and how you can do it as an example involving the right people, specifically the fact that they involved... It was a Māori advisor? Cultural advisor?

Michelle Ockers:

That's right. Claudia Faletolu. Yes, so we backed up two episodes, one was episode 103 with Zoe, just talking generally about how they built their strategy. And she talked a little bit about how they deliberately prepared the L&D team and also incorporated or was informed by a Māori world view, but then episode 104 with Claudia is all about the process of weaving Māori culture into learning strategy in the organisation. And what was interesting for me, Ravina, out of that conversation with Claudia was, I had worked with that organisation for over two years and been part of some of the work around learning strategy and bringing together a centralised learning and development team, there was such a depth of thought and rich symbolism that went into the visual narrative and the storyline about the strategy that I really hadn't understood. And the depth of the work there is incredible, and the respect across the organisation for the Māori culture and how genuinely they engage with it is so impressive. So they're amongst my favourite episodes, not just because I know the people and had some hand in the work, but because I just have so much respect for the way they tackle the integration of this different group.

Ravina Bhatia:

I absolutely agree.

Michelle Ockers:

And whether listeners in other parts of the world might go, 'Well, we don't have such a need to incorporate our indigenous culture.' But if you think about any group that you think, 'We need to be more inclusive with a particular group to build more belonging as part of your diversity agenda', I think much can be learned from those two episodes.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely. I'd probably go as far as to say that in context of other regions that I've worked with, there are probably multiple cultures present, and that might seem to be a challenge, but I think it's about that deep thinking that's gone into it. And I say not just one group, I'd go so far as to say there are ways to incorporate multiple groups into that cultural narrative, without leaving any one group out or singling any one group out. It's

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about people looking at the visual symbolism, people listening to it and connecting to it. And by doing that as a part of their strategy, there is an immediate connect that it forms with the people who are going to receive it. And that for me is very powerful, it's huge, it has meaning. So it's out in the public now so for people who are interested, I would urge you to go ahead and have a look. Look it up, the Waka Kotahi Learning Strategy. It's in the public domain for you to look at, and you get a sense of what we're talking about when we talk about the visual symbolism. It connects right from the time you enter New Zealand, and you see that around you, and then when you look at their strategy, it all just connects so seamlessly. And the way that your strategy looks, and there is no undermining the visual presentation of anything, you've already formed a connect there.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, absolutely.

Ravina Bhatia:

And then of course your strategy then carries it forward so that was one that I loved, in addition to the agile one. And the third one was actually a completely different area. It was a bit... It was about blended virtual learning and advanced clinical supervision, the one that Kate Fraser and Dr. Kuva Jacobs... The conversation that they had with you. So these three were my favourites. As you can see, they're quite different from other...

Michelle Ockers:

What did you really like about the one with Kate and Dr. Kuva Jacobs? That was episode 110, by the way, if anyone wants to go and listen to that one. What attracted you to that?

Ravina Bhatia:

And it talks to the theme that I talked about earlier, which is making bold moves, things that might not seem bold to others, but are bold for the organisations that they're working with. And the example they had about making bold moves is they use Miro, which is a collaboration board. And you and I use it a fair bit in the work that we do as well. So that was one example. The way that they strongly on-boarded participants and supported the SME facilitators using this... Apparently, that was a point of difference for this organisation, but also if I look at this topic, it's about trauma, and psychological safety is huge in this space. So when you're using a virtual-session format and coaching to be able to deliver this, you're also showing to the organisation how it can be done because a lot of organisations are blocked to the idea that this can be done virtually. And they, in fact, used virtual methods, blended methods to be able to implement this. And that's no mean feat. Right? In an organisation like this, it's for social workers, for clinical supervisors, and with a subject like trauma, which isn't the easiest subject to talk about. It is very sensitive, people want to feel supported. And I think the way that they talked about the program work that they did... So yeah, I thought that was great.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, it's interesting, it gives us a glimpse of the aspiration to have a much bigger impact through our work than on what's right in front of us. And one of my favourite episodes along those lines was with the Oceania... About the Oceania women's football development, episode 96, with Emma Evans, who's the Oceania women's football manager, and Annie Kennedy from Capability Group, who worked on a capacity-building program together. Now, they normally run this program face-to-face, it was during COVID, they had to go online and run it virtually. And they had women... I think around 11 different countries around the Asia-Pacific, some of them didn't even own a laptop or have access to a laptop, so they had to set them up with the technology and get them using the technology. But really, it was about giving women more opportunities in the game of football around the region, so the women who were part of the... Participating in the program were a women's football development...

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In women's football development roles in their country, across 11 Pacific nations.

But there was this huge ripple-on effect, it helps create social change, it gives them a voice and a sense of a mission and helps them to build a network they wouldn't otherwise have access to. So I really like this thought that for the work we do in learning and development, the ripple impact of it can be significant. If we help build confidence, if we help build skills, that has a knock-on impact to how people conduct themselves outside of work, to families, to community groups. I think we should never lose sight of that bigger impact that our work has the potential to create.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, one other favourite was... I think Helen Sedcole from Z Energy, who I mentioned before... And one of the things that really struck me, like a specific insight... Let me talk about some specific insights. There was this moment where we were talking about her role, and what's her role, and she talked about having a couple of different responsibilities, and she talked about one of these responsibilities being the guardian of the employee experience. And her role title in Te Ao Māori, in the Māori language, is actually po tangata and po means a pole or something that supports, to hold something up, and tangata means people. So this concept built into a whole role title that she is a guardian, to hold on to their vision, for what matters to their people, and hold on to their aspiration for their employee experience and holding them account to as an organisation and a leadership team to deliver on that, being a protector and supporter. And when I think about maybe 15 years ago, working in organisations and the HR teams and what the role of the HR teams was and how they saw themselves, nothing like that. Right?

A lot of it was around industrial relations and employer... But in terms of, 'I'm here to be the guardian of the employee experience', I think a lot is shifting and it gets to the heart of... With a mindset like that, that's got to impact the way you do your work, and it's really evident in that episode. So I'm always drawn to guests really whose language reflects the way they see learning in the organisation, and then you see that coming out in what they're doing. So Helen was probably a standout there for me this year in that way.

Ravina Bhatia:

Wow, that's beautiful.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I've had other guests who've struck me in that way and who have really... There's something that really touches me deep inside about the language and the vision they have for their role, and whilst it's not someone that we featured this year, it wasn't one of the favourites from last year, is Kristina Tsiriatakis from Deciem, and some of the language she uses about your learning technology being like a watering hole and thinking of it as a watering hole and a gathering place and creating connection in the organisation through it. So what about you, any specific insights or takeaways from any of the episodes or series of episodes?

Ravina Bhatia:

I've talked about the one that you did with Zoe Freeman, I'll go back to the one that you did with Damien, which was about the use of agile...

Michelle Ockers:

That one with Damien was actually last year but I think it's still worth talking about.

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Ravina Bhatia:

Okay.

Michelle Ockers:

That wasn't one for this year but it's worth talking about. And Damien's another one of my repeat guests whose outlook leads to innovation. Yeah? So go ahead and talk to us a bit more about Damien's episode on agile.

Ravina Bhatia:

So what I firstly loved about it is that this is probably something, and it's relevant this year as well and in the coming years, that a lot of organisations that have been on this agile journey, he talks about how he has been able to implement it at 7-11, he was able to implement it at 7-11, but also how it actually was used to foster learning, rather than just be something that was forced upon teams. And that's the language I've heard a lot when I've talked to organisations that want to implement agile. It almost seems like, 'Oh because the entire organisation is doing it, I have to do it too.' However, when I heard from him just the practical ways that made it easier for the organisation to use it, but also to promote and foster learning in the organisation, and that was the biggest standout for me, that using agile not because the organisation is saying we've got to use it, but for using it to create... We talk a lot about learning culture, so how can we use agile to really create that culture, to help it grow? And the way that they use chapter leaders, and then creating that continuous learning ecosystem, and then finally using it as a believer of business performance. And that is what stood out to me the most, if you haven't heard it, I would... And if that's the journey that your organisation is on, I would urge you to go hear it because there's a lot of valuable input and insight you'll get from listening to Damien talk about it.

Michelle Ockers:

I'll make sure I put a link specifically to that one in the show notes, given that it was a previous year's one.

Michelle Ockers:

Another area where I think there are some really good takeaways and insights is in the area of partnering between someone in an organisation and your external suppliers or partners. And I did actually two episodes with the one guest this year, one early in the year, episode 93, and then one more recently, episode 112 with Siva Kulasingam from Coles, who has a really solid approach to partnering with external partners, particularly in the areas of tech and learning innovation, but you could apply that to other areas, partnering for improving learning experience design, for instance, as an example. So he talks about... I asked him around, 'How do you find the right partners? What do you look for?' And he talked about, 'Well, they need to be aligned with our vision for learning in the organisation, they need to have a willingness to collaborate, and a bit of an appetite for risk and innovation.' I think that goes to your observation about boldness. And obviously, they need to work with you within your requirements.

But I think he's a great example because we often talk about, In learning and development, we don't want to be order-takers, we want to partner with people in the business. That extends to the way we engage with our external partners to bring out the best of them and what they can offer to us to shape learning more effectively in our work. And he gives really great examples of what that looks like, to not treat your external partners as order-takers, but invite them to understand your organisation, to look for ways to really shift learning and to bring the best of their expertise to the table.

Ravina Bhatia:

I love that thought and I've also... I mean as you were talking about it, it got me reflecting on my own experiences now as an external partner. When we're

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engaging in the work that we do together, the way that organisations are turning to us for our expertise that we bring to the table, for our... I don't like to use the word 'opinion' but I'll use it for now. But our opinion while respecting the years of experience that we have doing this, and that's why they brought us in. And not just expecting us to deploy what they've asked us to, but really have input into shaping it. And that's the crux of our entire engagement with every single client that we work with, Michelle. How do we... That advice that we offer, the expertise, our lived experiences, and clients tapping into that, taking advantage of that, and that hunger that they have to learn. I think that's evident in our practice as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, you know what's really funny, Ravina? Here we are, I'm talking about partnering with external partners and so on, and we are, we are the external partners, but the way we work with our clients, I actually wasn't picturing myself as the external partner because the level of trust and the way they engage with us, we really do get to get a really solid understanding, their business, and there's an incredible mutual respect that gets built up as a result. So it's just... I'd never thought of it that way, that we are in effect that external partner. And I wouldn't have it any other way, but to engage in that really collaborative way.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely.

Michelle Ockers:

So looking forward to 2023, are there any particular stories about different types of topics or themes, that if you could give me an order list and I could go out and fill it for you, that you think would be great on the podcast?

Ravina Bhatia:

While we're on the subject of order-taking. Right?

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ravina Bhatia:

So definitely more of new tech in practice, not just about new tech, new tech exists, we all know about it or know mostly about it. But new tech in practice. And the particular point of focus which we don't hear a lot about is failure stories, so what didn't work. And I think there's a lot of learning for all of us in that as we're embarking... As we're trying to be bold, trying to be risk-takers. You spoke about consensus earlier, and yes, there's a lot of learning, etcetera. And just as you scout for stories, something that I like to do is scout for technology, which is, find out what's the new technology that exists, visit all of the stores and find out, What is it that your tech can do so that there's awareness that I have that I can bring to the table in the work that I do around technology and transformation? And just is, Am I missing anything in terms of functionality that exists out there or something new that tech enables? So it's something that I'm doing.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, well we've got a great story coming up next year around... Now, I hope I'm not going to put a curse on this one because it's not quite locked into place, but Schneider Electric's and the use of the talent marketplace, they're probably one of the early adopters really looking at, How do we leverage skills using talent marketplace technology? And we did hear Josh Bersin talking about how much of a game-changer this new area of tech is going to be.

Ravina Bhatia:

Absolutely. And...

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Michelle Ockers:

Go ahead.

Ravina Bhatia:

Sorry. Yes, so it's about the tech, it's also about how it's put into practice, the failure stories, and just making it meaningful beyond just tech. So I'm looking forward to hearing that episode from Schneider, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I hadn't thought about maybe just doing an episode that is like 'what didn't work episode' rather than just a specific case study, maybe a collection of snippets about, 'Don't try this, learn from my experience.' That could be interesting. I'd like to do more around the skills agenda, I think we've been grappling with it for a while, I think it is a more significant shift than many people realise. I don't think it is just doing more of the same and, 'Haven't we always done this?' I think there are some fundamental shifts for us to respond to, so I'm looking out for more stories of what's working there. And one that... I don't know that I've ever done an episode squarely on this topic, but it is so critical, around enabling managers to develop their people.

Ravina Bhatia:

Yeah, yeah. That's a hard one.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I'd love to do a story which is really squarely about that. And I know it's linked into learning culture, but I think that would be really fantastic as a story. And of course, I talked about scouting for stories at conferences or in... If I'm reading industry research reports and so on, but I'm always open to people coming to me with a story. And I encourage people, 'Don't be shy.' Or if you see someone else who's been doing something good, it doesn't have to have won an industry award, it doesn't have to be that they're speaking on the conference circuit about it, sometimes it's more traditional things just done well, but I'm always open to exploring a good story.

So as we start getting towards wrap up, Ravina, on a professional level, what are you personally looking forward to in 2023? What does 2023 hold for Ravina Bhatia that's exciting?

Ravina Bhatia:

So my answer is probably pretty boring. As a young business, growth for my business is top of mind, getting out there, having that growth there. But also, what I find extremely satisfying is to see results for my clients, and I find that extremely satisfying. And just learning from what worked, what didn't work, how can we improve it, how can we improve my practice, and also what we do for clients. So those would remain the professional highlights for me in the coming year. What about you, Michelle?

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I was going to say you have an amazing continuous improvement mindset, that's one of the things I love about working with you, you're always stretching me to keep improving things. I also like the fact that, building on something you said there, we've got a number of our strategy clients in the sustained phase, and seeing how things are playing out over the next year, being able to learn from that, help them to make adjustment, that's really exciting. I'm also doing a big trip next year in May, I'm going to be speaking at Learning Technologies UK in early May, and at the Association for Talent Development Conference in San Diego in late May. So I'm really looking forward to refreshing personal interactions with people in the global network and hearing more outside of Australia and New Zealand about what people

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have been doing, and hopefully bringing some more stories from outside of Australia and New Zealand to the podcast next year as well.

Ravina Bhatia:

Fantastic, I will look forward to hearing all about it once you're back, no doubt.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. So we are actually taking... For the first time ever, I'm taking a Christmas break from the podcast. So our next episode after you listen to this one will be in early February, so don't think we've gone away, we are coming back just after a month off for our summer break here in Australia. Thank you, Ravina, for joining me today for this episode and for all the work you do alongside me with our Learning Uncut clients. It's been a fabulous year, really wonderful working with you. To all of our guests, our Learning Uncut guests, the podcast of course would be nothing without you, thank you for your generosity and willingness to share your stories and experience so that we collectively get stronger as an industry. Also want to shout out to Hanover Fairs, who run a series of conferences, including the Learning Innovation and Tech Fest conferences here in Australia and New Zealand. They've been a podcast partner for us. And to you listeners, I really love it when people reach out to me and say, 'I've been listening to the podcast.' They let me know on LinkedIn, or at conferences, I hear them talk about specific episodes and what they got out of that.

That's always really delightful, to hear from listeners, so thank you for being a listener, if you are tuned in. And if you're finding Learning Uncut valuable, please share it with others, tell colleagues about it, post about it on LinkedIn, anything to get the word out, leave a rating somewhere because it helps get the podcast to more L&D professionals who can learn from the work of our guests. Ravina, thank you.

Ravina Bhatia:

Thank you, it's been an honour to be invited to your podcast, definitely an avid listener, and I continue to... I will look out for some of the interesting themes coming up in the new year.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely, thanks so much. Okay, everybody, have a safe and Happy Christmas if you are listening to this at the time of year that we're recording it, get some refreshment, replenishment, some rest, and come back ready to do more great work next year.

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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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