

Learning Uncut Episode 117
Equipping Leaders in a Hybrid Environment – Lalaine Gedal
and Cindy Huggett
Hosted by Michelle Ockers



Michelle Ockers:

I'm joined by two guests today. The first is Lalaine Gedal, the Associate Director of Leader Development in the US for Takeda. Lalaine shares Takeda's very intentional approach to supporting their people to adopt a hybrid working model from their consultation on what hybrid working should look like to developing a toolkit to support people to adopt this change and engaging Cindy Huggett to run virtual sessions on leading in a hybrid environment.

Yes – you heard that right! Cindy Huggett is our second guest. Cindy is widely acknowledged as a leading expert in virtual training. It's clear that the virtual facilitation skills of L&D professionals increased dramatically as a result of the switch from face-to-face to online facilitation necessitated by the pandemic. Even so, I'm confident that just about anyone who facilitates live online sessions will pick up something they can use to improve their practice from today's conversation. For those of you who've started to facilitate hybrid sessions we touch upon this as well, noting that Cindy has been ahead of the curve on this skill set for several years.

So there are two very on point themes in today's episode – both supporting the adoption of a hybrid working model with a focus on equipping leaders for this change, and levelling up your virtual facilitation skills. Be sure to check out the resources in the show notes to dig deeper on these topics.

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome Lalaine and Cindy, it's lovely to have you joining us from the US today.

Cindy Huggett:

It's great...

Lalaine Gedal:

Hi.

Cindy Huggett:

To be here.

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Michelle Ockers:

I'm very excited to bring this story to our Learning Uncut listeners. And Cindy, you and I have been talking for some time exploring, what's a great example of work that you've done? You're well known for your virtual facilitation and now, other areas of facilitation, which we're gonna talk about today. So, thank you for inviting Lalaine to join us. And Lalaine, thank you for your willingness to share. So let's start with you Lalaine, with an introduction to your organisation.

Lalaine Gedal:

Absolutely. Well, thank you for inviting us, and I am so glad to be in the company of Cindy, and of course with you, Michelle. So, my name is Lalaine Gedal and I work with a pharmaceutical company called Takeda, an organisation, a pharma biotech company that focuses a lot into research and development and creating solutions to better the lives of our patients.

Michelle Ockers:

Great. Thank you, Lalaine. And would you like to talk to us a little bit more about your role and your team? Assuming you have one sometimes I'll guess you're a team of one.

Lalaine Gedal: Absolutely. But this is something very interesting since the topic we're talking about has something to do with hybrids. I actually was hired by Takeda during the peak of COVID. So as, as we all know, like, you know, a little bit of rewinding what happened, what, three years ago, and we were working from home, so was hired and really excited to go back and, so I was, hired and it was a new team that Takeda had identified and saying that we need to focus on developing our leader. So I work under the function of the United States Business Unit, leader development.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. And your team, you have a small team, I believe, Lalaine?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yes. I have a small team of, of two wonderful individuals, and we're a mighty team of three people that our focus is pretty much elevating and building courageous leaders, with a shared purpose. So how do we upscale them so they basically are able to drive the culture, the kind of culture that Takeda would like to see.

Michelle Ockers:

Can you tell us just a little bit more about the leaders in your business unit? How many of them are there? Where are they? What kind of roles or teams would they be leading?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yeah, absolutely. So Michelle, I'm just focusing on the United States Business Unit. So I would say the total employee we have in the USBU is about close to 3000, and we have about close to, I would say 380, people, leaders. So those are leaders that are basically leading teams.

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Michelle Ockers:

Great, thank you. And the body of work we're going to talk about today, which of course is set in COVID and the kind of, I'm never quite sure if we're out of COVID yet or not. It's kind of like we've learned... We're learning to live with it, but there's still adjustments going on in workplaces. So we are gonna talk about the context for this conversation. It is about some of the adjustments to Takeda and leadership development in that context. Cindy, you worked with Lalaine and her team, on these adjustments and supporting leaders through these adjustments. You are well known in the learning and development profession. Would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself or anyone who may not be familiar with you and about your work?

Cindy Huggett:

Sure. So I'm home based in Raleigh, North Carolina, but I work with clients all around the globe, mostly very large global organisations. And for the last 20 years, I've been doing virtual facilitation consulting on virtual training. So needless to say, the last three years have been extremely busy and productive and a lot of fun in helping organisations move to the virtual classroom who's never experienced that before, or how do you transfer those in-person classes to online. Something though that in this tail end of whatever we'll call the last couple of years, is the idea of hybrid. And hybrid is something that goes hand in hand with virtual. I wrote about it in my 2016, 2017, book on how to do it and continue to do that. So hybrid and virtual go hand in hand, and we'll talk about the definition of hybrid in just a moment, but I help organisations move to the virtual hybrid classroom, all aspects of that design, facilitation, production, platform selection, you name it.

Michelle Ockers:

So Cindy, you were talking about hybrid, learning and live hybrid facilitation back in 2016, 2017 already, most of us are starting to grapple with what does that mean? So perhaps to your point about definitions and the way we use terminology, because we are going to talk about facilitating hybrid sessions today as part of this body of work. What does hybrid actually mean in this context?

Cindy Huggett:

That is the golden question right now, because we don't currently as an industry have a complete settled on definition in the education or university world. Hybrid typically means a blended journey, perhaps a college course where you meet online, or meet in person with the professor and then you go do work on your own or with a small group and you come back the following week. In the workplace learning world, we call that a blended learning journey. So for us in the workplace, in most organisations, a hybrid is a synchronous event. We meet Tuesday at 10:00 AM with a facilitator and colleagues, and we meet together except for a hybrid audience. Some might be in person and some are connecting through their remote location from their remote location, through a virtual classroom. So you may have 20 participants all meeting at the same time, 15 are in person, five are remote.

Michelle Ockers:

So we are gonna dig more into what that means for a facilitator and how you facilitate in that environment as we get into the body of the conversation. This is my first time on Learning Uncut. We've had a story which did feature true hybrid facilitation. And as I said, a lot of the organisations I work with and the, L&D teams I'm speaking to are looking at how we do this form of facilitation right now. So very timely. So Lalaine, let's give some context to the story, a little bit more background. This is a story about preparing your people

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leaders to shift to, you are calling it hybrid work, not to be confused with hybrid learning, but to shift work locations, and how they work with their teams spread out, over a range of locations. So what had been happening at Takeda with where and how work was being done. Up to the point where this story starts, which I think is around late 2021, we're looking at preparing your people leaders to work in different ways. What had been happening with where and how work was being done in the organisation?

Lalaine Gedal:

That's a great question. So, again, I think one thing, one thing that Takeda was very successful in driving the hybrid working model was they were really very, very number one transparent. That in the beginning, we don't know the right answer for this. We are still navigating, and finding the right formula because people were like, let's face it, Michelle, there were studies that were done by McKinsey way back in 2020 and asking people how they felt about coming back to work. And it was a resounding saying that 74% on that survey would like to be working from home. And I think that was very universal. It was so hard. But again, the Takeda was very, how would you say, intentional and really looking at let's listen to our employees. And they establish working groups like leaders, working groups, and surveyed employees on the interests of coming back to work. It's like checking the temperature. Let's do a check-in. And they focus on their core principles. They've identified three core principles for working, and one of which I would just focus. And this is the reason why I reach out to Cindy, who in the past as a learning professional, I've attended Cindy's courses before and I know the guru of this and just wanna make sure we become successful, was one of the core principle in this hybrid working model for Takeda was commitment to ensure success.

Lalaine Gedal:

So committed to ensure success. And the way we Takeda, or the way Takeda had described that was, we are committed to supporting our people to make hybrid working models successful by identifying the tools and technology to facilitate seamless collaboration and efficient working regardless of setting. So when you think about tools, our leaders, 'cause the focus primarily, for, for this particular initiative was equipping our leaders to make sure that they are able to walk the talk and set the examples to their team. So providing those tools, to be effective in facilitating hybrid meetings.

Michelle Ockers:

So it sounds like there was a lot of flexibility being built into your approach. When I hear the words, regardless of setting, some people may be in an, in an office environment or in some sort of other corporate facility. Some people may be working from non-corporate environments such as the home office or indeed some other office facility. So the emphasis was on enabling the teams to be able to work seamlessly for your people leaders. What were the key challenges or opportunities that you saw in order to live up to this commitment to ensure success regardless of the work setting?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yeah, I think truly we were not equipped to be able to facilitate very successfully. How do we do hybrid, how do we do hybrid? Like we have people who are working, still working remotely, and again, we are being intentional about the purpose of why you come back to work or what's the purpose of you coming back to work or saying, what's the purpose for that? And you have to be intentional. So our leaders, we were not, I mean, I personally wasn't, was not equipped, to manage or facilitate or even do a, I would say one-on-one

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meetings with a team that a part of them were remotely and a part of them were in the office. How do you drive that being inclusive? And we were all starting to navigate what is inclusivity? What is equity, what is diversity? And so glad this pandemic had taught us to be more, purposeful and to really listen. So that's the first thing that Takeda did to really listen and really understand what this is what we're facing.

Michelle Ockers:

So it sounds like inclusivity and equity were part of the opportunity, part of what you were aiming to build into this new, approach to people working from anywhere in a seamless way. It also sounds like you had new tools and technologies for people to come to grips with and that you're saying, well, there were skills or behaviours for the people leaders to facilitate work in this way that would need some development. Cindy, given that you work with a range of organisations around the globe, what would you add to the specific situation that Lalaine has described for Takeda in terms of behaviours and skills that people leaders need to shift to working in this hybrid or work from anywhere setting?

Cindy Huggett:

You think that as we develop leaders in any organisation, that we would step back and think, what are those competencies? What are those skills? What are those things that we need? And I think many organisations assume that our leaders are just going to, because they do it, learn how. And in some cases that may be true. It's not always though. And one of the favourite things that I watched Takeda do, I came in on the tail end as it was being completed, but many organisations skipped this step. Lalaine was sharing about the listening, the intentional deliberate method that they went about to put hybrid working, and hybrid models into place coming up with, and it was a team effort, a manager toolkit. Defining what we mean by the hybrid workplace? What are the guidelines that we're going to have? What kinds of conversations should you as a people leader have with your employees?

So it wasn't just a company-wide announcement, we're going to have a hybrid workplace. This is what we're going to do and here's how we're going to support you. And they were physical documents, electronic, but physical documents that were put into place and put in the hands of the people leaders on how we do this and what does it mean? And it wasn't a strict document of exactly how you must do it, it was the guidelines for here's what we mean by it. Now have the conversation with your team about what that looks like on your team. And I think so many organisations skip over that step where it's just, okay, we have some people working in the office on Mondays and Fridays, and if you're having meetings those days, good luck, which is not necessarily a formula for success. So if I recall correctly, Lalaine, your team tied your hybrid toolkits and your principles back to the tenants of the organisation, the values of the organisation, and just very deliberately put into place the support that both people, leaders as well as employees, needed to be successful in this environment.

Michelle Ockers:

So what were the key shifts then that the people leaders needed to make to be successful in this environment?

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Lalaine Gedal:

Well, number one would be emotional intelligence. 'Cause I remember, after speaking with Cindy and we, we targeted close to what, 380 or around 300 leaders going through the first round of the session. It was important, Michelle, that in order to be successful in hybrid facilitation, there should be some empathy around understanding those people remotely calling in and individuals in the office. So that's why I say emotional intelligence because it involves a lot of listening skills. And Cindy taught us like, listen. And when you're listening, it's to look at the camera, it's not listening while taking your phone. And it's really that a %100, the focus is there, and validating the response back by saying, "Oh, I hear you say X, Y, and Z, is that right? Is that what you said? So then that individual on the other hand is hearing that, "Oh, I feel unheard."

Lalaine Gedal:

So it's not just the skills that's being taught, but also that whole, what does listening really involve? So the component of, we were taught the tools, there's also that component of the technology, which was, oh my God, that was a learning curve, for us, you know? And then we also added that whole skills development for leaders going through emotional intelligence, understanding, psychological safety and that whole component. And I think this is what, I was just referring back to what Cindy was saying about the toolkit.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So Cindy, when you started working on the project, had the toolkit already been developed, or maybe if you can just give us a sense of what stage was the change initiative at when you joined the program and started working on this with Lalaine?

Cindy Huggett:

That's a great question, because the toolkit was, well, on its way. I'm not sure that it was completely finalised, but there had been a team working on it, a cross-functional team that went beyond Lalaine's team, Lalaine being a key driver of it. And it was well along its way. And part of what the team realised and how I was brought into the project was not only do we need to support our leaders with tools, but we need to support them with skills. We need to educate, we need to provide some learning on how to facilitate this new hybrid working environment. And just a very, very simple, but perhaps example that may help explain, think about leading a meeting, a skill that almost every leader does. In person meetings, we set agendas, we invite people, we schedule the logistics for the room and the people. And then in the meeting, we lead the conversation. And that's a pretty typical skill now in a hybrid meeting, instead of focusing solely on the agenda or the content or in a virtual meeting where we focus on, does everyone have the link and are we going to turn the cameras on in the hybrid environment? It's the skill of how do I prepare to have an equal and equitable experience for everyone, whether they're in the room or not. How do I manage things like those little side conversations that may happen in the in-person room? How do I manage the technology? How do I prepare for that?

Lalaine Gedal:

How do I... If we're going to have a conversation that perhaps is not a, what we call a rubber stamp conversation where everyone says, yes, maybe there's some dialogue and discussion and disagreement, and let's work through, how do I as a leader, lead that type of conversation when not everyone's in the same room? And so there's a skill that goes into that, and that's where I came in. How can we upskill the leaders in facilitating hybrid meetings? And so we did a series of workshops and we can talk more about those as the

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conversation goes, but were brought in at that point to help with the education and upskilling.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So what I really like is that we are talking about, a learning solution to give people skills, but this is part of a very well thought out, much bigger change initiative, which you've described to us Lalaine, rather than it just being about, well, we just give them the skills and that's it. Or we give them the tools in tech and that's it. So you've given us a sense of some of the elements that were in place, Lalaine and the consultation that led up to solution development. Is there anything you'd like to add in terms of what the overall change initiative looked like? Any other pieces of the puzzle and where the learning solution fitted in?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yeah, absolutely. So I would say that it is really a well-designed, I would say approach to bringing people back to the office. But again, making sure everyone succeeds, but as I heard, Cindy saying a while back, that I would just like to elevate because the culture in Takeda is really brought about making sure that our focus is around a patient and the importance of Takedaism, which is about patient trust, reputation, and business. So patience comes first. So it was really, I would say, designed around that culture. The corporate philosophy evolved and evolved the way we work because we were like, we really didn't know what to expect and making sure that our people, our people is a foundation of everything Takeda does. And so therefore, we need to make sure that we're committed to ensure success and again, upskilling to ensure that when we do come back to the office and now we are coming back twice a week to the office, again being intentional. And today, I had to share with you what a wonderful announcement that our Fridays are half a day. So, which is like, I know. I was like, time to really focus on mental health and that is so important. And today I was like, wow, this is so awesome to see the commitment of the organisation to make sure that people are thriving and really taking care of themselves.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. And no wonder that with the well considered approach that's helped to put this in place, and to evolve it over time. So Cindy, let's focus a bit more closely on the learning solution and design of the learning solution. So what were some of the key considerations or drivers when you were looking at design of the learning experience, including when and how and why to use live sessions?

Cindy Huggett:

Another really great question, and it may be helpful for context, that when I partner with a client, I offer workshops. It's kind of a core offering that I have, and I have a catalog of workshops that I offer, my hybrid facilitation, how to facilitate hybrid meetings. Hybrid events is a core offering, although it was very customised for Takeda, and in fact, it was a new offering at the time, because even though I've been talking about hybrid events for a while, it just hasn't been a popular thing to do until recently. And so in talking with Lalaine and rolling out, it was a custom version of my program and we customised it for the language. We customised it for the audience. So there were about 300 or so leaders that needed to go through the program. And it's one thing to bring 300 people together into a virtual event, but that's just a lecture.

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Cindy Huggett:

We wanted to give practice and do case studies and scenarios. And so we took the program down. There were about 15 people per session, so we needed Lalaine and I to go through the scheduling and communication process, the registration, all of the things you think about with that type of rollout. And Lalaine and her team handled the administration, the registration. I took care of the facilitating of the workshops, the electronic participant materials. Now, it would have been fantastic had we actually done these programs hybrid, however for a number of reasons, they were all virtual. So we used case studies and scenarios, the actual workshop, which I have now done in hybrid settings. But for this rollout in this circumstance, partly due to the timing, partly due to the locations, everyone was still working remotely at the time. Save a few here and there.

Cindy Huggett:

We did these workshops remotely. They were short workshops. They were 90 minutes long. They were scheduled at various times, various days to accommodate schedules. And the second part of the solution, because we all know that typical training workshops one and done are not the only way to learn. We've already talked about the toolkits and the other resources and support that was surrounding it, but we followed up with a series of micro-learning videos, a series of resources and references that were distributed, that were available for the learners to go back review, refresh their skills when they needed them. So when they could go back and lead their first hybrid meeting, they had a library of tools at their disposal.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So with the live sessions in which were virtual delivery, what was the participant experience that you were trying to create and what are some of the key things you do as a facilitator to create this experience?

Cindy Huggett:

Well, anyone who's been in my sessions knows that they are, from the moment you join highly interactive, you are brought into the experience through interaction, discussion, dialogue, collaboration. In that 90 minute session, participants will have done a preparation assignment to be ready to make sure their technology is set. I have a producer with me who is helping manage any technology issues. We're in breakouts within the first 10 minutes where the groups are working together and talking about what's challenging, what's our experience, what do we hope to learn? There's case studies that help bring the content to life. There are job aids for takeaways. There's application assignments and conversation around how we can apply this. So I think one of the best comments you could get at the end of a workshop, especially a virtual workshop, is I was so engaged that the time went really quickly and I didn't have time to multitask and be checking my email or doing other things. So because that's my standard, my hope, that's what I brought for these workshops. And Lalaine, I know, participated in several of them. If Lalaine has anything else to add, please feel free.

Lalaine Gedal:

I've learned a lot from Cindy . Again, if all meetings are that highly engaged, it's worth the time and your attention to be in that meeting. It's really, I would say, designed around a human center, because it's really about the people regardless where they are. And so it was amazing, amazing work that Cindy has done with Takeda.

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Michelle Ockers:

So, and I'll leave this but... Oh, Cindy, it looks like you wanna add something? Go ahead.

Cindy Huggett:

The other thing I'll add is when we think about learning solutions for any topic, we often, especially in a remote or hybrid working environment, naturally gravitate towards the self-directed solutions. Can I put together an e-learning course or program or job aids that we could push out to the learners? And in many cases, that's the right solution. For two reasons, live learning was the right solution here. Number one, we were teaching the skill of facilitation. We were teaching the skill of how do you lead meetings? And even though we did this in a virtual environment instead of a hybrid environment, there's so much overlap and parallel that it was the right solution, number one. And then number two, because of the timing, because of what needed to happen in a quick time frame to upskill the learners, we were up against some dates where the return to office was planned. We wanted to quickly provide some training. And with a virtual event, especially a workshop that was already under development, we were able to more quickly get the learning to the leaders who needed it.

Michelle Ockers:

So, in terms of the solution itself and the kind of activities, Cindy, you spoke about it being really interactive, and I'd be interested in both of you maybe sharing an example in response to this question. When you... And I think Lalaine, you said you went to four of the sessions. Cindy, obviously you were there for all of them. Do you have one example of one of those interactions or activities you ran in these particular sessions that either of you thought was particularly effective?

Cindy Huggett:

One of my favourite activities is a case study on a leader who needs to lead a hybrid meeting. And in the workshop after we've talked through the challenges of hybrid and some of the very specific job role challenges and some of the technology set up, the participants go into breakout groups and read through this case study to determine what did this leader do that was effective, what led to, in this case study the outcomes, and start the conversation around the solutions, finding the solutions in the case study. And the second part of that, once we look through and debrief and talk through the strategies, the next step is, so what will work at Takeda? What works in your organisation? Because obviously a case study, it's like watching a cooking show on TV. The recipe turns out perfectly every time, and we try to make that at home and it just doesn't look the same. And so the conversation around application in the workplace. For example, one of the aspects of the case study, tied back to some research that had been done during the pandemic by Microsoft on the fact that when we go from meeting to meeting to meeting to meeting and our brain gets overloaded, productivity declines.

Cindy Huggett:

And so in the case study, the leader changed the meeting time to start at 10 minutes after the hour for an afternoon meeting, and then communicated that. And it always led to the discussion around, "Well, does that mean you're starting the meeting late if you started at 10 after?" "Well, that was the planned time for it, deliberately in the afternoon to give people a break from whatever meeting they were going to." And so bringing up that conversation around, well, can we do that? That's very different from what we normally do. We start meetings at the top of the hour. And so being able to, in a small group setting, obviously in

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a virtual event, breakouts are a key activity that allows for discussion, collaboration, conversation, and that conversation would always come up. There were many other aspects, but that case study was a significant part of the solutions leading then towards the application of what can we do here in our environment to have more successful hybrid meetings.

Michelle Ockers:

Nice example. Lalaine. Are there any other examples of activities or interactions that struck you as being really powerful?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yeah, I would say I've learned from Cindy during this facilitation was about opening the meeting, the hybrid meeting, 10, five minutes early. That is, I think, so powerful and staying at the end as you close it, sometimes we're so in a hurry to close the meeting, but actually waiting, being there for those individuals who have questions and are afraid to ask. But you're allowing that space and offering the space that, "You know what, I'm here for you. If you have any questions, I'll be around." And I think that is, for me, very powerful because that really is investing in people and being able to listen is so important.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Cindy Huggett:

That's another one that, that did come from the case study because when you think about, in-person audience, those side conversations, not just during the meeting, but as you stand up and start to walk out of the room, sometimes we call that the meeting after the meeting where the decisions are then discussed. So in a hybrid environment, the remote attendees don't have the ability to participate. So a technique that helps a hybrid meeting be more successful is to keep the online meeting platform open until the last person leaves the room, as a meeting facilitator, being aware of the dynamic that may be happening with those conversations and drawing in the remote users. So, I'm so glad Lalaine remembered that one. It's another one that absolutely...

Lalaine Gedal:

It was so important.

Cindy Huggett:

Yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

It's a nice example. So Cindy, what are the most challenging aspects or traps of facilitating either in a virtual or hybrid setting? And here I'm talking about being a learning facilitator as opposed to somebody leading a work meeting. What do you say are the most common challenging aspects or traps that people fall into in facilitating these sessions? And how would you recommend people address them?

Cindy Huggett:

Michelle, how many hours do we have to continue talking about this?

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Michelle Ockers:

[chuckle] Well, you know what we're, you are a very prolific writer Cindy, and you've mentioned one of your books. I know you, I've seen a lot of articles from you on LinkedIn, so we will curate some resources that address that topic. But if you would just pick one, like the number one trap that you see people falling into and how they, how people can avoid it, when facilitating either virtual or hybrid learning sessions.

Cindy Huggett:

One of the things that's been on my mind lately about hybrid and virtual facilitation is there's a time and a place for presenting. There's a time and a place for teaching and speaking, but in a facilitated environment, facilitate means to enable, to encourage, to make it easy. And when I reflect on the amount of time that we as the facilitator are talking, it's very easy in a virtual environment when you are separated from the audience, when you are not in the same room with everyone, all participants to either turn yourself to presenter instead of a facilitator or to focus the conversation on those who are in the room. We want to shift that thinking and focus on the learner and getting their involvement. And their involvement may be verbal, it may be through other input mechanisms like polling or chatting or breakouts or whiteboarding and all the other tools that we have. But at the end of a, let's say one hour facilitated event, if I look back over that hour, how much time did I spend talking? How much time was I the one as the facilitator, shining the spotlight on what I wanted to say versus enabling my audience to speak?

Cindy Huggett:

And if we were to record a hybrid meeting or a virtual meeting, and somebody watching that recording back could have the same exact experience as somebody who was there live. Why was it a live event to begin with? So we're joining together for the sake of dialogue, discussion, and collaboration, sharing that airtime. I think that's one of the biggest skills that we can all learn to be better at, one of the biggest challenges and an area of opportunity for us all.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. I will take that one on board as well, Cindy. I do sometimes because I do so many virtually record sessions and then I'll look back over it. I think, oh, I spoke way too much. So yeah, that's something for us all to keep working on, I think. So Lalaine, as you participated in these sessions and watched Cindy facilitate, was there anything else significant that you think you or your team learned around virtual facilitation?

Lalaine Gedal:

Yes, I would say so with my team, working with my team and having gone through Cindy's workshop sessions, I would say really being inclusive is so important. And having that not only people in the room gets to talk, but I guess that's what Cindy was saying earlier, but having that equity, that balance, and you try and you try to do that the best you can, but making sure that we hear everyone in that meeting. And again, also making sure that not everyone is like an extrovert, who right away would like to speak through the microphone, they could speak over the microphone, there are people who'd rather do the chat. So we really have to be able to offer that option that you could either go off the microphone or put it into chat. So I would say really having that being inclusive and equity and making sure everyone is heard is so important.

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Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Thank you. One of the things I often do in my sessions is if I have a dialogue coming up, I give people an opportunity to do some individual reflection to gather their thoughts first, because some people are really quick thinkers and they come up with things straight away and it can kind of wash out the people who need a little more time to gather their thoughts before sharing. So I think that's really important. So Lalaine, you talked earlier about the bigger change initiative. You talked about an exciting new change to the approach and philosophy where Fridays are half days for working days. So obviously Takeda has continued to evolve its approach to hybrid work. So you are obviously learning things and adapting both as an organisation, and from a skills development perspective. Up to this point, what would you describe as the key outcomes of the shift into hybrid work for Takeda and the impact of the change initiative and learning solution on these outcomes?

Lalaine Gedal:

I would say it's really about the people of Takeda. And we... I say that because there was a shift even in employee engagement that we just had our employee survey, that was conducted late last year. And you could really see the reflection and the people's feedback on how it's being managed, how hybrid working is being managed. We're not forced to go back to the office. You just have to be intentional, what's the purpose of coming back to the office, and also finding that balance with mental health and taking care of yourself. But also having that foundation of the patient being the focus of why we're here, why Takeda's here, why Takeda exists. So I would say it, the reflection is how people are so engaged and we could see, I'm proud to say we have like an 82% engagement rate, which I think is pretty, pretty high for an organisation.

Michelle Ockers:

Well, particularly right now. So well done on that. So Cindy, in your role as the designer and facilitator for the live sessions and some of those micro-learnings and so on, what, if anything, would you do differently on this particular solution if you had your time over?

Cindy Huggett:

One of the things we didn't know in advance that I recall from this solution was the fact that the return to work date was going to shift. When we planned out the workshops, it was an attempt to deliver the workshops and the learning as close to the actual return to office date when the skills needed to be used. And then, well, because pandemics don't follow what we want them to, the date to return for these skills to be employed, got pushed back. And so there was a gap in time between them. And I don't recall what the gap was, but I remember there was a gap. So if I could wave a magic wand and go back and change things, it would have been to shift the timing so that it was a little more just in time. Now, the micro learning, the reinforcements were a big help in still having the support that was needed when the hybrid meetings rolled out and when they needed to use them.

Cindy Huggett:

So Lalaine and her team won an award for the change initiative. And Lalaine, I know you know the details much closer than I did, but I think it is important to recognize that your team was recognized for this change initiative and all of the work that you did in the rollout.

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Lalaine Gedal:

Thank you, Cindy. It was the one Takeda award. It was a high award, one of the highest awards in Takeda. So it's, again, the collaboration and the people that you bring with you in the journey is so important.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. Congratulations on a body of work well done and recognized. I feel like there have been lots of tips and suggestions for listeners shared right throughout the session, but I do like to give you an opportunity if there's anything in particular you'd like to emphasise or any other practical tips for others who are looking at supporting and enabling hybrid work or doing more with learning facilitation, either virtual or hybrid. Is there anything else you'd like to add? We've covered a lot of ground already.

Lalaine Gedal:

Yeah, I think I would like to add that it is so important that once you have the tools, you have the skill of facilitating hybridization. We also should not forget about the human skills of adding empathy into the work that we do. Understand what is emotional intelligence? How do we create a psychological safe environment that as we facilitate hybrid meetings, everyone feels safe and it's not easy to do. And, but that whole thing is leaders need to be equipped in having the skills to do that and to be able to maneuver in situations that they face.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Thank you very much Lalaine. Cindy, is there anything you would like to add as we wrap up the conversation?

Cindy Huggett:

Thinking about the skill of hybrid facilitation in general, when we think about what it takes to be successful, we've talked throughout today's conversation about various skills and the idea of we're trying to create an equitable environment, helping everybody feel included, regardless of the location. There's technology that makes that a lot easier. There are room kits, video cameras, audio setups, panels, screens, right? There's technology that an organisation can invest in that's going to make that easier. Hand in hand with that though is the facilitation skill, the skill of including everyone in the conversation of managing the discussion of asking questions and having a remote first response mindset. So the ideal scenario is both. You have a technology supported facilitator, that you have a facilitator who has been upskilled and recognizes the importance of including everyone. If we don't have the ideal scenario, then it's figuring out what we need to do to make this work and make it work well? I see too many organisations who plan for an in-person event, but somebody at the last minute can attend or at the last minute, oh, can we just let them call in? And there wasn't an advanced plan for that hybrid situation. So yes, the technologies out there can in a make it work scenario happen, but ideally we're going to support our facilitators with the technology that we need and the skills that they need.

Michelle Ockers:

And that is a nice piece of advice to round out on. Thank you so much. We're gonna include in the show notes a range of resources relevant to today's conversation, as well as a link to LinkedIn profiles for both of you. If anyone would like to get in touch to find out more about the topics discussed in today's episode. Thank you so much, Cindy and Lalaine for...

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0:52:44.6 Lalaine Gedal: Thank you.

0:52:45.7 Michelle Ockers: Sharing your work and insights with us. It's greatly appreciated.

0:52:50.5 Cindy Huggett: Thanks for having us.

0:52:50.8 Lalaine Gedal: Thank you.

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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 experience, pragmatic organisational learning strategist, L&D capability builder and modern workplace learning practitioner. She also delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events.

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

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



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