

Learning Uncut Episode 126
Rethinking Regulatory Learning – Deb Van Rensburg
Hosted by Michelle Ockers



Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to another episode where we dig deep into the real-life experiences of professionals in the Learning and Development field. I'm joined by Deb Van Rensburg, the head of Enterprise Regulatory Learning at National Australia Bank. We explore the evolution of regulatory learning at NAB in the past two years.

Deb and her team have tackled head-on the common issues that many L&D teams grapple with when it comes to mandatory learning. With every workforce member experiencing this type of learning, usually both at onboarding and then annually, it's a golden opportunity to give people a well-crafted learning experience that makes a positive impression and leaves them interested in engaging with more of your learning solutions. It's an area that deserves much more attention than it often receives.

Deb walks us through their well-considered 3-stage approach, which not only streamlined and removed duplicated content, but also significantly improved the learner experience. They are using a scenario-based method that allows for recognition of existing knowledge and also allows the design team to refresh content to stay abreast of real-world events and risks.

Moreover, we delve into inclusive design practices. As Deb puts it, inclusive design is all about ensuring that everyone who completes the learning feels seen and understood, and that the learning material is relevant to them well beyond their job function. Deb shares some great examples of how this concept is embedded in learning design of their regulatory learning.

Michelle Ockers:

Deb, welcome to Learning Uncut.

Deb Van Rensburg:

It is great to finally be here, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

It is. And I've got to say, Deb, I've been following this piece of work we're going to talk about today for about a year and a half. We've been checking in with each other saying, have you taken it far enough? Is it ready? Are we able to share it yet? And we are finally here, so I'm delighted. Thank you, Deb.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Thank you for the opportunity. Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

So Deb, you're with National Australia Bank. This is not the first podcast story we've done with NAB, so I will put a link in the show notes to a previous episode that we did some years ago. If you can introduce the organization briefly to the listeners, particularly as we have listeners outside of Australia who may not know what National Australia Bank does, although there's a clue in the name, right.

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Deb Van Rensburg:

I think there is a clue. National Australia Bank or affectionately called NAB, is one of the four largest financial institutions in Australia. But, a lot of people don't realize we also operate... Besides Australia, we operate in New Zealand, under the BNZ banner, we also operate in Asia, the UK, and the US. We've got a global workforce of around 40,000 colleagues. So a fairly significant organization. And I understand in terms of market capitalisation, we are the 21st largest global bank.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. And in terms of the conversation today, we are going to specifically hone in on the work you've done around improving compliance learning. Is this body of work just with the Australian workforce, or have you been doing this body of work globally? What does that look like?

Deb Van Rensburg:

The body of work was sent or deployed mostly to a global audience with the exception of BNZ, who operate quite independently. So everybody, that I named except for BNZ in New Zealand.

Michelle Ockers:

All right. Well that is interesting in the context of regulations in different countries as well. We'll see if that comes up in the conversation.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Sounds good.

Michelle Ockers:

Deb, can you introduce us to your role and your team?

Deb Van Rensburg:

My role is head of enterprise regulatory learning, which is quite a long title. And my team, the enterprise regulatory learning team, are a very small team that operate and sit within the Learning Center of Excellence as part of the people and culture function within NAB. We operate a federated model. We have the COEs and then we also have embedded capability teams in the organization. And my team are ultimately responsible for ensuring that NAB meets its enterprise regulatory learning obligations. And we do this through providing oversight of the central list of the obligations and act as a gatekeeper for all of the enterprise learning that goes out to our global workforce.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So does that mean then, Deb clearly governance is an important part of today's story, and that's one of the functions you've just described for your team. In terms of the actual development of regulatory or compliance what language are we gonna use? We're gonna call it compliance learning, regulatory learning. Let's settle on a term for the conversation.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Let's call it regulatory learning. It forms part of the compliance suite, which also would include things like that, the role essential learning. So let's think of it more broadly as what do the regulators need us to comply with? And let's stick at that level.

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Michelle Ockers:

So in terms of development of learning solutions and resources for regulatory learning, does your team do that or is that done by other teams in this federated model? How does that work?

Deb Van Rensburg:

We work with the key compliance stakeholders, as well as the content owners that sit across the enterprise. And our role as the team is almost to... We act as the learning professionals and make sure that we coordinate and deploy and ensure the quality of that learning as it goes out to our workforce. So we are the intermediaries, but we're also the learning technical specialists.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So other teams and people are developing the solutions and the content then, and you are doing like a governance and Q&A role, have I understood that correctly?

Deb Van Rensburg:

They own the content. We support the development. We work with vendors and with our content owners to make sure that solutions are developed to the standard that we would like.

Michelle Ockers:

Got it.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Sometimes they may work with vendors directly, but in the main, we are brought in as a partner.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So you've got a direct level of influence over what goes into those solutions working with external vendors largely to do the design and development work.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Correct.

Michelle Ockers:

Got it. Thank you. Deb, there's been a massive shift in regulatory learning in NAB over the past few years. Why was this needed and what were you trying to achieve?

Deb Van Rensburg:

If you cast your mind back, sort of early 2021, early to mid 2021, we were in the middle of COVID. We were facing ongoing, and increasing requirements from the regulators. And because of the increased expectations of our regulators, we had adopted a very conservative approach towards our compliance learning. In addition, we had the additional health and safety and wellbeing learning that was being developed to support our workforce. What this meant was almost an overwhelm of content that hit the workforce to the point was it felt like almost every month, every two months, there was a new piece of mandated learning arriving in your learning plan. And it just became quite an overwhelm for the workforce. So it was decided then that we would need to do something to streamline the approach, to remove duplication and to create certainty for our colleagues around what the learning was that they were doing, when they would be doing it, and why they were doing it. So, strip out anything that wasn't, really key and critical and really focus on what that experience looked like for our colleagues.

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Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. And you've taken a three step improvement approach since that time. That was mid 2021, you talked about as a kind of the time marker, the start. So we're now at mid 2023, 2 years later that you've walked me through as we kind of shaped up the episode, a three-step improvement approach. Can you give us a high level outline of those three steps?

Deb Van Rensburg:

Yes. The first step was really taking a close look at what we currently have. So that was a deep diagnostic of all of the mandated compliance learning that was sitting at an enterprise level, for our colleagues doing a real deep dive into what was it, how long was it, what was the experience like for the colleagues? And then we also worked on what would we like it to be? So if we cast our mind forward, what should it look like? And we worked with an external partner to put together a strategy around what our future state looked like based on global best practice. So we brought in some thinking what was happening in the UK particularly because they'd gone through a fair bit of change similar to us.

So we very much looked at what was happening there, but also what was right for our local conditions. That was the first step. Deep diagnostic and looking forward, this was a big piece of work that needed to be done to get to the ultimate destination. So we broke it up in two parts. So the first step, the second part of the three step process was launching an interim curriculum. So very quickly stripping out anything that was duplicated, removing non-essential content, and starting to tidy up what their quality looked like. And then the work then happened on the end state, which is what we call our risk conduct and compliance program. And so we spent a year workshoping, ideating what it could look like and building together the program of work, which launched in February this year.

Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. So it was clear you took a very deliberate and well considered approach to making this set of changes. At what point did you need to engage stakeholders? What support did you need from stakeholders and how did you go about getting the level of support you needed? And were there any kind of friction points or pushback because it's notoriously challenging to engage with our very well-intentioned compliance stakeholders who have an important role in the organization, right? To make sure we are meeting those regulatory requirements. So how did you go about engaging and influencing stakeholders on the program?

Deb Van Rensburg:

That was probably the trickiest part, the change management piece of this program. So initially just because we could push content out, we did, we collectively as content owners, as project teams pushing out a piece of mandated content was seen to be part of a change process. And so initially it was, we first of all had to stop, so we just pressed pause on everything unless it was regulator specific, regulator required so that we could determine, just stop. We need to actually understand what is going on here.

Michelle Ockers:

So Deb, when you say press pause, does that mean you just froze, like nobody had to do any compliance learning? Did you freeze everything or was it just a pause on developing new stuff? What did that pause look like?

Deb Van Rensburg:

It was a pause on anything non reg required being pushed out to our workforce. And it was just for a short period of time. And at the time period when we generally don't push stuff out

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to our colleagues, so December, January. And it was to allow us the opportunity to say, well, what actually should go out? So anything to do with enforceable undertakings, anything to do with what the regulators need. Of course that goes through without any challenge, but everything else, for example, if I'm in a project, a change team, and I developed a project for a new process, part of that would be to push up mandatory learning to those impacted people. We didn't allow that to happen. We stopped all of that so that we could get an understanding.

So of course that got... It caused a little bit of a ripple, I will say. And it's been ongoing conversations around what are we doing? Why are we doing it, what should it look like? And having clear guidelines and guardrails for our content owners so that they could be comfortable that they were recognized as the technical experts in their field as we are the technical experts in our field. And so making sure that they understood why we were doing this and giving them a degree of certainty as to what could go out and what should maybe be deployed to the team in another way. Maybe it was comms, maybe it was a performance support tool, not necessarily a mandated piece of learning. So really shifting the gears around understanding what should be pushed out in this way and what other mechanisms could be used.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. And how did people respond to that? How did your stakeholders respond to the suggestion that not everything needed to be pushed out as a course? That there were other ways of making sure people understood what was required?

Deb Van Rensburg:

We had some fabulous stakeholders who completely understood what we were trying to do, and they were really our trailblazers. So there were a couple that we worked with, really our trailblazers and understood and were key part in us developing the future state solution. And there were others that were a little bit trickier. And so it was really getting them comfortable in what was required by the regulators was not negotiable that absolutely needed to go out. But in terms of how it went out, in what format and what the experience needed to look like, we would help guard and shape that. So it was very much a partnering approach right from the very beginning. So think about it as being 18 months of change management with summer relationships.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And to what extent did you challenge stakeholders who were saying, well, it's a regulatory requirement, it's got to go out. To what extent did you challenge them to say, well, can we look at the regulation together, for instance? Or, can you show me where that is in the regulation? Did you have to get down to that extent of show me what... Where it says this?

Deb Van Rensburg:

Yeah, absolutely. We got really granular to what the specific obligations state and what the learning content needed to look like. So it was very granular. And of course that was months of consultation to make sure that we did adequately address regulations, because that's not negotiable but very much mapped content to obligations.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Thank you. I think it was important to get that out. I have heard of others who've gone down this path and one of the things they've all had to do was to get to that level of granularity at times. So you spoke a little already about this first stage, which was about mapping out what was already in place and also looking at your deep dive diagnostic and looking forward. Just briefly, how was this done and what did it show you?

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Deb Van Rensburg:

So, we worked with an external partner to do complete mapping, and I really feel for the individual who had to undertake each and every module of our learning. And so they had a small team that just went through every module. They went through what content was covered, what the experience was like, what the design standards were like. So, we got a very clear view of how long each module was, what the content was that it covered in granular detail. As well as what the experience looked like. And it showed us kind of three key things. So first of all, there was real lack of clarity as to what learning was required for what. So we needed to get really tight around mapping content to obligations. The second thing is the mandatory learning was really lengthy and contained a number of duplications across the programs.

And the third thing is it created confusion with our colleagues around what learning was mandatory and when they needed to complete it. Because if everything's important, then nothing's important. So, there was just as overwhelm as I've mentioned. So those were the kind of the three key things that came out of the diagnostic, which was a thorough review of every single piece of learning that was pushed out.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So then you took this two-stage approach. You talked about an interim curriculum. Talk to us a little bit more about that interim curriculum. What did that look like?

Deb Van Rensburg:

That was, then we knew what content in the main needed to be there. It was making sure that it wasn't duplicated across programs and was also bringing some programs together. So interim was very much about starting to streamline when learning was deployed and removing duplication. So we have to deploy this... We are required to deploy this learning every year on a refresh basis. So we couldn't say, well, while we design the future state, we just won't send... That won't push learning out for 12 months, but we knew we wouldn't be ready with the full design. So the interim was really to make sure that what was critical was pushed out. It wasn't the prettiest, I will admit, but it wasn't a poor experience either. It was better than what it was, but it wasn't nearly where we needed to get to. And, but the first stage was, get rid of the duplication, start to streamline, make sure we push it out.

Michelle Ockers:

So a little bit of low hanging fruit, the clear and obvious stuff.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Completely, yes.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. One of the other things you started exploring in this stage is, accessibility and inclusive design to set yourself up for the next stage. What, and I know there's been a lot more conversation rightly so, about inclusive design in recent years. In your own words, what is inclusive design?

Deb Van Rensburg:

So inclusive design is making sure that you consider all aspects of inclusion when you design the learning that needs to go out. And that is including accessibility. That is including age, gender, race, cultural diversity, geographic diversity. It's bringing it all together and making sure that anybody who completes the learning feels like, feels seen, feels like the learning is relevant for them, and importantly doesn't feel like they've been culturally targeted

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or gender targeted. So really using learning as part of continuing to build the inclusive culture that we are building at NAB.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. And I believe you had a number of your designers completing inclusive design workshops. Is that correct?

Deb Van Rensburg:

That's right, yes. We partnered with the Center for Inclusive Design. They ran a workshop series for our designers, not just within our team, but we brought a couple of designers in from around the business as well, because together we needed to make sure that we put in place a framework that was... That would work for the organisation. And so it was a series of workshops where they understood what inclusive design was and what it wasn't, and then they worked together on an inclusive design framework that we now use as part of our quality standards with all learning that is designed and deployed at NAB.

Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. And what are examples of some of the things that shifted in your approach to design as a result of really getting deep and getting educated on inclusive design.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Visual design. So, with our latest learning that we deployed, we use a selection of diverse, low poly characters. So what that looks like is... And we use them in our scenarios, and what that looks like is it's more of an abstract representative of a character it's not realistic. But what it means is, the learner can then imagine themselves in that role. So it starts to make the learning experience much more richer. They're not focused on the gender or the race or anything like that. They're more focused on the scenario and can really take the learning out of that. The second thing was the actual scenarios that we used.

A lot of the scenarios were heteronormative, so we needed to bring in the scenarios that we're using to be reflective of our community and reflective of our colleagues. So, breaking up those scenarios. We also used a diverse range of reviews of people to review the scenarios to make sure, because we can't see our own biases as humans, we need to make sure that whoever's reviewing the learning represents the colleagues that will be consuming the learning. So there were a number of things that we undertook of course, accessibility. We've always been really strong on accessibility and accessibility standards. It meant that we continue to improve on that area as well.

So there's no reason why you shouldn't be able to consume the learning from an accessibility perspective either. There's no excuse for that. And so that's top of mind for us as well. And we were collecting feedback along the way. And one, I took a snippet of one of the pieces of feedback I want to read to you, which really warmed my heart and showed that we had... We got this right this time. And the person had said, there is only one race, the human race. I liked that ethnic groups or people from specific countries were not singled out when drafting scenarios. We had so much rich feedback that people felt that they could really connect with the learning and they didn't feel singled out.

Michelle Ockers:

I love that, there is only one race, the human race. Excellent. And you mentioned working with vendors when we were talking in the introduction about your team and how you work. How did you bring your vendors along or did you need to bring them along or were they already there with their inclusive design practices? How did... What did that look like in terms of your relationship and how you work with vendors?

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Deb Van Rensburg:

We had undertaken the inclusive design workshops before we kicked off the final stage. And then with them, with stage three of the process. So we then engaged our vendors and got them across our inclusive design framework. So the vendor that joined us in supporting the build the ideation and the build actually was exposed to our inclusive standards and then used those to help us develop the learning.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So obviously having the design standards and framework is really important, even if you're not working with external partners to making sure everyone's working towards the same thing in a design team. So shall we move on to stage three then, which is where you've kind of gotten through that initial round of where are we at, what needs to change, what might the future look like? What can we do now to the really big chunk of work, right? The really bigger shifts around connecting and in lifting the learning experience for your regulatory learning. I know that, connecting everything has been important so it doesn't feel like this overwhelming, disconnected experience. What... How have you tackled that challenge of connecting all of the regulatory learning?

Deb Van Rensburg:

This piece was really important to us. So what we did is we looked globally and said, "Well, what are other financial institutions doing? What are other companies doing?" And we connected it and we aligned it to the code of conduct to NAB's code of conduct, which is in line with what we found was successful globally. So our code of conduct, it doesn't only outline how we work, but it also serves as a decision making tool. And so we wanted our learning to kind of connect under the three pillars of our code of conduct. The first one being our community and our customers. The second pillar being our colleagues, and then the third pillar being governance and risk. And so we really wanted to align the learning under those three pillars and focus on a culture of speaking up, identifying risks, making decisions, and understanding the consequences of those decisions. So that was the envelope in essence of the framework and the envelope of what the learning looked like. And then we plugged the elements of learning within that framework. So it was quite streamlined, easy to understand and it was logical, it made logical sense for our colleagues.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So what else has changed about your compliance, your regulatory learning?

Deb Van Rensburg:

Historically, what we collectively, the industry have viewed compliance, regulatory learning as here's some content, here's a knowledge check, might even have a scenario. And then you've got an assessment at the end. And it can be quite dry. And the assessment questions can be designed to trick you. So a lot of time you'll get through and it's the click next, compliance learning. Did you learn anything? You get right to the end and you go, did I learn anything? Not sure, but I don't have to worry about it for another 12 minutes.

Michelle Ockers:

It ticks the box.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Tick the box. I'm not gonna get in trouble. One of the things I'm really proud of, and it showed in the feedback afterwards that people actually felt they learnt something, from the learning that we've just pushed out. It was really high. It was in the 90th percentile of feedback that we learned something. And so the reason why is we shifted the approach. So

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we used scenarios to kick off the learning. So these are scenarios taken from real life things that happen at NAB, real life events obviously anonymised and prioritised as well. Again because some things are more of a priority than other things.

So real life scenarios that you go through this scenario and then we ask you, so what should you do in this instance? Either way you're gonna get some rich feedback. If you're really clear, we, through recognition of prior learning, you can move through the learning a little bit faster. But you get rich feedback based on the consequences of the decision you made. So if you didn't quite get that right, this is what could happen if you go on that route, let's try again. So giving clear feedback and asking our colleagues to make a decision and then understanding the consequences of those decisions was how we shifted the learning.

So that's probably the... One of the things that is really different about this, the actual... The way we've designed it. Other things, we use more bite-sized modules. A lot of our colleagues are in the frontline and if a module is 30 minutes long, they can't jump in complete a bit and go back to serving clients, more customers when they need to. So we really needed to modularise this so that they could jump in, complete, jump out. So, that was another thing that we did. And then this, the third thing was the inclusive and accessible framework that we utilise, which really changed how the scenarios played out and created more emotion and created more stickiness.

Michelle Ockers:

So you talked about integrating or connecting everything through to your code of conduct, did it mean that you changed kind of the modular structure? If you're doing it through scenarios, one scenario might cover off considerations around different types of regulation, for instance. So instead of, here's your training on this piece of regulation, tick that module off and you go onto to the next module, which is about a different piece of regulation. Were your scenarios actually covering multiple regulatory requirements from different places? And if so, how did you make sure that you'd covered everything off that was essential?

Deb Van Rensburg:

You are absolutely right. There is overlap. There is a lot of overlap. So, it was working with the stakeholders then around, if we use a scenario, what are the elements of legislation that this scenario might encompass? And we had complex scenarios and we had very simple scenarios. So depending on the content type and the complexity of it, we would build in more decisions, more feedback, and work with the content owners to work together to have a meaningful scenario. So it was a really big win for us because you don't think in slithers of this is this regulation or this is that regulation. There is an overlap in terms of how you execute your role. And so it's making sure that our colleagues see that and they're not able to recognise when there's a risk happening around conflict of interest or around, a number of different things are able to recognise it, in that instant rather than think of it in terms of a module.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. So how do you keep track of all this? So, I imagine from time to time, as a matter of course, regulators want to satisfy themselves that the regulations are being adhered to and that essential training is being undertaken. Heaven forbid there's some incident that needs to be investigated. But even in turn, I imagine there's a level of due diligence internally where things are being monitored and checked. Do you have some sort of big master spreadsheet somewhere that cross references? How do you know that you've got everything covered?

Deb Van Rensburg:

There is a big, big, big spreadsheet covering everything. And noting as well that this learning is from an enterprise perspective. So if you are a deep specialist, for example, in a certain

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part of our business that needs to do additional, this wouldn't cover that. This really is awareness of risks at a higher level. So, it's much more the top part of, what does everybody in the enterprise need to know, and then had we evidence that they have received the learning when they join the organisation, but also that they've received the refresher training and any training on any kind of new emerging things that might have come through them.

Michelle Ockers:

Great. And you mentioned RPL, Recognition of Prior Learning. What does that look like and how do you identify that and use that in this new world of regulatory learning?

Deb Van Rensburg:

What we found, and we are still diving into the data, but what we found is, you had a degree of muscle memory around the content, that people were able to get through the learning really quickly, because they understand... They knew what the questions were year after year, they didn't change too much. So they would just go through. What we've done this time is, we've asked our colleagues to focus on decision making. So here's a scenario, what would you do? Even for those who had a deep knowledge of what might need to be done, it would force them to stop and reflect and think a little bit. For those who are really comfortable with the content, would then be able to get through the scenarios and the assessment questions pretty quickly. And if you answered progressively in the way that you needed to respond, then you would get less scenarios, only the critical ones. If, for example, it was a complex scenario and you didn't answer it quite correctly, you might get a follow up scenario that would help to extend your knowledge until you were comfortable. So again, even people that have been with NAB for very many years, and gotten used to certain compliance training, gave us feedback that they actually learned something this time. So even though there was very similar content, we asked them to think differently about it and to make decisions.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And to that point then, do you continue to develop the scenarios because somebody's done them one year, they have to do a refresher. How do you keep it up to date? How do you refresh? What does that look like?

Deb Van Rensburg:

This is where using SCORM 2004 really is going to come in handy. So what this means now is we understand and we can pinpoint where we have very strong muscle memory in the organisation around a certain topic. So 95% of people responded to this question and they... After the scenario and they actually made the right decision. And if there's an alternate topic where we might need to reinforce the learning or there's an emerging theme, let's focus on those. So we can start to be smarter around what do we prioritise in terms of our content and what do we prioritise in terms of our risks, based on what we're seeing and based on how the... How our colleagues are responding to the questions. So we can start to be really data informed to create the next learning, but also to understand if we've got a bit of a gap in a certain area, how do we bolster that? How do we reinforce that through campaigns, through nudges? What are the other mechanisms we need to use?

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so really using the data that's available to you to understand where you need to spend more time and attention for the organisation. Obviously, regulations change or there's new risks or threats so you can refresh the scenarios as well. You mentioned SCORM 2004, and if listeners haven't twigged yet, I am not an instructional designer. So I'm familiar with SCORM, but SCORM 2004 specifically, what makes it like, why have you called out the 2004? What's special about that?

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Deb Van Rensburg:

What's special is it allows us to dive into the granularity of how people respond. So we can very quickly... So we're now not just only measuring completion rates, we're actually measuring decisions along the way. So we can understand two-fold. As I mentioned to you, we understand now where there's a greater level of comfort with content and where there isn't. So where we might have gaps that we need to plug or reinforce. But the other thing is, if the module is not performing as it needs to, or the question is a little bit confusing, we're able to very quickly go in, see that, and remediate. So for example, we found that on day one, one of the questions was looping. And we were able to jump in very quickly, go in, remediate it straight away, and minimal impact on people completing it. So it gives you line of sight as to how your learning behaves, but it also gives you line of sight as to how people are interacting with the program.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, and how often is your team looking at that data?

Deb Van Rensburg:

At the moment, because it's post-deployment review, we're diving into it, we're doing a full diagnostic and diving into it. There will be other programs that are deployed that they're now looking at also using SCORM 2004 to understand behavior, to understand what we now have as a baseline of data. So that will continue with other programs that are deployed. We'll do this on an annual basis, which will be terrific, because we'll be able to kind of establish a baseline for certain things, and now we can see how we perform relative to that.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, great. Can we come back to scenario-based learning? What have you and the team learned about scenarios and how to prepare... What makes for a good scenario, a useful scenario versus things that maybe you tried in the scenarios as you were putting them together that you thought that didn't really do the job it was meant to do for us?

Deb Van Rensburg:

The best scenarios have been those, and the most impactful scenarios have been those that came from real cases, real events. People can tell when something's made up. They really can, and we know through storytelling that you can really get people to connect with the characters, to connect with the message. And so it was really important that we weren't just making things up to fit a regulation, that we actually took real events and we spoke about what happened, what could have happened if certain things played out different ways. So I think the key thing is it needs to be as realistic and as connectible as possible for people to really understand why this is important.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. There's something I'm curious about, you talked about your team working right around the globe. So NAB operates in many locations and your team has taken responsibility for the regulatory learning across a range of locations. How have you managed to do that? If you're trying to be inclusive, so there's cultural differences, there's slight differences in regulation in different places, how have you approached that to ensure that what you've got is truly enterprise-wide relevant across all of your operating locations?

Deb Van Rensburg:

That's a really good point, and we are getting better. So we are learning and getting better all the time. The key thing is, what is legislated here may be legislated differently in other areas. In Asia for example, look at the health and safety content, they would have their own regulations. So they develop their own module around things that are unique to their

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geography, and we developed... So we have the modules that are consistent with all geographies and then we'll have those that are unique to Australia. And so where it's local legislation, those teams develop their own and of course we take on feedback all the time. So we have learning colleagues in other areas, our P&T colleagues, we ask them to review and reflect and give us feedback. Making sure that we are inclusive with the other geographies, but also respecting what's unique in the other geographies, and they develop the learning for those things that are unique.

Michelle Ockers:

Understand. So you've got this oversight without taking on everything yourselves. Which begs the question around how do you now govern regulatory learning to make sure that all of this good work doesn't somehow gradually erode and get undone over time? How are key decisions made about what's going to be covered, about who can push out things that are regarded as mandatory and so on? What does that look like?

Deb Van Rensburg:

We've put in place a governance framework and a regulatory learning forum, and senior risk and compliance executives sit on that forum to make sure that we don't get back to the position that we were in 18 months, two years ago with the enterprise being overwhelmed with content. So the forum meets every quarter, more frequently if we need to, and we decision around audience, frequency, what's going to be deployed. We have some pretty robust discussions around, should it be everybody? Shouldn't it be everybody? Or should it be a specific audience? As well as discussions around, should this even go out as mandatory or can there be other ways to do that? So that's one of the key decisioning forums that we have. And then of course, we have checks and balances and controls along the way to make sure that content is current and addresses what is required on at least an annual basis.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. There's just so much energy and thought that's gone into this. It just strikes me that it's such a valuable opportunity and touchpoint with your workforce for learning generally. And if we're not making it a great experience, we're really missing an opportunity for people to go, "The learning we're offered is useful. It's interesting. We learn something. I want to engage with more learning." So it's about not just the regulatory or essential or mandatory learning, but it's about setting expectations and engagement and building an appetite for other learning as well, Deb. Has that sort of been something on your mind as well?

Deb Van Rensburg:

It has been. There's a couple of things. If we overwhelm our workforce with too much mandated learning, they really don't have capacity to do any kind of growth learning. So that's an opportunity cost for the organization. It is a great cultural lever as well, as you mentioned, to really engage our colleagues around, this is who we are and we're proud of this, this is what you can expect. So from a culture perspective, it's a terrific opportunity. And compliance learning or regulatory learning is the one piece of learning every person in the organization will do, so let's make it a great experience. Let's make it engaging. And it's not just good for the employees, it's good for the business as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And to that point, what impact would you say the changes that you've made have had on your workforce and on your business up to this point? How are you gauging the success and impact of these shifts?

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Deb Van Rensburg:

I'll answer that in two parts. From our colleague perspective, the feedback, as I've mentioned before, has been overwhelmingly positive. We had 100% positive feedback on our inclusive design, so that was a very big tick for us. And other areas that received positive feedback were around the design experience, the learning value, the graphics. There was just a lot of very positive feedback from our colleagues. From a business perspective, there's a number of strong benefits. First of all, we saved the organization the equivalent of 10,000 days. That was just through removing duplicated and non-critical content.

Michelle Ockers:

Wow, that's massive.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Yes, that's massive. And also through streamlining the process on and combining the programs, the business now has greater certainty when the learning is coming, and so they're able to plan... Do the workforce planning a lot more effectively. And then thirdly, from a risk perspective, we can now very clearly demonstrate how we are addressing the prioritised risks and what those impacts are.

Michelle Ockers:

Fantastic. Lots of reasons to inspire people to get in and take a good look at their regulatory learning. So if we think about what's made this initiative so successful, Deb, what are kind of the top two to three things that you think have been most critical for the success of the initiative?

Deb Van Rensburg:

First thing is senior executive sponsorship and advocacy. So our chief compliance officer was our sponsor throughout this program and was a vocal advocate of this program throughout the 18 months, and that didn't waiver. They stood in front of the first ideation workshop and challenged the content owners to think about compliance learning differently. So really challenged all of us to take a different approach and think, and this person was a big advocate in terms of connecting the other senior leaders in the organization as to what we are doing, why this is important. So number one, absolutely, have a very strong sponsor who is vocal along the way.

The second thing, work with strong external partners that challenge your thinking, that bring their experience to you, that show you what good looks like. Work with people that you trust, external partners that you trust, that's been crucial for us. And then third is be really clear on what your North Star is. What are you trying to achieve? It helps you stay the course, but what I would also say is listen to feedback along the way and be flexible to adjust based on that, so that you get to where you want. The how may not be clear at the very beginning and you may need to adjust, but then you will get there. That's probably the three thing for me.

Michelle Ockers:

So you talked about having a North Star. What did you keep coming back to as your North Star with the team on this?

Deb Van Rensburg:

We needed more streamlined, more simple regulatory learning that engaged our colleagues without overwhelming them, that satisfied three things. We absolutely need to satisfy the regulators. We need to address the key regulatory requirements and we have to satisfy that.

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The second thing is it needs to be a great learning experience for our colleagues. They need to engage with it. And the third thing is it needs to be commercial. It needs to make sense. So if you cover all three of those together, that was crucial. That was part of our North Star.

Michelle Ockers:

Great. And that's really clear. And you were just able to rattle those off the top of your head with incredible ease, so I can tell that that was your anchor point the whole way through. If you had to undertake this project again knowing what you know now, is there anything you'd do differently?

Deb Van Rensburg:

I think the... And we spoke about this a bit earlier on, around our internal partners, our content owners, there were some that really struggled with the enormity of the change. And I would probably have doubled down on that a little bit more, a little bit earlier. Because it got to sort of point difficulty with some and it took a lot of work to get them on board. So I would have front loaded the work with our content owners a lot heavier and spent a lot more time painting the picture.

Michelle Ockers:

Great. Thank you. And, Deb, final question, tips for others. And it might... You've already given us a lot of tips in those last couple of questions, but if anybody's sitting there thinking, "Gosh, we really need to make some shifts in our regulatory learning," or what we would consider as mandatory learning in our context, in our organization." What tips would you give people just for getting started and maintaining some momentum on this?

Deb Van Rensburg:

I think just reflect on the fact that compliance learning, again, is an area everybody needs to do compliance learning. So if you're not doing something about it, you are missing a trick in terms of building your culture, in terms of engaging and connecting with your colleagues, and improving your risk profile as an organization. So I would just say, focus on this. Don't be scared of it. I think a lot of people... A lot of learning professionals step back from compliance learning because it feels scary. You are not the expert and I'm not the expert in terms of the regulatory obligations. My content owners are and I partner with them. I know what I need to show. I know what we need to evidence. They know their content in detail. So if we're all really clear around the roles we play and work together, this is a great opportunity for organizations.

Michelle Ockers:

It is a great opportunity, Deb. Thank you so much for sharing the story of how you've gone about challenging the organization on this and ending up with a much better result for everybody at NAB. I'm going to include a link to your LinkedIn profile with the show notes if anyone would like to get in touch with you to find out more about topics discussed. And we'll add some additional resources to the show notes as well. Thank you so much, Deb. Really appreciate finally having you in the position where you could share this story.

Deb Van Rensburg:

Thank you for the opportunity, Michelle.

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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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