

Learning Uncut Episode 136
Just-In-Time Support - Low Tech, High Connection -
Matt Garrett and Blake Sohier
Hosted by Michelle Ockers



Michelle Ockers:

Today we are speaking with Matthew Garrett and Blake Sohier here from IOR, welcome to the podcast Matt.

Matt Garratt:

Michelle, 135 episodes and we're finally here.

Michelle Ockers:

And yet you and I only met literally last week, right?

Matt Garratt:

That's right. We caught up just before the Innovation and Tech Fest in Sydney. Had a great time and really glad that we crossed paths.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, me too. I was immediately captivated by the company IOR and by some of the work you've been doing. And I just knew that we had to have this conversation. And Blake, welcome to Learning Uncut.

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, thank you. I'm obviously very happy to be here and we're up in the hundreds. So, you know, we've made it. I'm excited.

Michelle Ockers:

It's always exciting. So IOR is such an interesting company, Matt, a great Australian company. I think one worth talking a little bit about because it's what it does, I think is pretty unusual. So tell us a bit about IOR.

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, well, IOR started as Inland Oil Refinery. That's what it stands for. And there's only two refineries left in Australia. We're one of them. We're very proud of that fact. But that's only a really small part of our business now. We're most well known for our network of unmanned diesel stops. We've got about 107. And people that have travelled around Outback Australia, or if you've got a transport company or a farm or someone that's reliant on fuel of some description, then you'll probably have heard of IOR. Everyone else, maybe not so. And you should get out and do a bit of travel in the Outback.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes. And of course, Australia is a vast country and the idea, just the business model, the business concept is amazing. But of course, there's only so many things you can do unmanned, you still need to get the fuel, the diesel out to these stops, right?

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Matt Garratt:

That's right. And that's the unique thing about our diesel stops is that they are unmanned. And the way that we manage those unmanned sites is we've got a program called HiDip that we've developed ourselves that manages or sends back the information about how much fuel is in each of those tanks. And that goes to our logistics team, so they know where to coordinate, where to send their drivers. And it's allowed us to expand really rapidly because of that software. So we're as much a, as well as being a transport and logistics company, we're also a technology company as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Innovation or being innovative. Innovation is one of your company's values. And I know that both of you, when we spoke yesterday, described the business as innovative and entrepreneurial. I'd like to get a take from both of you around what that means for your work in L&D, the fact that the company is innovative and entrepreneurial.

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, well, our founders, when they see an opportunity, they will just jump on it and make it happen. And so you're right, in terms of the innovation side of things, we've always got to think a little bit outside the box when it comes to delivering training, because we've got such a diverse workforce. We've got people in the office here in Brisbane, but we've also got a large percentage of our workforce are truck drivers, that their hours are managed. They've only got small windows of time to do training. We've got people who work in workshops, building tanks, and every so often there's a new element introduced to the business. We recently opened up a fuel import terminal that we built ourselves. So just keeping up with the rate of pace and the change and the things that are happening, it's such an exciting place to work for, but it definitely keeps us busy.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. And of course it's a privately owned business. I think that's important to understand. And a relatively small business still, so things can be done a little bit quicker. Blake, you've been with the business less time than Matt. Matt, is it about four years, a little over four years you've been with IOR?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah. Yeah. Soon to be five.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay. And Blake, how long have you been with the business?

Blake Sohier:

I'm actually coming up to two years in a couple of months, so I'm looking forward to it.

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Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah. So in terms of what you've noticed in terms of the differences, because the company is so innovative and entrepreneurial, how has that affected how you've approached your role and what that means for you working in L&D?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, so I've had to approach my role, obviously, in a very different aspect coming from roles where it's very heavy and online tech savvy people. And, you know, the, the digital literacy is, you know, quite high. Whereas here, we've got to think outside the box. And it's got to be very quick, fast paced learning. So going back and really reevaluating what you've taken strides to learn and understand, because that's the way the world's going, step back and go, actually, this is how we need to do it, because we're such a unique company. And that's probably the biggest thing for me is just stepping back from what I know, and really evaluating what the company needs, what the learners needs are, and then, you know, making decisions towards that that would benefit them.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah. One thing we didn't cover off was roles. What's your role in the L&D team, Blake?

Blake Sohier:

Yes, so I'm the learning and development advisor here at IOR. I do much more than advising. Thankfully, I get a lot of hands on approaches. Obviously, you do the advising and, you know, we're both hands on. We're building a course at the moment that we've been passing between us. So, yeah, I can't say my role is just one thing, but the title is definitely advisor.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And Matt, you're in the leader role.

Matt Garratt:

That's right. Yeah, I'm the manager here and where Blake himself, like he actually gets to, and I've done a lot of this too, travel around and visit each of our remote depots around Australia. I've seen so much of the Outback since joining IOR. And the other really cool thing is Blake looks after our onboarding and inductions, and we wanted to keep the experience really based on that small family business that it started out as. We wanted to keep that intimate sort of relationship building when someone came in. And so we've got these really fun tours. We do them in person. There is a bit of a hybrid thing. There's still the online learning, but Blake heads that up and does a great job. We call it the party bus that he takes around with the, what is it, the ute that you've got and the flashing MindSpec light that you sometimes put on.

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, the MindSpec ute. I do want a party bus, so I have to take all the new people around with the free drink in the back, a nice cold bottle of water to go with it.

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Michelle Ockers:

I tell you, it sounds like you guys have a lot of fun with your work as well, which makes a big difference. We are going to focus in on the driver workforce and the just-in-time approach, married with the personal touch, the people touch that you take to support the drivers and their development. Blake, you spend a lot of time with the drivers. Can you tell me a little bit about who they are, what sort of work they do, who they are, what matters to them?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, so who they are, well, every single one of them is completely different, that's for sure. But, you know, they're true Aussie men and women. We're quite fortunate to have a number of female drivers with us. And it's just amazing that every time I go and meet a driver, there's always that little bit of apprehensiveness of, oh, you're from the head office, what are you here for? But as soon as I mentioned something like fishing or, hey, I'm a normal person, my shirt's untucked, look at this, you know, you become a more normal person. So these drivers just they want help and they want it then and there, like it's got to be relevant to them. And while like in the onboarding at the end of their first day, I send them like a wrap up email of the things that we've covered and key links to systems and where they can find information. That is actually, I've got my phone number at the bottom. So, you know, Matt and I both become really the first point of contact for, hey, this has happened or where do I go for this? And, you know, we take that approach of, you know, train, not fix, but. We also don't want to be like arming information off, you know, palming people off. So we make the introductions where we can and, you know, really try to keep that people focus. So we're not, you know, just the person. Once we return back to the office, you don't hear from us again for another 12 months.

Michelle Ockers:

So what does that mean, train not fix?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, so train not fix is we really try to encourage people or any stakeholder, any person in the business, if they've got a concern or a challenge or something that they need help with, it could literally be anything, as we know as L&D practitioners, we get all sorts of questions. And train not fix, like Matt's and I's approach to this is just we want to make sure that we put them in touch with the right information or the right people who can get that information. And the T part of train not fix actually forms a wider part of what we call the FACTS methodology. So it's all around being, you know, flexible, so flexibility, acceptance, consistency, that train not fix, and then the service that we provide. Because we treat ourselves like a service provider, we want to give the best possible service and the best outcomes to those people.

Michelle Ockers:

Fantastic. We're going to come back to the drivers and some of their skills requirements in a moment. Matt, what might be interesting, we're going to be talking about a just-in-time approach and the use of a just-in-time approach. So let's set some context. Let's start with talking about what just-in-time is and what it isn't. And talk about, you know, what were some of the key considerations and challenges that

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have led you down the path of adopting a just-in-time approach to support the driver workforce?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, well, it was really important to look at just-in-time for us because there was a very low tolerance for people to go and find information. They just expected things to work. and be able to find things straight away. And if you didn't acknowledge that or accept that, then basically you became the port of call for everything and you were just constantly putting out fires. What we looked at was broader than just having a learning management system with our courses that we put people through, our inductions, and then saying, see you later, goodbye. We wanted to make sure that when we did do training, there was something for people to come back to and really embed it in the work that they're doing. So we've got a lot of ways that we've sort of thought about how can we support people to do their jobs well rather than What training do they need? Different mindsets.

Michelle Ockers:

Different philosophy, right? Supporting people to do their jobs well. Yeah. As a start point. One of the things I often rail against is this idea of people have about learning in the flow, which is kind of, you know, mixed up with just in time that if we just shove micro content into places where people can get to it from wherever they work, that that's just in time. But it's a very different philosophy, right? When you think about supporting people to do their job.

Matt Garratt:

Exactly. And I can give you an example with the drivers because they're, as we sort of, we might have alluded to earlier, they're a special demographic. Some of them are very tech savvy, but most of them aren't. And whenever they reach out or they want to get in touch with either Blake or I, it's actually, they're taking a big step, a big leap of faith. It's important that we develop that rapport with them initially, which is what Blake's talking about in terms of having his shirt untucked or being himself.

Michelle Ockers:

Let me just put a pin in there for a minute. Do you deliberately pull your shirt out before you go and talk to them?

Blake Sohier:

Well, so I've got a high-fit shirt and a lot of drivers have them tucked in, but at the end of the day, you're a little more casual. So I try to look like I've, I've worn the shirt for more than just a few hours. You don't want to present, you want to present in a professional way, but not so professional that they're like, Oh, I don't want to talk to that person because they're out, they're out West. They're down, hands on the ground kind of people. You want to be approachable.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes.

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Matt Garratt:

It's more about maybe wearing the high-vis, the same as the drivers, you're not turning up in a shirt and a suit pants or something like that.

Michelle Ockers:

But you want to make sure you wear it with credibility, right?

Matt Garratt:

Totally. That's exactly right.

Michelle Ockers:

So I think it was a nice little sidebar. So Matt, you were talking about establishing rapport with the drivers.

Matt Garratt:

Totally. And so when they reach out and they're looking for help, we want to really dive into that service element. We want to make sure that they're getting a good experience. They're happy to come back again. They know that if they reach out, they're not going to get in trouble. They're not going to be put down or laughed at because they had a silly inquiry or something like that. We want to make sure that they feel good about making the call and asking for help. And even if it's not our department to look after them, We will direct them in that area, and it can be tempting sometimes to just fix the problem, but that's probably one thing that I've had to let go of as we grow bigger and bigger, that it's handing off to the right person, informing them of who they can call next time to help solve that problem. But just in time for a driver is actually very low tech. They do need to use technology while they're out in the field. They've got a driver app that tracks the input, where they loaded their fuel from, where they dropped the fuel off, that sort of stuff. We've created a physical driver handbook that has got instructions in the back of it. So if they get stuck at a certain step and they're not sure what to do, they can refer to that handbook. And even if they give us a call, we can refer back to a certain page in that handbook so they don't feel like they're lost and they know how to return to that next time.

Michelle Ockers:

Great. So, Blake, let's hear a little bit more about the drivers before we come back to their experience with learning and support from your team. How many of them are there?

Blake Sohier:

Oh, I would say, and Matt, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we're sitting around the 160 or 180 number range for our drivers at the moment. And just looking at my work beforehand, I've seen a few more in the pipe work. So once they've cleared some medicals, I'll have some new best friends on Mondays.

Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. And, So what else can you tell us about the drivers in terms of things like, I don't know, how would someone looking at them describe them? I know you said

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they're very varied. Does that mean like a lot of diversity in age? They're working remotely. Where are they all based? Just give us a little bit more of a flavor for the driver workforce.

Blake Sohier:

Yeah so the driver workforce, the ones in particular, they do sit on the slightly mature age side of the age bracket in the working sense but you know we have been seeing some younger drivers starting to come through and we are going to start making pushes for you know younger drivers because we've got an aging workforce like many other areas but the people that we have are fathers and, you know, brothers, like we've got a couple of brothers that do off like each other's opposing shifts at Eremanga. And, you know, they're family people, they're people who are quite approachable and, you know, they're happy to call a spade a spade at 10 o'clock at night if something doesn't work. But, you know, they're easy to get along with there. Yeah, I'd probably say the best way to describe most of them is that, you know, they're family people. They're men, they're women. One of our female drivers in particular, I had seen her a few months ago and she recently just changed trucks into a different style of delivery for our AdBlue production. And I forgot I had actually grown a beard since I'd seen her last. So when I approached her, she couldn't recognize immediately who I was at a distance. But, you know, we ended up talking for a good 10 or 20 minutes while her truck was sort of being finalized because it's a brand new truck and we had Volvo there. you know, doing the last little details on it before they handed it over to us officially.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. Yep. Nice. Um, and, and clearly like you guys have talked a lot so far about rapport and who the drivers are as people and establishing a connection with them. Right. You've used the word, service, like being of service, like who are you hear to service and support. So there's a philosophy that's coming through and how you approach, your role with this workforce and how you see them and yourselves. The just-in-time approach, Matt, you mentioned a little earlier that it's a mix of whilst they're using tech and you are using digital approaches, there's also low-tech, non-digital approaches, and that personal touch is really important. You just mentioned, Blake, you've got a couple of new drivers starting next week, so you're going to have a couple of new friends. Can you talk to us, Blake, I know you spend a lot of time doing the onboarding, so perhaps we'll run this one through yourself. When you've got a new driver starting in the business, What's their experience? So, let's imagine you are that new driver. What can they expect to experience over the first, I don't know, week, month, however long you view the onboarding process in terms of their support to get up and started from your team?

Blake Sohier:

Look yeah and it's something that Matt and it's the same drumbeat I have. It has to be consistent, smooth and enjoyable. Consistent in that whatever I show one driver obviously there'll be unique things for each truck in each location but you know I consistently give them the same information, show them in the exact same order Then we want to make sure that it's as smooth as possible for them. So I want to make sure that I've got their technology because we do have driver iPads that they

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can use to communicate with anybody in the business and make sure that that's ready for them to go. Make sure that they've got their logons for their truck tablets. And the whole onboarding process starts off with, if they're here in person in Brisbane, if it's a Brisbane driver or someone who can get to Brisbane, it starts off with a handshake and then we go and get a coffee from our nice coffee machine and we start the day with who is IOR and you know we have lots of questions about who they are and you know what they're looking forward to about their role. So onboarding is not me directing and talking at them the whole time. It's a very conversational flow to my onboarding. Then once we get through all of our standard core compliance online modules, once I say goodbye to all our non-driver people, because at that point I can hand them back off to their managers.

Michelle Ockers:

So, can I just check with you, Blake, when you use the word modules, do you mean digital modules like online e-learning or is that you just walking them through, you know, a series of lessons, if you like?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah. So, they are online courses and this is another thing too about it being smooth and enjoyable for them. These drivers, they'll do our core modules in our online modules with me, I'll be there in the room while they're doing it. So I can hear four courses going at once sometimes, but if they get stuck, I'm there to fix it. And then I could throw a stone at our IT team and get them to come and help if I need it. And really from that experience, those online modules, actually, that's probably another point too. They do ours, then they might go and do a customer's induction, and that could be multiple inductions if a customer site requires it. Each terminal needs an induction. So our modules, and this is probably a topic for later, but we've redesigned the way that we run our online courses because it is essentially, at the end of the day, the same content you'd get at each one, the mandatory things, compliance, health, and safety. But once they go through that, I'm quite fortunate enough to have access to our development system for where we develop our app before we roll it out. I use that to demonstrate the system and I take them through an imaginary journey. So I go, okay, we've woken up for the day, we've got to the truck, you've done your pre-start, and I show them what the pre-start looks like and how to do that. Not how to do it, but what the checklist entails. Then from there they'll go through and we'll go through how to load the fuel, how to deliver the fuel in the app, not the actual task itself. We do have driver trainers, experienced operators who have the training, you know, skill sets there that take them through the operational side. But before they leave, my goal is that they are broken the ice with the system. So they're not in front of a driver in the heat, potentially all the rain, trying to learn fuel, worrying about inductions. My first day is their shirt, you know, clean or, you know, and all those little things that happen in a learner's mind in their first week. We've then worked with our transport department and the heads of their and other driver trainers and we've come up with what I call a buddy checklist. And we have a buddy shift where the driver, the new driver will go out with an experienced operator and they'll just, you know, shadow for a day and then they'll swap over and then he'll be driving for the rest of that week or two weeks, however long they need. We try not to put too many timeframes on things. because like our Brisbane drivers, they can do

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lots and lots of loads and deliveries in a week, whereas our line haul drivers might do one a week.

Michelle Ockers:

So line haul are taking the diesel from Brisbane to more remote locations, is that right?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, so we've got some Brisbane guys and girls here that actually go from here to Aramanga, which is about, I think, 1500 or just over 1500 kilometres away. So that's what we call line haul, those long distance drivers. So they'll spend all their day driving, but only that little bit of time at the start loading and then right at the end, the delivering. So we really try to give them an option. A cool thing that we put in there is a sign off from both the learner driver and the operator, so the experienced driver. It's yes, it's not that I'm competent, it's yes that I've been shown it. We keep that as a record so we know it's not just one person saying, yeah, I've done it. It's both of them holding each other accountable to, I've been shown this. It helps the driver who might not necessarily have training experience just know what to show the new person. At the end of their first week I usually reach out to all new starters not just drivers with a quick phone call because we know that after their first week they have a few more questions or things that have been covered off that might have been different because you know each person has their own way of communicating and we touch in just see how they're going, is their technology still working? you know have they been in contact with their manager regularly? Just all those little easy to talk about conversations and then at the end of their first month we know that that's usually another key point in their like onboarding process. So again I reach out to all new starters but I ask a few more questions, still your standard, is your technology working? are you getting the support that you need? I prompt them about their, it's more of an informal one-on-one sort of induction, a probation that we have. They do their one month and it's more just to make sure that the manager's checked in, they're getting the support they need. If they need more training, sometimes it's easier to talk to somebody who is not their direct manager. Because as tough as some of these blokes can be, sometimes it's just easier to talk to the person on the phone.

Michelle Ockers:

It feels safer, right? Sometimes to talk to someone who's not your manager.

Blake Sohier:

That's exactly right. And, you know, we've all experienced that before. And most of the time they're really good. They'll give their feedback straight away. So it might just be no one's asked them that question. So we really try to have a good conversation with them. And if I can't reach them because a lot of the time they are driving and no texting or talking on the phone while driving, I usually send them a message and just say, hey, just checking in and see how you're going. If you would like to chat, give me a call. And then even though they've got my number, I still put it in at the bottom because it's easier to just click it and call. And a lot of the time, it's quite nice that they give you a call back.

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Michelle Ockers:

Nice. So you're developing your relationship with them as well. How many new drivers would you induct every year?

Blake Sohier:

Oh, that is a good question.

Michelle Ockers:

Because it's obviously high personal touch here, right?

Blake Sohier:

That's exactly right. I'm not exactly sure of the number and how many drivers we onboard every year.

Michelle Ockers:

Just roughly.

Matt Garratt:

We're looking at around 10 to 15 new starters at IOR and probably like maybe a third to a half of them would be drivers.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, great. That gives us some sense of scale. Is there anything else you wanted to add to round out your response to that question about their onboarding experience, Blake, before we look at what happens once they're settled in the job?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah, so probably the only other thing, we sort of alluded to it a bit before. At the end of the day, so after we've done all the systems training, if you're fortunate enough to be here in Brisbane, we've got a particular ute that's all mine spec and it looks all very, you know, fun and high-vis, that's for sure. And we go for a drive and I take them to the tank manufacturing site, our AdBlue manufacturing plant. They're one of the Brisbane depot so they can see you know what a typical not so much a typical depot but what one could look like and um the office obviously I show them a little bit around here but I take them to all of our key sites around Brisbane because it's one thing me telling them that we manufacture a tank but seeing all the boys and girls out there from ordering parts to putting those parts together or just turning one piece of metal into a full power box you know or into a bowser seeing that in real life and seeing the scale of some of this stuff and it just breaks the ice and it really shows that we're a family-owned company and we try to keep that family feel no matter how big we're getting.

Michelle Ockers:

I love this sense of creating an awareness that they're part of something bigger and a connection with others across the company, particularly as they're spending so much time out on their own driving and potentially physically disconnected. Do all of the drivers come to Brisbane to do their induction?

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Blake Sohier:

No, not all drivers do. So we've had some starting in Katherine. We do them online. I make sure that the manager in advance has got their Teams link and if I remember to, I send a message going, if you get stuck, don't forget to call me. But 99% of the time, I don't know who they're going to call. We've had some remote workers that do live in Brisbane, so they actually coordinate their flights around making sure that they've had their first day with me in person. So they don't end up, say, at Arambanga or, you know, a really remote location and then have to do the onboarding when they can have that, you know, the pleasure of Matt's and my expertise in person.

Michelle Ockers:

I thought you were going to say company then, Blake.

Blake Sohier:

I was going to say company, but I thought better.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so you've established some rapport, some connection, you've made them feel welcome, gotten them set up with how to use the apps and navigate around the company. So Matt, if we can swing over to you now, once they're settled in and out on the job, what does just-in-time learning look like for them or just-in-time support?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, well, as far as possible, we have to try and make it so these people can help themselves. And in addition to our drivers, which are a big part of our workforce, we've also got a lot of people out in regional depots who coordinate drivers themselves and service the customers in that area, the farms, the mines, those sorts of people. So we have a number of strategies we use to support these people. One of the things we've got is a centralised intranet we call BlueHQ, which is related to our values and living to our values. And that intranet, we try and make it as exciting as possible. So people want to go and visit it. They open up their browser and it's the first thing that appears. It's got weekly updates from our CEO. We do a weekly wrap that highlights an area in the business that's done something interesting or unique or we haven't heard from in a while. So everyone gets to see what's going on around IOR. But where it's important from a learning perspective is we've got all of our control documentation, all our procedures, all of our policies, as well as all of our how-to guides. So if you search for something like HiDip, which is that software I mentioned earlier, you can see the HiDip team that is responsible for managing the HiDip solution and who to go to contact if you need help with getting a login or something like that. You can also find documentation on HiDip. You can find brochures on HiDip that we might send to our customers. All of those things are in one location. So you don't need to understand or learn how to navigate different platforms to find the information you need.

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Michelle Ockers:

And is that information all literally stored in one place or is it just you've created some sort of portal or hub that links to other places? How does it work?

Matt Garratt:

It's one solution. So we started off with a SharePoint solution that didn't work out because we had issues with version control. It kept throwing up old versions of things when you'd search and it just was getting out of control. So we've got a intranet solution that does all of those things relatively well in one spot.

Michelle Ockers:

And what's the platform that's used for that?

Matt Garratt:

That's AXero, which is a US based software solution.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, people won't be familiar with that one. Everyone who's ever been frustrated by SharePoint and has some discretion around what technology they use may be going off and looking at that. How do you spell that?

Matt Garratt:

A-X-E-R-O. And we're really looking forward to a new feature they're talking about at the moment, which is an AI chatbot. And because everything is in one place, it will be able to learn off all of our source information. And if someone asks a question to that chat bot, they can get a conversational kind of question back again, but also link to the source documentation. So they can fact check and make sure that it's real.

Michelle Ockers:

Nice, nice. So you've got your centralized knowledge base. You talked about the printed guides before, in-app support.

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, so a key software that we've got here is our ERP system, which tracks all our fuel, basically stock management, I guess. So we've got a dev team here that has built that ERP from the ground up specific to our operations, and they're really smart in including a help button at the top of each page of this ERP. It can be a bit busy, some of these pages, so if someone's a little bit unsure about what to do or the next steps that they need to take on that particular platform, they can click this little help button in the top right corner. It sends them back to our BlueHQ intranet to a relevant page that might have a software simulation on it that we built in that tells them so they can interact with it and show where they need to, what they need to do next. And it's got process instructions below as well with little screenshots so they can step their way through the process. So yeah, that's that in-app support. We've done a similar thing with the driver app. It doesn't link back to our BlueHQ intranet, but there are little help buttons that they can press if they want to get a bit more insight into what they need to do on that screen.

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Michelle Ockers:

So the app that you're using, what was it called? Hi something?

Matt Garratt:

HiDip.

Michelle Ockers:

High dip, thank you very much. So that high dip app has help available from within the app as well, is that what you've just said?

Matt Garratt:

So our ERP system is actually called dashboard and that's what tracks all our fuel. High dip's a different system that the schedulers use to monitor the levels of the tank.

Michelle Ockers:

Ah, okay.

Matt Garratt:

I think that might be a feature that's still coming in high dip, we'll watch this.

Michelle Ockers:

But the drivers are actually used, what are the drivers using?

Matt Garratt:

They use what we call the driver app or IOR job manager. So they've got jobs and that job information feeds back into the ERP called dashboard that we've got.

Michelle Ockers:

Right. So it's from within that jobs area that they can get some in-app support.

Matt Garratt:

That's right.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. And have you developed that? Have you had a third party develop that? Talk me through the process of getting that in-app support up and running.

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, so our dev team here developed that for us. It's an in-house program. I think that in-app support is probably not used as much by drivers. They tend to prefer to call, or now that we've sort of started to coach that behavior, go to their driver handbook. But one thing you'll find with drivers and even other people rurally is they're unfiltered. You know, if something's not working, they'll tell you straight out. And because of that, they probably hold us to a higher standard. We need to think about, is this going to work from a driver perspective? Is this going to work from a depot manager out in Rome or in June or Chinchilla or something like that? We've got to think about them and make sure that if they're a bit stuck, they can find

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information. And that actually helps everyone in the organisation. I was really pleased yesterday after we had a little catch up, Michelle, I walked into the kitchen and someone who started recently with us, Chris, he was saying just how incredible it was that he could sit down at a computer and almost be self-taught. He could find the information that he needed, he could learn how to use the different software, and he could get up and running pretty much straight away. So by thinking about the most challenging users or the users that have the most challenges, you benefit everyone.

Michelle Ockers:

And what are some of those challenges? What do you think are the key challenges that you've had to address?

Matt Garratt:

I think like Blake said, when a driver starts with us, it was a bit of a revelation for me. I saw them, I was lucky enough to sit when they were doing a terminal induction, which was another induction that they have to do before they enter the terminal. And it was all the same stuff that we'd just given them, but because the terminal procedure said you have to be trained in this stuff in their learning management system, they were going through all this generic content again. And at that point, we had generic content as well. And he was just sitting back on his chair, eyes half closed, hitting next, just getting through it. And I realized, like, if we want our training to be meaningful, we've got to do better. As soon as they see it's some generic guy talking about a concept, they've seen it a thousand times. So we need to do things a bit different. Our manual handling course, which we're about to release, it's got people in the workshop using tools. It's got drivers pulling hoses. And we've got the safety people and the head of transport. They're talking about why this stuff matters. So it's a nice introduction to those people, and it makes them pay a bit more attention and realize that it's just not another compliance training module that they have to do because of a procedure somewhere that hasn't been reviewed in eons.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes. Having worked for a manufacturing business myself in the office environment and having had to go through all of the manual handling, compliance training and working at heights and so on, it's like, I don't work at heights. The heaviest thing I lift is a pile of paper off my desk. So making it relevant is really important, right?

Matt Garratt:

And that's that just in case mindset. We've got to train all these people just in case. But if you give too much information to people, they're not going to pay attention. It's just a waste of everyone's time. So that's the ethos, I guess. We want to make sure that when we are providing support or training, it's going to help them do their task or their work better. And we've got to keep that central and we've got to keep it bite-sized. So it's just, you know, they're on that page, on that ERP, and they want to do something in that moment. They don't need a full induction to the ERP. They don't need to go and try and re-enroll themselves in some course in the learning management system and skip next seven times to get to that point. We want them to be able to go and find what they need to do on that page right at that moment.

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Michelle Ockers:

So in terms of looking end to end at how you created this solution and experience for the drivers, what do you think has, and I might move to Blake first up for your answer on this, Blake, what do you think has gone well and why?

Blake Sohier:

So I think what's gone well is definitely keeping the hands-on approach. I'm sure we've all heard it from anybody, I prefer to be hands-on or I prefer to be physically doing it or technology is not for me. So I think what's definitely gone well is keeping the hands-on approach. Yes, it does take up a little bit of time, but at the end of the day, the return that you get from that is a good connection and also a well-supported team member. Things that I would do differently would probably be... I would probably say I'd like to spend more time, but there's the practical element to that as well. Obviously, I'd like to spend more time, but we do have plans in place of bringing more driver trainers on board because Matt and I, we're fantastic facilitators and trainers and assessors, but we can't operate a heavy vehicle. So I think what we need to do better is get more of those operational trainers in the business. And we collaborate quite well with ones that we've had in the past. So probably not what I would, it's more what I would change and what didn't go so well.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. Yep. How about yourself, Matt? You've had a couple of extra years to evolve the solution. What do you think has gone well and why?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, it's been so fortunate. When I came in, there was very little in terms of a learning ecosystem. funny story I sometimes recount to people is like, I walked in and I was told to start this driver onboarding journey, and this was before Blake. I said, all right, well, how about you give me the policies and procedures relevant to a driver? And they go, yep, sure, just go and speak to compliance about that. So I went over to the compliance team at the time, and I said, oh, maybe speak to the head of transport. I said, I just came from the head of transport and they sent me here. And then we just started to yell out, you know, does anyone have policies and procedures for a driver? And then I think a scheduler said, oh, yeah, I've got it here on my email. So there was no point where we could actually go to and get the current version of the key details that the drivers and other people needed. So our first step was actually to develop the documentation, have a solution that was central for people to access that. And unusual for a learning and development team to be involved in that based on previous experience. But it ended up being really good because we were able to make that intranet part of the learning ecosystem and part of our learning strategy. So that's actually gone really well for us. And the learning management system has become a very small part of what we do here at IOR. It's just to track completion of the mandatory compliance training that we have to do. Everything else that is key for, you know, learning how to use systems, other, like how to be a good manager, that sort of stuff, we've put that all on the intranet so people can access it when they need to.

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Michelle Ockers:

Yep. Yep. Out on the shop shelves, not in the warehouse.

Matt Garratt:

That's right. Yeah. So really fortunate to have that experience and that opportunity. I didn't come in, even though it was a bit of a frightening moment when at the beginning, it was good to be able to build something from the ground up and be thoughtful about the decisions about where learning lived and how you wanted to actually build something that was going to be bespoke and relevant to the organisation.

Michelle Ockers:

OK, and is there more you want to do with the just-in-time approach? And if so, where are you taking it?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, so I think probably the biggest opportunity for just in time is we've brought on a lot of new software in the last few years and a really important feature of that are workflow notifications. So when a key thing happens in a process it often triggers an email or an alert or an action and that needs to go to the right person and it needs to have three really important elements which is What action they need to take needs to provide information to those people about how to make good choices and good decisions and how to take that action. And thirdly, who they need to talk to should they want to get more information outside of what's available on the intranet and the preferred way of contacting, because there's so many ways, right? Email, phone calls, Teams, there's so many networks and methods. We would like to be thoughtful and review how our key notifications, like what they say, are they just spamming people, are people deleting them? We've got a new general manager of transport that's come in and he's already asking those questions. I'm getting spammed by our safety management system, I open it up, there's nothing for me to do, why am I getting these notifications? So we really need to make sure that that's a real opportunity, I guess, to give people the resources they need in their workflow and direct them to the place where they need to take action.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, look, the better designed your systems and processes are, the less people need to be trained.

Matt Garratt:

Exactly, exactly. It reduces inquiries. It frees our time up. So when we do a good job of something, it builds momentum.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah. So I'm going to flick back to Blake here. So two years in, Blake, what have you had to get better at doing or to embrace in your time at IOR?

Blake Sohler:

I think what I've had to get probably a bit better at doing is, and it comes back to that FACTS approach, is the acceptance. I come from very big companies of 15,000 plus

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people and they're very mature in terms of their learning. So for me, one of our ones is acceptance. So accepting that this is the current state, but tackle it with a solutions sort of approach. Like, here's what we're going to do and really think about the bigger picture of, Where I was going? in terms of the future, you know, what do we want to achieve as a learning and development department? and, you know, how does just in time fit into that? because like we've said before, it's not just onboarding and it's not just systems training and, you know, Where does Just In Time fit into that? And, you know, look at all the options. We've got so many smart people and so many smart L&D practitioners out there. We learn from each other. And I hope someone gets something out of this one too.

Michelle Ockers:

You know, that they can take with their strategy. Yeah. So apart from not tucking your shirt in, what have you had to let go of?

Blake Sohier:

I've definitely had to let go of the whole, well, probably like what I said, why haven't we started to do this yet? You know, each business is completely different. So just letting go of what I've known previously, you know, you shouldn't really approach anything with these preconceived thoughts, whether it's a conversation or relationship or a job. And, you know, that's probably the biggest one for me is just letting go of what I know, accepting what's exact, like right in front of me. and now using my skills and knowledge and putting that into the business context. And we've been quite lucky. We've got some pretty clever solutions, even our heavy vehicle industry one that we've started to do.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. So Matt, how about you? What have you had to get better at doing or embrace over the past four years at IOR? Almost five, sorry. Almost five.

Matt Garratt:

Look, I think there was a time where I was getting very frustrated when people would provide feedback that they hadn't had training or they needed more training when only a short while ago they had received this training. And it was almost infuriating to me, you know, like I've spent this time, made a lot of effort to go out to these far-flung places. What do they mean they need more training? At first I thought, well, I'm going to make sure that I track every training that I do so then I can prove these people that they've had their training and therefore they're wrong. You know, they've had the training. But my mindset now is instead, if someone's saying that they haven't received training or they need more training, that's just their truth. The training that they might have received just hasn't worked for them, or it hasn't been suitable in some way. And so rather than getting frustrated, you've just got to be curious and think about how can we do that better? What can we leave for them that will allow them to come back to that? Or if they're not paying attention at the time, for whatever reason, there's a lot going on, what can we leave with them to make sure that the key objectives of what we're trying to achieve are left behind? And having that, that mindset shift, I think just makes it a better experience for everyone and has led to some really good innovation in the way that we've approached learning here.

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Michelle Ockers:

So I think you've, you've kind of covered off what did you have to embrace and what did you have to let go of all in one hit there, Matt?

Matt Garratt:

Yeah, it's been good to have this, this chat with you, Michelle, and just reflect on, on the last four or five years and, and think, you know, like it's, it's good to see the journey that we've been on. And, uh, it's been an evolution for both, you know, like IOR has grown so much, but I've grown as well, had to keep up with, you know, the fast pace and come up with different solutions in order to just make things work.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Let's round out with some rapid tips, to close out the episode for others who'd like to get started or do more with just in time learning.

Matt Garratt:

All right, well, I reckon the first thing you've got to look at is, you know, what legacy are you going to leave behind for people that aren't in a face-to-face training experience or an online training experience, whatever it is. What is it that they can take away if they're not there that time or paying attention? And it could be people that haven't even started in the company yet. So think of the what comes after. Second thing is, think about how people can access information easily. If it's hosted in a lot of different systems, that's potentially information that's just not going to ever be found. You need some way to either bring it together or a platform that's going to allow you to have it all in one spot. If it's too hard, it's just not going to work. As I said, that might even have better flow and effects when it comes to introducing something like AI, because you've got it all in a nice little packaged up area for it to be trained on. And the last thing is, I think, think about what learning can you provide people that will actually improve what they need there and then, rather than trying to think of all the potential scenarios, the just-in-case mindset. Think about what it is, the day-to-day, what's critical, and do that really, really well, and then have the just-in-case stuff as things people can find when it comes time to use those things, and so many of the ideas that we've had, the genesis for them, have come from the front line. being around the drivers, being connected with the depot managers, having those conversations in the kitchen, getting that feedback has allowed us to make better learning for others. So that's probably another really good tip to think about. Don't just get stuck in the crunchy deadlines and push out learning, try and spend a bit of time with people who are experienced at learning, understand what it means for them, and try and get better at coming up with solutions that's going to work well for them in the flow of their work.

Michelle Ockers:

Excellent. They are great tips. Blake, is there anything you'd like to add?

Blake Sohier:

Yeah so Matt talks about the legacy, mine you know is the planning of as well so you know look at the bigger picture of what you as a department or as a person if you're

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a single practitioner want to achieve and determine when and how this learning is going to be accessed We've said, you know, we can run courses all day long, but if they're not ready for it, it's not going to be relevant. So look at how they could do it. It might not be as easy as clicking a button, but, you know, they can access our intranet. They can open up a book. to get that information and probably look at how just in time can be embedded into your business. We've talked a lot about us and how we transport fuel and manufacture tanks. Everyone's going to be different so look at what you've already got. Toolbox talks, online courses, face-to-face. We've done lunch and learns before but look at how because essentially what we're training is information and processes so how can somebody access that information because ultimately what we, what I aim to do, is limit the number of calls from you know "how can I get help" to "how are you going I haven't spoken to you in a while" I want people to be able to find their information and we get quite a lot of feedback on and you mentioned before with Chris It's easy to find it because we've got it in that one location, but that was a bit of planning at the start. Let's take everything that we've got and put it just into one spot. From our perspective, updating it, it's so much easier.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, I think you've cracked the atom on a common challenge that people have. And in bigger, more complex organizations, of course, much harder to solve. But there's some philosophies and approaches for people to think about there. Thank you so much, Matt and Blake, for sharing your work and insights with us and also for how responsive and quickly we've moved from introductions to not knowing each other a week ago to being able to do this recording. We'll pop a link to both of your LinkedIn profiles in the show notes, plus some other resources. So if anyone wants to get in touch with you, they can look you up on LinkedIn. Thank you both.

Matt Garratt:

Thanks, Michelle. It was so much fun.

Blake Sohler:

Thank you, Michelle. Hopefully we can get another episode in.

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Learning Uncut are learning and development consultants that help Learning and Development leaders and their teams become a strategic enabler so that their businesses can thrive. We work in evidence-informed ways to drive tangible outcomes and business impact and are strong believers in the power of collaboration and community. We specialise in helping to build or refresh organisational learning strategy, update their L&D Operating Model, enable skills development, and conduct learning evaluation. We also offer workshops to shift learning mindset and practices for both L&D teams and the broader workforce – as well as speaking at public and internal events.

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Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at 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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