

Michelle Ockers:

Donald Taylor joins me for a look at what we saw happening in learning and development in 2021. We look at the year through the lenses of our own work and network interactions, industry events and, of course, the case studies shared by guests on the Learning Uncut podcast.

Don is a deep thinker which always makes for a fascinating conversation. This one is no different. He stretches our imagination beyond the consuming current challenges with skills, workforce mobility, talent shortages and the Great Resignation to contemplate what he is calling an ‘unbound’ world. Don observes that organisations are becoming more porous, with some profound implications, including for the contribution of L&D.

In 2021 Learning Uncut has featured big strategic stories through to specific solutions done well with few resources. We explore key themes and what our guest case studies reflect about what L&D is working on and how we are working. A big, heartfelt thank you to all of my guests this year. I appreciate your willingness to share your work so that everyone in L&D gets to keep pushing up their practice and impact.

Looking ahead, be sure to go to the show notes for a link to Don’s annual one-question Global Sentiment Survey to share your thoughts about what will be hot in L&D in 2022.

Stay tuned at the end of the podcast to find out about what is coming up in December/January for Learning Uncut. Just as learning never stops, we will continue bringing you an episode every week.

Thank you also to you, listener, for tuning in. Please share the podcast with colleagues in any way you can, and if you have a potential story you’d like to share or know another L&D professional who is doing good work just reach out to me via LinkedIn.

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome back to Learning Uncut Don for our end of 2021 reflection.

Donald H Taylor:

It is a pleasure to be here.

Michelle Ockers:

I am delighted to have you. This is a little bit different from our normal episodes. We are looking back over the course of the year through a few lenses. One is of course, looking at the big the guests we’ve had and some of the things we’ve talked about on the Learning Uncut podcast conversations, but also through the lens of your work and my work and the interactions we have. There’s a few things you do to stay abreast of change. What are some of the key ways you keep your finger on the pulse what’s happening in L&D?

Donald H Taylor:

I think there are three things. One is running conferences. I’m duty bound to just keep an eye on what’s happening. So I’m scanning literally every day to look for good stories, good ideas, things that are popping up. That’s one thing. The second thing is of course, the Global Sentiment Survey, which I do every year and a new survey, which I launched this year, the PATI – People and Technology, Innovation survey. So Global Sentiment looks at what



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people think is hot. PATI looks at what people are actually doing. And I guess the third thing is my writing and thinking around it, where I sit back and trying to distil some of those trends and look at what's underneath them and what it tells us about where we're going. And one of the big things that came out of that thinking this year was the idea that we are shifting towards an unbound world. And that has some profound implications.

Michelle Ockers:

I think we'll come back to that theme. I'm curious about this idea of the unbound world. Like you, I mean, I pick up some of my stories from you, Don, because you're very good at hunting down stories.

Donald H Taylor:

I was going to say the same thing about you, Michelle. I marvel at the range of case studies you mentioned again, and they're all great.

Michelle Ockers:

It does take a little bit to find them. I've got to be constantly on the alert. Sometimes they come up through my work or people I'm talking with, through just networking conversations or through clients, mentioned somebody else's work and I get an introduction. Conferences are always a great way to look out for guests and I don't necessarily need to go to the conferences because you can just look at who's speaking what they're speaking about and make an approach.

Donald H Taylor:

But of course, listen to it. Don't forget. It is always possible and desirable to buy a ticket for a conference just to let slip that in as a conference organizer.

Michelle Ockers:

Well, it is, I thought you were going to say to approach Michelle if you've got a good story to share, which is of course

Donald H Taylor:

People know that already, come on.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. I think some people are bashful Don. I think some people underestimate the value of showing their work on things they've done and sharing. And I do have guests sometimes that, you know, people I approach who think, "is there anything that's special about what I'm doing?" But I think, you know, I look for stories, not only that are a little bit innovative, maybe doing something new, but people were just doing really good solid work with more traditional methods.

Donald H Taylor:

Absolutely. And you're absolutely right, but people say, well, it's this new very often. I find myself talking to people and they think their story is about AI, but we have a conversation that turns out, oh my Lord, you're doing this stuff. Did you realize that nobody else is doing that? And we need to share it with the rest of the world. People, of course, people don't realize it because we tend to work in silos so much. And that's where, what you're doing is

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great, Michelle, is giving the light onto these great stories, which deserve to be shared.

Michelle Ockers:

I like being able to surface them. And I really appreciate when people come to me as well. We always do, you know, a bit of a conversation around what is it about the work you've done that makes it stand out. Occasionally people aren't in a position to tell their story, to share it, but it helps me to stay abreast of change. And I love that I've got this vehicle where I can literally approach any learning and development professional anywhere in the world and say, "let's have a conversation about your work. Tell me about your work." It's just a great way to stay abreast of what people are doing and what they're up to.

So before we talk about what those stories tell us, and we are going to concentrate on the case study stories, I've got another series I started running this year called Elevate, which are shorter episodes, which are really about elevating your performance and impact as an L&D professional - a skill an approach, a report, something specific. I started that just to have another vehicle to do something a bit different with the podcast, but of course the case studies are the heart and soul of the podcast. And that's what we'll draw on today.

In terms of the individual lenses that the two of us bring through the interactions we have and through the work we do, what are some of the things you've worked on this year or some of the community activities, things you've been reading, watching, learning where, you know, where are you drawing some of your key insights from a little more specifically this year.

Donald H Taylor:

The same vehicles and mechanisms for reaching out and getting in touch with people. So online communications, particularly LinkedIn, less, so Twitter, particularly LinkedIn as a way of picking up on really interesting stories. Also of course, conversations with people. There have been far fewer of those face-to-face, but there's been most of that online this year. And so those are the two mechanisms. And of course, in addition to that the PATI survey - People And Technology Innovation - which I did over the summer, where I asked people where they were innovating. I had a couple of free text fields in that to enable people to give more details about what they were doing. And I had, I think 550 people from 50 countries. It was a decent return. It was a pilot survey. The first one I do properly next year in 2022 will have a slightly different format. So I've looked at it, got some ideas and tweaked it. The free text, interestingly is fascinating on that survey because it shows what people are considering to be innovative.

And also of course, what people choose to leave out and how they express themselves tells a story as well. So it's not just what people say, but how they say it that tells us about what's new and changing in L&D. Also, I have to say, I think looking at the bigger picture is crucial. I always try to make this point from there. It's not enough just to listen to what we're doing in our own field. It's really important to get out to the wider world and look at the, particularly the economic and political situation to understand the bigger changes that we're going through. And perhaps we'll talk about that a bit later on.

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Michelle Ockers:

The podcast gives me the opportunity to do a lot of interaction with people, of course. And as you say, LinkedIn is interesting, like the shift in LinkedIn and Twitter over the past few years, right? There's a lot more conversation happening on LinkedIn now, and you can sort of stay abreast of people's work a lot more effectively.

Donald H Taylor:

I find LinkedIn is much stickier in terms of your story. I think it's interesting, and you can spend some time with it. And of course, there's no character restriction. Twitter, unfortunately, seems to have less useful information on it these days for me anyway, but I'm still there because once in a while I get some absolute gold. And I think both of us probably, Michelle, spend a bit of time on these panning by the river, looking for nuggets of gold in amongst everything else.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And of course I am a practitioner, so I do a lot of work with different organizations. And I guess the three key things I've been working on this year are learning strategy, and I've worked with the Australian Public Service on a whole-of-government learning strategy, which rolled out mid-year. New Zealand transport agency, Waka Kotahi - I've been working with them alongside Nigel Paine on learning strategy, learning culture, and capability build for their learning team, probably for close to 18 months now. It's really interesting to be part of helping a progressive team, shape their transformation and just be in the trenches and seeing how things are playing out. Of course, I work alongside Nigel with our learning culture program that we run, and also with Shannon Tipton and Laura Overton on something called Emerging Stronger, which is all about helping L&D professionals take bold action.

Donald H Taylor:

Where do you find time to do all this Michelle?

Michelle Ockers:

I'm pretty well organized. I have a little bit of a team as well.

But you know what, there's another thing I've been doing, which I'm really finding very enjoyable, surprisingly, because I didn't think I was going to enjoy it. And I'm thinking of doing more of next year. I've been working again with the Australian Public Service. I've been doing a long-term evaluation of a pilot of regulatory training at three different levels in the organization. And it's something that will eventually roll out to around about 10,000 people in the organization and they wanted an independent evaluation. So I've been working with the learning, the LTEM framework, the learning transfer evaluation framework from Will Thalheimer and really honing my skills around evaluation. And it's really fascinating.

Donald H Taylor:

Oh, wow. I mean, look, it's a great framework, and of course Will does some great work and it's great to see it being used in practice. But you are organized Michelle. I know this from working together with you, extremely well organized. And I think if, by the way, Michelle, hasn't asked me to say this dear listener, but if you want anybody who's organized help you out and go and speak to Michelle about it, cause she can, she'll make things happen.

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Michelle Ockers:

Well, that's part of the intent. The most fascinating part of my work though is definitely the learning strategy work and helping people to take a solid well-informed deeply consultative approach to understand what their organization needs and not just grabbing something and running with it or making assumptions.

Donald H Taylor:

So Michelle - how much when you're doing this strategy work, I think it's really crucial - how much do you find that people think a strategy is putting together an implementation plan? So we're going to roll out technology. We're going to do this and that versus what you said, the deeply consultative understanding of the business requirements. And if they are in that position, how easy is it to persuade people that there's a bigger picture that need to go to first?

Michelle Ockers:

The organizations I end up working with are the ones who have the aspiration to take the time to do the deep consultation. They really want to make a shift. And they're willing to make a little bit of investment in that. I guess this links back to what are we seeing in L&D, which I think we need to move on to. I, you know, I had a lot of people mid to late 2020 coming to me saying we've made shifts in learning this year, obviously because of COVID, and we want to try to consolidate and leverage those. A lot more people came to me and said, we are interested in learning strategy and our organization is ready to shape learning strategy. So I'm curious to see with the Learning Performance Benchmark that Mind Tools for Business do, what's changed again next year. I think that could be very best fascinating all these longitudinal pieces of research at the moment because of COVID I think are throwing up some really interesting shifts Don.

So let's move on that note into a general reflection on what we've noticed happening and being talked about in L&D in 2021. And I think maybe before we even talk about kind of what's happening in L&D that context piece that you mentioned that we can't just be thinking about L&D, but it's always in the bigger context of what's happening in the world around us. And what's impacting the organizations that we serve, regardless of what sector they're in be they government, not-for-profit or private sector.

Donald H Taylor:

I think we tend to see the surface of change, inevitably, because you notice when the bins aren't collected or when something doesn't work and that hits you, but you don't necessarily look behind it to see what the causes for it are. There are some fundamental changes that are taking place in the way the economy and society operates, which are the result of some very long-term changes, some running since the second world war some since the late 1990s, early 1990s, some shortened then, but they're all coming together, whether it's globalization, connectivity, use of data, or the shift towards the service economy. All of these things, which had nothing to do specifically with L&D, but affect it, all of these things are leading us towards what I call the 'unbound' world, where the previous ways of doing things, which were effective rules of operating, don't apply anymore, or their usefulness is breaking down.

These major changes, these major themes that have been happening, are forcing the developed economies into position whereby we are going through dramatic transformational change. And it's not like it's a result of COVID, that's just an accelerator, it's a catalyst. As I say, it's been happening for a series of decades. And I think that we are in terms of the technological side of it, we are kind of towards the end of the first industrial revolution, which

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probably got a cap on it at about 1830/1840 when extraordinary change had happened. You know, we think we're living in busy times, but absolutely extraordinary things happened in the previous seventy years. If you think about the timescales, I think that's what's happening now. And then what happened was you've got the implications of what's been brought in. I think that's what's happening to us now, just as the way you lived in 1830 bore no relation to where you live now in 1760, and you had a whole new way of doing things, that's totally the way our lives are now.

And yet the mental models we use in order to run businesses, in order to interact with each other, and in order to learn are the same as we had seventy years ago, largely. And I think that's the issue. So, I mean, look, I've been thinking about this topic, talking about it a lot. I could go on about this, the entire podcast. That's not the point, but reflecting back. But I think that for me, that is a common theme across a lot of what I've been seeing in 2021. And I think it will continue to be so next year. And I think that the innovation that I'm seeing, the new things that are happening are people who are either coming in from left field with new ideas, or who recognize that we're in this tumultuous change and the same old ways don't do it anymore. We have to consciously move to a new way of doing things.

Michelle Ockers:

So can you give us an example of one of these kinds of grow and die kind of changes and, you know, maybe the implications that has for L&D.

Donald H Taylor:

Yeah, sure. I was being very abstract. So let's boil it down to be a bit more tangible. Classic case is that certainly when I started work in the 1980s you typically were either employed or not in organization. You might be a consultant, which was quite an exotic thing, but you're either employed or not. That isn't the case anymore. It seems like a fairly minor thing possibly, but we have a range of ways of employing people. And I look at this as being the organization in the past, being like a medieval city with a wall around it all has crumbled and it's much more porous. People come in, go out. They may be in the city some of the time and out in the fields the rest of the time. That range of employment includes full-time work, part-time work, contract work, working for joint venture company, working as a contractor, working freelance, working for free as an interim. In fact, an intern possibly even working, possibly even helping the company as a customer. There is a really wide range of ways in which we engage with it.

Now, what does that mean for L&D? It means that the old certainties, like the walls, have crumbled. So we used to be able to say, right, we have these people and we need to train them. I don't think that's so clear anymore. I think that there is now a range of people who need to be skilled up. Some of them are full-time employees, some of whom aren't. And if you look at, for example, Common Spirit, which is a health system in the US that runs at 120,000 people, I think 24 states, something like that. They of course have a core of people that employed full time. And then they have sort of, it feels like a series of onion rings going out. Some people are contingent. Some people are part-time. Some people are only there very occasionally. And a lot of these people are very highly skilled. And so it's a real issue. If you've employed that many people you've worked with that many people across that many states to make sure that you could recruit these people, bring them in to fill the jobs you need. Now they have some very good systems that enable them to identify what jobs they've got, what skills are required to therefore, what people they need to come in and fill those gaps. And they've used these systems to cut the time to recruit a nurse from 90 days down

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to 30 days and do it much more effectively.

The nurses are happier, except of course there are some nurses who were very highly specialized and who, because they were very rare, were able to charge a premium. However, now that they've got this talent marketplace where they've got a really wide range of people nationwide that they are pulling from, it's actually much clearer who's got the skills for these very specialist nurse jobs. And actually some of those jobs are now paying less as a result because well, it's supply and demand. There are more people who are evidently in the field. On the other hand, there are other people who can say, well, I am now able to do a job in the way I want to do it. If it's part time or whatever, and I feel much happier to doing that. And also they are able to predict - this is a big thing in the States - they able to predict how much work they're going to get in a way they couldn't do it the past. So there's winners and losers.

For the L&D team internally there's a real challenge. I'm not talking about Common Spirit, but about all organizations which face it. We now have to ask ourselves, well, what's our job. Yes. Okay. Our job is definitely keeping the wheels on the bus and keeping the ship afloat. So we have to do all of the stuff we've done in the past. We got to do the compliance training and what happened for the employees and perhaps the people who need to be signed off. But there's lots of other stuff that we need to do. We need to be able to work with the systems. When people come in, we check they're compliant, they give them the skills. And so on.

Then we ask ourselves strategically, are we only concerned with building long-term capability with full-time employees? Or are we interested in doing it with people who are, maybe part-time contingent, whatever. You might say, well, that's a waste of money because we're training people that don't work for us. They're going to go and work for somebody else longer term. But it's a real picture, I think, about L&D emerging, which is that we are contributors to a larger talent pool of people. And it works for the business if alumni of the business, if you think of it that way, leave, come back and feel that there is a good relationship with this company because they're investing in me as a person. In the States, it's called "learning as a benefit." I don't think that really translates very well internationally, but I think for a lot of organizations, the sense that individuals who are invested in their own professional development will come to you because you've got a contract, maybe not an explicit one, but you've got a contract that is, we give you work and we help develop you. That becomes part of the employment benefit for people, whether you're full-time or not.

Michelle Ockers:

I think it's really interesting when you think about looking back and looking forward. So what you're giving us as a shape of an emerging future that you're starting to see hints at this year. But if you think about some of the things that have really occupied us globally with L&D this year where we've been, you know, this whole skills agenda, which of course came up very clearly in your Global Sentiment Survey last year. Wherever you look, people are talking about skills and re-skilling, and up-skilling, and, you know, that's partly because of the recognition of the need for workforce mobility and the need to scale at speed, as well as, you know, emerging skills and a half-life of skills and how do we keep up.

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Then overlaid on that there's the global talent shortage, which is hitting some sectors more heavily than others. But again, it's apparent in many economies that it's taking longer to recruit people. So we're thinking part of what we need to be doing is being better at reskilling people within the organization. I've heard a number of podcast guests this year talk about as a success metric for L&D the internal fill rate, which I don't think I heard people talking about two years ago. But then if you think then about this emerging conversation around the Great Resignation as well, that indicates people are looking for more flexible ways of working is part of it, or they're not getting what they need in the current workplace arrangements. So maybe what you're talking about is part of where we're sort of heading into the future and is coming off the back of a number of these things we're trying to grappling with at the moment in L&D as a solution into the future. What are your thoughts? Is there a linkage there?

Donald H Taylor:

Totally. Don't you describe it really well? You're absolutely right. The focus on reskilling and upskilling is absolutely to do with this business that we simply can't find the people in the marketplace for it. At least there is a lesser risk if you fill internally than there is if you fill externally. So if you pull somebody from the outside, it takes longer, it's more expensive and there's a high risk. They leave. That happens less if it's internally.

Now what's interesting is with the PATI survey, People And Technology Innovation, I was trying to just have a very different phraseology from the GSS. It's the same format. I asked 15 box - which things are you innovating, and other. Talent mobility, which I was expecting to be quite high, only 2.6% of people said they were innovating in talent mobility. It was right to the bottom of the table. And I was very surprised by that was reskilling, upskilling was number two after personalized learning. So people are, it strikes me that there is still a natural lag. So something happens and probably one or two years down the line, you will start to see coming through in the PATI survey. But I think that what would people innovating in right now is trying to just train people up to do things differently. Reskilling, upskilling, they haven't moved from that tactical approach, the more strategic approach to the talent mobility yet. I am so looking forward to the survey next year to see what happens in talent mobility.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, absolutely. This is not something I'm seeing coming up yet in the work of the people I'm talking to for the podcast. I am seeing some very specific solutions around scaling coming up from time to time. I'm seeing the examples - it's sort of a mix. The podcast stories are a mix of these really big strategic stories around shifting learning culture, building, transforming learning. I had Simon Brown, the CLO from Novartis on episode 77. Beth Hall from Cotton-On Group has been on the podcast a couple of times. I've been following her body of work with building learning culture at Cotton On. 7-Eleven Australia is going through a really interesting period for learning in that all of their corporate areas have gone Agile, so they've got learning and growth chapters. And what does that mean? How do you work with - or they've got chapters and capability development done through chapters, which are like little knowledge communities. How do you work with them, and what opportunities does that bring up?

So we've got some of these really big picture ones, and then I've got some really specific stories around things like blended learning in the virtual learning environment. How do we create engaging, blended learning? I had Neil Von Heupt from the Social Media College on for episode 79. Some of the episodes that get the most interest are the ones about things

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you can do with limited resource and on little budget, because not everyone is a big organization, right?

Donald H Taylor:

I'm always keen on hearing those stories because very often people have got tools. They don't know they've got tools. They don't know what they can do, or they've got tools, but they know they need to use, not quite sure how to do it. So what are the best stories you've got around those Michelle, the using of tools and stuff?

Michelle Ockers:

So I had one which was really interesting, which was from Humm group here in Australia who kind of do an Afterpay type service. It was all around nudge-led learning. So here's an example of a program that they tried to roll out, which required face-to-face training. They're obviously looking for an alternative, but people were saying they were too busy. It was around collaboration for the finance team, working more collaboratively with other groups. And people were just saying, we're just too busy to take a day out. We can only give you an hour. You think, well, what can you do in an hour on collaborative learning?

They used a nudge-based platform, the Elenta platform, to actually send out – it's classic micro-learning, mobile-enabled and flipped classroom all rolled into one. It's good use of data too - over the course of two to three weeks people would get a small message coming through in an email to ask, to get them to start reflecting. "Have a think about a project where you need to collaborate with someone in the coming week." "Tell us who you've got to collaborate with, where they're from and what the project is." That data's captured. and then a couple of days later, it's like, "okay, time to start planning that first conversation with so-and-so about such and such, and here's a structured conversation."

Donald H Taylor:

It sounds brilliant.

Michelle Ockers:

They do that all the way through. They were gathering data along the way that were asking people to feedback and reflect on. Did they take the action? So it's nudging behavioural change. And then it was an hour of facilitated reflection using the data from the learners in a virtual session.

Donald H Taylor:

And so when you ask, what can you do with an hour? Hey, it turns out quite a lot.

Michelle Ockers:

You can do quite a lot. You can do quite a lot with an hour.

You know, to your point around L&D thinking beyond the boundaries of the organization, when they're starting to think about who is our workforce, what does that mean now, and are we building connection with people who aren't ever going to be employees and investing in them? I had some really good stories about L&D playing a bigger part in society that wasn't just about building capability inside the organization. I had a really interesting one from Africa. I did have a goal this year to try to get a story from every continent, but I wasn't able to achieve that unfortunately, but I did get my first story from Africa, which was from GE in episode 73, about GE upskilling African engineers. And that was about lifting, you know, engineering capability in the whole country. They were working with engineers who weren't

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necessarily GE employees. I thought that was a really nice story.

There was another really interesting one in Australia. In episode 81, Gail Bray, who again, was a return guest talking about something completely different, too, very innovative, very inspirational. She's actually leading an initiative in an Australian secondary school, which is a technical school - they specialize in technology, technical skills - who are partnering with higher ed and with industry to do real-world projects with things like robotics and AI. These are high school kids, and they're out there doing real work. So it's equipping the kids with future skills and building association for them with industry, and industry gets stuff out of it. So I think that really interesting example sometimes of work that L&D is doing that's much bigger than just their organization.

The scope of the stories I'm getting is really interesting. I did have a run on a few stories on themes that I know that you would be interested in Don. A lot more stories about data this year. And I will say, I reckon it's almost reached a point where pretty much every story I do, people talk about how they're using data and the value of data - and that wasn't happening 18 months ago. I think we're getting more sophisticated and getting a better grip on how to use data. One of my personal favourites, probably I'm not supposed to have favourites, I guess, but one of my very favourites was a story I discovered through you, Don. I think you had Guy Wilmshurst-Smith from Network Rail speak on a webinar about defining training needs using operational data and the work they've done on understanding what operational data they had, how do you use it to gain insights between things happening in the rail network and performance issues and the linkage to skills, and then addressing those. Phenomenal piece of work.

Donald H Taylor:

Awesome. Absolutely awesome. And he's such a nice guy as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. That's probably my favourite. So it's a lot more on data. Mobile delivery, you know, again, it's kind of a given that solutions are more mobile now. Whenever I talk with people about specific solutions, no-one's really talking about solutions that aren't mobile. So we'll stop talking about it eventually the way, you know, what doesn't come up anymore, because I think we've just matured, human-centred design thinking. 18 months ago, two years ago, I did a few stories that were really showcasing the use of human centred design, but I think everyone's really matured with their use of that.

Donald H Taylor:

Well, I think with things like that you're never quite sure. Is it being matured? Has it become business as usual, or has it sort of, is it a wallflower as I call it - something that is exciting and it comes to the dance, but doesn't really get involved? And for me, curation is a classic. One of those where everyone's talked about it a lot, but very, very few people who've done it well. I'm actually seeing some technology solutions now, which are making curation far more possible, but on the Global Sentiment surveys it's been up and down. It's making its way slowly towards the bottom of the table. Mobile delivery's a bit the same in terms of the

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pattern of behaviour, but mobile delivery is different. It's coming down the table year on year, simply because you say, well, it's par for the course.

What's interesting about mobile is that just when you think we know everything about it, somebody actually comes along and does something pretty interesting in terms of making it, something which you sit up and you think, oh, well, I, I hadn't thought about that, but now I appreciate there's more we can do with that. The same is true with video. Video is off the list now, but for a long time, video was going down and coming back up again, because people were doing more stuff around, I don't know, branching pathways and video and so on. There was always some new iteration coming through.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I think coming back to the curation, when I think that's really interesting and I wonder, and this is just me kind of pondering whether the challenge with curation is, if you have to do it manually, if there's a lot of effort, it just takes a long time to do it well. So maybe it's kind of just at that point where we're getting better tools for curation, and there's some mix of, this idea of augmenting human work with technology, or maybe we're augmenting the work of the technology with humans. In this case, I'm not sure where that's headed, but some combination of human skills and the tools and platforms that can filter, that can pick up on patterning people's preferences and people's needs working together.

Donald H Taylor:

I think curation you're absolutely right, is something, whether you do it manually or not is something which requires a lot more effort than something like mobile delivery in the sense of the mobile delivery is a substitution, or maybe you're augmenting something, right? You're delivering content fine. Well, you do it one way. And maybe instead you do it mobile, or you add on the mobile, but it's an additional branch. Whereas curation is something that effectively is an entirely new work stream for most of the people on top of what they're already doing. And that's, you know, nobody is sitting around waiting for more work, more things to fill my day. Everyone's flat out. So it's, time-consuming. It requires a new way of thinking about things. It requires new systems and processes in place, unlike, oh, I'll deliver this stuff mobile rather than deliver it face-to-face.

So it requires time and a new thinking, and it probably requires a new relationship with other people in the organization as well. So there's a lot to be done there. I do think tools are coming through which will enable us to do a better job with curation in the future. May be that who knows next year - I've kept it on the Global Sentiment Survey, even though it's been number 14 for three years. I've kept it there on the basis that at some point, we're hoping it's going to come back.

Michelle Ockers:

We'll see. I haven't had a good curation story for, for some time. I didn't have any curation stories this year.

Donald H Taylor:

We'll see if we can find one in 2022.

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Michelle Ockers:

Well, you know, where I am when you've got that. I do get a lot of requests. I get a lot of people say, have you got a good curation story?

The other one that's been interesting, and I know that we're not mature in this yet, but I think again, the technology is shifting a lot - and that's virtual reality; VR and AR. I did an episode with Jeremy Dalton from PwC who's not an L&D person. He works more broadly in XR at PwC. We focused on case studies for learning and development for virtual reality and augmented reality. Off the back of that, I had a few other people come to me to say, I've got a good VR story. I did one that I just loved, which was from the palliative care sector, episode 88 from work being done at Trinity hospice which started with them exploring almost like bucket list end of life experiences for people and for children who've been in care for long periods of time, then evolved to empathy-building for their staff, and also training their staff, giving them an experience or difficult situations and conversations that they might have to have with relatives, with patients and being able to practice those when it's really hard to create a realistic environment to practice it. It's a wonderful story and a wonderful use of VR.

Donald H Taylor:

I agree. It was a great episode. There is no doubt that VR has moved beyond the manual skills training. It's great with that actually, but it's moved beyond the manual skills training and simulation piece to the soft skills and putting yourself in somebody else's shoes and particularly empathy training. And even the sales training very effectively. There are lots of reasons why VR and AR, but particularly VR, which was super hot in 2017. It was number four on the Global Sentiment Survey. And it plummeted this year for very good reasons. I know why it was. It was cost and a lot of things, but it is absolutely coming out of that slump. And it's proving itself in practical applications for lots of reasons. Cost has come down enormously. Hardware has improved immensely. It's not tethered anymore. That's a big change.

It's set up is much faster. The skills base of people who can do VR and AR is much wider. Now you don't have to go and pay premium costs. People can develop stuff for you. And overall the acceptance of it as a way of doing things as well, which is pretty important, has also increased. So I think that we can expect to see a lot more VR stories next year in a really wide range of things. And I welcome it. I don't think it will ever be the silver bullet.

Michelle Ockers:

No, nothing ever is.

Donald H Taylor:

But I do think that it has a wider reach than the simple, I don't want to diminish it, a wider reach than the practical skill building, which is very good at. It has a lot more to do with it, particularly in depth, really defined views of faces and very good simulations of interactions with people on VR, which you can now start to do. You can really start to shift people's perceptions of things and the way it's very difficult to do any other way.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, absolutely. One thing I haven't heard stories on this year, which I I'm shaping up some stories for the new year around some of the diversity and inclusion themes. I think that's been a space we have spent a lot of time thinking more carefully about and working in more consciously. I also haven't had many stories around resilience and mental health. I'm looking for some good examples. Probably the stories I have lagged a little bit behind the work that

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people are doing at the cutting edge, because I look for impact. So I look for something that people can talk about the difference it made.

What sort of stories would you hope to see next year? If I could get a guide from you as to a story you think would be worth telling.

Donald H Taylor:

I think you will see some of those wellbeing stories coming through because in the global sentiment a lot of people were talking about that. It was digital skills are broadly across the organization, digital skills and wellbeing with two very strong themes that came out of what people were concentrating on this year after the pandemic. I think that the diversity and inclusion thing is absolutely right.

I'd also say accessibility. I think that's a theme, which is definitely quite rightly much more important. Now accessibility is not about adding on a few bits to a training program. Once you've done it, it's about designing it from the start so that it's open to everybody. And guess what, if something is designed well, you open to everybody, it benefits everybody. So I'm not, I have no difficulty with my vision, but if I'm doing a course, which is designed for somebody who is sight impaired, it will be better for me. Ditto taking sound carefully detailed a whole lot of other things as well. So we actually focusing on that or the Learning Technologies conference and in a couple of things. We've got diversity and inclusion session and a session on accessibility and they kind of overlap. So I think those are two big stories, which we can expect to come through.

I also think the talent mobility stuff, and I think the working of L&D with other parts of the organization is going to be a big thing next year. As we said, the lines are blurring. And I think that the smart organizations will be those where we get less hung up on boundaries between departments and L&D is working more closely, particularly I'd say with management. And I think I'm hoping that will be a big story for the next year.

Michelle Ockers:

That's excellent, Don, thank you. For listeners, if you are aware of someone who you come across, who's doing good work either through, you know, your personal interaction, your work with them, you're at a conference, you read something, please do just reach out to me on LinkedIn and pass those stories on because I'm always on the lookout for good stories. And I think half the effort in the podcast is finding the good stories, so please share that.

Donald H Taylor:

I would add this. Look, if you pass it on to Michelle, the range of people that benefits from is enormous. We all get to learn more about great stuff that's happening. So please, if you're something good going on, let Michelle know about it.

Michelle Ockers:

And share it with colleagues as well. So Don it's Global Sentiment Survey time again. For anyone who hasn't listened to it, we talked back on 16th of March, episode 74. We unpicked

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last year's Global Sentiment Survey. This is something you do every year and some listeners may not be aware of it. So would you like to just briefly explain what the Global Sentiment Survey is and how people can get involved?

Donald H Taylor:

Sure. Thank you for the opportunity. Global Sentiment Survey - I ask every year, and I've asked it for the, well, it will be the ninth year in 2022. I ask one obligatory question - what do you think will be hot next year? Identify more hotties. I don't define what the options are either. I give people 15 options. They choose from them. And that's very quick. That can all be done in a minute or less. I then ask one or two supplementary questions - where do you work? And a free text question or two, just to provide a bit more information, but you only have to answer that one obligatory question. This year, 2021, I actually had three and a half thousand people at the end. The official total was 3,114, but I did a couple of supplementary things afterwards and pushed up to three and a half thousand.

A tremendous amount of data built up over nine years. That enables us to see the patterns and how the world is looking at trends and L&D in the world. It's over 90 countries respond. Big focus this year on Africa. I want to get proper set of results from that. But Michelle, you always do a great job. Also bringing me a fabulously wide set of people, responding from Australia. And it's always interesting to hear what the Aussies have to say and what they're doing. So if you can, when Michelle shares the link or I share it, please pitch in, share a minutes of your time to choose what you think is going to be hot next year.

Michelle Ockers:

I'm going to include a link in the show notes too Don, and obviously your LinkedIn profile if anyone would like to get in touch with you, Don. The other thing I want listeners to be aware of this is the last official Learning Uncut episode for the year. But listeners who've been following me during the course of the past two years and listening to the podcast will know that there's a special type of series, the Emergent series, which I started with Shannon Tipton and Laura Overton during the pandemic, in the heart of the pandemic - although the pandemic just seems to be never ending at the moment, Don, I must say. So when I say the heart of the pandemic, in mid 2020 when we thought this was going to be a short thing, we were exploring what L&D could do to emerge stronger from the pandemic.

We've got another mini-series coming up, which we're recording at the moment. It will be one episode a week for seven weeks during December and January. We've researched a slightly different question. We're curious now more around the core strengths that L&D professionals need to take bold action. So for listeners, you can tune into that over the next seven weeks.

I wish everyone a fabulous Christmas, a happy Christmas. I hope you get to spend it with loved ones. I know I had very little time with my family in the past two years because of border closures in Australia, and our state borders are finally opening up again. So I'm planning lots of great time with friends and family in Sydney. So I hope wherever you are, it's, it's a healthy one and that you are able to spend time with family and friends. And Don, what are you doing for Christmas?

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Donald H Taylor:

Christmas will be spent at home with the nuclear family and then seeing people locally in London. Not planning on any travel, just going to keep it quiet, looking forward, as you say, to seeing more of the people we know and love. And yes, I'll just echo Michelle. So end of the year - hopefully you have a great end of the year, wherever you are in the world, and that 2022 is a peaceful, successful and unrestricted year for you.

Michelle Ockers:

Thank you. For listeners, if you found learning valuable in 2021, please share it with others. Tell a colleague, post about it on LinkedIn, leave a review if you'd like to when you've got the time, but anything to really be appreciative of the work that our guests put in and their willingness to share their stories so that we can all benefit from it and have the opportunity to learn from them. So thank you for being part of a learning community in 2021 and we will see you for the Emergent series.



About Learning Uncut

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

We are highly collaborative and pragmatic. We partner with organisations to align learning to their business needs, unleash continuous learning, and build capability to help them thrive. Learn more about us [at our website](#).

About your host, Michelle Ockers



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

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

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



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