

**Learning Uncut Episode 71**  
**DIY A Smart Learning Technology Solution – Jess Griffin**  
**and Jody Dollisson**  
**Hosted by Michelle Ockers**



**Michelle Ockers:**

In this Learning Uncut conversation, I'm joined by Jess Griffin, and Jody Dollisson from James Hardie to discuss a really elegant solution using technology and automation with low resource on a low budget to solve a business challenge. Their context is manufacturing, and in particular the processes for assessing and managing the competency of production line operators, which has all sorts of implications for efficiency, safety and quality in the business process. However, there are lessons that can be drawn firstly to similar contexts. If you are supporting frontline staff, customer service facing staff, and you're looking for unobtrusive ways to support their learning and assessment, you may be able to adapt some aspects of this solution. But more broadly, there's something really special in the way that the James Hardie team went about understanding and solving this particular challenge. They worked very closely with their external provider Go1 who they mentioned several times in the conversation. And while this is not a sponsored episode, I felt that the strong partnership between the organisational L&D team and their provider was well worth highlighting.

It's also a great illustration of one of the themes from last year's Learning Uncut, Emergent podcast series, which you may recall, explored how Learning and Development can emerge stronger from disruption. After sifting through all of the high-quality experience and advice provided by our 32 guests on that podcast series, and integrating that with evidence from a range of other sources, Laura Overton, Shannon Tipton and I have identified four lenses or ways of looking at business challenges which Learning and Development teams can adopt to be more effective and relevant than ever. Today's podcast story nicely demonstrates all four of these lenses which are data community, experimentation and technology. If you're an L&D leader who is curious about how you can use these lenses and are looking to be more relevant, effective and high impact than ever to create business value, please head over to the Emergent Masterclass website at [emergentmasterclass.com](http://emergentmasterclass.com) for information.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Welcome to Learning Uncut Jess and Jody.

**Jody Dollisson:**

Hi.

**Jess Griffin:**

Hi, thanks for having us.

**Michelle Ockers:**

It's a pleasure to have you both here. We are talking about a really great practical example from an industry I've spent a bit of time in and absolutely love, and that is manufacturing. I believe Jess and Jody, that you won an award for the solution we're talking about today. Can you tell us a little bit about the award?

**Jess Griffin:**

We did. We decided to enter into the Asia Pacific Institute for Learning and Performance awards for learning technology for the work that we've done on our plant training and assessment system in New South Wales. And we were fortunate enough to be the winner, which was very exciting.

**Michelle Ockers:**

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Well, fantastic. Congratulations. I think as people hear you tell the story of what you've done, they will appreciate why you why you received that award. So well done. Let's start with an introduction to James Hardie - who is James Hardie? What does the organisation do, and who do you do it for?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

James Hardie is a global leader in the production of interior and external building products made of fibre cement. So if you think about it, if you're into home design, or maybe you've been looking to renovate, you probably have seen our products on homes, or places like Instagram, like Three Birds Reno. If you're interested in maybe a Hamptons look or maybe something modern and contemporary. You might have also seen our products in Bunnings if you're a keen Bunnings person. We also make fibre cement products that also go in places around the house that you might not see as much so like in bathrooms and details and floors, and we even have decking.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

I love Bunnings absolutely adore it. For those who aren't in Australia - I think Bunnings may be in New Zealand as well - it's this kind of like a hardware Wonderland. It's a massive hypermarket for hardware, right?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

It's truly an institution, and where you take your children and you get a sausage sizzle. It's where you are on the weekends in Australia.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

How nice is it to have the sausage sizzle back as COVID restrictions have eased?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Absolutely.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Tell us a little bit about more about the kind of operations in terms of roles and facilities that you serve as Learning and Development professionals.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

As far as the organisation goes, we're a global business that generates more than 2.6 billion in net sales and an EBIT of around 18%, which is which is quite good performance. Culturally, it's an organisation that focuses on high performance and ultimately finding better ways to build. So there's always a continuous improvement mindset to everything that we do. And that goes for us in HR and learning as well. Our business is fast paced, and our people are smart in the way they solve problems, driven in their pursuit of results and real in the way that they build relationships and work together. We take zero harm approach to safety and have a relentless focus on achievement, learning and development.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

It sounds like there's this really strong sense of linkage between people and learning and business performance. I'm hearing that thread Jess, as you talk.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Definitely. As a People and Performance Team, we are really focused on what are the business objectives and how can we help drive performance through our people - with and through our people I would say

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#### **Michelle Ockers:**

The story we're focusing on today is in the manufacturing area. Do you want to tell us a little bit about ... and I'm not sure whether you call it manufacturing or production, what language you use ... but around that the kind of work, the kind of environment that the solution is focused on?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Definitely. As I said, earlier, we manufacture, or we make fibre cement. So this is going to be my short and probably terrible explanation. But like baking a cake, essentially, the ingredients come together in raw form. So you mix cellulose, cement, sand and water and they create your cake mix. The mix is then created into specific James Hardie products, whatever they're making that day and baked in the autoclave, which is like the oven. It then goes through a finishing process before heading to the DC on its way to customers. So what that means is that we've got a number of operators, we've got team leaders and department leaders that will work together to create a lot of products and many different SKUs. So the challenge for James Hardie is in manufacturing businesses that we need to ensure and be able to demonstrate that we've trained and assessed our people as competent and clearly defined and documented standard operating procedures, which you'd know, Michelle, are your SOPs in the plant. That's so that every person returns home the way they arrived to work every day. So it really does help us achieve true zero harm. It also helps to ensure that we're making good quality product, we do it as efficiently as possible using our version of lean, and ultimately that people know what they're doing each and every shift.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

What I'm hearing there is safety is critical, efficiency is important, product quality is critical. So there's a number of drivers. And whilst it's not frontline in that you don't have people standing in a customer facing role, these are people who are not sitting at desks. They are on the line. They're hands-on. They're working on shift. There's some aspects of that environment, if you're supporting people with their learning in that environment, that need to be taken into account.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Absolutely. What you just mentioned there, all of those capabilities, is really something that we had to factor into anything that we do in in learning space at James Hardie. So it's not just a HR thing or a learning thing, you know, we really need to work across those capabilities. So lean, safety, working in with the production teams, any kind of other cultural engagement activities that are going on, so that we're sending a consistent and regular message in a way that's palatable to the frontline.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah, absolutely. Can you tell us a little about the business challenge or opportunity, however you want to frame it, that led to the use of technology, which we're going to discuss in a moment.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Each plant was responsible for maintaining their own training records, which resulted in a lack of standardisation and was compounded by manual, inconsistent and paper-based records management. We identified that we could deliver a more consistent formal competency assessment process across our Australian sites. For example, in the past, we could not easily produce training records as and when requested. As a result, we weren't able to easily identify training compliance and then proactively support the business to close the capability gaps identified and build talent pipelines. This lack of visibility also led to serious wastage. The business would conduct regular training days where everyone was

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required to attend each and every session, whether or not it was applicable to their role, or whether or not they had completed it previously. This sheep dip approach was conducted because there was no visibility to identify who needed what and when. In real terms, we were able to calculate that one single training day at Rosehill cost the business almost \$13,000 due to this lack of visibility.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

So I can hear the wastage there. And you know, this is a situation certainly that I've faced before. It's often a problem that people can't pull it together, or it's in disparate records, I think you talked about the records are in different Excel spreadsheets and so on. It's really hard to piece together the story and to drive smarter decisions with how we're supporting people's development, right?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Absolutely. And you need to be able to do that on an individual level, but also across one area of business and then right across Australia. So as you say, you need to be able to produce learning records on one person for any particular reason, but then also be super productive, reduce the waste, and ensure that you're delivering what you need to keep the business running.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Tell me a little bit more about why this was important to the organisation.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

It's a great question, because I think the why was somewhat different to the different levels of leadership in the business. This was something that I had to think about each time I was pitching it in a meeting. I think there was some real no brainers in there around safety and zero harm, vicarious liability, increased workers comp, and ISO accreditation, for example. But there were also things like being able to run the plant in the most efficient way, reducing waste and cost of production, being able to scale the plant effectively to meet increased product demands to meet changing needs, which is something that is actually playing out right now that, you know, we didn't foresee 18 months ago. It's something that's playing out in a real way now for our plants. And lastly, for the operators. If they were new, it's about helping them to feel confident and competent on their job, and also getting that real sense of satisfaction when they are deemed competent. You know, like they've cut their teeth, their new, they know what they're doing, and they can be confident every day that they know what they're doing and they're making a contribution.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

I like that idea that the value, the Why, is different by different stakeholder, and you had to really think about that, and be able to speak to different groups in different ways about why this was important. I really like what you've done there. You talked about pitching it - pitching either the solution or pitching the need to do something about it. Was the need to do something differently, or the opportunity, was that obvious or did you need to get buy in for that? And if so, how did you do that?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

I do talk about it as if it were pitching, I think I could have worn a special T-shirt or a sash because I felt like I was on a campaign tour for quite some months. On that, at the time, we had no HRIS, (just) an older version of a very traditional LMS that was very hard to do anything with. So this was actually part of a broader pitch that involved implementing a new learning experience platform in APAC called Go1. The platform was going to help us do a lot of things across the capability strategy including delivering quality compliance training, deploying leadership development content, like podcasts and videos and eLearning

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modules, in a way that was easy to get organised, and literally putting thousands of pieces of quality content in their hands to support their individual development plans, which is something that no one in the business had access to before. Specifically though, a major win in getting Go1 was pitching that if we were going to introduce a plant training and assessment system, we needed it to be digital. Go hard or go home. Let's go and do it properly here. We decided that as a business we needed to be able to easily track evidence collected to determine competency, including observation, questioning expert feedback, and then send that data back to a central repository. We need this data to understand where the capability gaps exist, and for hundreds of operators who need multiple assessments depending on what role they were in. So it's limited bandwidth across the team. As you can see, we are very small but very keen. We needed to ensure that each step was automated and needed to be relatively low cost and easy to implement. We also didn't want the solution to interfere with the operator and the plant trainer's engagement. We just want to two people having a conversation out on the floor about how they go about their work. good eye contact, good quality conversation, good connection.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Okay, so you mentioned that your team is quite lean and I know I'm talking to two of you, Jess and Jody. Are you the team or the more people who are involved that you consider part of Learning and Development in James Hardie here in Australia?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

So the Talent Capability team is made up of Abby, our talent sourcing leader, Kirby, our talent sourcing specialists in the Philippines, Ngaire our plant trainer in Queensland and Ross, who is our plant trainer in New South Wales. So it's Ross along with Jody, our organisational capability specialist who's here with me today, that were part of the real team effort which delivered the project to the business.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

I understand at the time you started creating this solution or thinking about how we're going to create a solution that Jody's role didn't exist. Is that right, Jody? Were you brought on at some point?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Yes, I was brought on probably about six months into the research. And yes, and I was also brought on at the same time as the plant training lead, Ross, at our Rose Hill plant.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

I really was on a campaign to to get some systems and some people.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Luckily, it's all paid off. So tell me just in terms of getting the buy-in, getting someone to sign up and say, yes, you can invest money ... It sounds like you had to get investment in an LXP. You had to get investment in Jody's position, at the very least, if not potentially further investment. What really got it over the line with the key decision makers, what was you know, most critical to getting a yes to the investment.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

I think it was really tying it back to the business objectives. So every single time I was talking to someone and their drivers were different. I did really tie back into our strategy for that particular year. So in particular, it was around zero harm, but it was world class manufacturing, as well.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

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The other thing, I think it was really important at James Hardie was to tailor the communication. So I would say that we've got some people in the business who are really into the detail and want to know the research in the background, and others who you really do need to deliver something on one page and be able to talk to it. I did lots and lots of research. I sat through so many demonstrations from different HR technology providers. I went out and spoke to different organisations to see what they did. I created a list of what was required and how important that was. You know, I had a huge amount of information in the business case. For some people in our business, that was exactly what they wanted. I was able to anticipate every question. And those sorts of people were able to sign it off quite quickly. I also had to be prepared with the one-pagers and to walk into senior leadership team meetings and just be able to answer things off the cuff.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Making the case for change can be a real challenge. I just wanted to get you to dig into that a little bit more. Because I think that's something - and there were some really great tips there - I think from what you did, around the level of research and benchmarking. Clean and clear on requirements. Taking that business first mindset and thinking about it from a business perspective is really important to making the case for change. And then tailoring communication. So well done on all those strategies. I think many people making the case for change in L&D can take something away from that. Thank you very much. Let's move on to the solution. You know, you talked a little bit earlier about some of the constraints or some of the requirements around things being done on the shop floor, around it being unobtrusive. What was the solution that you ended up with? And what were some of the key design considerations or why you've ended up with any particular features of the solution you have? So you're going to lead us on that one, Jody?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Yes, I am. So as Jess saying we needed to empower the plant trainer to assess competency and track training on the manufacturing floor in real time on a mobile device or tablet. The plant trainer needed to be agile and assess people quickly and safely, while not impeding on productivity targets. Basically, we needed to stay out of people's way. The plant training needed to engage operators in real conversations in the moment and not be hampered by technology or paperwork. So after compiling information from over 300 SOPs and attributing knowledge from these documents into role-specific assessments, we created an offline assessment documentation and tested the approach without the use of any technology. This allowed us to work closely with the stakeholders to understand what would work for them and gather any feedback on how the technology might support or hinder our daily activities.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

I love what you've done there. You prototyped basically, right? You said here's - it's almost like he's a kind of minimum viable product - let's have a think about what this might look like, before we start investing in setting things up in software or coming up with a technical solution. What might the process look like? So you went for a low-tech prototype first? And what did you learn out of that?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

It was super critical, because we knew it was not going to be an out of the box solution. So it was, we knew that we weren't going to run away and build something and then have it have it not work.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

It was really important for me to understand. I hadn't come from a manufacturing background myself. So it was really important to sort of stand in the shoes of the people who were being assessed and understand what, what they do and how we could help them without hindering

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them. So I spent a lot of time, and Ross, our plant trainer, spent a lot of time just understanding and getting to know the stakeholders and the operators around what would work and what wouldn't work. It's all good and well for us in our office to implement a process. But if we don't understand it, and it doesn't work, it's not going to work out on the floor. So that is really important for me.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Getting out into the space where the work is done, going to Gemba is the kind of Japanese saying for that. It's come up a few times in the podcast, and you see things when you get out there. It's even better than just having a conversation with someone actually - going and physically being in the workplace with them. I think the approach you've taken there was great. And so you prototyped it initially without the technology. Where did you go from there?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Luckily enough we had Go1 already implemented as a Learning Management System. So we worked with our customer success manager to discuss options and identify any integrations that might be available to support. We tried several solutions. What we ended up with was using Google Forms. We transformed the paper-based assessment into an online form that the plant trainer could complete on the go on the manufacturing floor. Once the assessment is completed, an automation tool called Zapier updates the learner's training record in Go1 as 'in progress' until the assessment outcome is verified by an independent expert where their records are then once again updated to competent or not yet competent. This allows us to see in real time where our assessments are up to and what the outcomes are of those assessments. Once we have the assessment process worked out our next challenge was how to demonstrate to the business where the training gaps are and anticipate any needs. Many of our safety related training is only valid for certain periods of time, so we needed to track whose training was current and who needed to update their skills. We needed to be able to anticipate what was going to expire and ensure that it was scheduled in advance so as not to impact any production. Using Go1 as a central repository for the data we build an automated dashboard in Microsoft Excel. This dashboard gives us a visual report showing any training gaps and expired or expiring accreditation.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

So in terms of what the process looks like on the floor, then you've got Google Forms in the background that you've set up your assessment documents in. And you've literally got a trainer, what with a tablet or some sort of mobile device who's actually just filling in the form real time as they're doing the assessment. Is that how it works?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

That's it. That's correct. So they've got they've got a mobile phone, having a conversation with the operator, and the phone prompts him with questions that they should be asking the operator and asked for them to put in comments around what kind of response the operator gives them.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

It's pretty critically in our environment in particular, because we have quite a diverse workforce. So we do have people who have English as a second language. They might have communication challenges and things like that. So having those prompts and flexibility in the forms allows the trainer to use various methods to determine competency. They can use questioning. They can ask them to demonstrate something depending on the individual. And it allows, you know, individual comments for that particular assessment to be held on record, which is just exceptional. It's not just a year this person was assessed tick on this

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particular day. It's how do we assess them? Do we use questions? What was the trainer's feedback? What did the SME or the experts say as well? The data was so much richer than what we had available in the past.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. Often these paper-based assessments are scanned into a system, but you can't do anything with the data. It's inaccessible. So you've got a solution here where you've got data that you can use in different ways into the future as well.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Jody, can you tell us a little more about Zapier? What Zapier is how it works, how you used it in your solution.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Zapier has become my new favourite software application. I was introduced to it by Go1, and just have loved it since day one. It's an automation software tool that acts a little bit like a band aid, and it pulls different things together and automates tasks. What it allowed us to do was enter the details into the Google Forms. Zapier then grabs that information and enters it into Go1 for us into the central repository without any human interaction whatsoever. Being such a lean team, we needed a solution that had limited human interaction. And Zapier allowed us to do that.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Smart use of the technology available. Did you think about going out and seeing if there was an off the shelf solution that could do this? Because I've got to say, when I was working at Coca-Cola Amatil, seven years ago, we had the same challenge. And at the time, I thought, "Gosh, wouldn't it be great if there was an app you could use for this?" And I wasn't anywhere near as resourceful as you guys in figuring it out. But did you go and look to see if there was already something in market that could do this for you?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

We did. Unfortunately, with budget constraints, we weren't sort of able to get an off the shelf solution. And we felt that our needs were quite specialised in what we needed. So we found that they have been able to use different technology in different steps was the best way forward for us.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Okay. budget constraints is often an issue, right? But you didn't let that stop you. You're resourceful. Congratulations on that. And tell me, did you go straight to the Zapier solution? Was it obvious that Google Forms with Zapier to get the data into the Go1 LMS and then to be able to extract to Excel - was that clear that that was what you were going to do? Or did you have to test and trial different approaches before you landed on that?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

We definitely had to test and challenge different approaches. So you know, we looked at SurveyMonkey and Microsoft Forms. We knew that solution was probably going to be some kind of form online form using Zapier integration into Go1. But trying to find the right online form for us that worked with Zapier well was the challenge. We definitely trialled. I sent Ross out onto the floor several times with different solutions going "Can you try this for me?" We ended up landing with Google Forms because it gave the flexibility that we needed for the solution.

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Go1 we're really helpful in that respect. You get a customer success manager. And you know, they've got some expertise - shout out to Joe, because he's been amazing. And we put him under a lot of pressure. But I remember him finding someone at Go1. He was like, "You know, this gentleman is excellent. He's technical, he knows Zapier." It was about using your CSM to connect you to people within Go1 that could help us with this unique challenge that we had. And how did you gather feedback from your key stakeholders internally? What was their involvement with kind of testing things out and providing feedback? I would say it was really small, like, it wasn't like we built things up. And then, you know, we presented to them and said, Here's all this work that we've done. As Jody said, it was literally like, "Hey, Ross, here's a new form. Go out and trial it." Or "Here's a new assessment. Test it out in this part of the plant." Ross was really our connection to the plant at all levels, including team leaders, operators, and department leaders. He was sharing their perspectives, and some of the emotions for some of our team leaders around implementing something, a solution like this. I wouldn't say that there was a formal, you know, each quarter we presented to the senior people. I would say it was more, it was really iterative. It was really, "Here's where we're at, test it out, get feedback on the floor, make it better." And just it was a continuous loop until we got to a point where we were ready to let it loose, I think.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

I think the stakeholder engagement came more towards the end of the project, once we had the data, and we were able to present that to show training gaps and show training needs. That's where we started to get more stakeholder engagement around the project and having to flex some things with it. Once we had that information, but getting that data to start with, there wasn't a lot of stakeholder...

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Yeah, that's a good point, particularly from the senior levels they were probably, you know, what are we doing flapping around on the floor there and talking to our people? That was quite an exciting day when we were able to say, "Look, we've flipped your matrix, and here are all your gaps, and here's how we can save you money." So, that was that was quite an exciting message.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

That is exciting. And you know, the modern manufacturing environment is a data rich environment as well. You know, they work real time with data. And I know when I was at Coca Cola Amatil, all of the automation in the production lines. So it is an environment where they understand data, and they are looking for reliable data, so being able to provide them with more reliable data to make better decisions no doubt was something that fitted quite well with you probably your leadership area, at the very least, if not the operators as well, because ... I don't know what's it like ... At Coke we had computer interfaces. Everything was computer interfaces to set up the production lines, to monitor the production lines. Is that similar to the level of automation in your production facilities?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Yeah, absolutely, I think you make a good point. You do really have to talk in their language. So it is about how do they talk in, you know, on the production floor, and also with regards to our version of Lean, which is called HMOS (Hardie Manufacturing Operating Systems)? So absolutely, they want to see data. They want you to talk to the reds, which is what's outstanding. They want to understand why is this a problem. Well, it costs you X amount every time you do this. You know, here's what you have to do. And here's how we can help you do that in an efficient way. So it is really about understanding their environment and incorporating the language that they use.

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#### Michelle Ockers:

In terms of demonstrating the value and the impact of solution, it sounds like you were doing that in a fairly fluid way starting to feedback. Well, here's what the dashboard is telling us. And here's how we can make different decisions. Did you have a particular strategy around demonstrating value? Did that play out a certain way? Or was it literally more that very fluid, maintaining the relationships and sharing the data and the dashboards back in and just people seeing the value of it? How did that work?

#### Jess Griffin:

I think it was both. So you know, I think it was you know, the some of the more frontline, it was a continuous iterative, you know, constant communication, here's what we're doing and why and give us your feedback and all those sorts of things. In terms of the broader question around how we demonstrated value and the impact of the solution, as Jody's mentioned, it is really about once we had all the data into that matrix, it really was quite ... well in our team was quite exciting, because they're all nerdy, but it was magical to see actually to have it all flipped out and go, this is what it means.

#### Jody Dollisson:

Yeah, so we've created a system, we've created a matrix, and basically it comes up red or green, you're either competent or not competent, or your accreditation is valid or not valid. It's red and green. It's right there in front of you. So we're able to list out what training and assessments are required for every role in the plan and in real time and understand where the gaps exist. From there, we can now plan the right training and assessment for the right people at the right time. And we are proactively supporting to true zero harm that each and every person who is trained and competent to carry out the task we employ them to undertake. It also means that we are now agile and ready for any ISO reviews and audits that are required as part of our quality procedures. And that we can respond quickly and comprehensively to any requests for information.

#### Michelle Ockers:

Fantastic. Often that's a huge effort to pull together bespoke reporting from all over the place in Excel that you've got at their fingertips, which is great.

#### Michelle Ockers:

So tell me, what went well, and why? What do you think the key success factors were here?

#### Jess Griffin:

I think the things that went, well, were that we chose the right technology in the end. So as I said, if I sat through heaps and heaps of different demos. I went out and spoke to lots of different people in my network. And I think choosing Go1 helped us to do multiple things across our capability strategy. They're a company that has got a good level of investment, which means a strong dev engine and the right approach in customer success. So that was pretty critical for us in terms of making them bend and twist to get this project to work for us. And that's exactly what you want in an HR tech vendor. I would say, absolutely go and do research, go and sit in a heap of demos, create the criteria in terms of what you're looking for, how important each item is, and then do the analysis because plant training and assessment was one piece, but Go1 helped us to achieve pretty much everything else on the strategy for last year. I think that's something that went really well. I think we chose the right people to join us. As I said, I think when I joined as a lone ranger, which often happens, I'm a bit of a builder. So having Jody and Ross - they really embody smart, driven and real, and without bright people, this project wouldn't have landed the way that it did.

#### Michelle Ockers:



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I'm curious about your skill set Jody. What do you think were the key skills you brought to this? Firstly, what do you think the key skills were that you brought when you first started on the project? And also, what skills do you feel that you developed or strengthened over the course of the project?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

I've got a number of years in Learning and Development behind me and have previously used Go1 in a previous role. I think what I brought to the team was an attitude of, I won't take no for an answer. So the amount of conversations I had with our customer success manager, where he'd go, "No, you can't do that." And I'd go, "Why? Why can't we do that?" And then trying to find ways around it. So really thinking outside of the box around how we could do things. I think that's probably the biggest thing that I brought to the team is just that persistence and constantly asking why and how we can improve things.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Yeah, that's what I would say. When I saw Jody's resume, it was excellent that she had worked with Go1 before but, the resilience and just being comfortable with ambiguity and a bit of experimentation. There were so many challenges on the way. Just saying "Here's the challenge." Jody would come back and say, "Yep, here's what we can do." I would say "close, not quite what we need," or "that's really good Jody, but could we make it do this?" And then Jody's probably a little bit frustrated on the end of the phone. Just really having the attitude and the open mindedness to push things a bit further, make magic happen. Together, Jody Ross, and I have really just taken this far-fetched idea across the last, you know, 12-18 months and turned it into something extremely practical, and one that's delivering value to the business.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Jody, what was the most significant challenge that you had to address?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Was it me going on maternity leave three days after you started?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

I started in the business. And three weeks later, Jess went on maternity leave. And she given us this great idea of what she wanted to do and Ross and I had to sort of bring it to life. So I think that was probably the challenge - not knowing the business. Not knowing manufacturing even was a really big challenge for me. So getting that sort of knowledge and understanding of that. I know the technical stuff. But it was working out how we could make that technical stuff work.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

How did you address that challenge?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Just getting out there, as I said earlier. Stepping in the shoes of the operators. Working really closely with Ross, because he is my person that's in the in the plant every day. So working really closely with him around what can and can't work. So that was the way that I addressed that.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Great. And from your perspective, Jess, were there was there anything else you think was a significant challenge that needed to be addressed?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

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I think as a team, really knowing all of our roles, and playing to our strengths, was pretty key to it. For me, as a leader, empowering them with everything that they needed to do to go and get the job done. And not really, you know, being a helicopter over the top of that did allow me to be on maternity for those couple of months. But also, it freed me up to you know, sit in those rooms and communicate over and over and over again, "Here's what we're doing. Here's why it's important. Here's why you need to continue to support us from a senior leadership level and get your direct reports to support us when we're going out and trying things on the floor." I think we're just a great team. And we all work together really well, we communicate with each other. And we all know the value that we bring together.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Fantastic. What's next for the solution? You mentioned before that you continuing to develop it. Where are you taking it?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

After the pretty successful, well, I should say, award winning pilot, we're now rolling this out with our Carole Park plant. That's in Queensland. We're also broadening that right across Australia to our distribution centres and research and development, with plans to include other departments in the near future. So once that's deployed right across Australia, it will allow us to look right across the business from a capability perspective in real time. And in the long term, it will allow us to support the build of a strong talent pipeline, which will support the business through the challenges of an ageing workforce, which is like a lot of manufacturing in Australia. It's a key challenge.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

We're also looking at it enhancing our reporting capabilities using a piece of software called Domo to speed up the integration, and provide real time self-service analytics for people in your business.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

And then hopefully, we're going to take on the Philippines. When the borders open back up again.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Well, you've got I think, plenty of time to perfect it before then, unfortunately. So tell me in terms of tips for others in Learning and Development who'd like to get started with using technology more smartly, in particular automation, or to do more with the way they use technology - what tips do you have?

#### **Jess Griffin:**

I would say get out and immerse yourself in everything that you can. So you know, join some organisations, whether it's AITD or AHRI, and go to their networking events. Read as much as you can. Listen to podcasts. Go out and get some technology demos. Listen to the webinars. Scheduling time for play. So just you know, maybe it's a Friday afternoon thing and have a play with some technology, you know, depending on maybe your organisation uses Google or maybe they use Microsoft - plenty of free and cool things to play with in that space. Go out and speak to other people see what they're doing. Also, be generous of your own time and energy too. It's as much about, you know, grabbing that info and being a sponge from other people. If you've done something well, you know, go and share it with others, as well.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

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It's how networks create value, right? Being a generous contributor is as important as finding out what other people are doing.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Absolutely, because there's always something I think in an organisation you might do one thing really, really well and you should share it. There's always opportunity to do something else better. The more that we can in the network of Learning and Development professionals continuously share. We're going to Make you know everybody better at what they do and it's just going to lift the value of the profession so the more generous we can be the better.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

So there's a lot of kind of immersing yourself there. Jody, what about your tips for others in L&D you'd like to improve the use of technology?

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

So for me, I'd say don't be afraid of trial and error. So Jess instils in us as a team, that it's better than what we have, get it out there. Learn. Make it better, and then get it back out there again. So that's a piece of advice I use every day since working with Jess, and I just think it's fantastic to live by going, "It may not be perfect, but let's get it out there and trial it. We can always amend it once we know and get feedback.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Yeah, that's definitely something I learned do Domain. I think if you spend any kind of time in a tech organisation, it's ship fast and iterate. If it's better than what we've got to get it out there, get some feedback. Don't wait until you've got the perfect solution, because it's probably going to be too slow. And you'll probably never get it to be perfect anyway. So get it out there, get some feedback on it and continually make it better.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Such great advice. Thank you both for sharing your work with us, and also what you learned through the process of putting the solution in place at James Hardie. For listeners, there'll be a link to Jody and Jessica's LinkedIn profiles in the show notes. Plus, obviously links to the different tech that was used as part of this solution, and perhaps some other bonus resources as well. Thank you so much, Jess, and Jody, for your time today for sharing your work and insights with us.

#### **Jody Dollisson:**

Thank you.

#### **Jess Griffin:**

Thank you.

# EMERGING STRONGER Masterclass

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## **About Michelle Ockers**



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### DIY A Smart Learning Technology Solution – Jess Griffin and Jody Dollisson

*Michelle Ockers works with business and learning leaders to realise the untapped potential of learning in organisations. She is an organisational learning strategist and modern workplace learning practitioner. Michelle works with organisations to develop and implement transformative organisational learning strategy, and to build the capability of their learning team. She delivers keynotes, workshops and webinars for learning and broader professional or workforce groups at both public and in-house events. Michelle also mentors learning professionals at all career stages on career planning and professional development.*

*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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