

**LEARNING UNCUT EPISODE 8:  
PROJECT 100 – TRANSFORMING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING – GAIL BRAY**

Michelle Ockers: Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. I'm Michelle Ockers.

Karen Moloney: And I'm Karen Moloney.

Michelle Ockers: And today we're going to talk with Gail Bray from Victoria Polytechnic about Project 100. This is a three year strategic initiative, which radically transformed 100 qualifications following a modern leading learning delivery model.

Welcome Gail, and congratulations on the project receiving the 2018 Excellence Award for Blended Learning from the Australian Institute of Training and Development.

Gail Bray: Ah, thank you, Michelle. And I hi everyone, and hi Karen.

Karen Moloney: Hi Gail.

Michelle Ockers: Let's kick off with you telling us a little bit about Victoria Polytechnic, what the organisation is and what the organisation does, Gail.

Gail Bray: Victoria Polytechnic is part of Victoria University, so we're the TAFE Division known as a dual sector. We are located in the west of Melbourne and we offer both vocation education training programs as well as higher ed qualifications. So the Polytechnic itself employees just over 600 staff and last year, around 12,000 students completed their vocation education training with us. We deliver qualifications from certificate two, we're actually certificate one level up to advanced diploma in a variety of vocation. That includes our trades, health and community services, and business courses as well as transition education.

Michelle Ockers: Right, and do you work directly with students enrolling or do you also have partnerships with organisations supporting school development and organisations? How does that work?

Gail Bray: Yes. So we work with ... We have commercial clients. So for example, one of our major clients is Weston Health here in the west of Wellborn. We have also a lot of relationships in the trades area, John Holland and those type of large organisations from a commercial point of view, but the majority of our students are either school leaders or mature age workers returning or revisiting education.

Michelle Ockers: One of the things that stuck me when I learned about this project, Project 100 is the sheer scope of the project. It's actually massive and was named after 100 qualifications being included in your project's scope. Can you give us some of

the other key data about the scale of this project so people can really appreciate what you undertook in the project?

Gail Bray:

Okay. So, the scale really for us, yes, a 100 qualification. And I guess what ... In terms of volume, some qualifications would range from 20 units of competency up to 88 units of competency. So overall, that's about 3,000 ... Actually, it's over about 3,000 units of competency had to be included. We also in that mix was assessment tasks, so we had to rewrite and redesign many of our assessment tasks. We had over 249 teachers involved that we had to retrain and refocus in the instructional design and learning facilitation. Along with that, we had support staff that needed to be trained in learning management system analytics. And about 34 staff were included in that. A big component, a large component, was our managers of the teaching departments, and about 28 managers were identified to be coached to drive change. And in our initial roll out around about 7,000 students have completed their vocation education training through our blended learning model.

So project meetings included about 175 stake holders all up as well. The reach and the size and the scale was quite substantial.

Michelle Ockers:

So a project of this size, there had to be a really compelling reason to undertake it. I know there was a learning platform that the organisation faced at the time that led to the decision to undertake the project. Can you tell us a bit about the situation, the organisational context and it's burning platform to the project?

Gail Bray:

Yeah, that's a really good question, Michelle. So, round about 2012, government made some drastic reforms around funding for TAFEs, publicly funded TAFEs, and removed around about 300 million dollars from the sector. So that obviously had a devastating effect on vocation education and training, but more importantly the TAFE component of that, the TAFE delivery areas, particularly in Victoria. So, the impact of that really was massive restructures to the business and a loss of about 50 percent of our staff along with about 50 percent of our students.

When we sort of stabilised a little bit in about 2015 there were some other drastic game changers let's call them, that were quite apparent. And one of those, which is common to everybody and everyone can relate to is digital destruction. So, the fast pace of digital technology, and how that was impacting our ability to engage with our students, but also our ability to deliver the education that the community and the public and industry required. And along with that really, also comes globalisation. So as our reach and our product offerings grew, I guess, or we had the opportunity to grow, we had to think about how we could deliver not just locally, but nationally and internationally to really respond to those global changes.

Michelle Ockers:

So what were some of the most important things you did in this context to start engaging your stake holders, building the vision, getting them on board and then to work with them to deliver on this massive scope?

Gail Bray:

Gosh, that's a really good question. So, communication really was something that I had in the back of my mind. And I guess to put this in context for people, a lot of the idea for the blended model was not new. I mean, everyone's been doing blended learning and everyone's been doing flipped classroom. None of this is new. I guess, what was different for us was actually sitting down and actually working out was going to be best for the student and our teachers are very passionate and a very experienced in what they do.

To answer your question, and understanding the state of our organization, communication for me was going to be a key to actually get this project up and running and out to the organisation as a whole. So what I did is really, I built a team from scratch. So I had a small team that I was able to put together with key skills. And what we did, we actually did what we call a launch. We went to the staff meetings and we did an initial launch to really talk about the state of flux that the organisation was in to get them a beacon of hope. So it was almost like saying I know we've been through, let's call it a tsunami, but, however, we're about to rescue, something that's going to be a game changer for the organisation and for you personally as teachers and managers.

Behind the scenes, my team and myself and particularly as the leader, was engaging with team managers. So team managers of the teaching departments. So what I did as part of my communication strategy and change management strategy, is I engaged and I referred to what I think is the accelerating implementation model, which is methodology, which is called AIM and that's really taking a real simple tool I learnt from that about visualising pretty much on my wall behind me in my office with some post it notes, who the targets were that I was going to start to engage with in the first year.

So, in the first year, we had 20 qualifications that we were going to tackle, which I had about four or five managers that would be leading that were in charge of those qualifications. So, behind me on my wall I just some post-it notes of the managers names, who they were and the teachers that reported to them underneath them. And I sort of made that as a representative of the targets that I would be engaging with. Then I scaled that back to just one manager and one team that I actually met with. They were really my guinea pigs or my pilot area, but what was interesting about this particular manager was actually our aged care and community services area, disability area, who were actually about to be shut down because their student numbers were so low.

So, this poor manager probably had nothing left and I guess when I went and I met with her, and said, "Right, we're about to support you to regrow your course." I had to build a relationship with her and build trust with her. So I spent time with this particular manager and actually began to build the model for her as a pilot and as a guinea pig. So that was my approach in being able to connect with her. And as we started to see success, that allowed to tell me stories. And I told these stories through manager meetings and staff briefings and things like that and we were starting to get a few quick wins, which made it a little bit easier for me to get into the other areas.

Michelle Ockers: I think there's a few keys I get out of that answer in terms of tips for other people. One is getting in front of people talking face to face were things you did a lot of. Finding someone to engage with who got the benefit of what you were trying to do and working closely with them to get some runs on the board and then being able to use that as a success story.

Gail Bray: Yep.

Michelle Ockers: Yep. And I think you talked a little bit about some of your visual work practices and engaging people through visual work practices. I think Karen, you wanted to explore that a little more fully.

Karen Moloney: Yeah, I did because I really ... I've started working like that a bit more myself recently and I'm finding it a really productive way to work. I know you were using visual management boards to actually manage the project overall as well as the redesign as each of the courses, which that's quite a different way of working for many people, especially in an organisation like TAFE and as large as TAFE. Can you just tell me a little bit about what your challenges were with that and how did you get the team who already changed the teams to start working in a different way?

Gail Bray: When you're communicating, in my experience, what I've learned is to keep it really simple. So I chose the ADDIE instructional design framework, simply because it made sense from implementation and for the overall Project 100. So when you look at ADDIE and it has the Analyse, Design, Develop, Implement and Evaluate streams, I actually re engineered that for my project. That was one of the first tools that I did on one page. And it allowed me when I was communicating to teams that this is the process that we're gonna take, these were the steps that we were gonna take, and these people that we're gonna support too, to do that. So I had my small L and D team, which was about eight of us and we were partnered with the teaching teams and like my pilot group, there was about probably about ... The manager and about three teachers that was only four. So we were able to have this one document, which I'm happy to circulate, that both my team, the L and D team, and the teaching team were working together on. So it was a collaborative team approach with a one page document that spelt out the steps that we were gonna be going through. So that was the ADDIE structural design model.

Karen Moloney: Now, there's lots of talk about ADDIE's dead, and we have to move faster, be more agile in these things. And I find it really interesting that you were using the ADDIE model of instructional within an agile project framework. Can you tell me a bit more about how that worked?

Gail Bray: Yeah, so with the agile, that really was more for my L and D team to follow and also to really simplify what was a massive amount of work. So when you look at a unit of competency, and I think I mentioned we had 3,000 eLearning files that we had to create within three years. One unit of competency could have anywhere between ... If we put in terms of power point slides, could have

anywhere between 20 to 500 slides. We just said, "Look, this is a story board. It's in power point." And then my team worked with them to help them reword it a little bit and make it more instructionally sound.

Karen Moloney: Right.

Gail Bray: But we had to do it in one and a half weeks. So my authors who used Articulate, would that need complete story board and once they got the complete story board off the teacher, they would then need to turn that into ... Now that is a massive, a very, very short timeframe for anyone that's done anything in development.

Michelle Ockers: Yes.

Gail Bray: But the teachers were critical. So they were subject matter expert, but also had the role of creating the story. Now, when we had road blocks ... And I guess, this is where the agile sort of approach comes in. We didn't do anything through death by email. We would get the teacher to come and sit with one of my authors or we would go and sit with them and we'd say, "Look, I've developed 50 percent of this build, but I'm stuck here. I just need you to come and talk me through." So in less than an hour, a teacher would come in and that eLearning author was able to move on very, very quickly.

And I think, Karen, you made a really good point when you mentioned this is not traditional in TAFE. I don't think we can skip over that because that's so true. In large bureaucratic organizations, what you'll find is that everyone hides behind their computer.

Karen Moloney: Yeah.

Gail Bray: So what was really different for this project, was like, no, no, no we're actually coming out to meet with you and you're gonna come and meet with my team. So my L and D team and these teaching department teams became one and worked as one team.

Michelle Ockers: I've got this vision, Karen, of people who are working in organisational learning and development settings in big organizations who have the pain of trying to get access to subject matter experts to work on programs all the time. So then they're saying, "Yes, how did you get their time? Like how did you create a situation where it was important enough and high enough priority that you actually got them into a room with you?" So, how did you do that Gail?

Gail Bray: Well that was about setting up expectations. So when we ... Just following the ADDIE instructional design model, the first stream of that is the Analyse part and part of that is what we call a mapping session. And that mapping session was just a real basic again, using post-it notes that we would ... The expectation

was that the director of that teaching area, the manager of that teaching area, and the teachers concerned would need to attend that meeting.

And although that you would also know that in a bureaucratic organisation, a lot of it's also about leading by influence. So there was ... I sort of came in and sort of helped that process by sort of being able to communicate what was in it for them. It just goes back to the what's in it for me approach that if you engage in this project, the outcomes will come. The benefits would be realized. And I sort of had to articulate that as well. So there's definitely a bit of sales in there as well. But the leadership was very clear that this projects weren't going away, that you needed to engage in them.

The teams came up with go live dates, so they actually came up with the date that they wanted their course to go live. A lead subject matter expert was appointed within the teams so that was a teacher that put their hand up that said, "Look, yeah, I'm happy to lead subject matter expert." And they were probably back filled some of their time so they could work on the project so that's another point that they needed some resources allocated for them to work on these projects.

And to finish off the loop, it would be in their work plans that this was part of their KPI for the year. So there was multiple layers of strategies, I guess, that we undertook to get them engaged.

Karen Moloney: To get the buy in, yeah.

Gail Bray: Yeah.

Karen Moloney: I'm just think about the ... Because this wasn't just an learning program either, it was part of ... It's a blended learning strategy, and as part of that, you implemented a flip classroom approach.

Gail Bray: Yeah.

Karen Moloney: For some of that course redesigns. I was thinking about flip classroom a bit like I bet people either love it or hate it, like lots of conversations go on about that. How did you go about communicating that approach with your team and getting them on board with it? Because I imagine it would have been sort of split view about ...

Gail Bray: Vocational Education training is very much about developing skills. So, it really doesn't matter what the qualification is. What industry tell us on a regular basis is we want to employ your graduates that have the skills so they can hit the ground running on day one and what they've been finding since the regulation and since the government reforms is that the students that were coming out of TAFE and RTOs, so all the privates that popped up, did not have the skills and they had to retrain them. So my key message when we presented the modern

blended learning to the departments was the way we would design the model would be students would prepare for face to face classes by completing the learning component of the blend.

The learning component needed to be the theory that we digitised, but also needed to be engaging, it needed to have some scenarios in there. It needed to have some check for understanding and the teachers were then obviously trained in the element so they could check the data analytics to see if the students were progressing with the learning. So that was the first part of the model, the preparation.

The second part was, the students would then come on campus in their face to face sessions, to develop the skills that they had learnt through their theory. So for example, if you was studying paramedical science or aged care, when you came on campus, you would be actually doing the skill part, which could be if it's paramedical stuff, it might be around transporting a patient from the ambulance into a hospital. So they would actually have to use the equipment. If it's aged care, it would be grooming or bathing or bed making.

The practice component is a big part of vocation education training. You see that in our apprenticeship model, and you also see it in our workplace and so 99 or 90 percent of our training has a component where students are in the workplace. So we needed to ensure that the blend were in the practical practice component that they would do on site whether they were in construction or in the workplace if they're in hospitality or whether they're in nursing or aged care or early childhood. Now, this blend if it's delivered properly and facilitated well with the teachers, would ensure that the students actually left with the skills that industry said that they need and they gained meaningful employment or they would then move on and to further career ...

Gail Bray: One of our biggest challenge was the teachers because the teachers really struggled. They were used to putting power points up in the classroom and actually working through them and that's one class done. Now, our attendance was telling us that students wouldn't turn up for those classes. So we would have a teacher in front of a class with three students. So, our data was telling us that the way we're delivering was not meeting our customers, which were our students or our industry's expectations and we needed to do something differently. So, our data now will tell us that attendance has gone up to around about 88, 89 percent since the implementation of this model.

Karen Moloney: It's quite a big change for the teachers and instructors as well, because the kind of the subject matter of what they're portraying in those face to face sessions is flipped, it's different to what they were doing. Delivering the theory, they're actually helping implement the practice. How did that ... How was that received by them and implemented by them?

Gail Bray: So when a team was notified that their course was about to go through redesign and blended, we would enrol all those teachers in a blended facilitation

program that we did initially externally and then we brought in house. So, we had to introduce them to the language, we had to introduce them to what it meant to be a facilitator, how to engage students in a blended model, how to actually get used to technology. So the digital literacy component became a part of that.

Karen Moloney: Yeah.

Gail Bray: We then ... So took course took between six and 12 months to develop and it would dig in, it depended on the size of the course. So it was a stage by stage training approach. So, there'd be a blended facilitation training that they all had to undertake and it was compulsory and it was in their work plans. They then had what we call a learning management system level one training session. And then as the teams got more confident and more sophisticated and as more questions started coming out they went through what we called LMS level two training and LMS level three training and we also offered help desk support, telephone support, and PS support the early adopters.

Karen Moloney: Fantastic. Like it's ongoing change support right through the whole program end to end, which is ...

Gail Bray: Yeah, so it ran alongside the design and development part of the model ...

Karen Moloney: You've talked about the increase in student attendance, I think you saw a big increase in enrolments as well, so that kind of organisational turn around you were looking for. Your data showed you that you've actually achieved that, three year project.

Gail Bray: Yeah. So what ... If I go back to the story of the first manager and the pilot group that we started with, their numbers since implementation has tripled. Because not all projects kicked off at the same time, of course, we're still experiencing growth. Now, but their numbers have tripled. And really, that was also about re-engineering their time tables. So what that means is, students used to be enrolled in batches or what semester by semester. So what we were able to do with the model, the agility of the model allowed us to do monthly enrolments. That meant that departments could actually enrol more students. So of course student numbers went up, completion rates went up because again, a lot of our students and particularly in vocation education training, are either already working, stay at home moms, students that have part time jobs, or those that may have two jobs. So this Monday to Friday nine to five time tabling, was not attractive.

The model allowed us to re-engineer that for them and our student completion rates are now at about 87.6 percent. It also allowed ... Sorry.

Karen Moloney: Go ahead.

Gail Bray: It also allowed us to promote the model to our commercial clients. So for example, aged care or hospitals or small business now have come to us to picture the full solution or single units of competency on niche programs. So what that allowed us to do was become commercially attractive and since implementation, we've won 3.2 million dollars of commercial projects. So, that's just meant that our quality was definitely seen by industry as being there for them.

Karen Moloney: Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: It's a fantastic story of re-engineering and turn around, Gail. I thank you so much for sharing that with us today. And look somewhere in amongst all of that, I'm assuming you find time for your own professional developments. So could you share with us one thing you do on an ongoing basis for your own professional development?

Gail Bray: Yeah, yeah, so well a couple of things I probably do is I'm a great believer in leading by walking around. So, I tend to get out into the business and I'll drive out to Sunshine Campus. We've got about five campuses and I actually go and talk to the teachers and I talk to the managers out there and we just chew the fat and how things are going. And I learn a lot from them. And I then bring that back into my team. I also have been lucky enough to have been invited to do a few presentations and I've recently been to Singapore and I've always been up to Sydney. I've just come back from Denver where I've been able to actually meet with other experts in the field and learn from them and listen to what they're doing. So that's something that I do, but I'm also ... I have a great team, and my team itself are a really high performing, highly engaged team and they send me heaps of links to different ideas and different things that are going on so I have this thirst for knowledge anyway, but I try to sort of bring it all together and to improve, to continually improve on what my team's doing and what the future holds for us as an organization.

Michelle Ockers: Fantastic. It sounds like its paying off for you. Well done. Thanks so much for sharing your story today, Gail and for the extra resources that we're going to pop into the show notes.

Gail Bray: No problem at all, thank you for your time.