

Michelle Ockers:

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community, including those of the Brinja Yuin people on whose lands I come to you from today and to pay respect to the elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples present today. Having done an acknowledgement of country, I would like to welcome Ryan Tracey to the podcast. Welcome, Ryan.

Ryan Tracey:

Hello, Michelle. Great to be here.

Michelle Ockers:

It's lovely to finally be able to speak with you. We've been dancing around a podcast episode for, I would say years now, Ryan, what do you think?

Ryan Tracey:

Definitely years, definitely pre-COVID, so it's been far too long.

Michelle Ockers:

It has. And when I first got active on Twitter and started looking at, you know, building a local network 10 years ago, 2014, I kind of put as the marker for when I really consciously started building my professional network in L&D. You were one of the early people that was a really strong guide and introduction into the network for me through your local networking activities here in Australia, particularly in Sydney, and also your blog, Ryan, which is still going strong, your blog, right?

Ryan Tracey:

I'm still writing it. Yes. And thank you for your kind words. You make me feel old now. But yeah, I've always been active on social media. And I do enjoy writing the blog. And I really find that to be a great learning experience and learning from others as well.

Michelle Ockers:

It is. And I often have my podcast guests say the opportunity to come and reflect on a body of work, be it a specific solution or an approach, which is what we're going to talk about today, is a great opportunity to gather your thoughts and a reflective exercise as well. So thanks for taking the opportunity, Ryan. Would you like to give us just the context a brief overview of your career, perhaps with a little emphasis towards the topic we're talking about today, which is about training at scale.

Ryan Tracey:

I'm Ryan Tracey. I'm a senior learning and development manager with over 20 years of experience in the corporate sector with stints in government and higher education as well. I have an e-learning background. That's how I got my start in this profession. And for much of my career, certainly for the last 10 years or so, I've been involved in scaling up learning and development across organizations. At the moment, I'm in between gigs, so I'm enjoying some time off.

Michelle Ockers:

Thanks, Ryan. And your blog, is it still called the eLearning Provocateur?

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Ryan Tracey:

It is. I've been toying with the idea of changing that label. Because, you know, e-learning, you know, we've gone beyond that now to digital learning and blended learning and so forth. But it's got a little bit of a brand, so I've resisted it. So I'm in two minds whether to change the name or not.

Michelle Ockers:

Maybe it's provocative to leave it as e-learning. So listeners, I will put a link to Ryan's blog and Ryan, I know you've picked out some specific articles you've written on your blog that are pertinent to today's conversation. All of that's going to be in the show notes for anyone who would like to dig deeper and I encourage you to do so, to follow Ryan's thinking and work. So the title of this episode, at least the working title at this point, is Training at Scale. I never thought I would throw the word training into a podcast title, but there you go. It's still a valid part of the mix, right? And there's always this debate about training versus learning versus performance, but this is not about black and white, but we are squarely focused on training, right?

Ryan Tracey:

Indeed. Like when scaling up learning and development across a large audience. I'm a fan of the 70-20-10 model. And so for those who are unfamiliar with that model, and I don't think many of your listeners would be, the 70, we know that that refers to on-the-job learning and support, things like job aids, knowledge bases, learning in the flow of work. The 20, that's your social element, learning from others. Communities of practice are big in this space, and they tend to be hosted online these days. Those 2 components, the 70 and the 20, they are indispensable components of learning and development at scale, because they're independent of location. Anyone, wherever they are, they can access those at any time, but the 10, which essentially refers to training, you're right, Michelle, it attracts a little bit of heat among our peers. And it's not the flavor of the month, that's for sure. But it's certainly, I agree with you, a part of the mix. when done properly and for the right reasons. But this is the component that I've found over the course of my career has been the most challenging to scale up.

Michelle Ockers:

OK, so when do you think is the right time to use training? What are some of those right reasons, Ryan?

Ryan Tracey:

Yeah, look, it depends on the circumstances, of course, but I think there are some general principles. For example, when the learner is a novice, they don't know what they don't know. And so they need an expert to lay that foundation for them. Maybe when the subject matter is complex, and they need some hand-holding as they work their way through it. When speed to competence is important, the reality of business is time is money. And also, when the learning outcome is non-negotiable, this is especially true for regulation and compliance, when you can't leave that learning outcome to chance.

Michelle Ockers:

We're going to come back to some of those. I mean, they're really strong reasons to use training. And when you do it, you want to make sure you do it really well, which was the point of this conversation. So we'll circle back to design and how do you do this. Well, let's talk about the scaling part, which is the other part of the title of today's conversation and what we're talking about here. What do you mean by scaling? And in the organizations that you've worked in, why has scaling training been important?

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Ryan Tracey:

I think historically, training has been about, you get a group of people, 20 or so, maybe less into a room at the same time, and you present content to them. And, you know, death pipe PowerPoint is the trope. But with globalization these days, you know, companies are multinational. And if I look at my own country of Australia, you know, even just 20 years ago, many companies were just doing business in Australia, maybe New Zealand. But today, you know, so many companies are doing business around the world in Asia, Europe, America, the likes of Atlassian, of course, certainly the finance companies that I've worked for have offices all around the world. They have people in these places and they all need to learn and develop as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. But even within Australia, it's a massive country. And I feel like I need a little ready reference guide to refer to in podcast conversations for people overseas to say things like, you know, the state of Queensland is X amount or you could fit the UK into it X number of times just to give people a sense of the scale. You know, we've got basically from the east coast to the west coast, about three hours time zones difference. The U.S. has similar ranges of time zone difference, right? So when you're talking about, without even thinking about globalization, national companies in some organizations, particularly with decentralization and trends towards people moving out of cities, even pre-pandemic, this is a scaling training across geographic areas. is important, right? There's also scaling training in different ways, though. It's not just about geography, right? There's different dimensions to scaling.

Ryan Tracey:

Well, there is, like you mentioned, people moving out of the main cities. And, you know, COVID obviously drove a lot of that. But post-pandemic, we're seeing a lot of people working from home now. So even if your colleagues are in the same office, theoretically, practically, they might be at home or somewhere else. So the location can be different even within the same city, that's for sure.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, and workforce size matters as well right here.

Ryan Tracey:

Indeed. So, you know, when you're dealing with many thousands of people, if we look at the skill based learning strategy that is emerging, particularly in the corporate sector, we're moving away from these piecemeal interventions that target a narrow segment of the workforce. I'm talking about skills like working with data, digital intelligence, you know, the human skills like communication, problem-solving, creative thinking. These are transferable skills, and they're universal. So that means that they apply to everyone, regardless of their role, and certainly regardless of their location.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. So you're talking that this move away potentially from role-specific skills, which might be to a particular segment of your workforce, to skills which apply to all of your workforce, so you need to scale it across all of the workforce as well.

Ryan Tracey:

That's exactly right. I think the role base will still be there, that's important, but I think there's a big shift now, or a big focus, shall we say, on that skill-based learning approach to talent management, integrating that with learning and development. And as you say, it applies to everyone in the organization.

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Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So you gave us some reasons to, to train earlier. We've talked a little bit about scale. Let's evolve the conversation then to think about when you are training at scale, what sort of outcomes are you looking for?

Ryan Tracey:

Well, generally speaking, we're dealing with capability uplift across the entire population. And ultimately, of course, that corresponds to improvements in performance. So whether that be something like safety awareness or a digital skill, these are capabilities that we want everyone to build and to apply in their own roles, in their own context. So a hot trend that I see a lot of organizations grappling with at the moment is Gen AI. That's no surprise to anyone. So, you know, how do you teach your people to use the tools that are available to them? How do you teach them to prompt effectively? How do you develop their critical thinking skills to evaluate the output? That's important as well. Because they're doing it, right? They're using these tools now, I guarantee it, whether you know it or not, in all disciplines, for all kinds of reasons. So I think that's a timely example of a skill that needs to be developed at scale. And if we're talking about an initiative that I've been involved with recently, I can nominate working with data. So everyone's trying to be data-informed, make data-driven decisions. OK, what does that really mean from a skills perspective? Well, one way the rubber hits the road is with data visualization. So by visualizing your data, you can gain insights that might have been hidden might have been hidden by the massive numbers. And then of course, use those insights to make better decisions. So again, the outcome is to uplift everyone's capability to visualize data in this sense, in this case, and to use it in their own context, in their own roles, so that they can improve their own performance.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so widespread capability uplift across the organization is what we're looking for here in a nutshell, Ryan.

Ryan Tracey:

That's it. And it means something different to each individual. But the trick is to give them the tools and skills to be able to apply it in their own context.

Michelle Ockers:

Okay, so how do we go about doing this then? Because we're not talking about the training being contextualized by role. We're talking a kind of about a generic kind of approach to skills to equip people to then take it back and do the contextualization. We'll come back to contextualization. I think that's an interesting aspect here. But you know, I think we saw a lot in COVID of people rolling out these massive digital course libraries. And the easy answer might be, well, go and do this particular course in this particular library, regardless of what the library is, might be a pretty common approach. What do you think of that approach?

Ryan Tracey:

Well, I certainly think it's a common approach. And look, I think it can work because the reach of digital technology like that is second to none. But I also think that we need to consider the human element. And you really need to be disciplined to make the most out of course libraries like that. Like, you know, you just have to look at MOOCs to see the famously low completion rate.

Michelle Ockers:

Give us a decode there. You and I know what a MOOC is. 2012 was the year of the MOOC. But perhaps some people are sitting listening going, what is a MOOC, Ryan?

Ryan Tracey:

What does it stand for? Massively Open Online Course. So courses like by the likes of, I don't know if we can mention brand names here. You can, go ahead. Coursera, TedX, they're the famous ones. Brilliant courses, university backed usually or by the likes of Microsoft or Google. And, you know, it's easy to sign up to these things. It's a lot harder to continue on with them. It relies on motivation. It relies on having a lot of time. You know, who doesn't complain about not having enough time these days? And, you know, sometimes people feel isolated doing these courses because you're on your own. You don't have that human connection. You mentioned generic content. By nature, they're going to be generic because, you know, thousands, if not millions of people literally will be doing these courses. And they can be difficult. This applies to e-learning more generally, I think. It can be challenging, shall we say, to apply that knowledge. If it's designed well, you know, has scenarios and maybe labs if you're dealing with things like programming skills. But the authenticity is going to be limited. So, you know, if you take coaching as an example, you know, you can learn about the growing model online. That's great. You can do an interactive scenario. That's better. But there's no substitute for coaching a real human. That's going to be something different. So getting back to what you were saying before, Michelle, I think it's very tempting to roll out, you know, a big course library. I think that can work. I think that's probably step one, and it's very easy to set and forget, and I think we need to do more.

Michelle Ockers:

So what is the more we need to do?

Ryan Tracey:

Good question. I think, essentially, it's about blending the learning experience. So, leveraging different modes of delivery for what they're good for. So, looking at digital learning, it does have many advantages. It's flexible, it's self-paced, it's asynchronous. So, you know, you're not reliant on everyone being there at the same time. They can do it when it suits them, when it's most convenient. And so the role of the learning and development professional, I think, would be to curate those learning resources and to pull them into some sort of sequence, preferably, I think, to prepare them for face-to-face training. So if we take the example of data visualization, let's say the course is about visualizing data with Tableau. Tableau is one of those common software tools. I don't want them walking into a training session, seeing the software for the first time. So by the time they walk in, I'd want them to be familiar with the interface, aware of the features, they know what you can do with the software. And, you know, it'd be best if they've already had a go at using it to visualize data, because then you've got that metacognitive element whereby they work out what they can and they can't do with the software. So that really boosts their motivation, I found. And so when it does come time to step into that training classroom, either figuratively or in practice, they're raring to go. They've got that theoretical foundation, they've given it a crack, and then you can reshape the nature of that live training.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Some previous podcast episodes are coming to mind here, and I will put some links to some of those. But there was one we did with about banker onboarding at ANZ, and they had a very well considered approach to figuring out what should be done asynchronously, individually, what should be done in a in a group setting and what were those group settings best utilized for? And I think we're kind of dancing around that topic now when you're talking about using these different modalities in a well-designed blend to get that widespread capability uplift. You've used the word face-to-face a couple of times. I feel like the way we use face-to-face has changed since COVID. In this case, are we just talking about physically being in a room together or are we talking, when you use that term face-to-face and the

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training in this instance, are we talking potentially about live online sessions as part of the mix?

Ryan Tracey:

Yes, the way I use it, and I don't think there's any right or wrong here, but for the sake of clarity, when I say face to face, I mean both in person, which, you know, to do that, you'd need boots on the ground. And, you know, that could be run by locals. So if you've got, you know, someone in the New York office, for example, who could run that for you, or, you know, you can fly people in. That's not with beyond the realms of possibility as well, or virtual. you know, your, your training via Zoom, or so forth. And since COVID, certainly people have become more comfortable with that. I think we forget, pre-COVID, it was pretty unusual, not unheard of, but pretty unusual outside of like broadcast webinars, to do training that way. But When we do talk about face-to-face training or get-togethers, something that I put my hand up and say that I have underestimated through the course of my career, and I blame my e-learning background, that is, people crave human-to-human interaction. So, you know, if we get back to those digital libraries or digital resources that you provide to people, they're great. But you need to supplement that and integrate that with some sort of human-to-human, peer-to-peer interaction. People are looking for that engagement.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And it's not just because we're social beings, right? It's because we learn so much from and with each other. Trying to avoid using the word learning styles because this is not about learning styles.

Ryan Tracey:

We're not going to go there.

Michelle Ockers:

I did not see that coming. And it's not about learning styles. I'm looking for a different word. Let's use myself as an example. And you're getting an experience of that live right now. I talk to think. Sometimes I don't clearly understand my thoughts or where I sit with something unless I have the opportunity to talk it through with someone. And my position on something can change from the start of a conversation to the end of a conversation as I grapple with the right words and corraling my thoughts. So for me, that conversation is a really important part of how I learn, of my cognitive process, right? It's more about cognitive processes than it is about learning styles, let's ditch that term. So that's for me, that's one good reason for me personally to be learning with others in a group setting. What are some of the other reasons beyond just we're social beings and love spending time with each other and, you know, the whole talking to think and bounce things off each other? Why do you think being in group settings, how does that aid the learning process?

Ryan Tracey:

Yes, it's an excellent question, and I don't think you're alone on that score, Michelle. I think a lot of people take that point of view. And maybe learning preferences might be a better term, certainly a safer term. But in any case, I think the big advantage of live training is that it provides an opportunity for value-added activity. So by that, I mean, you know, don't use it for the consumption of content or the transmission of content. You know, the digital learning aspect is great for that. People can consume that content in their own time, and they can get that under their belts, so to speak. So we don't have to transmit all of that information and do an info dump. So what do we do instead? I think there's an opportunity there for what I would call pull learning. I know Jeff Rip is big on this. I don't know if you know Jeff, but I'll just give him a shout out. By that, I mean, the facilitator asks the question of the audience, you know, what the key points are and the key messages. And collaboratively, you put that theoretical

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foundation together. I think it's a very adult learning way of doing business. Because people come to the training session, you know, with experience, with knowledge already. So let's clarify that and get on the right foot right from the get go. I think there's another option. Rewind. I think there's another opportunity there for contextualization. You mentioned this before, Michelle, but with digital learning, a lot of it can be generic. That's fine. That's good stuff. It's universal. But you really then have to join the dots. So let's say Tableau. OK, you've got some great familiarity now with the interface and so forth. But in our organization, how do you get a license? How much does it cost? How do I sign up? How do I log in? That kind of thing. What version of Tableau do we have? All of those kinds of itty bitty little questions that relate to the organization specifically can be covered off. And then, of course, the big one is application. So, you know, I mentioned before with the digital learning, you can do that to a certain extent. But in the live training environment, this is where you can do it for real, so to speak. So visualizing data with Tableau, give them a training data set, give them a go under supervision, trying to visualize it, making all the mistakes, getting to the endpoint, and then you can cite that learning outcome. Can they create a dashboard? Can they create a bar chart? you know, that kind of thing. And you can actually assess the practical application of the skill for yourself.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, that's something you definitely miss with just getting people to go and do stuff in digital libraries, right? They may not even go hands on with it, let alone actually you being able to look at examples of their work and determine their proficiency, give them feedback so they can continue to develop. So when it comes to making the choice whether to train in live online sessions or to train, you use the term boots on the ground to try to pull people together in rooms with an instructor physically present or a facilitator physically present. Can you talk us through what factors would sway you to one delivery mode versus another for training and maybe bring that to life as some examples from your work?

Ryan Tracey:

Yeah, certainly. I think it depends, obviously, on the nature of the topic at hand. Using software is a prime example. That can be hard to do virtually because you can't see what the person is doing on the screen in front of them. Yes, they can screen share, but then that's just one person at a time who you're having a look at. It can be done. You can split sessions as well. Virtual can be hard for very long sessions, you know, all day events. You know, things that aren't very practical, like if you're doing a user experience design workshop or something like that, where it might take several hours, people can get Zoom fatigue. That's for sure. With having boots on the ground, I think, you know, I might have a personal bias that I'm sharing here. But I think face-to-face, sorry, in-person training is preferable, because there's no substitute for that direct engagement. And I think if you can get an SME to help you, or if you can fly someone in, that can work. There are challenges there. Just because you're a subject matter expert, that doesn't necessarily mean that you're a good facilitator. So you might, you might have to upskill those folks in facilitation. For that, I find briefings are indispensable. You know, you'll want facilitator guides, checklists, you know, support resources, that kind of thing. I think also, for those folks, you need to think about their development cycle as well. You know, bringing them into observe a session that's being run, that's very helpful to break the ice. Then getting them to co-facilitate a session and building up their confidence that way. With flying people in, obviously that can be quite expensive. And, you know, being in Sydney, everywhere is far away, you know, unless it's Melbourne or somewhere. But if you're thinking like something like, you know, let's say Singapore, Hong Kong, Jakarta, for the sake of argument, you know, you could do a road trip and hit them all at once. But while the facilitator is there, that's an opportunity to upskill people in those offices as well. So getting back to your question about, you know, which one to choose, I'd lean towards doing in-person if you can. Doing virtual, if that makes sense, that might be

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authentic. You know, for example, the topic might be leading remote teams. So that's going to be done via Zoom. So you might as well run the training via Zoom or Teams.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, there are those brand names again. Large organizations, you know, it's increasingly challenging for them to connect over Zoom, like most of it is being done on Teams.

Ryan Tracey:

For sure. And by that, you mean Microsoft Teams, of course, for those who are unfamiliar. So, you know, insert generic technology here. Yeah, it really just depends on the circumstances. And I hope I'm not weaseling out of that question, but that's really the answer.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah. You know, one element or one location for delivering training we haven't talked about, which can be required at scale is the workplace itself, right? Because we know that context makes a massive difference to recall. And when I think about, for instance, my time at Coca-Cola Amatil, some things we don't, we couldn't simulate in a classroom environment anyway with operating production equipment on the shop floor. We didn't have the scale, I guess, to invest in training devices or a training suite of a production line. That's a very expensive investment. We didn't want to send people to a vendor site where they had training facilities set up because that just didn't suit the way skills were being built. It takes scaffolding. It takes repetitive practice with feedback. And the training centers, again, from Australia are a long way away to send someone to Germany, for instance, multiple times to be trained on a training suite, a training production environment. And so being able to support training at scale in the workplace is another dimension for some skills, right? I think also another organization I've done some work with, Orica, who are a global manufacturer in the mining sector. A lot of their training is done in the workplace by subject matter experts. So I don't know if you wanted to comment on that or to say, look, that raises a whole stack of additional issues, but certainly some of those complexities around the instruction, like workplace instruction skills, workplace based instruction skills for your subject matter experts is really critical. The standard of the resources, how you go about designing stuff that people who aren't trainers, first and foremost, can deliver. really important considerations if you need to scale for workplace-based training, Ryan.

Ryan Tracey:

Look, I think I'm a big fan of that approach, and it comes back to authenticity. And I think the less that you can refer to the activity being training or learning and development, which isn't the primary purpose of most people's roles, they're not there necessarily to learn and develop, even though we know how important that is. They're really there to do something else. And so if you can help them do that something else in the place that they do it, then that's gold, you really can't get better than that. So I support that where it's feasible. I can imagine lots of issues, as you were alluding to, but it can be done. And where it can be done, I would say, yes, it should be done.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. And what about post-training? So people go through, you know, they're going through a blended learning experience that you put together for them. You've talked about, you know, perhaps some digital formats for content consumption, for familiarization prior to bringing people together, either physically or in a live online environment. And perhaps you're doing that more than once during the whole end-to-end learning experience design. What happens once people have come out of a session, a training session? What's some good practices there that you've put in place?

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Ryan Tracey:

Yes, certainly. So the learning doesn't end with the event, which is something that I think that many of us have probably been guilty of in the past. But what we're really talking about here is that post-training support. So I've mentioned before, job aids and communities of practice, They're very important, coaching is another option. Ask me anything sessions is something that I've been involved with as well. So people can come and ask their curly questions as they try to apply that skill back on the job. I'm a big fan of portals or a central hub that contains all of these job aids and information and resources, like a central gateway. And I don't think the LMS is the place for it. I'm not anti-LMS. I think that's got an important place in the ecosystem. But in my experience, once people have finished with their training there, they never go back. So you could use an LXP. That's the fancy incarnation. you know, lo-fi works as well. I've used SharePoint in the past. I've used Confluence. It doesn't really matter what it is, so long as there's somewhere for people to go wherever they are in the world, you know, whenever they need it.

Michelle Ockers:

With whatever tools they have to hand. And sometimes, Ryan, again, I will add, sometimes that is still hard copy stuff. SOP is sitting next to a machine, for instance.

Ryan Tracey:

Sometimes it is. Sometimes it is. But the secret is being able to access it, knowing where it is and being able to get to it. If it's in some obscure folder that no one's ever going to find, then that's not going to serve anyone if it's a bunch of PDFs, so be it.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes. You know, when I was, I don't know, I think you're aware of this. I spent the first 16 years of my career in the Air Force and processes in the military, processes, everything. You know, I was a logistics officer. I could be picked up. and plonked in any air force base to manage the warehousing. And it would work the same no matter where I was, because we had these standard operating processes. There were manuals, it was like wall-to-wall manuals. So the three months training course that I did in my technical domain area, a big chunk of that was learning how to use the manuals so I could look stuff up whenever I needed and knowing what was in those manuals and how they worked. So helping people, I guess, as part, if you're using those kind of references and resources, making sure as part of the training that they know where to get them and how to use them and when to use them is an important consideration as well.

Ryan Tracey:

Absolutely. And that makes you think, like, how can anyone do their job without them? Yes. So they need them at hand. And, you know, learning in the flow of work, learning just in time. Well, you know, whatever kind of buzzword you want to put to it. It's all about supporting people actually doing the job.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. Absolutely. And I've just thought of another example from the podcast series, which where I think from Sydney Trains, a customer service program, they rolled out to their workforce. And I know it's only Sydney, but it was a pretty big workforce with a lot of operational constraints for their frontline workers, the people who were standing on the stations providing customer service. And they did a really good job at thinking through before, during and after kind of training events. So I'll pop that link in the show notes as well. So we've talked about a lot of different considerations, some of which just comes down to good instructional design. I've got two questions about that for you. The first one is, are there

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any specific principles or practices for good instructional design that you think are especially important for training at scale?

Ryan Tracey:

Look, I think you're right. Everything that we've talked about, does come back to good instructional design in general. So I don't know if there's anything necessarily different, although the blending approach that we've talked about, I think is indispensable to cross borders and geolocation. I really can't see how you could do it without a blended approach. But one point that I would raise is that the bigger the scale, the more unforgiving it is of your instructional design. And that's something that I call the multiplication effect. So, for example, if I was running a workshop in my home office and, you know, had 20 people in there and I was dumping content on them, you know, that's one facilitator's time and 20 people who miss out on a richer learning experience and application of skill. But if we did that worldwide, that would be many facilitators and many more people who are missing out on that and potentially wasting their time. And when you're talking about SMEs, these are very busy, very important people. And they can be very expensive as well. So when you do things not in the best way, that negativity can multiply itself out when you're dealing with the larger scales and the larger audiences.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, absolutely. And I want to talk about demonstrating value in a moment, but I have one other question that's just arisen as we've been talking, bubbling away in my head here. Have you come across situations with training at scale where cross-cultural considerations or even language has been a factor. And again, when I think about the work I've done with Orica, translation of materials into some of the locations that they work in has been particularly challenging for them.

Ryan Tracey:

I've been lucky, if that's the right word, to not have to face that challenge. In the companies that I've worked for, or the organizations that I've worked for, it's been dealing with mainly anglophone countries or places like India or Philippines and they're very adept at speaking English. So I haven't had to deal with translations or sometimes cultural differences that really comes into it actually with things like public holidays and religious events. You have to make sure that when you're training people around the world, that you've got those in your calendar. Because you would not believe the number of times that you would set something on a Monday and that Monday, no one's at work, you know, that kind of thing. Or even cultural tendencies, like, you know, people might not come into the office until 10 in the morning. You know, so you're restricted there. And then when you combine that with the time zone difference, that can make it very difficult as well. Something else that I have noticed is cost sensitivity. So if you've got an internal charging model, which some organizations do, then you have to be very mindful of the different socioeconomic regions that you're dealing with. You know, what you charge someone in New York may very well be different to what you charge someone in a different country. So that that's something to be mindful of.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. Those cost out models and the way your budget is managed are important considerations. I also think from a cross-cultural perspective, when you think about power distancing, for instance, is it Hofstetter who did this? I'll look it up. I think it's Hofstetter who's there's a body of work around power distance. It was it was used to inform understanding of what was happening in cockpits, airline cockpits, aircraft cockpits, and also in the medical area where you look at anything where there's a hierarchy. And sometimes those hierarchies are very obvious. They're built into the way job roles are structured or organizations are

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structured. Sometimes they're more cultural, which is where the Hofstadter stuff comes in. And I think what was happening in cockpits in some countries, for instance, Korea versus the U.S., was very different, where people operate very differently with others in a position of authority and whether it is acceptable to speak up or to not speak up. to disagree or to not disagree. So I think those kind of cultural differences, if you're operating across a range of very different cultures, come into play when you're looking at activity design, for instance, and the mix of people in a cohort that you bring together in a room. So I'll just do some digging around and see if I can dig up some additional research on that in case anybody has that dimension that they have to work with. It's really fascinating stuff.

Ryan Tracey:

Yeah, please do. I'd love to get into that a bit more. Even in a country like Australia, which is allegedly very egalitarian and so forth, I still have noticed a very strong deference to hierarchy, shall we say. So that comes into play when you're dealing with things like breakout rooms. Who do you put in those breakout rooms? If you put in a director or senior executive, they are going to dominate proceedings. It's nothing against them personally. It's just human nature. And people are just going to agree with everything that they say. So if that doesn't happen in your culture, then that's great. But I do see that to be the tendency. So that gets you thinking about, you know, who do you populate breakout rooms with? Who do you include in various activities? Sometimes it makes sense to cross the, get a cross-section of the leadership stages, as it does with different divisions and different teams. And sometimes it makes sense to put more like to like together.

Michelle Ockers:

It's all about the purpose of the activity, right? So let's move on to demonstrating value and impact. And you spoke a little about what you call this multiplication effect before, where if you've got some poor quality design decisions being made for training at scale, it amplifies the impact of those. I imagine if you've made some very sound decisions, it amplifies the value of those as well. But how do you determine impact and show value for training at scale in particular? Yeah.

Ryan Tracey:

Yeah. Excellent. And, you know, this has been a neglected area of L&D and, you know, that's another podcast in its own right. But I've always been very big on measurement and evaluation. And just from the get-go, I'm very much of the opinion that the primary role of learning and development professionals is to uplift capability. So that's our mandate. So we need to at least demonstrate that. Because, you know, there is some commentary out there that we need to go beyond that. And I agree. But the very first thing that we need to do is demonstrate the capability uplift.

Michelle Ockers:

So it's certainly the thing we have most control over, right?

Ryan Tracey:

It is. It is. So there's no excuse not to do it. Yes. And certainly, you know, if my instructional designs are practically oriented and, you know, the evidence of their practice is being assessed, then that's relatively straightforward for me to report. You know, so why wouldn't I do that? I've also found confidence ratings to be useful, particularly when they're aligned to the learning objectives. And if you compare those before and after, that's a real handy way to demonstrate an uplift. But confidence is one thing. And having said that, the purpose of developing capability is to improve performance, preaching to the converted there. So if I can demonstrate that, that's going to be much more impactful, certainly from a personal point of view. And obviously, business metrics come into play here. I would have to be

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mindful to isolate the impact of my learning and development intervention on the outcome. And historically, I've found it can be difficult to get my hands on the data that I need, you know, even though I work, you know, in the same organization. And I also have to be mindful that, you know, these skills that we're dealing with are being used across different roles in different parts of the business. So then what data exactly am I looking for? You know, that can be challenging too.

Michelle Ockers:

I think the way I've tackled that in some of the evaluation work I've done where you've got, you know, it is very hard to go, this is exactly what we're going to see because the workplace context is so different across the organization is gathering examples of shifts after the fact. So at about that six to eight week mark, what have you done differently? What have you tried? Give us an example of that. What impact do you think that's had? And then what factors have helped you to make changes and apply in your work? What factors have hindered that, the kind of areas I play in? But obviously that's a lot of effort to do that constantly. So picking when you do that, is it when something's newly rolled out? and you're wanting to get a feel of application rather than doing it all the time. Do you do spot checks? Are there certain areas of the business where it's more critical to show impact? But there are ways around that where you can't predefine exactly what application is going to look like for everyone.

Ryan Tracey:

That's exactly right. I highly recommend that approach. And it's what I would call a showcase. Right. And so you're right, at the certain period of time after the fact, invite people to showcase how they've applied the skills and the outcome that was achieved in relation to the work that they do. I think that's the key point. And while it might be a little bit of mucking around, I think it's very worthwhile because it's a win-win. They get to raise their profile. You'll be surprised at how many people actually do want to showcase what they've done. And then they celebrate as success. And it also gives other people a bit of FOMO as well. It's like, oh, they've actually applied the skill and got something out of it. Maybe there's something in that for me too. So don't underestimate that effect.

Michelle Ockers:

I think there's role modeling as well, right? So that's how that person's used it. Maybe I can try it in that way, or that gives me an idea. You can actually, if you're recording those showcases or somehow capturing short stories, examples, you can use that then. You can input that back into your training, into your design in some way to give people examples of here's what others have done with this skill, right?

Ryan Tracey:

Absolutely, you can use it for your marketing. You can use it for your training prep, you know, one of the digital assets that you draw upon. Yeah, there's lots of things that you could do with it. I've obviously put it on that central hub that we talked about, that people can get to, because post-training, they might need that little reminder or that, that little prod of how they can be applying the skill, and frankly, that they should be applying it as well. But those showcases, I find, are really valuable for me to have evidence of real business impact. So that particularly if the data is scant otherwise. Yes. At least I have these examples that I can roll out and show that it is making a difference in different pockets of the business.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I think they're a great way to go about it. Now, I think we've talked about, we're kind of getting to the end of the session where we talk about lessons learned, tips for others. We've talked about a number of challenges along the way. We talked about boots on the ground,

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SME facilitation schools, time zones, cost sensitivities. I don't think, there's probably one or two other challenges which we haven't touched on. Is there anything else you'd like to add to that list, Ryan, and address briefly?

Ryan Tracey:

Certainly, yeah, I think I can put these into two camps. One is the pre-work and one is the post-work. With the pre-work, one of the disadvantages that I found is that sometimes people don't do it. It's just one of the realities of business. And we talked about some of the disadvantages of digital, you know, with the motivation and perhaps the time pressures. If we're generous. So I think there's a couple of ways that you can get around that. One is to make it a prerequisite on the learning management system. Some people are allergic to that. Sometimes the learning management system might have such an awful user experience that you don't want to go there. The beauty of using a gated technology like that is that you can ensure that people have completed every step along the journey as you've designed it. Another way is that with the training content or the training experience, you insulate it against the fact, knowing the fact that some people are going to turn up a certain percentage and they haven't done the pre-work. So don't be reliant on everyone having done the pre-work, what you're really looking for is a critical mass to make it work. And if you, you know, if you do like the pool learning that we talked about, then, you know, you bring everyone along the journey and make sure that they're on the same page and get them up to speed quickly. So that's a couple of ways, you know, use the technology to kind of enforce it, or be clever with your instructional design and insulate against it. That's the pre-work side of it. With the post-work side of it, again, not everyone is going to apply the skill on the job. And again, there's reasons for that. It might be a time thing. It might be an environmental thing. There's no opportunity for them to do it. There's, you know, various things that you can do and making the environment attractive and accommodating for them to apply the skill. Again, that's another podcast episode on its own. But something that I found works is badging, digital badging. Now, if you ask me, I know you're no stranger to my argument here, Michelle, but in my opinion, a digital badge should be a representation of you having applied the skill rather than just completing a course.

Michelle Ockers:

100% agree. 100%. Yes. I've been speaking a little bit about micro-credentials and a little bit of work with micro-credentials over the past couple of years. Absolutely agree. Otherwise they're meaningless. If you just give the showing up badge, no Boy Scout, no Boy Scout ever got a badge for turning up to the weekly Boy Scout gatherings.

Ryan Tracey:

You had to build that fire, right? If I didn't see the flames, you're not getting the badge. And so I think we can apply a similar approach to the learning and development space. And, you know, something else that's been a surprise, certainly in the last few years, is that people love badges. They get a bit of hate. People say, oh, they're childish, they're useless, whatever. Wow. No, your target audience, a big proportion, wants these badges. And, you know, people have been bothering me, you know, when they don't get their badge quick enough, you know, where's my badge? So I think for motivation, they've got a part to play. But also, from an instructional design point of view, we're talking about that practical application. And if it's an independent assessment of the evidence of practice, that's meaningful. And if you offer the badge as a part of your end-to-end learning experience, then that would push and prod a lot more people than otherwise to actually make the effort and apply the skill.

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Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. I was singing from the same hymn book on badges and the value of badges, Ryan. So let's wrap up with a brief summary of key tips. You have others who are getting going or need to lift up their scaling of capability building their own organization. What tips do you have? What are the key tips in summary?

Ryan Tracey:

OK, well, number one, I would say use the 70-20-10 model as a lens. Design learning experiences that are blended, drawing from each of those components, the 70, the 20 and the 10. Leverage different modes of delivery for what they're good for. Don't put face-to-face delivery in the too-hard basket. As tempting as it might be, it's too important to ignore. And the reason I say that is because you want to realize the opportunity that live training offers for those value, value-added activities that we talked about. And last but not least, ensure that the learning experience is practical. It's about the doing. That's what you have to focus on.

Michelle Ockers:

Thank you, Ryan, so much for sharing all your insights based on your experience with training at scale. I'm going to pop a link to your LinkedIn profile if anyone would like to get in touch with you to find out more about what we've discussed.

Ryan Tracey:

Please do. Thank you so much.

Michelle Ockers:

And to guess, I don't often do this plug, Ryan, but I'm going to do this plug. If you're finding Learning Uncut valuable, take a moment to rate it wherever you listen to it or to share it with a colleague. I get lots of great feedback that people find these podcast conversations really practical, useful, and walk away with something. So let's spread the word and share it as widely as possible so we get the chance to learn from great guests like Ryan. Thank you, Ryan.

Ryan Tracey:

Oh, thank you, it's been a pleasure. And that's not an empty offer for your audience. Anyone who wants to reach out to me, please do. You're more than welcome.

Michelle Ockers:

Thanks, Ryan.



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

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

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



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