Michelle Ockers:
Welcome listeners, in the spirit of reconciliation, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community, including the Brinja Yuin people on whose lands I sit today as we have this conversation. We pay our respect to their elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be listening to this conversation. Welcome to today's guest, James Woodman. It's lovely to have you here, James.

James Woodman:
It is lovely to be here. Thank you for inviting me.

Michelle Ockers:
I found it very compelling to reach out to you. How this originated, and some of the listeners may well be following me on LinkedIn, I do a little Friday video. I just pick a little example of something, something I've come across, something that may have popped up during the week that I think has a point that may start a conversation for learning and development. And a number of weeks prior to our conversation today, I shared a conversation that had come up in a workshop I was running about compliance training. And it was actually a manager, rather than just a manager of a part of the workforce rather than someone from learning and development who kind of said, look, let's not even bother talking about compliance training. It's just compliance training. It's just the way it is. We just have to suck it up. And I was quite stunned that that was the attitude and I posted about this and there was quite a strong reaction to this with people commenting on, you know, it doesn't have to be that way, it should be amongst the best learning that happens in organisations. And through that process, Michelle Parry Slater, whose wonderful book, The Learning and Development Handbook, has a number of case studies in it, said to me, there's a great case study in my book about some work that Acteon did with Channel 4, and through that, I picked up the case, the book, looked at the case study. Your name was on it, James. And I immediately reached out to Michelle and said, this is great, this is just the kind of example of how to do this differently that we need to be talking about and sharing. So thank you so much for agreeing to have today's conversation, James.

James Woodman:
Thank you. I do agree with you about compliance training. It's weird that there's so many people putting so much effort and money and energy into something that isn't really designed to have any impact on the workplace. The amount of time people spend doing training and working through content that is not, everyone knows it's not actually going to change anything, but we just have to do it, don't we? I mean, it's kind of baffling in a way. It's a strange world.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah. And it's such an incredible opportunity for learning and development. We moan about, you know, people not being engaged with our learning, but there's this touch point that everybody has when they join an organization. And then often on an annual or some other recurring cycle with compliance learning, what, why not make it amongst the best that's on offer? So people are thirsty to do more learning in your organization.

James Woodman:
And this is just making this an expression of our culture, like wherever you work, whatever the organisation is, this is often, like you say, it's your first week and this is where you start to find out about how people work here, what kind of people we are, how we work together, what matters to us. So, yeah, take advantage of that, use it as an opportunity.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, I love that idea of making an expression of our culture. And I know we're going to talk more about that in the case study today. I was really surprised, James, to hear that this case study is 10 years old when you told me that when we had our prep call. I was really shocked because it feels so fresh and so relevant today. And so ahead of the times compared to what I'm still seeing in a lot of organizations. And I understand this particular piece of work was done at a point in time when Acteon was shifting your approach to learning. So tell us a little bit about your organization, what you do and how either what you do or the way you do it has shifted since the project with Channel 4 that we're going to dive into.

James Woodman:
Yeah. And I think what I should say about that as well is this project came at a point when we were not exactly shifting, but I think getting clearer about what it was that we do and why we do it. And it's probably taken us most of that 10 years. It's crystallized, I think, during COVID lockdown times when we were thinking a lot about how we work. I think we reached a point where we've now got much better at talking about what we do. So I think when we were doing this, we were actually, we were working in similar ways to the ways that we would present Acteon now but I'm much better at talking about it now than I would have been if you'd asked me to explain why this worked at the time of the project. And on that point about how fresh this feels, this is the project that I kind of keep coming back to. And it's such a brilliant expression of what makes a difference, what has an impact in the workplace when it comes to compliance. And so I still talk about this. You're right, it's 10 years old. It does still feel very fresh and it still resonates and the ideas behind this still work and will continue to work. They're very simple and I know we're going to get into that in more detail. And one thing I'd like to say as well is that when I'm talking today, this is me talking, these are my views, it's my story. I'm not talking on behalf of Channel 4. I can't talk on behalf of them because I don't work there. And I think the people we worked with on this project 10 years ago have moved on to other roles and other organisations now. There's also a whole team of people at Acteon who worked on this campaign alongside me. So I'm talking on behalf of the company, but I'm certainly not taking the credit for myself. But what do we do at Acteon? The way we would describe that now is that we help people and organizations to shape moments that matter. And so when we say moments that matter, what we're talking about is the things people do in the workplace, the things that are going to have an impact on whether an outcome is more positive or less positive, the choices people are making in the moment. And these moments happen all the time. You don't control them. You don't decide whether they happen or not. But there are going to be moments every day where people are making decisions and the ways that they act, the behaviors that they use, will either help them, their colleagues, their organization to succeed, or perhaps they won't. And so our job at Acteon is to help people understand what's happening in their world, help them understand what they want to be different. to identify the moments that matter most, perhaps the ones where if you can influence what people do, there could be a disproportionate impact to the really kind of smart places to act and to make a difference. And then to try and shape what people do. So we're interested in people and how people act and the ways people behave. People are really complex. You can't just tell them what to do. If you go and read this policy, some people will read it, lots of people won't. Even the people who read it, very few of them are going to remember it. And they're certainly pretty unlikely that it's going to have much of an impact on the way they do their jobs. Even if you turn it into a nice piece

of e-learning and you give them 15 minutes of interactivity about the policy and they answer some questions and they pass a quiz at the end, maybe they've engaged with it a bit, but is it really going to have any impact on what they do? you need more than that. You can't just do something once and then assume it's going to make a difference. So, we look at what we talk about as the drivers of human behavior. So, when you want to shape what people do, when you want to influence what people do in the moment that matters, we think about capability, we think about motivation, and we think about opportunity. So, capability is very much the kind of traditional L&D world, which is do people have the skills and information that they need to do this? Have they been trained how to do it? Motivation is really, really important. This is about seeing that this action matters, this thing that you're asking me to do at work. Do I understand why? Do I care fundamentally? Does it kind of resonate? How does it map onto the things that matter to me and the reasons why I come to do my job? And then opportunity is about the things around me, the people, the processes, the environment, Do they support me in doing this or do they get in the way? Is my manager doing it? Do I see it being done? Are there things that are prompting me to do it? And so we sort of sit at this intersection of L&D, employee engagement, comms, operations. I mean, people actually kind of doing, putting this into practice in the workplace. When we sit there, we can help all these people understand what is happening, think about what they want to be different and what's going to make an impact on their world, and then use communication and learning interventions to help shape that through campaigns, through focuses on these behaviours, trying to make things different and sustaining that so that they see the change that they need to see.

Michelle Ockers:
There's a lot of similarity to another kind of framework that I've seen used and have worked with organizations using, which looks at the fact that there are KSME, knowledge, skills, motivation, and environment, and it's the same kind of capabilities, your knowledge and skills, motivation is the same, opportunity equals environment, and the trap that too many L&D people still fall into is when someone orders training, you deliver training rather than exploring what really needs to be different in the workplace and whose behavior needs to change, how does it need to change and what gets in the way of them adopting the behaviors now and how do we support them, which is a similar kind of way of talking about it. So it certainly resonates coming at it from like what we would call a performance consulting lens. So who typically would engage you then? Is it an L&D team who typically would engage Acteon or is it someone else in an organization who would engage you?

James Woodman:
I think this has been probably, this has been part of the shift for us. So where our company started, we've been around for over 40 years now in the UK. We were one of the first companies in the UK to work with learning and computers. So early, early forms of, I doubt it was even thought of as e-learning then, but putting a computer in the workplace, not even connected to anything, but perhaps providing a computer with a piece of software on it to help you learn to do something in your job. So that's kind of part of where we started involves using technology for learning. That then led into becoming people who were pioneers in digital learning in the UK. So we've done a lot of innovative things and really pushed what's possible with the technology here. And so a lot of our work has come from the L&D side of organizations. I think we've, expanded beyond that and realized that often we want to be working with people who are outside L&D. So working with L&D is brilliant, but it's better when we're working with more than the L&D department, when we're working with the people who actually are responsible for perhaps for a change or who need to solve a problem or change something. So it's often L&D. It can be through communications departments. It can be that we're working directly at board level with somebody who is ultimately responsible for some form of change program or initiative within their organization.

It varies and depends on the project, but a really, really wide range. And sometimes we're working on compliance projects Sometimes it could be things like well-being, diversity and inclusion. It could be how do we reimagine the way that we do recruitment here so that we're really using best practice in recruitment and equipping all of the managers who are involved in that with the skills that they need to make it happen. We work across all sorts of things really. We don't have a single specialist field.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, interesting. And it does take many different kinds of teams within an organization to truly make change happen. You know, I'm often talking about learning and development needing to partner very closely with other parts of the organization. It's not just about throwing a learning solution at a problem and expecting that's going to fix the problem.

James Woodman:
And I think it's really challenging. It's really challenging for people who work in L&D when they haven't been involved earlier. So when somebody comes to you as an L&D specialist and says, OK, we need you to make us some health and safety training. And okay, well, why? What are we trying to achieve with this? Well, we need some health and safety training. There's an audit requirement that we have some better health and safety training. But why do we need the health and safety training? And by the time it gets to that point, everyone else has already decided, well, the answer to this is clearly you're gonna make some more training. Often it's too late to have an impact on what's being done at that point.

Michelle Ockers:
There is an art to opening up that conversation, agree with you. So let's bring this all to life with the Channel 4 project. Channel 4 is probably familiar to listeners in the UK, but for those of us in Australia or other parts of the world listening in, I think we need a bit of an introduction to Channel 4, not only who they are, what they do, but also the nature of the organization and their culture.

James Woodman:
Yes, absolutely. Yes, I don't want to fall into the trap of assuming everyone knows who Channel 4 are. I think lots of people will potentially have seen Channel 4 content or productions. I think a lot of it is syndicated and sold around the world, so possibly on TV, wherever you're listening. So Channel 4 is a broadcasting company in the UK. Everyone's heard of the BBC, probably quite a lot of people have heard of ITV, which is the independent commercial network here in the UK. Channel 4, was introduced in 1982 as, I guess you might say, an alternative to those. So when I was young, we only had three TV channels here in the UK, and Channel 4 was the name that was given to the fourth one. It was set up, so it's publicly owned. It's a public service broadcaster like the BBC, but the BBC here in the UK is funded through a license fee. Everyone who owns a device that can watch TV programs in the UK has to pay a license fee. That's the money that funds the BBC. ITV is funded through advertising and is commercial. It's privately owned by shareholders. Channel 4 is publicly owned, so it's owned by the UK but it's funded by advertising. So they don't collect any money from government, they don't collect any money from the public, they collect money from advertisers. And I think from the start, they used that independence of the state, that independence of the license fee, and that independence of having shareholders to set themselves up as different. They started out by saying, we're going to be innovative, we're going to be edgy, we're going to be different, we're going to be experimental, we are going to do things that other broadcasters in the UK would not do. They have a very strong public service remit, so they seek to champion diversity, to give a platform to people whose voices are underrepresented, and to do that through creativity, having an impact on the culture through creativity and through creating content that can be

broadcast on TV and now online and through other through other channels. And they do it brilliantly. They've been doing it incredibly successfully. They've made fantastic, fantastic TV shows. They've made fantastic films. And they've done things certainly that would not have been possible elsewhere. And I don't think would ever have happened if they didn't exist.

Michelle Ockers:
So they certainly sound edgy for their time. Are they still considered edgy or would we look at them today if we refresh them and go, well, they're kind of more mainstream now?

James Woodman:
Edgy is a bit of a double edged word, isn't it? I think if you describe something as edgy, it can be can be a good thing. It can also sound a bit awkward and not necessarily something that you want. But I think they've evolved and they've always done new things. They are striving to be at the cutting edge of broadcasting and to do to do whatever different things they feel they need to do at the point that they're doing them. The last few years, I'd say, it's been a difficult time for them because the government here has been trying to privatise Channel 4, so to take it out of this public ownership model and to change the way that they operate in ways that they feel would have a significant negative impact on the work that they can do. They've survived quite a lot of attempts to change them and are continuing to do what they do and doing it well. But I would certainly say that they've evolved, they've moved on, they're not still doing the same things that they were in the 80s, but they've kept that idea of doing things that other broadcasters wouldn't or couldn't do.

Michelle Ockers:
Right. So how does that sit with following a code of conduct, which is, you know, what what this particular training or behavioral change campaign was all about? How does that sit within a culture where it's about doing things a little bit differently, about being a little bit different, perhaps about taking a few risks?

James Woodman:
Yeah, well this this whole project was called learning to take risks. I will talk a bit more about that but the code of conduct. They have a code of conduct. If you work in a company that has a code of conduct, the Channel 4 code of conduct is probably not that different to ones that you've seen before. It covers all the types of things that you would expect to see in a code of conduct, like integrity, conflicts of interest, gifts and hospitality, information security, expenses, these kind of things, these kind of policies that get wrapped up as a code of conduct. That exists. So in the same way that lots of organizations have a code of conduct, and perhaps not many people look at it very often, and they have policies that perhaps people don't particularly look at, this was already there. There was a real focus on reputation. This was a I think this was a time when several broadcasters in the UK had had their conduct called into question. These were really well publicized issues. So I think most people worldwide will have heard about what happened with Jimmy Savile. There were other. issues at ITV, there were things happening at the BBC, Channel 4 had its conduct called into question over a particular situation that happened with promotional materials for a programme where there was a question about the legitimacy of some photos that we used to promote a particular show and whether they were genuine or whether they'd been staged for the benefit of promoting it. And so the chief executive wanted to make sure that everyone's behaviour was living up to code of conduct. Aside from doing the right thing, aside from the morals and the ethics of this, reputation is vital because it's what drives their viewer numbers. And I said already, Channel 4 is funded through advertising. So fundamentally, the number of viewers they have, their ability to sell advertising space is what enables them to keep operating. And so they need people to trust them so that they watch their content and believe in it and believe it's being done well and for the right reasons. They also need to do

that so that they keep the viewers and so that advertisers keep coming back and wanting to buy space. There are also things like, when you think about things like information security, by this point 10 years ago, we were already in the days when knowing information about your viewers mattered from an advertising point of view. So, if you're selling advertising on an online streaming service, which they were at this point, knowing who your viewers are makes your advertising more valuable. You can sell targeted advertising. So, if you're asking people to share their personal data with you as an organization, you need them to trust you. You need them to be willing to disclose that personal information to read this was ultimately it's about their bottom line and about enabling them to keep doing what they do. And there were aspects of their business as well, and still are, I'm sure, that meant there are things that are perhaps more common. So gifts and hospitality are really common in this industry, particularly when you get into the world of advertising. Gifts and hospitality are really common, inevitable, day-to-day activities. Conflicts of interest. They are operating in a world where lots of people are freelancers, and the freelancers might move into a role within Channel 4 for a bit. Perhaps you've been working as a program maker in a production team. You might move into a commissioning editor role at Channel 4, buying programs from production companies. And you're potentially going to be commissioning things from people you know, from your friends, from your colleagues. Conflicts of interest are almost inevitable. Clearly, there's a significant business risk if you don't handle them right. That was the context of why the Code of Conduct mattered. All of that sits alongside the fact that this channel, they described themselves as born risky. They were celebrating an anniversary at the time, and they described themselves as born risky. This organization of people who want to push boundaries and create cutting edge programs. It is not a natural environment for a code of conduct.

Michelle Ockers:
No. And lots of potential moments that matter if we come back to this idea of moments that matter in there. So how do you take this and figure out what is the behaviour that we're looking for? How do you move beyond people just being able to rattle through things in a policy and actually use it in all sorts of different moments where they're making choices about how they're conducting themselves that are relevant to trust and relevant to the organization's mission, but also needing to kind of push the boundaries, if you like, of this born risky kind of idea. What does that look like? What was the outcome you were looking for?

James Woodman:
So, where we started was by talking to lots of people. So, we didn't just say, okay, yes, we can make you some e-learning about this code of conduct, and we'll do an e-learning module about expenses and an e-learning module about gifts. And then after people have done that, then clearly they'll know all the things that the policy says. We didn't do that. We started talking to people about really what matters to them about their work. And we did this on video, I should say, we recorded these. We had lots of conversations with people, we interviewed them. But the purpose of the interviews, partly it was because it would give us video content that we could use when we created material for the campaign, but also this was about us understanding them and their audience and the people who work there and the way they think about all of this. I think we went into that thinking, well, clearly these people, what they care about is cutting edge TV and pushing boundaries, and they're going to say stuff about that, and that's why they come to work. What emerged actually was that they really cared about their colleagues and their teams. I think the strongest message was not people are here because they want to do edgy things and shock people or do stuff that is exciting. I'm sure all of that is true for some of them. It was that they cared about their colleagues, they cared about their teams, they cared about not letting their team down. And so the idea of doing the right thing and sticking to the code of conduct, what really mattered

to people was feeling like they were yeah, I'm trying to give a positive way of expressing it, but not letting their colleagues down is the best term I can use. And so where that led us to was the idea that we can take these important compliance messages from the policies and the code and link them to that desire to behave in appropriate ways for your colleagues and for your team. so that we can all do this cutting-edge broadcasting, so that we can take these creative risks and do things that other people couldn't or wouldn't do. that everything we do is founded on this excellent practice and these behaving in ways that are right. And that really, whilst you might not have read the policies, that actually everybody can get behind this. It's obvious that we would choose to work in these ways because this is what allows us to do the stuff that we love and that we really care about and why we come to work in the morning. So that was where we started. Where that led us, and this was, so part of these interviews, a really early interview was with the then Chief Executive, so this was a guy called David Abraham, who was Chief Executive of Channel 4, he's now moved on from Channel 4, but we started early on interviewing him, and I think that was one of the most useful and important things that we did because being able to speak to him right at the beginning and get his input, to hear how he talked about it, to hear what his aspirations are, how he wanted to set the tone and what he thought was important, being able to then call on that with other people. And when we were talking to other departments, when we were setting up other interviews, when we were making things happen, being able to talk about the way that the chief exec was thinking about this was really, really helpful. And it really got things off on a very powerful foundation. I think we were able to make more things happen because of having done that interview. But during that interview was where we got to fundamentally the most important thing about this campaign, which was the question, is it okay? And it's a question that they used as part, or still do use actually, as part of a show called The Last Leg, which started on TV in the UK at the time of the London Olympics, or more accurately, the London Paralympics. And it was a question that they introduced on this comedy show called The Last Leg to make it possible for people to ask questions about disability. So, is it okay? It was a hashtag they used on social media, they did it as part of the programme, and it was to make it okay for people to ask questions that they didn't normally feel comfortable asking. And in the conversation with David Abraham, we got to this idea of actually with the Code of Conduct, what we're asking people to do is to think about your behaviour at work, whatever the thing that you're about to do, the choice you're about to make, the action you're about to take, whatever it is, just pause for a moment and ask yourself, is it okay? And if you're not sure, then through the training, through the comms, through all the things that are part of this campaign, we will make sure you know where the policy is. You can go and check that. We'll also make sure you know that you can talk to your colleagues, you can talk to your manager. There are people out there who are going to help you answer this, is it okay question. You don't have to do it on your own, but just pause for a minute and check. Clearly, if the answer's no, then don't do it. If it's not okay, then don't. We underpinned that with some helpful check questions. And this was another part of the training was thinking, how can we help people with this? And so there were four checks of underpinning, is it okay? Does it feel right? What would my colleagues think? What would viewers think? Does it comply with the code of conduct? And is it legal? And so Those will help you decide, is this okay? That is the key thing that we want to get you to. Asking that question more, making it part of your life, knowing why it matters and motivating you to ask it, giving you the opportunity to ask it by priming managers to have these kinds of conversations, by using comms around the workplace to promote it, to get it into people's minds and make it a daily part of practice. That's what we wanted people to do. And you can reduce everything we did, all of this campaign, all of the content, all the learning, all the comms, everything down to that one question. Is it okay?

Michelle Ockers:
It sounds so simple, right? Like when you lay it out like that, it just sounds so simple. Was it obvious right from the start from that first conversation or how did, how did you kind of test that out to say, is this going to work? Is this going to get us where we need to be?
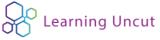
James Woodman:
I think we instinctively felt it was going to get us to where we needed to be. I think it immediately resonated with me because I am absolutely not a policy person. I shy away from anything that requires me to memorize a policy or learn lots of detail because I know that I'll forget it and that I won't be able to put it into practice and I'll need to look back at it. And so to me, it immediately felt this is right and this is the right way to approach these kind of compliance type campaigns is to make it simple like this and make it easy. we were able to test this with people who we were talking to. So we were talking to people in these interviews I was mentioning earlier, we were talking to people about the scenarios that came up in their working lives. And so we were very quickly able to kind of iterate and road test this with them. So it'd be things like people saying, look, it's completely normal for me to get an email from a supplier offering me tickets to the Grand Prix. say, like, come to the Grand Prix, join us in our VIP box next weekend. So, is it okay? I'm not really sure, I'd better go and check the gifts and hospitality policy. I need to book a freelancer to do this particular piece of work. And the freelancer I want to use is also my friend. I was working with the Warner Project, but now I've got a job with Channel 4. Is it okay for me to book them? I'm not really sure. I'll speak to my boss about that. I've got to carry on working on this document that I'm writing over the weekend and I can't take my work computer home. So I'm going to email it to myself to my hotmail address so that I can pick it up on my home desktop and keep working on it. Is that okay? Or should I be looking for a different way of transferring this sensitive data outside the building so I can do what I need to do? It just works in every single setting. And yes, it is incredibly simple, but it's incredibly powerful. And I think it works. It resonated with Channel 4 because there was the link to the show, The Last Leg, and the fact that they were already using the language. And so culturally, it was right. But it works anywhere. You can do this in any role. And I think I do it. I do it as part of my working life is thinking, is it OK? It just works.

Michelle Ockers:
All right. So I want to come back to the idea of that kind of cultural authenticity in a moment. But here's the thing that I'm hearing my listeners channeling back to me in advance of them actually listening. Yeah, that's OK. But we've got all these stakeholders who own the policy here. We're going to tell us the regulators are not going to be happy with that, that the regulators are going to want to know that everybody has been walked through every detail in the policy and ticked off somewhere that they understand it. Did you have to address that challenge or that view at all?

James Woodman:
To an extent, yes. So there was an audit requirement that 90% of the company had been given tracked mandatory training through their learning management system. That was a kind of I guess, a box that had to be ticked saying that 90% of the staff had been trained. That 90%, I think, represented 100% of the people they expected to be trained, so not the people who were off long-term sick, perhaps, or maternity leave, or not able to take part. So we had to meet that requirement. There was, I think I said earlier, there was an e-learning element to this training. And in the training, there were key points from the policies. I mean, perhaps I would rather have not had any policy points, but there were things that people had to learn as part of e-learning and there were questions in the e-learning. We didn't have the challenge of having somebody say, I've got this 20-page expenses policy, and I need to know that every single person here has been trained on every page of it. I don't know how

much that happens now. I don't know whether I'm lucky not to work with organizations where that happens too much, but I find perhaps 10 years ago, I was working with more people where it was necessary to say, yes, we have covered every single point in this policy. probably the people involved are expecting this to be a 45-minute training course that is really, really in-depth. And now, partly because of things like this Channel 4 work and the impact of that and the other things we've gone on to do, I find it much easier to have conversations with people saying, let's think about what you actually want to achieve. If it really is necessary to cover all that detail in that way, let's break it down. Let's not do a 40-minute e-learning module about compliance. Let's do something where people are going to do two minutes a week over 20 weeks, and we engage with them in a completely different way. And it still gives you the same ability to say, we've covered the whole policy, but we're not doing it in the way that we would have done 10 or 15 years ago. So yes, to an extent, there was that requirement to demonstrate compliance, but we didn't have particular challenges with stakeholders saying you have to show us that you are covering all of this in great detail.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, I have heard of examples where that has happened to people in learning teams working on compliance training. And where that does happen, I did have a conversation once with someone from Telstra, who are our largest telecommunications company, who said they had started challenging stakeholders who were saying, well, all of this needs to be in there. And to the point where in some cases they actually physically sat down with the stakeholder, with the regulation, and walked through the regulation, show me where it says this, what is the regulation actually requiring of us to demonstrate that we are compliant? And it shouldn't be necessary, but sometimes, you know, I would encourage listeners, if you're having that struggle, be willing to challenge. What does the regulation actually require? And to have that common sense conversation about at the end of the day, what is it we really need people to do to protect the company, to look after each other and so on in the best interests of themselves, their workmates and so on. So it's good that you didn't have too much of that.

James Woodman:
Yeah. And also, I would always be thinking where that does exist. And I know it does still exist in lots of organizations. But it's thinking, let's think about two different things. So there's a regulatory requirement, which we have to meet. Legally, we have to meet this thing so that we can stay in business and be OK. So we've got to do something. Let's also think, what are the things that are going to make a difference in our workplace? If we don't actually believe that this regulatory training, this kind of compliance training that checks the box that says, yes, you delivered the e-learning about this subject, if we don't think that's actually going to have any impact on what people do, Well, is that okay? I mean, maybe we're happy with that. All we need to do is check the box, so let's make it as quick and as straightforward and as simple and as engaging as we can. If we can bring our culture into it and make it even fun and interesting for people to do it, then let's find ways to do that. But if there are also challenges, if there are problems and things we need people to do differently or better or more quickly or more safely, let's look at that. There's a brilliant story from the world of engineering. This is not one of my projects, but it's a gas and oil engineering company where they had a real problem with objects falling from height. So imagine if you drop a heavy tool or piece of apparatus or a bolt or something from high up on a platform, whoever is underneath it is at risk. Yes, you can address that through health and safety training and you can create a new learning module and expect people to do it and make it mandatory. Nobody actually expects that to change what people do on the ground. The solution they came up with, somebody every day in a team is given a heavy metal bolt to put in their overall pocket. So you can feel it in your pocket. It's bumping against you. You're aware that

it's there. And every time that happens, your job is to look around you and check for anything that could fall off the place where you're working and put someone at risk. And it's a different person every day. So every day, somebody in the team is going to be picked at the start of the day. They're given this bolt, they put it in their pocket, and then it's their job to keep an eye on things. And it has made a difference. It actually has changed what people do and made it safer to work there in a way that a piece of training material or something that you do in a classroom would find much, much harder to have any kind of impact.

Michelle Ockers:
Nice. It's a little nudge, I like that story, nudges are great. So let's come back to the shape of the campaign and what it looked like. And I'm going to ask you, let's see if this is possible for you to hold the space for two things at once here, or if I'm just stretching the question too much. I'd like you to walk us through the user experience. What did it feel like for them to be part of this campaign and to engage with it? And in what ways did you build authenticity with the culture in? Is it possible to answer those two at once, or do you want to take them separately?

James Woodman:
I'll have a go. And if I don't, then you can ask me about the bit that I don't answer when I finish talking. I'll do my best. So the culture, the cultural element, they have a very distinctive culture. If you look at their programming, if you look at the channel, if you look at their website, they have a very strong tone of voice and a very strong identity as a company, a very strong brand. So we needed to capture that. We needed to convey that right the way through. At the time when we were working on this, I don't know if this is still true, they may have moved on, but at the time their values as an organisation were fearless, curious, cheeky and with heart. And that was what we tried to embrace and embody in everything. There was loads of broadcast output. So we used lots of video content from their shows. We used lots of photography and stills from their shows. It's brilliant working with organizations where they already have a really strong image library and you can pull on things that people immediately recognize and that resonate. And the people are proud of. And it's just with this, he's making that link. Here's the code of conduct. This is what we do. And they fit together. They are fundamentally entwined. There was, in the online elements, we used a lot of audio narration and we asked the continuity announcers on the channel to record that. So where you hear the person who's saying that about next on channel four, it's whatever this next series is. The people who did that narration on TV were the people who were narrating the content. And probably most importantly, these peer contributions. So the interviews I talked about earlier, we used real people talking about their lives, their work, what matters to them, their stories, their scenarios, their challenges, the things that went wrong. We use those all the way through. So sometimes that was absolutely a little kind of short blip in the middle of some other content. We also made some kind of mini documentaries, you could call them, about real things people had done to help illustrate aspects of the code. I might come back to that in a moment, because you asked me about the user experience, what this was like. The overarching campaign ran over six weeks. So there were six key aspects of the Code of Conduct, and we divided those up and focused on one per week. This was we treated it as something that was new so although the code had been around for several years. Even they had tried to train people in the code before. So twice previously, they had created code of conduct e-learning and it had failed pretty dismally. I think people didn't really see it as relevant and they didn't want to engage with it. And it just, I think they, Channel 4, used the word sunk without trace about the previous times they'd tried to do this. So we treated it as new and as something that was exciting and that was worth shouting about. For each of the weeks, there was a short piece of e-learning delivered through the LMS. So this gets back to the need to have something that you could track and show that people had completed the training. Those were generally scenario-based. So we would introduce the idea that there is

whatever, there is this aspect of the code of conduct about say IT or about expenses. And then we would give people scenarios like, is it okay to do this? Is it okay to accept this gift? Is it okay to do this thing? and they would put it into practice. And they were really simple questions. So the answers were always yes, no, and maybe. And they were written so that you would get feedback on your answer. And that was how you would explore this and learn. It didn't really matter whether you got them right or wrong. It was more about prompting the thought and making them feel relevant and feel like these are real things that can happen to me as part of my role. with my colleagues talking about the fact that they happen to them in their role. And I can see that these are genuine things. It's not a sort of abstract piece of learning. Those modules were supported by a comms campaign, and we worked with their internal comms team on creating this, which is another tip, I think, for people who are in my position, certainly where you're working with an organization that already has a really strong brand and tone of voice and the way of talking about their culture and talking to the people in the organization. Don't try and reinvent that work with the people in the organization who are already the experts to work with the internal comms team and you'll make it better and it will probably be cheaper as well. And we work with their internal comms team we had a whole series of really funny, engaging, clever, attention-grabbing comms that was very, very Channel 4 in terms of the culture and the messaging and the language that we used and the way that it was presented. It felt completely right. Michelle, I think you're planning on sharing some examples. It's quite hard to do justice to visual content with just the power of my voice. So I think there are things that you're planning on sharing with this that will help people see what some of that look like.

Michelle Ockers:
Yes, you've got a case study with examples on your website, right, James?

James Woodman:
We have. Yeah, we have.

Michelle Ockers:
We'll pop a link to that in the show notes.

James Woodman:
That's brilliant. Yeah, so that's the best way of seeing what some of this looks like. And there's also a little kind of teaser video that we made to show what this all looked like. The comms was supported with a kind of toolkit for managers. So there were quite a lot of managers within channel four. So there were people who were managing small teams. So some managers would be responsible for perhaps just two or three people. And then they would come together in departments under a head of department who were then under the executive team. And we were giving managers tools, frequently asked questions, lists, briefings that were going to help them have conversations with their team about this. And then we were equipping heads of departments as well with the data and the kind of insight they needed so they could target their resources. We were very focused on being able to go to specific teams and say, you need to do this thing, you need to engage with it, whilst also making that fun and worth doing because the experience of taking part in the campaign was a rewarding one. It was much more than just one hit. It wasn't just, here is your code of conduct training, or even here is your single expenses piece of training for this week. It was a real campaign across the organisation, a real buzz of people talking about conduct at Channel 4 in a way they never had before. And people were excited about it. I mean, it really was something people talked about and were doing. And they'd never, this is an okay idea. They'd never thought like that before, I think most of them. And it really, really landed well, and people were embracing it and leaning into it. So there was a lot of comms going on. They had these big digital poster boards around the office, kind of big portrait screens that

they could change the messages on. So we made use of all the things like that. We used their intranet. We used all sorts of things. We didn't have teams in those days or other channels, but we used everything that was available to us to keep talking to people, just to keep reinforcing that message.

Michelle Ockers:
It's interesting, James, you talk about not having teams or email, for instance, there's still a lot of workplaces, a lot of environments with deskless workers where they don't have all of those things available. So we're thinking about doing campaign style approaches, thinking about working with what you've got, be it, you know, TV screens in you know, breakout rooms in workplaces, or even if it's a sales staff working with EFTPOS terminals, you know, screens on their EFTPOS terminals or wherever, if you've got such a clear, sharp message that you can reinforce. Love the idea of giving managers toolkits that they can actually use that are interesting, practical. So it's really well-rounded, the ways you went about this.

James Woodman:
And in those organisations where you mentioned where people are not sitting at a desk, where they perhaps don't even have access to a computer. The managers are so key, team leaders, people who are able to start conversations, being able to make them feel like they're able to have these conversations and equipping them with the skills to how to talk about this. And when you can make it simple, if you said to an organisation with a load of managers, okay, managers, you are now responsible for doing the conflict of interest and gifts and hospitality training under the Code of Conduct, here's the policy, go in, teach your teams to do this. Loads of people are going to say, what on earth are you asking me to do? I can't do this. I don't know how to do it. Even people who are quite senior are not necessarily comfortable doing it. Some will do it well, others won't. But just making it simple. making it easy, making it fun even and engaging changes that completely. I think in any organization, people are so weary of training and learning and compliance and anything mandatory that anything you can do to make it easy for them and surprise them. This is not what I was expecting from my mandatory code of conduct training. If you can get that reaction, then you get a lot more buy-in, I think, and people are far more likely to engage with what you're trying to do and respond positively rather than negatively.

Michelle Ockers:
Yeah, absolutely. And that cultural fit is really important. I think you'd started talking a little bit about the use of the videos as well and making some mini documentaries. And interestingly, in Michelle Parry Slater's book, this case study is under social learning, the social learning chapter, not the compliance chapter. So obviously the social engagement was an important part of the approach here.

James Woodman:
And I think the interviews, this is something else where I think our thinking has changed over the time since we did this, that probably 10 years ago, we would have said, I mean, my background is in TV and filmmaking and I love video and I love talking to people and interviewing people in different ways. I think 10 years ago, I probably thought of that as a thing you were doing as kind of an input that was then going to be used to create a campaign that was the output. You've got this edited thing that you've made out of what people told you. Now I would be far more likely to say that actually that is part of the campaign. So by reaching out to people across the organization and speaking to everybody from the chief exec down to the graduate intern and everyone in between and doing these interviews, having these conversations, by doing that you are starting to spark a dialogue but also a kind of an organizational discussion about this and people will know about it and you can make it a thing. You can go out and look for people who want to take part on that. Ask

managers to help you find people, ask on the internet, look for people who want to take part. That social element can start before you've even made anything. It's really powerful and I think really helpful to think that way that you don't have to finish something before you have a campaign, you can actually start with nothing and say, let's do this together. And you can be part of it and find the people who want to be part of it early on.

Michelle Ockers:
The co-creation, the co-design approach and seeking input is part of what helps create the change.

James Woodman:
Well, I would say for me, and I think for Acteon, we don't, I said earlier, we're not kind of specialists. We don't have specific subjects that we would say, well, we'll come and make your training on X because we know all about the right answers and we know the regulations and so on. Much more than that, we are helping the organization to find its voice. So there are already people in this organization who know about whether it's the code of conduct, whether it's about health and safety, whether it's about whatever information security or well-being or diversity and inclusion or any of these topics. There are already people in the organization who know about it and care about it. And they may not even be the people you think of. If you think about something like diversity and inclusion, It might not be the person who is ultimately responsible for that who knows the most. There are going to be people from across the organization with stories and experiences and things that they've learned in their jobs or learned outside their jobs that they can bring to this. So let's bring all of that to the surface. I talked earlier about understanding what's really happening now so that you can identify the moments that matter and then try and influence them. Well, you're doing that by talking to people. What is really going on in your world? When does this go wrong? When does it go right? What helps this to happen? What hinders it? What are the things that make a difference and what could be different in the world? talking to people is the start of your campaign and I think that's a really powerful way of thinking. So that I would say that the social element of this started with that. The peer contributions were so important and people called that out in their feedback and said it was great just to see their colleagues and see some real people bringing this to life and telling it, telling what was happening.

Michelle Ockers:
James, I could keep talking about these kind of examples for a long time, but I think we're at the point where we need to start…

James Woodman:
So could I.

Michelle Ockers:
I know. I know. It's wonderful. And this is like, you know, an ongoing body of work where, you know, working with these ideas around behaviour change and making things more engaging and helping them to stick in those moments that matter. Ten years on, if you could go back to this project equipped with all the experience you've had in the meantime, what would you keep and what would you do differently?

James Woodman:
What would I keep and what would I do differently? I think what I would keep is this is kind of a negative, I suppose, but the thing I would keep is that belief that you can't just tell people what to do and then expect them to do it. You can't just say, read the policy, then clearly you'll all go away and do that, because that's not how it works. Organisations love to focus on capability, so this idea that if we teach people stuff enough, And if we teach people

clearly and well, and if we say it often enough and remind them how important it is, then they'll do it. And they don't. So I think keeping that, and that's the thing that has become clearer for me over the last 10 years, is that need for the motivational element and the opportunity to be there as well. Beyond that, I think the idea of linking what it is that you want somebody to do as an employee, linking that to their personal aspirations. So why do they do their job? What do they care about? Why should this matter to them? And part of that for me is always speaking to people from the start. So not going in thinking either that you know the answers or even that the organization already knows the answers. If the organization thinks they know the answers, then that's great. But let's put that to the test. Let's talk to people. And whether that's on video or not, let's actually talk to as many people as possible across the organization and find out what really happens so that we can understand it and think about changing it. I said earlier that talking to David Abraham, the Chief Exec, right at the start was incredibly powerful and I would absolutely keep that for any project like this. The earlier you can get to that point, the better and get that endorsement as well as getting the sense of what matters to them and what's going to make this a success for them at the top of the organisation. And the cultural fit, so really aligning with what's going to speak to people in the organisation and talking to them in the right way, I think that helps massively. focusing on actions, so not ticking boxes. Ticking boxes is almost, for me, in this, it's kind of a side effect. Like, we did all this great stuff and we got this campaign out there, and it was great as almost a side effect. They got the boxes ticked on the LMS that said they've got 90% completion. Well, it's brilliant. I'm really glad they got that, but I don't think that was the most important thing. And probably people outside of the specific team that needed that audit requirement to be met they probably didn't think that was the most important thing either. On that impact, and we didn't talk about this, but on the gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest, those were key actions. So there were two really simple actions, were to declare gifts and hospitality, where you were accepting them, or even when you turned them down, actually, and conflicts of interest. Not saying that something bad has happened, just kind of, I'm aware that there is something here that could be perceived as a conflict, so I'm declaring it. both of those went up markedly as a result of this campaign and stayed up. So they saw that they were measurable, measurable impact. And they're also actions, so, when you think about actions, when you think, what do we want people to do, that enables you to target it. And it also enables you to think, well, what would be different? How would we know this was working? Well, we can see that the number of declarations has gone up. So we can see that we're having an impact. It's beyond the buzz, beyond the conversation. We can see that there's a positive change here. And I think making use of everybody in the organization who already knows the organization, the people like internal comms, as well as people like L&D, working with them to make this a success and to use all of the skills and insight and experience they've got is really, really powerful. So I would keep almost everything, I think, about this project the same. And I think the fact that we're still talking about it 10 years on is a really powerful endorsement of that.

Michelle Ockers:
It feels like when you talk about it, it feels as fresh as if you just finished this body of work last week, you know. I really like that. So I think in the midst of answering that question, you've already provided a lot of starter points in terms of tips for L&D people, others who are listening who'd like to do more or get started with shaping behaviors. Are there any other suggestions you'd like to add to that list? There's plenty in there already.

James Woodman:
Yeah, there are so many things that I could say here. I think probably, I don't want to say all the things I've said already about thinking about what you want to be different, because I've said that quite a lot, I think. But I think something that everybody can practice, and really whatever your role, whatever you do, something you can practice, and I do this, is thinking

about the difference between actions, things people can do, and knowledge, things people can know or that they might feel, I suppose. So, if you think some organizations would say, well, the goal of this project is to have everybody understand the code of conduct. Well, that's not an action. Even if people said, yeah, I understand it. It doesn't change anything I do, I understand it. You might say, well, as an organization, we will do everything to promote diversity and inclusion. There's not an action. You can't just kind of say, well, okay, today I'm going to promote some diversity and inclusion. Good leadership, that's not an action. They're really kind of general things. So turn them into specific actions, specific behaviours people can do. With the code of conduct, pausing before you buy something, pausing before a purchase and saying, is this okay? That's an action, I can do that, ff we're thinking about diversity and inclusion, it could be that I'm the one who raises a concern about, say, a recruitment shortlist that's completely lacking in diversity. And I say, I'm not happy about this, do we need to reopen the job advert? That's an action. Speaking up about the way that a manager treats colleagues in a meeting, that's at the moment I speak up, that's a moment that matters. And if I don't speak up, if I don't have the courage to do it, it's still a moment that matters. And I didn't act for potentially good reasons, but that was a moment of choice. So you can do this. I think whatever your role, wherever you work, you can think what are the actions? What do I want people to do? And how do I distinguish those from something where perhaps if somebody is coming to me asking for some training, they think they're asking me to make some training about a particular aspect of our work. How can I take what they're giving me and work with them, work with colleagues, co-create something that is about actions and actions in the moment where we think we can seek to have some kind of impact on what people do?

Michelle Ockers:
Wonderful. We're going to call this episode, Shaping Behaviors in the Moments that Matter. Something along those lines, James, what do you think? Will we have sort of captured the essence of it?

James Woodman:
Utterly, yes, totally. And as I said earlier, we weren't using this language when we worked with Channel 4. We are now. And I think this project was a really important landmark along that journey from where the company was to where we are now at Action.

Michelle Ockers:
Well, and hopefully it will be some part of a turning point for many others listening to the conversation as well. There's lots to take away from it. It was really fascinating hearing more about it. Thank you so much, James.

James Woodman:
Thank you for having me.

Michelle Ockers:
It's been a pleasure. I think the pleasure was all mine, actually. I think I will include a link to your LinkedIn profile. We'll have a link to the case study on the Acteon website. If people want to explore a bit more about the company, they can certainly look there. And I assume James, you're open if anyone would like to get in touch with you to find out more about the topics discussed in today's episode via your LinkedIn profile would be the easiest way to do that.

James Woodman:
Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I am always absolutely delighted to talk about this with anybody. And so if anybody does have any particular challenges or things that they need to think
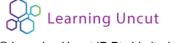
about or want to think about differently, then please, please do get in touch and be more than happy to have a chat.

Michelle Ockers:
Thank you so much, James.

James Woodman:
Thank you.

 About Learning Uncut

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

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

Michelle received the following prestigious industry awards in 2019:

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

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