

***Michelle Ockers:***

Welcome listeners. In the spirit of reconciliation, I'd like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia, including the Brinja Yuin people on whose lands I sit and their connections to land, sea and community. I'd like to pay respect to elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are listening to this podcast. Welcome to the podcast, Courtney Blackman.

***Courtney Blackman:***

Thank you so much and I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and I'm sitting in Melbourne, and that is the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and I'd also like to pay my respects to their elders past and present.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Thank you. So, Courtney we met, well, we're recording this on the very first day of May 2024. We met in late March, I believe, at the launch of a piece of industry research, a skills research being conducted by RMIT Online with Deloitte Access Economics. We talked very briefly over lunch, but I was immediately curious about the work you do. So thank you for agreeing to share more insight with me and make it available to our podcast listeners. I really appreciate your willingness to tell your story.

***Courtney Blackman:***

Well, thank you so much for inviting me on. It's wonderful to be with you today.

***Michelle Ockers:***

So Courtney, can you start by giving us an overview of the organisation you work for, who are a legal firm, Landers and Rogers?

***Courtney Blackman:***

Yeah, that's right. So Landers and Rogers is one of the few remaining truly independent Australian law firms. It was founded in 1946, and it's known for leading the charge in legal tech innovation through its law tech hub, its AI clinics, and its AI lab. The firm has offices across the Eastern seaboard of Australia and has grown organically to almost 700 people. And it has a very strong focus on client and staff care. And the firm's clients just so people know what we do include corporate, government, not for profit and private clients, and we focus on insurance law and litigation, family law, workplace relations and safety, real estate, corporate transactions, digital and technology and commercial disputes. And while we're a fiercely independent Australian law firm, our approach is global and we provide advice to clients both domestically and abroad.

***Michelle Ockers:***

And you led by talking about the organisation leading the charge with tech innovation, which of course is something we're going to focus on today. Is that linked in any way to any of the organisation's values? Why is like leading with tech innovation so important to the organisation?

***Courtney Blackman:***

Yeah, of course. So maybe just to jump back so I actually sit in our innovation unit at Lander and Rogers and it's called the ihub, and the I, that stands for innovation and innovation really is at the core of everything that we do at Landers, and the ihub brings together legal

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business and technology expertise to create innovative tech driven solutions to redefine legal operation. And just for clarity what we do internally, we ensure we have the best technology and processes to work efficiently. And externally, we advise and support and guide our clients on process optimization and business transformation solutions. And then, do you want me to go on with what I do a bit more?

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah, do, because it's, I was surprised when you talked to me about leading a tech innovation unit in a law firm. It was like, oh, I hadn't thought about law firms having tech innovation units. And I think that was one of the things that most piqued my curiosity kind of instantly when we introduced ourselves to each other at that lunch that we met at. So yeah, please talk a little bit more about your role and the innovation unit.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Sure. And I think what you said is how a lot of people might view the legal industry, you know, where it's like it's such an old industry, you know, one of the oldest in the world. And the fact that it's innovating and changing probably seems quite strange because it is so old and kind of traditional feeling, but there's lots happening in the space. So I'm head of partnerships for the firm, and I oversee two of our key external facing initiatives. And the first one is called the Law Tech Hub. And we use the word hub for a lot of things. So I'm apologizing to all your listeners in advance for any confusion about the overuse of the word hub. Within the iHub, our innovation function, the Law Tech Hub sits under that. So I run that. And it's actually Australia's first legal tech focused accelerator program for technology startups and scale ups that are building tech and transforming the legal industry. And then the second initiative that I run is our legal innovation clinics with universities across Australia, and namely our AI clinics with Monash University which have received and continue to receive quite a lot of media attention as these AI clinics were also the first of their kind in Australia.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Absolutely. So a lot of leading edge stuff going on there with tech. And for listeners also, of course, you are not a learning and development professional. And now and then I do have someone on to tell a story which I think is spot on with real learning and in particular with the development of learning cultures where the organization as a whole is learning. And I think innovation and continuous improvement, you know, these are at the heart of what real learning is all about. So I thought this would be a great story, even though you're not working in learning and development. I don't think that matters as to the impact of the work on your organization, on your clients, those who are the startups and scale ups in the legal tech industry. And of course, it makes perfect sense that the legal profession is being impacted by tech. And your organization is right at the forefront of pushing the boundaries with tech and figuring out what does this mean for us? Perfect sense.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, hopefully so.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Well, you have the innovation unit was set up, I believe, in 2018.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah. So, yes, I have again the overarching innovation unit that was set up in 2018, and it was the vision of our chief executive partner. And her name is Genevieve Collins. And it is helmed by our chief innovation officer and transformation lead, Michelle Bay. And our team, the iHub, has a combined strategy with our technology function, and that is to contribute to

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the top line goal of the firm, which is delivering the best Australian law firm experience. And our goal, so the iHub and the technology team, is to do that through sustainable innovation and tech. And we're hoping to shape the firm's future by being the market-leading technology-enabled, digitally-supported firm, we're also focusing on innovative ways to incorporate AI. We're exploring new ways to innovate and deliver value to our clients, and we also want to remain agile and future-focused while we're building a global brand of innovation. And we want to continue to attract exceptional future-skilled people, and we also dare to be different.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

OK, there's a lot of buzzwords in there, which we're going to bring it back to back to earth and talk about some examples of the work you've been doing. I do like, you know, there's several really solid business reasons why your work matters. You know, in terms of the organization's competitiveness, the service you provide, attraction and retention of the right kind of staff to continue to be leaning into the future. So I can see lots of good reasons as to why the work that the iHub does matters. Can you see I've changed my language from innovation unit to iHub? I've gotten with the program. Let's take a deeper dive into a couple of examples. We'll start with the Law Tech Hub, which was initiated in 2019. So it's related to the use of legal tech for startups and scale ups. Can you talk to us a bit more about the purpose of the Law Tech Hub and how it works?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, of course. So again, it was the vision of our chief executive partner Genevieve Collins and she has incredible foresight. And again, as you said it was brought to life over five years ago in 2019. And it is kind of a typical accelerator program in a few ways we do help to accelerate folks. And it is known internationally for transforming, for its transformative impact on the legal industry. And for us, it's our pro bono offering to the legal tech ecosystem, meaning it's completely free for participants. And how it works is the startups and skill ups that come through the program, they don't pay to participate. They do not have to give up a percentage of their company or equity in their company. They don't have to sign any exclusivity agreements upon graduation. So for us, our ultimate mission is to intensively support them and then help them scale over that six months and then watch them thrive after. And the great thing about this program is 96% of the startups that have come through the Law Tech Hub, which is close to 30, are still trading. And that's a really incredible success rate when general statistics point out that nine out of 10 startups fail. So we've had an incredible success rate with them still being in market, still trading. And we also had a record number of applications come through for the 2024 program from all over the world. We just announced the participants from this year. So it's exciting, and they're called ask Lexi Mary technology and VG by OCR to consulting. And they're all based here in Australia and these startups, they'll participate for a six month long initiative and it's very bespoke. So they'll refine their concepts and product products by collaborating with our lawyers and our tech experts. At the start of the program, they're invited to vote on the types of learning workshops they would find most beneficial during the course of the program. So that could be anything from understanding legal tech procurement at Landers and Rogers, to the legalities of using generative AI, to the 85 plus security and data issues to be aware of when selling into an Australian law firm. And each year it's completely different, and each startup has a very different experience based on the work that they'll do with their internal sponsor, and an internal sponsor is either a lawyer or tech expert within our firm that guides them through their six months via regular check ins, organizing pilots, and generally just acting as their conduit into the firm. And at the end of the program we hold a big global legal tech pitch night. And then that's that. And then then they become alumni and forever part of the Lander and Rogers family. And for us, we would probably measure success when a startup or scale up that comes through the program achieves what they set out to. One example is a 2023

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graduate called Diligence. They focus on the due diligence process, and they went from having some ideas of what they wanted to build to having a fully functional first version. Which is now in use at major law firms. So that's pretty massive to do that in that kind of time frame. And they've also been making headlines very recently, having just raised a million dollars in funding. Success is also for us accelerating the innovation agenda at the firm. When our lawyers get to roll up their sleeves and work with the startups, they get a preview of what's happening in the industry and what technology is coming to the fore. They also get to learn about what it takes to build a tech company and all of the challenges that come with that. And as mentioned, we're welcoming our seventh cohort. It's a significant milestone for the firm, and we're going to be exploring and reshaping the intersection of artificial intelligence, of course, and the law. And the three startups we've brought on are using AI to solve real legal industry challenges, which will ultimately, and which is another example of success, helping us at the firm continue to deliver the best law firm experience in Australia to our clients.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

So it sounds like an incredible investment that both the participants and your organization get value out of. And it's about something much more than revenue. It's not about them paying to go through the accelerator. It's around the benefits of innovation, learning on both sides, the relationship you're building with these startups. What do you put the high success rate down to? You said 96% are still trading. It sounds like some of them are kicking some really great goals. What is it about this program that leads to such great success?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, I don't know if we can take all the credit for people still trading, because maybe we're just fantastic at choosing, you know, the teams that are that are coming through and really kind of having that foresight that, you know, this is a great team, they're going to be, you know, sticking it through, they're going to be able to raise funding. I think it's that it's, you know, we spend a really long time, our Law Tech Hub advisory board, going over all the applicants doing demos, you really interviewing and interrogating the people that are coming through. So we spend a lot of time doing that. So I think just that care that we give it of seeing who those teams that are coming through and understanding the ones that are going to go the distance.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

It's a great way, as you said before, for your people who are getting involved with sponsors or even others in the organization, because I imagine there's a lot of showcasing of people talking about what's happening with the organizations going through the Accelerator program. Great way of staying abreast of change. Which is a challenge, right? People are busy. It's like, who's got time to stop clocking off the, you know, taking time off the clock where you're billing in a professional services firm to, to go and do a course. Where can you find courses that are going to teach you the sort of stuff you learn through the experience of being involved in a program like this. So incredible learning all round. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us? I know you've given us one example there of the, it was the due diligence example, wasn't it? Do you want to give us another couple of examples of projects or outcomes from people who participated in the Law Tech Hub?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

So there's a company called, I don't know if you've come across it, it's called eBrief Ready, and Their umbrella company is called LegalReady, but eBriefReady was in our very first Law Tech Hub way back in 2019, and we sort of built this product called eBriefReady with them. It is now used by 70% of the top law firms in Australia, which is a huge success story. And then we had them in our last Law Tech Hub in 2023, and they've built a new product, which

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is right now in beta testing. So it's been absolutely incredible having that company that, again, the overarching company is called Legal Ready. eBrief Ready is the one that's being used by 70% of both. Really exciting to have have something like that come through the iHub and be there through their entire journey. Joseph, I don't know if you've heard of them. That's another Australian firm. They have raised quite a lot of money. They're scaling to the US and UK. And they've just launched an AI platform called Joseph Q. They get quite a lot of media attention. We're really excited to have had them through the program. So yeah, lots of very exciting outcomes from the Law Tech Hub. And we do keep in touch with everyone once they graduate. They're always a part of the Lander and Rogers family and we keep a very open line of communication so if they want to get in touch with us and pitch new projects they're working on, let us know what they're doing, need help in any way, we're always here for them.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

And what does it mean for the organization internally, apart from simply staying abreast of change and being involved in some of these amazing cutting edge projects in your industry? Are there other benefits or things that your organization gets to pick up or changes that you make or things you do differently as a result of the exposure that the organization is getting to these startups and scale ups?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, I mean, I guess for the organization, if we're able to be on that ground floor where a startup or scale up is developing, we can help shape it so that it really works for us as a firm. And then it really works for them, too, because it's what a law firm would actually use. So that's fantastic. And then if we're kind of one of those first people at the beginning of their journey, then that gives us an edge to you know, on service delivery to our clients, because we have the most cutting edge technology and we might have tools at our disposal that other law firms don't.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. You've just reminded me I was at the Learning Technologies Conference in London in 2019. And the keynote speaker was a guy named Daniel Susskind, who had written a book with his father, *The Future of the Professions*. And he was like full of foreboding about, you know, the professions are seriously at risk with all the ships coming down, down, down at us. through technology and need to really think about reinventing themselves with how they engage with the technology, use it. You've done just that. Daniel would be very proud of your organization.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, I would say Lander and Rogers instead of maybe just waiting and seeing what's going to happen, we go out at full force head on. You know, this is coming. Let's explore it. Let's figure out what's happening. How can we use it? What are the use cases? Yeah, definitely take that approach rather than kind of a wait and see.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yes. And sounds very much, you've mentioned Genevieve a couple of times. It sounds like you've got some great leadership in terms of foresight and support and investment in the future, which is fantastic. At the other end of the spectrum in terms of well, maybe not the other end, but a different part of the spectrum in terms of your ecosystem are the AI clinics.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yes. Again, it's AI lab, AI clinic. It's a lot. So if anybody wants to get in touch with me, I can make a little graph or like pictogram of how it all works. That might help. But yeah, so we run

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clinics with universities in our AI clinic. It's a partnership between Lander and Rogers and top research university Monash. And that came into being last year so in 2023, and Dr. Jacqueline Weinberg who leads the Monash University Law Clinical Program, and I were having a discussion about what we could do together that was a bit new and exciting. And it was just as that media hype cycle was gaining momentum around AI. So we thought a legal clinic focused on AI would be an incredible way to explore the technology, and especially how it would affect the legal industry for both Lander and Rogers as a firm, but also for the law students who are about to enter the job market. So the initial concept was fully embraced by our chief innovation officer and transformation lead Michelle Bay, and our chief executive partner Genevieve Collins, and we work really quickly, develop the frame to develop the framework to market it to recruit the students, and we launched it and then we told the world what we're doing, put out a media release, and we got quite a lot of media attention around the AI clinic. And we were just shortlisted for an FT Innovative Lawyers Award for it, which is a pretty big deal in the legal world. And how it was run, it was run as a standard semester clinic at Monash University. So a 12-week program for one day a week, so essentially 12 full days. And participating students would get full academic credit for participating. And it was completely new, and a bit of an experiment. And so five students were ultimately selected to participate and huge credit to them for jumping in and being a part of it and helping us to shape it, because again, it was a pilot program, so we weren't entirely sure. I mean, we had an idea of what we wanted to do, but we were really just kind of building it as we went. And the main goal was to learn about and surface unique use cases for AI across the firm and to scour all of the technology that is out there that could efficiently tackle those use cases. And those would have been solutions that were available and capable of being used in Australia and ones earmarked for delivery later down the line. And just talking about that in the past tense, because it happened last year. But following on from the foundational sessions, we do a lot of foundation building for them as well. So they actually understand what's happening. So they got to learn about large language models prompt engineering, AI and the law, design thinking, and then once they've gone through that we embedded them right into our practice groups and they got to mix with partners and lawyers and interviewed them extensively over multiple days to kind of bring to surface where people were having some pain points. And the practice groups then plugged back in with their teams and surfaced more ideas where AI's broad capability could enhance their efficiency and productivity for the firm. And we ended up with over 40 use cases, which was mammoth, but we whittled those down to 15 to really focus on, and then we ended up with over a dozen recommended AI solutions. So a few we had in our tech suite for a few years already, and a couple were in our current law tech hub, which was great. And just to touch on some of those use cases at the time, it was document summary and management, legal research, contract drafting contract review and article drafting, and some of the tools which, if there's any law firms kind of listening might be interested in. So some that were researched and recommended included Microsoft Copilot, which the firm did adapt and we're actually piloting that right now. DraftWise AI was in one of our LaTeX hubs in 2022, and they were put forward for contract drafting. Lexis Argument Analyzer was put forward for legal research and analysis, and CoCounsel was suggested as a virtual legal assistant for asking general questions and engaging in chat. Similar to ChatGPT, which I'm sure everybody listening is completely aware of, but with more of a legal focus. And what we discovered in running the clinic was that many of the students were keen to learn more about and understand AI and its potential to affect their employability. So really wanted to know if it was going to be taking over their jobs for their job prospects. And I think what gave them a bit of comfort is that after doing this program together, everybody realized that their jobs are safe. But having a knowledge about AI and understanding how to use the various tools will definitely give them an advantage over their peers. And as a firm, we learned quite a lot as well. And again, we're very appreciative of the students that put their hands up to take place. And it was very well received. We got a net promoter score from the students of

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9.6, which was great. And some of the learning outcomes that they highlighted that they really enjoyed was understanding the future of AI in the legal industry. They're all law students. They really enjoyed learning how AI would affect their employability or at least enhance it. They really enjoyed learning about large language models and understanding the very basics of AI tools and examining legal concerns when using AI. And then there was some really great learnings which weren't really focused on AI at all, but learnings that if a student is maybe coming in or grads coming into a firm like ours that is focused on innovation and they enjoy learning about strategies to employ when selecting software so software procurement. They liked working with practice groups and understanding how to utilize design thinking tools to really extract a lot of good information. And they liked working with a team. A lot of them, it was the first time they had ever met each other and they were kind of thrown together in this little team and had to work together. So they really enjoyed working with diverse team members that they never had before. And so following the success of that, we deemed it as successful, and we ran a second version, which kicked off earlier this year. We had a team of six who focused on the ethical use of AI, and they spent 12 weeks researching AI ethics and producing a living document that will serve as a guide for the firm, highlighting key considerations that lawyers should be aware of to ensure they use AI ethically. And we just wrapped that up. So that just finished our second AI clinic.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Fantastic. So what did you, what did you learn about running the program that you've taken forward from 2023 into 2024? Like, what are you doing the same? What are you doing different? How are you reshaping things?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

In 2023, we had 16 kind of educational workshops in the course of 12 weeks. And I think that might have been a bit bold. So in 2024, we just slimmed that down. So it was really honed to what the first group had kind of pinpointed as what they found the most useful and then really kind of slimming it down. So it was very focused on ethics and AI.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. So, in terms of how you then take what's being learned out of, let's stick with the ethics one because I think the examples, the use case examples, it's kind of pretty obvious that if they're real use cases, they've surfaced and if they're coming up with solutions and you look at, well, how do we implement and adopt those solutions in terms of how you took you know, there's some sort of artifact that's been created. Can you describe a bit more about what the output was about the ethical use of AI, what was like physically produced and how that's being used by the organization and how perhaps those in the organization are applying what's come out of that in their work?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yes. So it literally got published yesterday. So they had two deliverables. One was the two page guidelines on the ethical use of AI, which is a real challenge to hone such a huge topic down to two pages. But we wanted to make it easy for people to access, easy to read, easy to comprehend and be a starting point for the ethical use of AI. And then their other deliverable was a longer form report that dug in a bit deeper to the principles. And it's probably a bit more geared to lawyers, but anybody across the firm may use it. So that's people sitting in our business services group or anybody sitting in the practice groups. And it targeted four key areas, so bias, privacy, transparency, and accountability. And what the document does is break down what bias is when using AI, and that's discrimination bias and hallucination bias. And then it also gives tips on what the risks are for a lawyer having that happen and how you can mitigate it so that maybe it doesn't happen. Transparency as well, it's looking at you know, that's really kind of pushing out or encouraging people to let, to

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disclose when AI is used and what it is used for. Going over why that's important and how to ensure transparency. And at the end of that, that's trust. You want your clients to trust you and you want, you know, they need to know when AI is being used and what it is used for. Privacy, another big one. That one also went over what the risks are, especially, you know, we're using co pilot, Microsoft co pilot and that's an enterprise version of it so that's safe and we can upload documents and this and that and it's not training. It's not using it for training data, but if you're using public. like the free version of Copilot or ChatGPT, and you are uploading things, then there could be some privacy issues if you're not aware and it is using things that you're putting into the systems for training. So we just have tips on how to mitigate that, which is just being careful how you're disclosing sensitive client data. The third one is accountability. I'm sorry, that's the fourth one. The fourth one is accountability, and that's just the human oversight. So making people very aware that information shouldn't always be trusted by AI. It can produce some funny things sometimes. So if you are working with clients and you're producing information or advice to them, then you have to have that element of human oversight and be accountable for the work that you're producing. So that's what they came up with this wonderful guide highlighting for ethics principles, and it will be a living guide so that may be built upon by future AI clinics, and that's published internally so anybody in our firm can have access to it.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

These are just great examples of reaching outside the boundaries of the organization to, you know, to access others, partner with others and leverage their interests, their time and capacity as well to continually learn as an organization and adapt. And in that vein, collaboration with educational institutions, these industry and educational sector partnerships, I think are increasingly important in an environment of continuous change. So tell me a little bit more about the collaboration with Monash and what's made that work so well.

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, of course. And so one of our overarching goals at the firm too is to be tied into higher education. We really want to be part of shaping the future lawyers so it's very important for us to have these relationships. And so we do these university industry legal innovation clinics, and we actually work with Monash in in Victoria. We work with UTS in New South Wales, and we work with QUT in Queensland, and we're always open to working with other universities as well. And what these clinics do is they place the students at the center of technological disruption in the law and they're giving them a future focus lens to go alongside their legal education.

#### **Michelle Ockers:**

In terms of the accountability to measure and demonstrate the value and impact of all the work that you're doing in the iHub, is there anything in place or is it just obvious? Is the value of this body of work obvious or is there some sort of measurement or reporting required to sustain the investment from the organisation?

#### **Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, I think it's multifaceted. It's obvious, in many ways, because we're running these incredible programs which also, you know, from an outward facing perspective to it kind of keeps us carrying the torch for innovation so we have a great relationships with media. So a lot of what we're doing gets a lot of media exposure. And then that, in turn, you know, filters through the clients that we are kind of the leaders in innovation in Australia, which is brilliant. And then as we start bringing in grads, et cetera, some a lot of them come through these programs, which is great. So it really exposes people to the firm. They get to come experience the firm. They may kind of envision themselves working at the firm long term, so



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it exposes them to that. And even if students don't come through our lots or one of these programs, one of these legal innovation programs, just by doing them, you know, it's kind of broadcast to the university so people can see, you know, Lander and Rogers are doing things in innovation with AI, etc. So it's very beneficial that way. And then we do surveys after we do these clinics. And they do get fantastic reviews. So the students really enjoy it. they go forth in their universities and chat about what they've been doing at Lander and Rogers, they might share it on social media. So there's lots of little, I would say, tentacles that spring from doing it. So for us, it's a very, they're very obvious investments to do these kinds of programs.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yes. So, Courtney, reflecting on this range of initiatives, and you've been with the organization, were you there when the iHub was set up back in 2018, or have you joined more recently?

**Courtney Blackman:**

I've joined the firm more recently, but in 2019, I worked at a tech and innovation hub in Melbourne, and we actually designed and developed the LATAC Hub together.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Oh, fantastic. So you've had some role right from the inception. So when you think about the work that's been done through the iHub in this period of time, what are some of the major things that have been learned or improvements that have been made along the way? And is there anything that you and your team have had to either particularly embrace or let go of along the way?

**Courtney Blackman:**

Oh, I like that. I would say for our innovation function, being aware of what tools are on the market and what's coming down the pipeline and testing new technologies is our job. Like we, that's what we need to be doing. And I'd say once we get into the rhythm of knowing what will serve the firm and what won't, it becomes really clear which technologies we should be embracing and which we need to let go of. And oftentimes, it might not even be technology that's solving the problem. We may just need to shift our thinking.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yes. So can you discern, if you think back over the past six years anyways, in which either your own or those of other people working in this innovation space in the organisation, that your thinking has had to shift or has shifted?

**Courtney Blackman:**

Well, I guess they would run in parallel, though, with technology at the moment, where not everything is technology, but just getting people to embrace AI at the moment, that's a shift because some people will embrace it. Some people are a bit reticent. And so it's getting everybody to at least have a basic understanding of it. And if they're not excited, some people are extremely gung-ho and excited about it. Some people are a bit more, I'm not sure. So it's just kind of trying to get everybody kind of embracing it in a way that'll be beneficial to the firm.

**Michelle Ockers:**

So what works to get those people over the line who are a little bit uncertain? What have you found works?

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**Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, so a great example is, as I mentioned, we've brought Microsoft Copilot into the firm, and we're piloting it at the moment. So we've got almost 150 people across the firm that we're calling co-pilot champions. So we've sort of charged them with testing it, experimenting with it, breaking it, kind of pushing the boundaries of how they can use the technology. And then we'll roll it out more broadly. We do very frequent sessions to kind of pick their brains and see what they're getting out of it. We've built something that everyone has access to in the firm where they can come up with ideas of how to use co pilot to solve problems and it's a shared resource. And then we have people in our AI lab that say yes that can be you know, with Microsoft Copilot, here's how you do it. Or they might say, oh, that can't be, you know, you can't do that with Microsoft Copilot and here's why. And then we get people to also share like what they've used it for, how have you used it that's unique that maybe you can see other people on your team or more broadly throughout the firm use it. So that's been fantastic. And once we kind of get this initial pilot under our belts and understand how people are using it, who's enthusiastic about it, then we'll release it more broadly across the firm. And there will be a lot of people in the firm that will be kind of shouting it from the rooftops of things that are useful for. And then we'll also have training sessions. So our technology team will actually have learning sessions where people will learn how to use all of the tools.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Yeah. So leaning into the early advocates to try it out, to promote it, and then handholding those who need a little bit of handholding to build their confidence and embrace it.

**Courtney Blackman:**

Exactly. Yeah.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Some of our listeners will not be from law firms, obviously, so if we could think kind of more broadly about people in organisations who may be listening and want to increase innovation in their organisation, what key advice would you offer based on your work in innovation?

**Courtney Blackman:**

Yeah, so having a really diverse team that thinks differently and is open to testing new things, that deeply understands strategy and client service, all of that's really important, especially as we enter this new era that is changing so rapidly to emerging technologies. And that's something so Michelle Bay who's our chief innovation officer is has been brilliant at building. A team that is what's 50-50 gender diversity, which is great to start with. And we've got folks on the team from all over the world that speak multiple languages that have really different experiences, really different kind of job outlooks, et cetera. And we're a really functional team because of that, because everybody does really unique things. But I would say the commonality is everybody's thinking How can we do things better? How can, how can we innovate to make things better? How can we operate more efficiently? How can we optimize what we're doing to be better? How can we serve clients better? Always keeping that fresh in mind. And I would say as a firm, we're really excited for the change to come and we're ready to meet it head on. It sounds like it. I was going to say too, you'll have to have our chief innovation officer, Michelle Bay on sometime to further elaborate on innovation because she is in the legal industry. She's incredible and she's a real visionary.

**Michelle Ockers:**

Well, the work is speaking for itself, I think, Courtney. Do you have any closing thoughts, especially, I guess, for those in the in the legal area working in learning and development or

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innovation in the legal area? Any last thoughts you'd like people to take away from our discussion today?

***Courtney Blackman:***

Yeah, I mean I guess the value of innovation is initiatives are really multifold. And so for our people we've really embraced it and we're open to testing and experimenting and I would just encourage people to try that. I think sometimes it can be a little bit difficult and more traditional spaces, but the world's just going to keep changing so you've got to embrace.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, absolutely. And I love how quickly you moved with Monash, right?

***Courtney Blackman:***

It was like a two week situation.

***Michelle Ockers:***

Yeah, fantastic. And good on them as a university for being able to move that quickly and for embracing it as well. We're seeing a lot of changes in higher ed with partnerships. So Courtney, I'm going to pop a link to your LinkedIn profile in the show notes. If anyone would like to get in touch with you to find out more about the topics discussed in today's episode, and I'm sure we'll have a little chat and, you know, a lot of the work you've done is in the public sphere in terms of media coverage and so on. So we'll put together some links in the show notes. If people want to go to the episode landing page and explore a little bit further, this fantastic body of work in innovation and I dare say building a true learning culture in the organization. So thank you so much for sharing your work and experience with us today, Courtney.

***Courtney Blackman:***

Oh, thank you so much, Michelle. It's a real pleasure.

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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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### About your host, Michelle Ockers



Michelle is the co-founder and Chief Learning Strategy at Learning Uncut. She is an experienced, 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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