

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. In the spirit of reconciliation, I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. Today, we're welcoming Cameron Hedrick, the Chief Learning Officer of Citi to Learning Uncut. Welcome, Cameron.

Cameron Hedrik:

Well, thank you, Michelle. It's nice to be here. I'm excited to have our chat.

Michelle Ockers:

Me too, for all sorts of reasons, one of which is it's been a long time since we brought a story from America to the podcast. So I thank you for bringing something to us from the US. And also, I know from our warm up conversation, not to put any pressure on you, but you're a really interesting person. So I'm tremendously looking forward to this conversation.

Cameron Hedrik:

Well, with me you get an American who was raised in Texas mostly, so you'll hear this kind of accent that's not common for New York City. So yeah, you get a twofer with me.

Michelle Ockers:

I'm already enjoying the accent. So let's do this. And Cameron, we're going to talk about a topic that perhaps isn't easy to grasp today. There's a lot of talk about skills in the air, there has been for several years in the HR and L&D world. But in terms of actually doing something meaningful with it and taking the approach that I know you've been talking about, skills portfolio management, it's not that easy to actually execute well. So I'm excited to have you here to help us unpack it. Is there any kind of opening statement you want to make just about this whole skills portfolio management area or the whole skills area itself?

Cameron Hedrik:

Sure. Thank you, by the way, for the intro. It was very kind of you. Listen, on the skills thing, and we're going to get into this deeply over the next many minutes, but it's the oldest concept in the world. I think about hundreds and hundreds of years ago when a blacksmith needed to hire a helper. Well, they might not have written it down, but they had an idea of the skill set that they wanted in that person to come and help them. So the concept is as old as can be, but now the fact that we want to do this at scale and manage them like an asset and predict where the world is going, that's where all the complexity comes in, and we'll get to unpack that as we move along here.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And I do sometimes have people say to me, well, what's so new about this skills thing? And I think it is that at scale and something you've talked about before is this fundamental shift in how we organize from jobs to skills and to fully embrace that is a pretty massive step for an organization. If you're going to wholeheartedly throw yourself into skills at scale and using skills to organize your workforce. I can see you nodding there. How does that construct, like if you start thinking about skills instead of jobs, if you are going to take it to that extreme, what does that really mean for you? What are the implications of that?

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Cameron Hedrik:

Well, the way I think about it, there are a few ways to think about it, so obviously I'll just share mine, is that managing a skills portfolio, first you have to disaggregate a role into skills. So there's the role side of the equation, and each of us have roles, that demand a certain skill and attribute inventory. Then there's the skill and attribute inventory of the human being and somehow extracting that from them. What do they have? How much of it do they have? And what's the quality of that skill? So those are the two sides of the equation that we have to start to unpack here as we go along. What I found at Citi when we started to talk about this is just the first step in the process is helping your leaders even understand the concept of running a skills portfolio in a way that you might run a real estate portfolio or a stock portfolio.

Michelle Ockers:

I think the key here is you've spoken earlier about managing your, I don't know if it's managing your work versus managing skills as an asset, because the idea of managing your workforce as an asset doesn't feel right. Like there's something fundamentally that sticks with your people as an asset in the same way as a property asset. But skills as an asset is slightly different. You're coming at it slightly differently, right? You're not kind of dehumanizing the whole thing.

Cameron Hedrik:

To your point, a human as an asset doesn't feel right because we're not machines. And we're impossible to actually value. There's not a valuation technique for a human. So to your point, deconstructing it into a skill and saying this skill is worth this much amount of money in this context is a little closer to the pin than saying that the human is the one that's going to be evaluated.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So you've picked this analogy, you've talked about this analogy about a real estate portfolio and assets in a real estate portfolio. Was that analogy alone enough for you to be able to get your senior leaders heads around what it means to manage a portfolio of skills? Or did you have to elaborate? Like, do you think for the listeners, is this going to be enough? Are the listeners going to go, yeah, I got it. or you want to elaborate a little bit on what that means and what this concept of skills portfolio management means.

Cameron Hedrik:

It took a lot more than just one metaphor. As I've already done in this podcast, I've talked about managing a stock portfolio and managing a real estate portfolio. But before people can even get a hold of that, they have to understand the building blocks of this. And it might be helpful for your listeners if I kind of take them through the same building block journey that I've been on when I'm selling this. For lack of a better term. The first is just to gain agreement with your stakeholder that a human being is composed, well, of a lot of things. We're magical. We're wonderful. But if you do distil it down, we do have a skill inventory that most of us, we put that forth in our resume. So not only do we have a skill inventory, but the skills are of different qualities, right? We have a little bit of it or we have a lot of it. And the way we use it in a specific context may differ. But the first concept I have to get across to people is that we have to somehow depict Cameron or Michelle in a way where we can see the skill inventory for each of us and begin to codify it. That's kind of step one before I move through. So let me pause there. So far, does that make sense?

Michelle Ockers:

It does. And I'm going to put a link in the show notes to a video of a talk that you gave, which has some visuals along with it. I think sometimes the visuals can help. So we're asking our

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listeners to imagine this without the visual, or maybe if we can grab some of the slides that you use to unpack this kind of concept, Cameron. So the listeners can go to the show notes, grab the slides, and it will make even more sense.

Cameron Hedrik:

Yes, and I'm happy to provide that, because to your point, if you have something in front of you, it's just easier to see. But the first step is saying, look, imagine you can codify Michelle's skill set and quality of each of the skills, and then Cameron's too, and then multiply that times however big your organization is. Citi is big, so in a perfect, you know, again, a lot of what I'm talking about today is conceptual. We haven't actually done this at scale, but you can theoretically imagine if you added up the skill that, the little bit of this skill that resides in Michelle, the little bit of this skill that resides in Cameron, and multiply that by all the humans in your organization, you can begin to see how much of each of these skills do you have? Where do they reside? And when we talk about assessments later, we can also answer the question, what is the quality of that skill in aggregate?

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. So when you break it down like that, it's not that hard to get your head around, right? It sounds really logical because humans are messy and organizations are complex.

Cameron Hedrik:

So to that point, I'm so glad you said that, because when I talk about this, there's this clinical, almost mathematical pretext, but we the people that listen to this and maybe we realize that humans are nothing like that, we are carrying around all of these skills and attributes, it comes out in different ways in different contexts at different times for different reasons. So there is a limit you cannot distil this into a linear equation. It's as much art as it is science

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And then when you talk about, and I know you said you haven't done this at scale yet in Citi, but I know you've been running some experiments, looking at how to do this. And there are a number of kind of organizational and cultural prerequisites. I know you've talked before about cultural, technological and organizational structure changes. Which of these in an organization, the scale of Citi, because you are a massive organization, I think you might be the world's largest financial organization, which of these, the cultural, technological or organizational structural changes, which are you imagining is going to be the most challenging to implement and why?

Cameron Hedrik:

Oh, that's a tough one. If I had to choose, And Michelle set it up perfectly. So we should probably talk about this in buckets. There's a mindset and culture shift that you need to achieve, which we've started down the path of that. There's an org structure dimension to this. And then there's a technological structure to this. But to answer your question directly, of the lot, the technological constraints and interoperability of platforms is the biggest problem. Now, not all organizations are as big and complicated as Citi, but if you're HCM, like we're a workday shop, a lot of people, a lot of your listeners probably know what that means. If you're a workday shop, and you use Eightfold, and you use DeGreed, and you use several other talent platforms, they've got to talk to each other, and they may not have the piping, for lack of a better term, to do that. That's been our biggest constraint thus far.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, it's interesting. I have spoken with Peter Sheppard at Ericsson about the work they've been doing. And of course, that interoperability is very tricky. He spoke a little bit about that. I'll pop a link to his conversation with me in the show notes. And one of the biggest blockers

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that they're grappling with, they've gone a long way down this path, by the way, but one of the biggest blockers at the moment is a single skills profile across all of these different systems. which can be very tricky. And then it's like getting approvals and permissions from everyone in your workforce to use this single skills profile as well in terms of kind of data ethics. So there is that aspect of it.

Cameron Hedrik:

Yeah. You said it perfectly. And let's assume that you can get to a single skill profile, but it's so dynamic. You know, the humans constantly changing, the roles are constantly changing, the overarching context in which a person works constantly changing. So there's a dynamism to this that also makes it difficult. I think it's worth it because particularly in a knowledge economy, you know, if you're a Drucker fan, you can see this clearly, like one of your primary assets is the skills that you have, the attributes of the people, the extent to which they're using it, and if you don't try to get at this in some way, you're leaving a lot off the table.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, certainly with internal mobility and all of the drivers towards more internal mobility and being able to use the skills you've got in your workforce more flexibly to adapt to change. Like there's a very big picture story as to why this is worth it. Mindset. It sounds like you've been tackling the mindset shift, the mindset and culture aspects.

Cameron Hedrik:

Yeah, let's talk about mindset for a minute. First, we started, rightly, with just helping a person understand the concept, which is hard enough. So yes, you have a skill, I have a skill, profile, and together we can codify it in some way. So we'll get to the tactics of that in a minute. But then beyond that, one of the big things that I was shocked at, when we started just asking people to validate and or populate their skill profile. There was a skepticism, a lot of question like, well, what is this? What are you going to use this for? And they weren't necessarily questioning the ethics of it or anything like that, but I did not see that coming. I assumed people would assume benevolence and goodness and kindness. But instead, if you're out there and you're trying this, you might be surprised that people might go, hey, pump the brakes a little bit. you got to help me understand why you're asking for this. So once we, and I wouldn't say we're certainly through that, but once we got the concept kind of down and then the people sort of kind of comfortable with sharing and their skills profile, now we're beginning to have the building blocks of the bigger story.

Michelle Ockers:

Right. And have you focused just on kind of building this out, trying the approach, seeing what you can do in one area, one part of the business or one division, one geography, one kind of role? How have you gone about? Where did you start?

Cameron Hedrik:

Yes. It's a short answer. And to your listeners, please, I would start with one multi-incumbent role. Like, in a bank, it'd be tellers or personal bankers. You got a lot of them, the skill set's fairly static, and you can assess each of your individuals on that. It's the cleanest way to start, so yes, I would suggest that.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, yeah. What has worked in terms of addressing that kind of response, that questioning, that why are you wanting this? You know, if other people are kind of trying to pre-empt, if my workforce has this reaction, what might work? What have you found there?

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Cameron Hedrik:

It's the what's in it for them narrative. And Michelle, you already actually said it quite perfectly, where if they understand that the impetus for this is mobility, there are several things you can do with these skill inventories, but certainly mobility, to your point, is one. And that's a what's in it for them. The integrity of the broad business. When we explain to people that we just want to look at these skills and aggregate to see if we have a deficit. If we need skill X, but then when we query the population and we have none of skill X, that helps us be a more durable business. So I just failed to tell the Y story very well.

Michelle Ockers:

But you're having practice. That's the point of doing this, starting somewhere, right? You've got the practice. And then when it's time to start scaling it out, you've learned these lessons at smaller scale and lower risk, right?

Cameron Hedrik:

That's why I'm trying to help people so they don't make the same mistakes that we're making. There are helicopters flying over, Michelle.

Michelle Ockers:

I was going to say, is the New York traffic ramping up on us?

Cameron Hedrik:

You know what's happening, actually? So I'm right by the Hudson River and this is a helicopter corridor anyway. But when the military comes through, you know, they have like a there's four like attack helicopters that surround probably maybe the president. I don't know. But we get that.

Michelle Ockers:

It's quite a show. My biggest noise risk is the two peahens, female peacocks who wander around my neighborhood honking now and then. We live in very different worlds, Cameron.

Cameron Hedrik:

Well, I guess so. Yeah, today for sure.

Michelle Ockers:

OK, so let's get back to it. Organizational structure. Who owns skills? Who manages skills? It's a tricky one, isn't it?

Cameron Hedrik:

Indeed. I'll tell you our story. And I've heard this story with several people that do what I do. When this first lit up as a possibility, this whole idea of managing a skills portfolio in aggregate, it started in learning, at least at Citi. We started to look at that. We had an LXP called HEF, an LXP called DEGREED. And we were intrigued with, even if it was just a self-analysis, a self-assessment, and a manager assessment of a skill inventory, all that we could do with that. So it started in learning. It has since moved to the workforce planning entity because, kind of back to our skills reside in humans. You can put it in learning or you can put it in talent acquisition. I actually think, this is heretical for some CLOs to hear this, but I actually think talent acquisition is probably a better place for it. And why? Because if you see that you have a massive skills deficit somewhere, you have to go higher the carrying mechanism of that skill, which is called a human.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah.

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Cameron Hedrik:

Now, sometimes it's a robot. That's a different discussion, maybe for later. But it's still mostly humans. And then a secondary thing that you want to do is to offset your skill deficits by learning and or other process engineering and things like that. So right now, that's where it sits for us.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And I think to your point, developing the people you have is just one way to address a skills gap. So L&D isn't the arbiter, isn't the executor of a stack of the other strategies that you could use. No, it feels to me like the organizations that I'm working with, talking to, who are starting to explore how to approach skills and how to build it into strategy. Like there's one organization I'm working with at the moment that in parallel is updating their talent strategy and their L&D strategy. And this question has come up, who's got the lead? And it's pretty clear in this case that the talent team has the lead. But then it's like, how do we integrate effectively? How do we work better right across all of our people and culture functions, if we're going to organize around skills, and do we all have to organize around skills or not? What thoughts do you have around what this means for collaboration across all of the P&C functions?

Cameron Hedrik:

It's a critical question. I had a long conversation with one of my colleagues about this this morning, where, when you're siloed like most of us are, there's a recruiting group, there's a talent group, there's a learning group, there's an insert your favorite HR function here, you stop thinking about the unified user experience. You start to only think about it down your lane. And to your point, Michelle, which is critical, you've got to have somebody pulling that red thread from the user's perspective through that process, or you're never going to get off the ground. We're in the middle of trying to figure that out right now.

Michelle Ockers:

It's always been important for employee experience anyway, right? I think the skills thing is just kind of the focal point for the question at the moment.

Cameron Hedrik:

Yes, that's right. And look, like with everything else, when this whole skills idea first came up, in its current form. Let's call it six, seven, eight, nine years ago, somewhere in that. A lot of puff pieces, a lot of speakers talking about this, but the doing of this in real life at scale is very difficult. Certainly worth trying, but to your earlier point, I would say start small and we're going to go through some of the other headwinds that you're going to hit. So maybe you can get through it with more elegance than I am.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, there is something about not potentially being the first mover in this case.

Cameron Hedrik:

Well, that's right. While we're on structure, in addition to where you place it in your HR organization, one of the other things I would challenge everybody to think about is to create, I call it an office of skills management. Again, whether that office of skills management sits in some place in HR or some other place, you've got to have a central team that looks at the taxonomy, how to generate a skills profile, what's the assessment methodology. That's a huge one. That's a massive one we should talk about. Who's doing the data analysis and insights? And what I found with most of my colleagues that are trying this is that they don't

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have this concept of the office of skills management. So I would challenge your listeners to maybe chew on that a little bit and see if it would fit for you.

Michelle Ockers:

That's an interesting idea. And when you think about these days, we're used to hearing about like a transformation team or a transformation office. This is a big transformation. So maybe it's not a permanent office, a permanent separate team, but someone's got to have their head just around this and in this game to make it happen and to address some of these complexities and challenges. So why not call it an office of skills management? Or if that's not palatable because people think you're building an empire, you know, the skills transformation team or something along those lines. It's that kind of concept, right?

Cameron Hedrik:

That's right. I just, in our experience, the diffusion of these concepts, like you've got to have a clear person who says this is the assessment strategy for our skills work. And this is the taxonomy approach that we're going to use for our skills work. And if that's too diffused across too many people, you're just going to have trouble getting it off the ground.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, too much difficulty getting agreement, right. Too slow. So let's talk about some sort of more practical implementation aspects and use cases. You talked about the kind of, when you were explaining the concept, identifying skills deficiencies at an organizational level across massive populations and how challenging that is at the moment. And that's one of the major use cases. How have you gone about that? I know you haven't done this right at scale, but with the populations you've been working with. How have you been able to approach and uncover and address skill gaps? And if we need to go through assessment or something else first, take me there first and we can come back to how do you identify skills deficiencies?

Cameron Hedrik:

So the way that in practice, we're currently identifying skills deficiencies, it is fairly rudimentary. It is an individual and that person's manager doing a generic Likert scale saying, you know, on scale XYZ, Cameron is, you know, from a one, which is a novice, knows nothing, to a five, you know, he can write the book on this stuff. And I can hear everybody's in their mind, that's why it's so unreliable. It's so subjective. And yes, yes, it is. This is just step number one, just to get a sense of where you might have a surplus or a deficit in your skills portfolio. So we took a limited audience, did a generic Likert scale against a generic set of learning objectives and skill definitions. And that's how we've started.

Michelle Ockers:

You've got to start somewhere, right? And it's the whole progress over perfection, because if your start point is to go out and find tech that can do this or start using AI to do it, you potentially miss the opportunity to get some more rapid progress and to learn some stuff about how you want to do it when it comes time to choose the right tech.

Cameron Hedrik:

You said it perfectly. While we're talking about assessments, we might as well just kind of stay in this zone of assessments because let's just kind of think about this from the most rudimentary to the most complicated way we can do this. I've already talked about rudimentary. A self-assessment, like I'm great at it, I'm terrible at it, is step one. Overlay that with the manager's that's probably step number two. And then maybe even put a peer vector in there. As a peer, if Michelle's rating me, she goes, I've seen Cameron demonstrate XYZ

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skill fluently or not at all. So those are the kind of the easy, most people can get at that with the tech they probably have already in their organization. The next major step, and your accuracy goes up exponentially, right along with your complexity, is actually having technical tests for whatever skill you're trying to assess. I'm a lifelong HR nerd, so I'll give you an HR example. If you're hiring a bunch of employee relations people, you would want to have a technical test that dove deep into all things that an employee relations expert would need to know. And that, though, again, imagine that times all the roles you have in the whole place. It gets complicated fast. So you're going to have to choose where you're going to use technical testing very carefully. And then further to your point, and I'll be done with this assessment bit, there's third-party observation. There's a lot of inference now, particularly with generative and some language models that you could use. You can infer my skill based on a number of things passively. But that comes with other privacy and bias and some other things that we can probably get to later. The punchline here, Michelle, I should have said it more succinctly, is to choose your assessment methodology carefully, be comfortable with the trade-offs, because there will be trade-offs.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. Skills taxonomy, that's an essential part of doing your assessment because you've got to figure out what are you measuring, right?

Cameron Hedrik:

Yes. Skills taxonomy is a big part of it. When we started down this road many years ago, people were buying intact skills taxonomies from like Burning Glass and some other groups. Which is fine. What I'm starting to see, and now I'm about to get out of my strike zone here, so others that are listening to this will know way more about this than I do, but there's more of a dynamic skills taxonomy approach that is leveraging language models and the like. So if I'm inputting my skills, and you're inputting your skills, and we use slightly different words, it can correct and normalize for that type of thing. And I'm grossly oversimplifying. It can do way more than that. But I think the way the future is not like buy a static taxonomy, use it. And because it's just too, it's just too dynamic.

Michelle Ockers:

You need a dynamic. And Ericsson has gone down that path. So again, I'd say to listeners, if you want to know more about what that might look like on the ground, listen to the episode with Peter Shepard, where he talks about how they're doing that at the moment. And, you know, you have to have the budget to pay for that basically. And you get people in who've got the tech that can do that for you.

Cameron Hedrik:

No, that's exactly right. And Peter doesn't know me, but I know of him and his work, and it's really impressive. And part of what he's done, and maybe I need to listen to this episode. I'm excited about that. You got to sell the business case to get the tech and all the other resources that it takes to give this a shot. And I'm guessing that that team probably did exactly that.

Michelle Ockers:

Well, not initially, not enough. So that was one of the key lessons learned. The other thing is they're not just using tech to infer skills. They also have skills owners in the business, people who are subject matter experts who bring that to the table and bring the organizational context to the table as well, because that matters when you're creating a skills taxonomy too, right?

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Cameron Hedrik:

It does matter a lot. And let's unpack that because I don't think I've done a very good job of doing what I need to do right now. Let's see if I can do this well. When you're thinking about your skills organization, figuring out how to quantify the skill in the human, that's one huge dimension we can talk about for hours. But the other, to your point, Michelle, is what is the skills profile for the role and the attributes inventory needed for the role? Not only today, but the people that are doing it well, they're thinking about the skills and attributes needed in the role, not only today, but six months, 12 months, 36 months out. And the marriage of those two things, what's inside the humans that you've quantified and what, how does that match what the organization needs on a role and ultimately an aggregate level? That's where the magic happens in that intersection.

Michelle Ockers:

Yep. So you need strong workforce planning, right?

Cameron Hedrik:

Massive. And that's why a lot of folks are putting this in the recruiting function because that tends to be the place where workforce planning also resides.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So to get to identify your skills gaps, you need to marry up your assessment, like the what do we have in the humans we've got, with the what do we need in order to identify the gaps.

Cameron Hedrik:

That's exactly right. And the what do we need. And then there's just one other in the what do we need side of the equation that I find fascinating. The ones that are doing it really well, they look at the skill profile of the role, the multi-incumbent role, individual role, and they'll say, in this skill profile today, this particular skill is dying off. We need less of some obscure programming language that a year ago was important. But we can see on the horizon that this new thing is coming, and we get to put that in the role because we need more of that in the next generation that we bring in. So there's a real strategic component to this skill profile building thing that we're talking about here.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Have you played around at all with the idea of skills, adjacencies and what that might look like and how you identify skills, adjacencies so you can identify here are people who have, you know, they might not have exactly the skill they were looking for, but they have something that is similar enough that we can bridge readily from where they are now to where we need them to be with a slightly different skill. Have you played in that space?

Cameron Hedrik:

Yes, I have. And this is actually a part of the talk that you referenced that we'll post. Imagine a world where you have a pretty good skill inventory of your incumbent population and a very good depiction of the role skill profile. And to your point, Michelle, this is, I think, what you're talking about. They don't tend to just go away all of a sudden, they tend to die off slowly. But let me use my favorite example. We know that certain roles that are currently very human intensive, where a human is pushing the paper from the left side of the desk to the right side of the desk, they're going away. Right, because we have other ways to do it. So we know, just hypothetically, maybe 500 people are sitting in that type of role that is dying slowly, and we can see it coming. To your point, now what we can do is say, but here's the good news. There's two new roles starting to come up, and they have these two profiles. And if we crosshatch the profile of the dying role people with the profiles of the upcoming

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roles, then we can start to say, well, what if you know, Susie can go over here and do this role because we only need to train her up on these four or five new things because she has the other things from her old role. That's kind of what you're talking about, I think. It's not that hard to do the analog version of that. You can do it fairly simply. I want to be able to do that at scale and much more predictive and elegant, but that is part of the play here.

Michelle Ockers:

Yes, yes. Other use cases. I do want to talk about data and the importance of data or data, depending on your flavor. Are there any other use cases, any other things you've tried to do or experiment with doing, types of decisions or approaches that you've been playing with?

Cameron Hedrik:

Where I'd like to get, I like this idea of a heat map where we can click into a product line of ours and say, for example, I'm just going to use Python programming. Do I have Python skill inside this population of people in the XYZ unit? And C, is Python red, yellow, or green, depending on how much of it and the quality of it in that particular place? So just imagine a heat map. And I'll put an example in the links that you could look at where at a click, you can say, yeah, in this organizational unit, here's the skill heat map I have. I know how much of it I have, the quality of it, just by looking at this heat map. So we've built tiny little prototypes of this thing, but I don't have anything like this in production. I just think it's, you need a way to visually depict your skill inventory, and this is one way to do it. The other use cases, you've talked about another use case, which is exactly what, you know, roll dying, roll coming on, cross pollinating rolls. There's a lot of mobility use cases in this. Those are the garden variety things we're doing.

Michelle Ockers:

It feels like, and if I'm reading the tea leaves wrong here, say so, but it feels like you're still building the case for change, trying to figure out what will it take to scale this in order to get the support to scale it? Or is it even, you know, taking a step back, you're still trying to figure out whether the effort and investment is going to be worth scaling this? Where are you at on the skills journey at Citi?

Cameron Hedrik:

The case for change is made. People understand it. We have technologies that are allowing it, that we are using today. I would just say that the harmonization across our systems that we talked about earlier, and by systems, I mean not only IT systems, but the organizational systems inside the place, that's where the opportunity lies for us to harmonize and maximize. But no, we're certainly off the blocks, down a path, but we just have a long ways to go.

Michelle Ockers:

Right. Do you have any sense of how long it will take?

Cameron Hedrik:

There's a correlation to length and how much we can use large language models. Citi is understandably got to be very, very careful with its info security, just by nature of what we do. If we had unfettered use of language models, I think we can move more quickly. So those of you that are in regulated organizations, you'll understand you'll be trammelled in a way that our colleagues outside of those regulated organizations may not be.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And of course, there are very few industries or sectors that are more highly regulated than financial services, of course.

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Cameron Hedrik:

Between our regulation and our info security demands, both of which are totally understandable. I'm not saying this is a negative thing. It's just a factor with us that is going to make us slower.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, but you'll be ready. You're doing all of this experimentation. It's not a reason not to start, right?

Cameron Hedrik:

That's exactly right. Besides the concept sale, I'm guessing this is going to be true for many of our colleagues who listen to this podcast. What if there's a saying like perfection is the enemy of the good or some version of that?

Michelle Ockers:

Perfection is the enemy of progress.

Cameron Hedrik:

Yeah. Can we be satisfied with just a five-point generic scale and self-assessment to get started? Yes. Because as you can imagine, and these people are right, that dies under the weight of, well, that's just too subjective and the quality of the data is not that... Probably true, but you've got to get a foothold.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. You've got to start somewhere. You've got to learn something to be ready to build momentum when you address some of those other big blockers. It's a data game, right? It's about making better quality decisions with data. What are the considerations with accessing data, getting the right data, quality of data? How do you need to be thinking about data?

Cameron Hedrik:

Yeah, the data question is massive. I would say, if you're jotting things down on a notepad, I would write down, number one, privacy laws. There are new ones every day. The ones written in a country, GDPR is my obvious favorite one. Not only governs you in that country, but anybody who touches that country. So just the privacy alone restricts data flow and is a complication. So that's the first thing I'd write down. The second thing is bias, of course. Particularly if you're moving into using inference models and other things like that to create passively skill profiles, you will rightly need to talk to your algorithm people to make sure bias is factored in. That's number two. And then number three is just transparency. As I said earlier, what are you using this for? People will have that question. So those are some of the things, when I think about data, those are the three vectors that are constantly in play on this skills thing.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So Cameron, over the coming 12 months, where do you want to be in 12 months time with this initiative and what are you most excited about?

Cameron Hedrik:

In the coming 12 months at Citi, what I want to see is just a wider use of just our basic methodology, self and manager assessment, and using that data as a first place to hunt. So just scaling, number one. Number two, in 12 months, The user experience and platform interoperability, I want to refine that to make sure the user isn't bouncing between platforms, you know, one place for their assessment, one place for the profile, one place for this. So

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that's second. And then the third thing I'd really like to see, even if it's very, you know, nascent and small is generative AI use in this space. That's going to be a huge unlock for all of this and we need to start using it more here.

Michelle Ockers:

Absolutely. And because I don't want to spend another hour having that conversation, let's not go down that path right now. I think you've laid out some really good start points and some things for people to think about if they want to get started, or maybe they're a little bit stuck and they're trying to think, where do I need to go next with skills management? What tips would you offer to other HR or L&D professionals who are considering getting started. Let's just stick with getting started on this skills portfolio management approach in their organization.

Cameron Hedrik:

Create your proof of concept in a very small place, just like you said, Michelle. If I had to do it all over again, I would pick a multi-incumbent role that's easy to understand, I would create a skills profile for that multi-incumbent role that has face validity. Then I would do a very simple self and manager generic assessment, and I would depict that in some data visualization tool to say, for this population, we say we need this skill here, but we have very little of it. or whatever the data illuminates. A lot of the stuff I talked about up front here, if I would have just started with that instead of trying to sell it conceptually, I could just show it, it would have got us down the road much faster. So show rather than tell. Don't let scale get in your way. Simple, simple, simple, small, small, small.

Michelle Ockers:

Thank you so much, Cameron, for sharing your insights and experiences with us. It would be wonderful to come back maybe in 12 to 18 months time and see where you've landed and give everybody an update. We'll pop a link to your LinkedIn profile in the show notes, and people can perhaps look at the resources in the show notes to learn a little bit more about the things that we've talked about today. Thanks so much, Cameron. Thank you.

Cameron Hedrik:

It was a 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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