

Michelle Ockers:

Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut, where we dig into real learning solutions with the people who made them happen. This podcast has been recorded on the lands of the Brinja Yuin people, and I'd like to acknowledge traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connection to land, sea, and community. I would like to welcome our guest today, Hannah Ryan from Percent. Welcome, Hannah.

Hannah Ryan:

Thanks for having me, Michelle. I'm really excited to be here.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, me too. So the reason we are talking is because Versent was awarded Best Learning Culture at the 2025 AITD Excellence Awards. And people have been listening to the podcast for some time will know I love a good story about learning culture. I'm very taken by the idea that we treat, I hesitate even Hannah to use the word learners, treat people, treat the people we're here to support, the people we're here to help perform, to learn, to grow, that we treat them with respect and we engage them as connected contributors to learning. We respect their autonomy and ability to self-direct in learning with the right support and don't just feel like we need to be there in the middle of every intervention for learning to happen, which isn't at all true. So I was particularly excited, you know, when I learned about the work you've done at Versent with your Craft 180 program. And I'm very, very much looking forward to our conversation today. So to set the scene, Hannah, just tell us a little bit about Versent, who they are, what they do, the workforce.

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah, of course. I firstly love everything you're saying about learners and not centring ourselves in that. So I'm really looking forward to diving into that a bit in this conversation. A little bit about Versent. So I am the Learning and Capability Manager at Versent. And Versent is an Australian technology consultancy, about 11 years old now, 11 years I think, we have a lot of birthday parties to celebrate but yeah and we work with clients from all sectors with a view to transform their business through innovative technology solutions. So On paper, Versent today is about a 700 person strong organisation and our workforce is made up of technologists predominantly. So engineers, solution architects, advisors, consultants with really deep expertise across cloud, data, digital, AI, and more and more and more. So that's kind of Versent in a nutshell and on paper, I think pulling that back a layer as well. Our people and our workforce love solving problems, love doing meaningful work and also building really deep expertise.

Michelle Ockers:

And you are the first L&D role in the business, Hannah, I believe?

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah, that's right. First and only at the moment as well, but I think that is probably testament to the way our employees lean in and come to the table when it comes to all things learning. One person for about 700 people doesn't sound like a lot, but when you've got great advocacy internally, you can make that go a bit further. So yeah, I came into the business as the first learning and development role they've ever had. And really, when I look back at my position description and the role on paper and what it was intended to be, it was centred around managing a learning experience platform, delivering leadership programs as well. And I guess where it's evolved to is something quite different, which is quite exciting and I've really, really enjoyed that journey.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, we are going to talk a bit about how you reshaped the role. When did you join Versent?

Hannah Ryan:

So I first joined Versent in September, 2022. Three years ago. I celebrated my three year anniversary recently.

Michelle Ockers:

Birthday cake for that as well?

Hannah Ryan:

A shout out. And I'm happy with that. But yeah, I came into Versent with a background personally in the financial services industry and moving into working in consultancy and with technology consultants was definitely a culture shift in terms of the organisations that I've worked with before.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. And something that's really interesting, Hannah, we will put a link to your LinkedIn profile in the show notes. And I encourage listeners to go and have a look at Hannah's LinkedIn profile, because you've only been working in learning and development. Is it about seven or eight years now you started in a learning coordinator role? And in that seven or eight years, you've kind of really blossomed, right? You've got your personal growth trajectory is massive in that time to be stepping into in the space of maybe four or five years of starting out in learning and development, stepping into being the sole L&D person in a new organisation. And when listeners hear some of the stuff you've done in that last three years, it's going to blow their minds, I reckon. So I was, I mean, I was impressed with the work you'd done anyway. And then to look at your history, you know, what drives you? Like what's really fuelled your own growth, your own learning, your own confidence to take on a role like this in such a short period of time?

Hannah Ryan:

Thank you. That's so lovely to hear. I think there's a few things that have driven me to this point and helped me learn quite rapidly as well. One, I've worked with some wonderful people in previous roles and had really great mentors and relationships with learning and development professionals that I've been able to learn from and

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grow as a practitioner and build my own sort of muscle in that area. So I cannot underestimate the value of having really great people in your circle, even if you don't work with them day to day anymore, but being able to have those networks is super important. I think for me, I am driven funnily enough by learning, but I am quite a curious person. And I want to know how things work, what good looks like, all the different things that contribute to that. I want to unpick things and get under the covers a little bit to understand what makes things be the way they are. And that really lends itself well, I think, to culture, which I'm sure we'll get into a little bit more. So for me, it's, yeah, being very curious, but also being quite open to learn new things and try new things. And I'll put my hand up for any project and I'll say yes to a lot of projects and opportunities, even if in the background I'm shaking in my boots and super worried and have imposter syndrome. But I want to give things a try. And you learn so much from saying yes to things and taking on new challenges. And I think that's served me really well in my career. I hope it continues to do so. And I think that's really led me to where I am now.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So what drew you to the role at Versent?

Hannah Ryan:

I was really interested in the role at Versent. I guess I'd come from a business where we had about 7,000 people, I think. And I worked in a team, in a learning and development team. I had my own direct reports as well. And we were working in financial services. And I worked with, again, some brilliant people in my own team that have made me a better practitioner just from working with them. But I felt like, and actually it comes to a little bit about my career journey, I felt like I wanted the opportunity to roll up my sleeves and have the full breadth of learning and development responsibility sit with me. So going from a bigger organisation to one that was a bit smaller, gives you the opportunity to have that breadth and range. You are thinking strategically, but you're also designing programs and you're also rolling them out and communicating them. And I wanted to just get a bit more of that in my role and in my experience. And then when I was looking for a new position, I came across the role with Versent and I, really resonated with a lot about how the business operated. And I think they, and continue to do so, really empowered and encouraged their people to just do things. And I think it's very necessary in financial services to have the right processes and procedures and hierarchy, don't get me wrong. But it felt like it would be a good opportunity to just do things and test stuff and experiment and innovate. And meeting some of the people there that I interviewed with, that was just further reinforced. So for me, it was a really great opportunity to one, have the breadth across all learning and development and kind of have that sit with me, but to be really encouraged and supported to test stuff out and experiment and try new things.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, smaller organizations do tend to support that. And I remember a conversation I had with Dinye Hernanda on an Elevate episode about learning in scale ups and startups. And I mean, 11 years old, you're beyond being a startup or even a scale up in a lot of ways, but I'll pop a link to that episode in the show notes because I think it might nicely complement some of what we talk about today. But it's such a great

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opportunity to go into an organisation as the first L&D person and have an opportunity to shape things. It's exciting times. So when we spoke, we met for the first time last week and spoke, and when we spoke, you described learning as already being deeply ingrained at first when you arrived. What did you notice? What did you see that made you think, well, learning's already happening here and made you think that there was something special about the culture, the environment you were walking into from a learning perspective?

Hannah Ryan:

There were a few things that were very immediately apparent notwithstanding joining the business and I think having quite a few calendar invites pop up from across different areas of the business of people saying hey we run this great thing or I've been trying to get this initiative up and running or this program going. And so that flurry of activity and appetite right from the outset of all different people in all different areas of the business was indicator number one, that people here really value learning and are really energized by it and are contributing to what that culture looks like. And again, secondly, it's a necessary aspect of working with technology. If you want to continue to be an expert in your field, technology is rapidly evolving faster than most people can keep up with. So you need to have that muscle and that desire to keep learning and keep reading and experimenting and understanding more. So that absolutely led to some of the behaviours and some of the things we were seeing with employees and leaders and the different initiatives that they were trying to stand up. I think also there was a really deep respect employee to employee at Versent. And we talk about craft and this idea that everyone has a craft, no matter who you are, whether you're in the data practice, whether you're in marketing, whether you're in sales, you have your craft and that's your area of interest and your area of expertise and your value that you have to offer other people. And so even if that wasn't as evolved as it is now, that respect was there right from the get go, coming into it, I guess I was really energized by that. And it's not to say I hadn't seen that in previous organisations, but it was so tangible with the conversations I was having and the language that was used and how people approached learning. So those were, I guess, some of the initial indicators.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, that word craft is an interesting word, and I've really only heard it used in one other place, and that's the Australian Public Service. But it's kind of old fashioned in a way because it harks back to the era of guilds and apprenticeships and a different style of learning. So was that word already being used in the organisation when you joined, or was that something that evolved after you joined?

Hannah Ryan:

I'd say it was being banded around a little bit in the organisation. And I think at the time, and I can't speak too much to the history when I wasn't there, but at the time our chief technology officer, Tim Hope, was really thinking deeply about this kind of thing and using this word to try and encapsulate what learning, continuous learning on the job and sharing with others as a technologist could look like and could mean. And I think also the organisation has always strived to be the destination for top tech talent to hone their craft. So we want it to be the place where people come, where you can go deep and you can really build your expertise in an area. And we want

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you to do that. And we're going to celebrate you doing that. And so I feel like the word was being banded around. It probably wasn't solidified or embedded just yet, but it gave us sort of the nexus to build Craft 180 around and sort of build that out and hinge our culture on it a little bit.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So you were hired to manage an LXP and to deliver leadership programs. How did things move on from that being your position description to the Craft 180 program and building a learning culture, which we're about to launch into?

Hannah Ryan:

I think a lot of people can probably relate to the feeling of your PD on paper and then like what it turns into and what it changes. But I guess I came into the business and don't get me wrong, I did manage the LXP and deliver leadership programs, but the proportionate amount of time really shifted. And I'm sure if I were to follow my PD to the letter, a lot of stuff I do now wouldn't even exist. But in the early sort of like first 90 days or so in joining the organisation and meeting a lot of different stakeholders, I was trying to get a lay of the land in terms of what was important to people. And things like leadership development absolutely were important to people, that goes without saying, but this aspect of craft and this idea that, you know, how can we support our people to learn year round? How can we support our people to share their knowledge and their expertise with others? How can we create this culture of knowledge sharing like document repositories and things like that, and documenting our knowledge and scaling that. This was sort of emerging in some of the conversations. And again, the conversations I had with our CTO led me to think that, okay, this is probably going to be quite important. And also this was the stuff that our people were really excited about. And so I think sometimes when you come into an organisation and you're new, there's an element of how do I add value quick? How can I establish myself? How can I meet the business where they're at? And this was sort of an opportunity to do that, to lean into what was going on and lean into what seemed important and at least just see what happens. See what happens if we go down this path and explore this need that's coming out of it. And so I remember a conversation with my people leader at the time and saying, I keep hearing about this craft thing, and I think it could be worth having a look at. And it speaks to the culture of the organisation. And my people leader was like, yeah, go after it. Let's go see what it is. Go find out. And that kind of being empowered to do that, was really important because, you know, perhaps in another organisation you could put your foot down and say, nope, not your role, out of scope, don't do it. But there was, yeah, if you think this is worth going and exploring, go off and do it, I'll back you. So that was really helpful.

Michelle Ockers:

So tell us a little bit more about Craft180 then. What is it? How does it work? What is the people experience like through Craft180?

Hannah Ryan:

So Craft 180, I've explained it a few times and it's interesting how some people think it is versus what it actually is. So sometimes people will be like, oh, okay, Craft 180, when does the program start? And it's really not a program. It's actually, I would

describe it as our ecosystem for ongoing development and building deep technical expertise and consultancy skills. So it's not just a program, it's an ecosystem that encompasses processes, practices, synchronous and asynchronous learning activities as well. And I guess the overall objective of having this mapped as an ecosystem and understanding what this ecosystem is, is to make sure that we provide avenues for sustainable, ongoing learning and upscaling and expertise development throughout the year. So as a learner, like how would you experience and engage in Craft 180? There's a few different ways. So we do big organisation-wide initiatives. We like to call them seasons. And they're things like Dev Jam, Contentarama, Megacertapalooza. We love a crazy name, evidently. It's a bit of a mouthful, but we do big organisation-wide initiatives that are aligned to the key skills and expertise that we need to build as a business. So that is really important, but we supplement that as well with easy avenues to get involved in learning, things like bringing in tech partners to do tech talks. We have our Versent Tech blog as well, where people can submit their learnings and write down case studies or things they've found interesting or things they've been exploring. We have craft talks that happen throughout the year across all our different regions, which are opportunities for people to stand up and share something they've learned about. And then we offer additional myriad of training programs and things like that. So in summary, it's an ecosystem, but it is programs, processes. It's how we think about learning. It's how we talk about learning. It's our project practices and sort of even our business rhythms as well, and how that all contributes to people's learning.

Michelle Ockers:

So much to unpack. So I'm going to take you back to these seasons. Dev Jam.

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah.

Michelle Ockers:

Contentarama.

Hannah Ryan:

Yes.

Michelle Ockers:

And Megacertapalooza.

Hannah Ryan:

You nearly got it, which is like quite impressive. So Dev Jam, which is our hackathon style event where people form teams together, there'll be some general guidance as to what kind of solution or technology people are looking to use. And the teams go out and prototype and create something and pitch it back to the business. And then with that event or with that season, We have a judging panel. We have enablement sessions on the relevant technology or the area that we're looking at so people can learn. But it's really about experimentation, innovation, creativity, and also some of those skills in pitching an idea back to someone. And then with the winners of that event, we actually sponsor them to develop that out. And so we give them the time and any required budget to build on that solution. And that's a really cool initiative

that we run every year. Contentarama is our season focused on harnessing our people's expertise through blogging, presentations content. So it's about a two month period where, again, we have a heap of enablement sessions across things like tone of voice, finding your audience, using AI the right way, all these kinds of different topics based on, I guess, what's happening at the moment. And then we do a real drive for contributors to our tech blog, and we have opportunities for people to practice and give talks in person to build those skills. And then Megacertapalooza, which is actually what I'm planning for at the moment, is our certification, technical certification drive that we tend to do towards the end of the year. And technical certifications are a pretty critical currency in tech consultancy. They give evidence of your knowledge and the depth of your expertise. So this is our time where we put a real focus on that across the business. And as you can see, probably from some of the names and things like that, we like to gamify things. We like to make them really fun. We add in swag. We add in prizes. We have a lot of fun with it. And they become really, really key pillars to our, I guess, craft ecosystem and our calendar of enablement and learning opportunities.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, it sounds like you've really dug into this balance around motivating people by making it really relevant, making it fun, offering certifications, which they absolutely need for their ongoing career development, as well as linking it through the different seasons back into business need and doing things which building skills, which are strategically important to the business and getting people working on, you know, innovations that are going to have direct business value. So it's a really nice balance there between business value and really connecting to individuals and engaging with them where they're at and what's going to motivate them. I really love it. So in terms then of you talked about processes and projects and business rhythm, can you build a picture of that a little more and how it connects to those things and give me some examples of how you achieve that?

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah, so I guess at the core of Craft 180, there's some really simple principles that sit behind it. And one of them is to make it really easy for people to participate and contribute to Craft 180. So when I say processes, they exist not to constrain, but to enable. And they just give the guidance and ease for people to say, hey, I really want to give a craft talk. I really want to get this certification. I really want to go and explore this thing. And trying to remove some of the barriers by giving really simple steps for how people can get involved in those kinds of things. So that's where processes, I think, are quite important. They can actually enable rather than constrain. When it's too overdone, they absolutely constrain, but I think they're quite important because they give people the clarity and permission to opt into things and feel really supported to do so. That's that aspect. The other thing that underpins Craft 180 and our approach to learning and our learning culture is also the way we talk about it and the importance we give it as a business. So we have an operating principle, we have five operating principles in our business, and one of them is called Craft Tomorrow Today. So our operating principle of Craft Tomorrow Today is all about encouraging our people to be at the forefront of their learning and to take control of their learning. So that is integral to us as a business, as a technology consultancy, it's critically important that our people are learning and feel empowered to learn and go after stuff

and stay curious and explore new technologies and explore new ideas. And so craft doesn't exist just when we talk about learning, but it's imperative to our business and achieving our business strategy and objectives because it's one of our operating principles. Similarly, we have quarterly awards that we do and one of them is focused around craft as well because it is just that important. So when I think about culture and when I talk about culture it's not just the programs we stand up which are obviously super important but it's how that gets really sticky to other business processes and business language and things like recognition or things like performance processes. And that's where processes and practices all tie into Craft180 to be our learning ecosystem and to be really successful in driving a learning culture.

Michelle Ockers:

So are there any explicit examples of how you connected what you're doing with this ecosystem into other aspects of the business? Like just in terms of other systems, other processes, other people processes, anything at all to kind of create reinforcement and linkage and coherence throughout the business?

Hannah Ryan:

I think like a really good example of that would be in terms of how we think about performance. So performance isn't a single data point necessarily. It's not, okay, I've hit my KPIs and I've been utilized, you know, a hundred percent or anything like that. It's actually about how our people, it's equally about how our people live and breathe our culture. And craft is embedded in that culture. Craft is one of our operating principles. So when we sit down and think about what high performance looks like, it is things like participating in and contributing to craft. Those are the other aspects. When you take the flip side of business results, it's also doing those things and it's also sharing your expertise with others or building your expertise. So for me, that's been really important in not just talking the talk, but walking the walk as well. We can say we've got great learning programs, we can say we're a learning organisation, we can say we've got a really good learning culture, but does it actually tie to those really important critical business processes like how we think about performance? And for us, it does.

Michelle Ockers:

It feels like you've done a really good job of firstly understanding the organisational culture and surfacing existing practices, pockets of good, like grounding in the real world, and then amplifying that. Where do your ideas keep coming from for, oh, we might do this next or we might, you know, here's the next season or whatever it is. How do you go about finding those pockets of good or surfacing ideas so that you can amplify the best of the culture and what's happening around you?

Hannah Ryan:

I'd say that I never really say no straight away to anyone, which can be a double-edged sword, but it's been quite organic in how we can build out broader offerings. And I think there's a couple of things at play here that make that work. One, Versent is born out of a startup culture where there's a lot of permission and empowerment given to people. When you start small and scale big, people are empowered to go after things and make decisions. And aspects of that still exist today, which is

wonderful. And I think that makes us really successful. And then by having that approach and having those startup routes where people are quite empowered to come with ideas. And I've always, especially initially, I've made a point of, you know, not saying no straight away. I want to understand what's going on. If you've got an idea, I want to know all about it. I want to know why and I want people to feel empowered to put their hand up and say, hey, like I was wondering whether we could try this or we could do this. So I don't ever say no initially. It keeps me very busy. But I will say that I will bring it back and have the lens of how does this contribute to our business strategy? How does this support us to get to where we want to go? That's the lens I will try and bring into those conversations. So we can have many weird and wacky ideas, and I want to hear all about them. But I see my role as helping unpack that, helping to understand if it can help us drive forward in our business strategy. And then sort of at least testing stuff out, I think for nearly any idea, I try not to be too selective. At the very least, we can maybe test something out and then see how it goes. you know, whether that's proof of concept, whether it's a pilot, whatever it is, but at least get test something out, get some results and then, then make an informed decision. Hey, this makes sense to scale out now. So yeah, the, the people in the business are quite empowered, which is wonderful and serves us really well. They have startup routes where they used to rolling up their sleeves and coming forward with things. And then, I want to be really open to testing things and giving it a go.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So what's an example of something you've tested, something you've tried and it didn't work? And why didn't it work?

Hannah Ryan:

I think things that haven't worked sometimes have been my own idea, but that's ok. We learn from our failures as well. And sometimes it's just it was actually early on when I joined the organisation and I was working with one of our learning providers, our external learning providers. They were really keen on bumping up our usage of the platform. And so I was working with them to try and design a campaign. How could we get people involved? How could we get people invested? I think we had a bingo card or something like that for everything that someone did. And I was like, wow, this is super cool. People are going to love this. And it wasn't necessarily the case. Some people got involved. But I think context to keep in mind, especially with an organization like Versent, is that our people are super busy. And when we're doing really well as a business, people are booked onto projects and working very hard and probably don't have a lot of time for learning. So I think being able to discern, is this a bit gimmicky? Is this just something fun for the sake of it versus, okay, this is helping us drive our strategy by X, Y, Z. So for me, that was a failure, probably more at my own end, but we've got to test, to learn, but there's been good success stories as well from something that started as an idea and then has then become an ongoing initiative that we do.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. Yeah. Fantastic. And that's a really nice example. And the contrast there, you went immediately to, well, I thought this would be a good idea as opposed to the stuff that's arising organically and the stuff you're building on that's coming up through the

people in the organisation. And you just mentioned working with an external provider. You've talked a bit about your working with your CTO, Tim Hope. Yeah. So who are the key people or groups either inside or outside the business that you've worked most closely with to support and amplify learning?

Hannah Ryan:

I think what's made it successful, there's definitely different groups that we've worked with. So very much, it's felt like very much in the background, but there's been a real focus from our people and culture team around this objective to be the destination for top tech talent to hone their craft. That overall objective has given the right amount of freedom, I think, to go after things. That's what I was talking about at the start when I joined the business, I could have been prescriptive and followed my PD to a tee, but because we had that clarity around what we wanted to achieve, going down that path of understanding more around the technical learning side, and what that could be led us to that. So the people in culture team having that clarity has been super important for me to sort of sit into that team. I work really closely with our CTO, Tim, and also our comms manager, Emerald, who is a wonderful community builder. And so I think between the CTO, Emerald, myself, but then pulling in people from across the business who have ideas, who want to get involved. We have people who put their hands up and say, hey, I want to help with Megacertapalooza. Hey, can I help with Dev Jam? Hey, I've got ideas around how to improve it. We say yes. And we bring them in and say, yeah, tell us what you think. We're here to help you and enable that and then scale that. So that's been really important as well. And I think, I also think some of the success that we've seen is due to the fact that it is also business-led. So it's not me coming in as a learning person and saying, hey, everyone should love learning, because everyone would be like, OK. But when your execs say this is really important, and they have great ideas behind it, and they back it and talk about it with such passion, it's unavoidable that our people will also follow suit. So that I think has been incredibly valuable. And then additionally, as a team of one, having networks outside of the business is also super important and having avenues for expertise like podcasts like this one are super wonderful to hear real stories from real people and what they do in the business. I really enjoy the Offbeat community. I think that is such a treasure trove. And also reaching out to people I've worked with previously and saying, hey, I'm thinking about this. Do you have a second for a call? Do you want to meet up for a coffee? And just talking things through is super valuable as well.

Michelle Ockers:

So lots of leaning into the network and I'll pop a link to the Offbeat community into the resource show notes. They're one of my favourites as well. So let's talk about hurdles or challenges. Have you hit hurdles? It sounds like a dream run, Hannah, at this point. Have you hit hurdles along the way that you've needed to address and how have you navigated through them?

Hannah Ryan:

We have a hundred percent hit hurdles along the way. And I'm not even sure we've solved for all of them just yet, which is great. We're always going to encounter challenges when it comes to learning and organisational change. We've gone through periods of change as an organisation as well, so we've sort of grown a little

bit and had an interesting journey there. I won't get into that, but that's been challenging as well, to be able to take our vernacular, which is so ingrained in us, and then share it with others who are like, what is craft? That's been fun. But I think being in a services-based business, like I said, we want our people to be booked onto projects and spend time working. That ultimately is what makes our business profitable. So finding the right balance where you want to take people's attention to learning, but equally being booked on projects is a really good indicator for our business. That's a bit of tension that at times can be a bit hard to navigate. We try and mitigate that by having lots of different avenues for learning. So, yeah, we do the big events, but we also try and scale up and down how people might participate in that. Do you only have half an hour a week? Hey, here's what we'd recommend. Are you on the bench and not on a project right now? We recommend going all in and signing up to XYZ. So I think that's how we're trying to navigate it. I don't think we have it perfect yet, but listening to our people and their ideas around how that might work or what they'd want to see is really important. We're still working on it though.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, I love that you've called out listening to your people and their ideas, because time to learn. It doesn't matter who I talk to in learning and development. It doesn't matter what organisations I work with. It's the number one issue everybody is grappling with, you know, and we try to solve for it. But perhaps we need to be going out and talking to the people that we're here to support a little bit more to see what suggestions they have about what might work as well. Yeah, I like that angle. So what has surprised you along the way in your last three years at Versent?

Hannah Ryan:

I think what's surprised me in the most pleasant way is just how generous people can be with their time, ideas and expertise as well. I feel like I'm painting financial services in a bad picture and that's definitely not the case. It's just a different beast and it's just a different industry. But what I've loved so much about coming into Versent is that people are really willing to come to you with ideas, come with suggestions. They're very, very vocal and maybe that's not for everyone, but I love it because you're never left wondering, what people think and what ideas they have and maybe what they didn't like as well that I'd rather know than not know. So for me that's been a really, really wonderful surprise that has energized me. I think to me, it's a dream come true as a learning professional to go into an organisation where people love learning inherently as part of the industry.

Michelle Ockers:

But, you know, Hannah, I reckon people love learning full stop. It's just sometimes what we offer them on the menu is not to their taste, right?

Hannah Ryan:

That's very true. I think when adults put their hand up to learn, it's because they want to. We're not in school anymore. So people want to learn for a purpose and for a reason. And if our learning doesn't match up to a compelling reason, well, then the problem sits with us as learning practitioners.

Michelle Ockers:

Most people honestly want to grow. They want to do their job better or make their job easier. They've got a career goal they're looking for. It's a matter of connecting with them and doing things that they find useful, engaging, offering things in a way that works for them. And, you know, yes, it's easier in some environments than others. And you've walked into this environment where it feels like there's a real appetite for learning, but you've had to meet people where they're at, right? And nurture them. Because you could have tried to cram them through a whole stack of programs sitting on your LXP and done little else to, you know, really amplify their appetite and the sort of things that work in your business. So yeah, I think sometimes we just have to work a little bit harder at it.

Hannah Ryan:

I agree.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah. So you talked about your LXP. It was mentioned right up front. And then you mentioned platforms as part of your ecosystem. How do you think about an approach, what to track, what to measure? What do you not need to worry about tracking?

Hannah Ryan:

That's an excellent question. And I think maybe a way to answer that is that we've since removed our LXP.

Michelle Ockers:

You've removed it? Most people join an organisation, if they don't have one, they're breaking a leg to get one. And you've gotten rid of it.

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah. It was a great product. I won't name it or anything because it was a wonderful product. It's not necessarily about the product. It's about the fit for the organisation, right. And it was brought in just before I joined as a way to aggregate different sources of content together, hopefully promote employee driven learning and employee authored learning as well, and roll that out. And these were excellent goals, but probably not meeting our people where they were at that point in time. And so the decision to pivot away from that, it came in a couple of stages. One, we simplified our learning platforms. So there's no need for an aggregator anymore. We've really simplified that down based on feedback from our people, absolutely, but to the most critical tools that they actually get a lot of value out of. So that kind of led us, all right, we probably don't need that. And then I guess like the forum or the way in which our people consume knowledge from each other is all different. And a lot of the time when you're working in tech, there's a lot of learning to come from things like documentation. And we have already existing systems for that kind of stuff. We're not going to ask people to document in a different system so we can put it in a LXP so we can report on it and tick it off. That to me is madness. I want people to be in the platforms and in the systems they need and they use in their everyday work as opposed to trying to artificially put them in another platform which is not in the flow of their work. So we made that decision to pull that out and that's given us you know,

budget to repurpose for things that we know they want and we know are critical. And so I guess coming back to what we measure and what we track and how we do those things, I've probably made my life harder in terms of having multiple different measurement points and metrics that need to be gathered together to paint a bit more of a holistic picture. But some of the things that we really look for, again, certifications are universal currency in technology. So how are we building on that? And that has a really tangible impact in terms of the partners that we work with and the partner solutions that we implement. So if we can maintain or increase those, we can elevate partner status, we win more work. There's a really easy tangible benefit there that is worth tracking. We get a lot of feedback. We get feedback on every single craft season and craft program that we run. And we run retrospectives on every single thing that we run as well, because we want to improve and we want to understand how, if it's hitting the mark and if there's more that we could be doing to make things suitable.

Michelle Ockers:

How do you run those retrospectives? We'll come back to the other signals and metrics in a moment, but I'm just curious, how do you run the retrospectives?

Hannah Ryan:

We use a couple of data points. We will always go out and request feedback from people who have participated in the learning and get that reaction based kind of evaluation and qualitative feedback and suggestions as well, which again, we're very lucky that people are quite generous with their ideas. It's always a really rich source. Retrospective, we do it really simply. We bring in the organizing team, the people we've pulled together to organize Dev Jam or organise Megacertapalooza, and do a really simple three-column retrospective. What worked well? What were the challenges or friction points? And then what have we learned that we want to take forward for next time? And I think we're lucky in the organisation, I say lucky, it's by design as well. We have the maturity to have those conversations really easily, organically, openly. There's no ego there as well, because everyone comes into that wanting to level up for next time. And so we bring people together. I will participate in it, but the people from the business who are passionate about it or have been involved in it or have suggested ideas will also come and participate in it as well. So we all have ownership over it and we all have ownership over the suggestions to improve it.

Michelle Ockers:

Fantastic. Thanks for that. So we were talking about metrics or signals about the effectiveness and impact of Craft 180.

Hannah Ryan:

Yeah, I think other things that are really important to us, we do our regular engagement surveys as a business and specific metrics and specific questions on craft and learning and career progression and satisfaction with that. And that is super important when looking, taking a step back and looking holistically, how successful are we being? So that is quite important. So the other thing that can be quite useful are exit surveys as well. And I really want to understand if people have left the organisation because they didn't have the necessary opportunities that they were

seeking with learning. And so far, we haven't really ever had a problem with that. But that doesn't mean that we don't keep an eye on that or get that kind of data and feedback as well because I want to turn that around pretty quickly if that is ever anyone's experience. And another thing as well that can be useful to get our hands on are the kinds of development goals that people set. And we have a cyclical process like many organisations do around setting those kinds of goals and getting that de-identified data in terms of like what people are looking at and how they're trying to build their careers is super important to make sure that, one, we can actually facilitate that with what we offer. And two, how that's changing as well, how that's changing year on year, because if we're still revisiting the same things over and over again, or that's not aligned to where we're going as a business, we kind of have a bit of a disconnect as well, which is worth interrogating a little bit more.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, some great signals there and some great use of feedback data input to continuously improve. So what is next for Craft 180?

Hannah Ryan:

Big, big question. Like I said, I'm in the middle of planning for Megacertapalooza, which is a whole heap of fun. But I think looking ahead to the future, and I guess what I'm really interested in is how we can leverage data about our people and their skills and what they're working on to have processes around workforce planning that allows people to learn on the job. We've got this tension with being booked on projects. Learning on the job is super critical. Can we surface up data on how people and the skills that they're looking to develop and marry that up with the work that's coming in to help bridge that gap a little bit? So it's lofty. There's a lot of things that need to come together to make that work, but that's a trail I'm very, very interested in going down.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, you probably want to take a look at a company called EPAM Systems. And I can share separately some stuff on their work with you. A great podcast from Red Thread Research. And I featured a case study, a real world example from them in my book, *The L&D Leader*, which is finally out this month, October 2025. So, as we wrap up then, Hannah, what advice would you give to L&D professionals who are wanting to build more of this continuous learning culture in their organisations?

Hannah Ryan:

I've thought about this, I've actually thought about this quite a lot when I imagine, not that I'm planning on doing this, but when I imagine stepping into a new role in a new organisation, how would I go about understanding the culture and how would I go about building another really great learning culture? And I think firstly, it's really important to zoom out and consider the organisation as a whole and get an understanding of what that baseline culture looks like. So for me, that's answering questions like how do people currently think about learning? How do people talk about learning? Is learning valued? By who? What things are considered important learning? Sometimes, you know, technical learning is important, but soft skills learning isn't. What does success look like at business? Who influences people as well? What do they think about learning? And just kind of like dig into what an

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organisation looks like as your baseline. And then from there with that kind of baseline, I think it's absolutely about starting small and not trying to be like, cool, I'm going to completely change the culture. Off I go, here we go. I think it's about identifying specific levers you can pull. So maybe the business doesn't necessarily have a strong emphasis on learning, but this particular team does. I'd be asking the question, how can I bolster them? How can I enable them? What does that lead to? What proof points does that give me to then scale out from there? And I think also recognition is important. If you want learning to be embedded in your business and how you operate, you need to recognise people for learning, but also business endorsement. Like I said, I'm a learning person, I'm gonna tell you that learning is important and people might roll their eyes. But when an exec or business leaders or those that are there working on the tools come in and say that and reinforce that as well, I think that really goes a long way. So yeah, don't bite off all of the cultural at once, understand the other things at play and get some business endorsement as well.

Michelle Ockers:

Yeah, fantastic, Hannah. And I think you would very much make the heart of Nigel Paine sing. I don't know if you have ever heard of Nigel Paine, P-A-I-N-E. He and I ran a program around building learning culture. I think we ran it in 2019 and 2020. And he works very much in this space around continuous employee development. He has been a guest on the podcast. I'll put a link in the show notes to a conversation we had around what is a learning culture. And as I say, I just think everything you've talked about here just exemplifies what a learning culture can really look like. And yes, listeners, Hannah's been a little fortunate in that she's built into a culture that has had lots of great stuff that she could amplify, but you've really worked with it. And I think you've given some great advice to people about meeting their people and their culture wherever it is at and starting wherever they can to build out some of these practices and thinking and working systemically. Thank you so much, Hannah. There'll be a link to Hannah's LinkedIn profile in the show notes and a stack of resources to keep exploring learning culture. Thanks so much, Hannah.

Hannah Ryan:

Thanks, Michelle. It's been 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 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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