

LEARNING UNCUT: EPISODE 1

WELCOME TO THE LEARNING UNCUT PODCAST – MICHELLE OCKERS & KAREN MOLONEY

Michelle Ockers: Welcome to Learning Uncut. I'm Michelle Ockers.

Karen Moloney: And I'm Karen Moloney.

Michelle Ockers: And this is the podcast where we talk to real learning professionals in Australian and New Zealand organizations about the projects and initiatives they've been doing, and their experiences with those projects and initiatives. When Karen and I first talked about kicking off this podcast, one of the aspirations we both have is to showcase some of the really good work being done in many organizations. We're on a mission to help our guests to simply tell their story and to talk in a very real way about what they did, why they did it, how it worked, and what they learned in the process, as well as tips for others. And I know, Karen, you're particularly interested in the very practical how-to side of things.

Karen Moloney: Yes, absolutely. I mean, I think there's a lot of great work going on out there. I hear most of those stories when I go to networking events and things like that. I'm not getting it through blogs or any other medium that we've got. So speaking to people about those nitty-gritty how-tos. We have a lot in our industry around what we should be doing, and we've got countless models and theories and approaches to learning, and we've got tools coming out of our ears, but it's the how do we do things differently? How do we take things into our organizations and make a difference, and effect behavior change and learning for the people that we're working with? So that's really what I'm keen to sort of dig out some of those practical tips, so that people can go away from these podcasts and have something actionable that they can go and do or research, or somebody to talk to, to really start just making that difference.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. And of course, in conjunction with drilling into the how-tos, we're also wanting to bring out the why. Why did you initiate this project? Why was this important to the organization? How is it impacting results that matter in the organization? So I think between us, there's a nice balance of the tactical and the nitty-gritty of how to get things done, as well as the more strategic and why would you do this anyway, and what outcomes are you getting.

Karen Moloney: Yeah. Because I mean, I think the landscape of business in the world in general is changing almost on a daily basis. So for learning, that's been a really big thing for us. I think we're just still playing catch-up a little bit, so I think we're hoping that in some small way, our podcast can sort of go towards helping L&D progress, and start helping businesses achieve their goals working at the pace that they're at.

Michelle Ockers: Absolutely. I think as a listener, if you're here joining us today, then you will be sharing that aspiration, which I think is so common across learning and development now, to do things differently to make a bigger impact on the business. The people we work with, the organizations we serve, are in a very rapidly changing and evolving climate. Job roles are changing all around us. The skills that we need to be enabling people to develop are shifting, and certainly learning and development is changing. I think we're well beyond the point of us as a profession grappling with the need to change, and getting on with

making change. So we're really hoping by highlighting some of the stories of our guests who are doing things a little bit differently, who are getting in and giving new approaches a go, that we can help fuel your own approaches and your own progress around making the kind of changes that we're aspiring in the profession.

Karen Moloney: Absolutely. I think it's also about giving people the confidence to try something else. Because I think that's a big problem for us in the industry. I think inherently we are part of a ... not an organization, but a world where historically we have been responsible for people's learning, which I don't think is right. I think everybody's accountable and responsible for their own learning. But it's been a lot about content in the past, where it's up to us to deliver the polished and finished content, and if the content is incorrect, then the program fails. I think there's some reticence from people to try something different or put something out there that's new or different or not polished.

The beauty of these conversations that we're having with people is they're real. When we say, "Real," it's, yes, they're real life scenarios and they're real people in real organizations, but they're talking to us about what they learned and where they failed, as well as, "Here's this beautiful project that we did, and here are the results, and everything was beautiful. We got ROI and everybody was happy." It's not about that. I mean, some of them didn't always go as well, but it's about the learnings and the fact that they tried something different, and they can look back on that and learn from it, and take their learning and their organization forward. So I think confidence to try something new is a big thing for me too.

Michelle Ockers: Absolutely. I think the confidence to bring your business stakeholders along with you.

Karen Moloney: On that journey.

Michelle Ockers: Just as L&D may have been reluctant to try new things for a while, there is also the perspective that people that we support in the business, business leaders, managers, our people right across, employees right across organizations, may have had a fairly traditional view of what learning looked like, and that framing equaled learning. I think that's starting to shift as people get more comfortable using resources and tools outside of the work environment to enable their own learning and solving problems as they go about their day-to-day business. There's still sometimes a bit of hesitation, I think, on the part of people in learning and development, to nudge some of their stakeholders along with different approaches. But we're hearing plenty of stories where key people in the business have really bought into trying different approaches, and there's an openness to that. So pulling out tips around how to engage with your stakeholders, to encourage them to try something new and different, and to shift the way they perceive learning and development and engage with them is also part of what we're doing here.

Karen Moloney: Yeah. I think also as well, what I'm getting from some of these stories as well, is I think ... I've actually been quite surprised about the kinds of projects that have got fairly easy stakeholder backing, if I'm perfectly honest, because I would've thought, "Oh my gosh, that would've taken several more months in business cases and buttering people up." But I think business is ready, and I think they want us to lead them in that journey. So I think we just have to be brave enough to take that step and say, "Hey, how about we try this?" It's not about doing something different and doing a massive rollout across the whole organization, it's about maybe taking a pilot group of people and just having a go, and seeing what results you get from it before you go out there. But I actually think that business is more ready and willing to change than we think they are.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. One of the other observations ... because we've recorded quite a few episodes at the point that you and I are talking today ... one of the other observations is, to do things differently is often simpler than people think it might be, and doesn't cost a whole deal of money, and doesn't necessarily involve a whole deal of technology. So we're starting to hear about, in the stories that our guests are telling us about, a lot of almost minor tweaks to things like how you do your analysis upfront and engage with people across the business to figure out what needs to be done, or what the outcome is that's being sought. So more bringing in ways of working from other disciplines and domains, such as agile approaches from the software industry, or human-centered design approaches. I think we've seen quite a few examples of that, Karen.

Karen Moloney: Yeah, it's definitely a theme that's coming out, and yeah, where we're seeing people running successful projects. But I think again it's also ... goes to their confidence as well. When you start looking outside of L&D for inspiration, for ideas for tools, resources, assistance, it can give you just a different skew ... like you're looking at things through a different lens all of a sudden. I've got more of a marketing lens on L&D now than I had before because of where I've immersed myself over the last couple of years, and it's given me other ideas about how to do things. So that's definitely a big thing that we're seeing come through. It's something that, I don't know, maybe people should start thinking about, is just stepping outside of our world of models and approaches and all those kind of things, and just seeing what's going on outside of your department, outside of the organization, and even outside of your industry.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. I've also found at the other end of the spectrum, the approach that some of our guests are taking, and the views they're sharing on challenging what is the role of learning and development, and what sort of spheres and spaces should they be playing in, some of that I think is going to stretch the comfort zone of some of our listeners. Some of it's stretched my comfort zone and my perception of what is our function, what is our purpose, and how might we add value in the business.

Karen Moloney: Definitely. Yeah. I think, look, there's been lots of talk over recent times about, "The function of L&D is dead," or, "We have to completely change what we're doing." We don't. We just have to sort of adapt to what's going on, and play to our strengths. Really, it's no good to sort of say, "User-generated content is a thing," and then everybody's just creating content and it's all crazy. They need some order and structure, and some of the things that we know how to do best to underpin all of that, to be able to make something useful from it. To make sense of it. So I think we still very much have a role to play in the organization as L&D, but the way that we view that and how we go about that just needs to shift slightly.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. Look, I think learning and development is very much alive and kicking, based on the stories our guests are sharing-

Karen Moloney: Definitely.

Michelle Ockers: ... and the courageous way they're going about trying out things and seeing what works and what could be improved, that's really inspiring and motivating. Which I trust that, or I really hope that our learners get that same sort of little twinge of inspiration and motivation and insight to try something a little bit different, or to improve something that they're already doing.

Karen Moloney: I hope so too. I think after those episodes, I always feel quite excited, much like I do after going to networking events, you know, when you've mixed with your tribe, and we will talk about different things that excite us. But it is exciting to see these things going on out there. I think that's been the big thing for me, is that we have the awards, and there are lots of different awards programs that take place here and overseas, and it's fantastic. I mean, we won awards in the business when I ran it. But I think there's so much more going on kind of like in the underground world of L&D, that we really just want to help people share those stories. So yeah, it's really fun.

Michelle Ockers: I think the podcast format makes the stories easy to share, and makes them very accessible.

Karen Moloney: Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: I think you and I are both big podcast listeners. I know I listen to podcasts a lot when I'm walking, or when I've got a commute on. They're easy to pick and tune into at a time that suits me.

Karen Moloney: Yeah. In the car is a big one for me, when I'm gardening, washing up, doing anything that I can sort of switch off from. It's nice to have that time, I think, to just take in some of the things that are going on, and make my own thoughts about them and action plans and whatever it might be. But yeah, I think it's a really versatile medium, the podcast. So we're hoping that we can reach more people that way.

Michelle Ockers: Our episodes, we're aiming to have them all around about the 30-minute mark. We think that's a kind of a sweet spot for the podcast episodes, and to publish them fortnightly.

Karen Moloney: Yep.

Michelle Ockers: If people are curious to find out more about the podcast, Karen, or contact us, how can they do that?

Karen Moloney: Yep. If you go to learningexperts.com.au/podcast, that will take you to a page that just tells you a bit about what we're doing, how to get in touch with us. Also, if you've got a story to share, you can send that through to us, and we'll get in touch and have a chat about that.

Michelle Ockers: Great. And of course, we'll be publishing show notes for each episode as well on that same website, and providing extra resources. So if people want to go back to things ... And even the transcript, we're putting a full transcript of each conversation onto a page on the website. So there'll be lots of resources for you to dig into, and to follow-up on if you've heard something you want to take another look at.

Michelle Ockers: Thank you very much for your interest in Learning Uncut. To all of our new listeners who are coming in for the first time curious about what this is all about, we really hope you get as much out of the guests' stories and experiences as we have.