

Learning Uncut Episode 183

183: Hearing Loss Awareness Designing for Empathy at Scale

- Georgie Cooke and Louise Bassiri



Michelle Parry-Slater

Welcome to Learning Uncut. I'm Michelle Parry-Slater and this is my first solo hosting. Michelle Ockers has gone off traveling for a while, so you've got my voice on my own for a little bit. I hope that that's all right with you, dear listeners. As ever, we will start in the spirit of reconciliation. Learning Uncut acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to elders past and present.

I'm joining you today as ever from the Kombumerri People's Land. And it is my absolute pleasure to be joined by Georgie Cooke, who is founder and head of experience designer at Lima Delta, and Louise Bassiri from HSBC UK, who used to be my employer very long time ago. Much, much, much, much, much in the past, I have to say. I'm sure it's a very different organization today.

We're going to explore Georgie and Louise's work around an award nominated, in fact, it was shortlisted for two Learning Technologies Awards. And as a judge of those awards, I know that they are hard fought. It is a program around hearing loss awareness and it's had a big impact on thousands of people's understanding around what it means not to hear.

Now I do need to declare an interest before I introduce our guest more formally. And this interest is that I actually have a hearing loss myself. And I didn't know. It was my children who told me. They kept telling me in very direct feedback that I was ignoring them. And of course I didn't feel like I was ignoring them, but actually I couldn't always hear them. And I didn't really know that. So I went to have a hearing test to prove to my kids that they were wrong.

In fact, it was quite humbling to find out they were right. And that gap between what I thought was happening and what was actually happening is really at the heart of today's conversation. So as a volunteer for Hearing Doctors for Deaf People, I couldn't be happier that my first solo hosting of Learning Uncut with Georgie and Louise is to share a case study that is so dear to my heart. A story about empathy, learning design, what good L &D can do and what it does when it genuinely serves people. So, Georgie, do want to introduce yourself a little bit and what you do at Lima Delta?

Georgie Cooke

Absolutely, hi Michelle I'm really happy to be here, thanks for having me. My name is Georgie and I am one of the co-founders at Lima Delta. At Lima Delta we design learning and

engagement solutions that help businesses make change happen. And on this particular project – this hearing loss awareness project, we actually came into the project through one of our partners Jam Pan.

So Jam Pan provide strategic learning and development solutions, covering things like technology, talent and content creation. They've got a relationship with HSBC, and when HSBC brought the brief for this project to Jam Pan, they felt it would be a good fit for us because of this behavioural element, which we'll come on to talk a lot more about later.

So, they introduced us and that's where I came to meet Lou, who we're here with today.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Lovely, thank you Georgie and Louise.

Louise Bassiri

Thank you Michelle and thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be here today and looking forward to sharing our story on our hearing loss awareness project. So my name is Louise and I'm a learning solution specialist here at HSBC UK. So working within our enterprise learning team to support the business in enabling our colleagues with whatever it is support wise that they need from a learning perspective and on this particular one, obviously around raising awareness around hearing loss. So HSBC is a global financial institution.

We operate in around 57 markets globally, servicing circa 41 million customers and in the UK around 15 million customers with 23,000 UK staff. But at our core, we're really focused on connecting customers to opportunities and supporting sustainable growth. And for me with HSBC, what really stands out is how much we live our values. So we really value difference, succeed together, take responsibility and get things done. And for us at HSBC, they're not just slogans, they genuinely influence how we work and how we approach every partnership and bring together different perspectives for our colleagues and customers working collaboratively.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Okay, so that is a lot of people that you've got to influence with this project, a lot of people. So you tell me, you know, before we get into the learning design, which is obviously where you come in there, Louise, help us to understand the context of this. Why suddenly is HSBC interested in helping people to understand about hearing loss?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, so it's a great question and something that stood out as part of a wider project was in the UK we know from the RNID, so that's the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in the UK, that around 18 million adults in the UK have a form of hearing loss or live with tinnitus or are deaf. So it's circa one in three adult individuals. So for an organisation size of HSBC with the staff numbers that we have,

What stood out to us is that prior to launching the program in our retail business in the UK, we had 16 colleagues who formally disclosed a form of hearing loss, which really highlighted to us that there was an opportunity to boost awareness, understanding and knowledge around hearing loss for our colleagues to be able to be made aware of what it could be like and also what support HSBC offers to help colleagues within their day-to-day role really be at their best.

We have a number of sort of workplace assessments. We work with some great organizations from a digital assistance technology, et cetera. So it's around how do we enable our workforce to ensure that they're aware of that? And so for us, it was working with the wider project team on what were the real goals. And it was quite multifaceted and it did have sort of a big reach in terms of what the project wanted to achieve.

And it was to look at driving the increase of number of colleagues that firstly report a form of hearing loss. So, we can truly understand those figures. Drive an increase in the number of colleagues, access in the support available at HSBC for colleagues with hearing loss, and also empower all colleagues, whether you have hearing loss or whether you don't, to communicate in a way that's inclusive for everybody within our workforce and right through to our customers. So really delivering sort of that measurable value and impact for sort of the wider organisation was sort of our key goal. And working with the RNID and with Lima Delta, with Georgie, we were able to kind of bring that ambition to life through the piece of learning that we created.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It's just amazing really because you were using the data to make something that is very invisible visible and the challenge that we have in learning and development is we're always you know should we use the data what's the data telling us but you know you've just described there really a really strong data story because 16 people out of those tens of thousands that work there. Clearly there was not a lot of reporting.

We can perhaps unpack that a little bit later on, but I guess this is all really about building a business case, isn't it? You just didn't suddenly go, the data's telling us this, and then we run off down that avenue to chase a shiny new thing.

Talk to me a little bit about what was the business case? Why was this so important? And what did you do about it? Did you go straight to Lima Delta, or was the process before that?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, so for us it was about that collaboration and inclusivity and we really want to foster that sort of within our culture and our workforce across HSBC. And as part of the wider project, one thing that we're really proud of is that we have a partnership with the RNID. So, in terms of that wider project that learning was a part of, we really focus in on how do we support our colleagues and our customers. And we set out on a two year partnership with the RNID.

And that was around really initially looking at colleague awareness. So how do we create the colleague awareness with the expertise of the RNID to ensure that we have the right support and we have that environment that's safe for our colleagues to be able to disclose that to us and work with us in terms of any support needed. But then how do we take that one step further to our customers, which is kind of the latter stage that we're at now with that partnership and central to that was sort of learning and development of how do we raise that education and work in the right way to create that really meaningful impact and raise awareness and how do we do that in a way that that wasn't sort of a tell, it wasn't sort of just informative but how do we really truly help colleagues across the business to live in those shoes and really experience as much as possible firsthand what it could be like for colleagues to take that one step further into our day-to-day working life.

Michelle Parry-Slater

That's such an important part of it. I guess that's where you come in, Georgie, isn't it? The HSBC came to Lima Delta with the brief. And what were you hearing was the real problem that you were being asked to solve? Were you hearing this was an awareness problem or a behaviour problem or something else entirely?

Georgie Cooke

I kind of heard, I think, two different problems we were trying to solve for two subgroups within the audience. I think for those HSBC colleagues who actually experience hearing loss, themselves, that's one group within the audience.

Now they might have a diagnosis or they might be, as you described Michelle in your example earlier, they might not actually think that they have hearing loss at that time. So we had people everywhere on that spectrum. So for that subgroup, I heard the real problem being solved was we needed to...help them understand what they were experiencing and also make them feel safe enough that they could actually report that and access the support that they needed to be at their best at work.

So I saw that as one goal, which I think does have an awareness element to it, but it's definitely about taking that awareness through into action. And then for the other subgroup within the audience of people who don't have hearing loss, for them, I think there was actually a bigger awareness challenge because as you said earlier, it's something that can be invisible if you don't experience it yourself or you don't have kind of maybe somebody in your immediate circles who you know has hearing loss, it could be something that you're actually really not that aware of.

So, for that group, again, it started with awareness, but the goal there was to get them to change their behaviours so they were acting in a more inclusive way day to day.

So, there's definitely a starting point of awareness, but for me, I think the project wouldn't have been enough if it stopped there. It needed to go through into actually changing behaviours on the ground as well.

Michelle Parry-Slater

We're leaning a little bit on RNID as well? Were they shaping any aspects of the inputs to this program?

Georgie Cooke

They were, it was such a great collaboration actually between the three parties. Obviously HSBC brought with them their goals, their data and the lived experience of their colleagues. RNID brought the really technical understanding and also all of the really practical tips of how to be very inclusive and how to communicate inclusively with people who have hearing loss.

And we brought our expertise in actually creating these kind digital experiences that drive change. And so bringing those three things together and bouncing off each other, I think, meant we got to a project that was kind of greater than the sum of its parts. It was a really good collaboration.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I love hearing when we collaborate in L &D. think it's one of the things that we do really well as a profession that we work together because we're in service of our organization. So that's just joyful. And you created what a program or a e-learning. What was it? What did you actually make?

Georgie Cooke

Well, the part that we made that Lima Delta was involved in, obviously as Louise has described, there was a big sort two year programme that had lots of parts to it, but the specific learning element that we're focusing on today, it was a digital module that people would take asynchronously and individually. And it was really the principle at the heart of all of it was...

Create an experience rather than just telling people. And I think that starts from as soon as you open the module, kind of within the first couple of minutes, users of the module are in these immersive video led simulations. So, imagine it's a first person perspective video and you're placed into a common HSBC environment. So was one based in a branch and one based in a meeting room in an office setting.

And as the user, you are given a challenge, you're given something to do, so you've got to help a customer in the branch or you've got to make some decisions in a meeting. However, while you're doing that, you're actually experiencing the world around you as if you have hearing loss.

So, we manipulated the audio in these scenarios to recreate some common experiences of hearing loss. So things like changing how the background noise and the foreground noise interact with each other, creating things that are more muffled, removing certain pitches.

So that actually as the user of this learning program, you are put into this environment and you're really experiencing what it's like to operate and do day-to-day work tasks with hearing loss.

And so it's all about getting people to experience what this is actually like so that they then are motivated to either kind of recognise it in themselves, and get some support or to then be really open to the practical tips that came afterwards to help them communicate inclusively.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I can really, really resonate with what you're saying there about the loss of pitch and the direction. So all the striking moments that I know we talked about before we actually started recording today was when the branch doors open and the background noise floods in.

Louise how did that impact as a user, as somebody who has never thought about hearing loss before, you know, going through that, when you designed it in this way, do you feel it landed differently?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, absolutely.

I think testament to what we've seen in terms of the engagement within the learning. So it's a non mandatory learning. So an elective learning for colleagues to sort of self-assign and complete. And we've seen fantastic take up with that piece of learning. And I think for us, something that we're really proud of is having a number of SMEs and colleagues who supported on that.

So within those settings that Georgie's described, we had a number of colleagues who, you know, we didn't have all actors within sort of that sort of scenario. They were true HSBC colleagues who were part of the filming and really helped to help shape sort of that and create what a day-to-day looks like. And one of our colleagues who shared his lived experience, he helped direct one of the scenarios in the meeting setting of what could be true for him and what he. . .

Sort of shows that for him on a day to day basis. So I think for me, by doing it in the way that we did with the simulations and working collaboratively with Georgie and also with the RNID is having realistic settings that really resonated, felt real to the audience, as in these are HSBC, they were filmed on HSBC locations, so in the branch, a bustling branch, and also then in a meeting setting. So they felt real.

They weren't dramatised in any way, so working with the audiologists at the RNID, you know, because obviously hearing loss has a scale, has a range, and we couldn't represent every level

of hearing loss within the learning, but we wanted it to be as most impactful as we could. And I think what's been testament is not only the take up, but the feedback that we've received from colleagues who've talked about how they weren't aware of how sort of just the way that you set up chairs within a meeting setting can impact somebody potentially with hearing loss.

Also, from sort of just wider awareness of, know, was there a colleague who had hearing loss but didn't realize and has since gone on and had a confirmed diagnosis and has been fitted with hearing aids. So it's that real testament of feedback that we've seen which is really powerful in terms of how this has landed. It's not only as we talked about earlier, it's not only just sort of the stats, but it's the life impact that this learning has had and helped highlight for our colleagues across the business, which is really powerful and something that we're super proud of.

Michelle Parry-Slater

You should be for sure. Georgie, there's a lot of empathy in what Louise has just been talking about there. And it really makes me think that you were setting learners up to feel, which is not something that we usually would be talking about. I know that when anyone has a learning experience and they have an emotional reaction, it sits with them for longer, that's for sure.

But I'm just curious about how do you go about designing something that makes somebody have a feeling rather than just something that they've read about? You talked about this move from Tell. Talk to me a little bit more about that.

Georgie Cooke

This is something that I spent a lot of time thinking about for this project because it felt so important that we did a really robust job of simulating what this is actually like. You know, I don't have hearing loss myself and I was really conscious that I didn't want to come in and just make a lot of assumptions and then replicate that in this simulation.

Because that would be disrespectful and also I don't think it would land and create the empathy that you've just talked about there. It has to feel really real.

So, I think the way we actually went about it was firstly that we worked very closely with HSBC colleagues that have lived experience to help actually tell us what are the environments where these challenges show up for them. So, you know, it wasn't me coming in and saying, I think we should really represent a bustling open plan branch.

That came out of workshoping it with HSBC colleagues. So I think firstly, it's making sure it feels real and it's set in real recognisable environments, kind of as Louise said. And then I think the next layer down is making sure all of the finer details are right and making sure that the simulations were very rich.

So, I remember one of the things that the RNID said to me very early on is it's a misconception to think that hearing loss is as if the volume has been turned down on the world because it's actually not that straightforward.

For some people it's actually not a volume issue at all, it's that certain pitches, as you said, that resonates with you, are harder to hear than others. Or actually sometimes it can feel like the volume is turned up because you're hearing a lot of more background noise than you would expect to. So...

Again, to really create these rich environments people could relate to, we had to get all of those little details right in how we manipulated the audio in the scenarios. And that, again, was down to the RNID supporting us and getting reviews from HSBC colleagues as well. And the final point, I think, on creating empathy is...

What I really didn't want to do was create a scenario where we basically said to people, just listen to this and think about the fact that you're finding it hard to hear because that's not a realistic situation. What I wanted to do was say to people, you're in this environment and you have a job to do, which is to support this customer, but you're going to be trying to do that while experiencing hearing loss.

So actually that brings up not just the recognition of, yeah, I am finding that when those branch doors swing open, I hear a lot more than I would normally from outside.

Actually, what people are thinking is, I'm starting to feel a bit awkward. Will the customer be okay if I ask them to repeat themselves again?

Or is there a quieter space that I could move to?

And I think creating empathy is about bringing out that level of feeling, not just observing the situation, but actually feeling the feelings that you feel when you're trying to get a job done in that situation. So those were the levels that we sort of built into our design to really try and create.

Yeah, that empathy for the audience.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It's beyond empathy, isn't it? It's actually creating a lived experience for the user through that.

Georgie Cooke

Yeah, yeah that's definitely what we were aiming for and I think you know to Louise's point earlier we were very aware that we didn't want to say this is what hearing loss is like because it's so different for everybody.

But we did try to take two quite common forms and as you say get as close as we could to really simulating what it's really like.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Now one of the things that you've ended the program with is just genius in my mind, really is. Louise, do want to tell us about what happens towards the end of that course?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, so something that we are sort of really pleased with and something that we made a deliberate decision and I think a really important decision with the end of the learning was to embed an RNID hearing check.

We were really aware of the fact that with the scenarios if colleagues were to complete the learning and recognize potentially signs of themselves or think actually I noticed this on a day to day basis, this could be me.

In that moment, give the colleague the opportunity to complete the learning by embedding that, sorry, complete the hearing check by embedding that within the actual learning. So typically with some learning items, you might see a resource pack that sort of added at the end of a learning that then takes you onto a platform for continuous learning where actually we wanted in that moment, in that space where that learner had just completed that awareness piece was if they resonated and they wanted to take it a step further to then go on and complete that hearing check.

In a private way to be able to assess their own hearing right in that flow of the learning.

We all know how life can be busy and sometimes if you have an option to go on to something at a later date, it might go on the to-do list and you might not get back to you.

But with this awareness and being so important, we wanted to strike in that moment sort of with learners and give that opportunity and that safe space. So that's something that in terms of the numbers, what we've seen is around 2000 colleagues now have gone on to complete that hearing check.

So that's just around 50% of those who've completed the learning have gone on to take that test. And from that test, we know that circa 60% have a form of hearing loss.

And I think that's really powerful in terms of they may have been aware. So it may be that colleagues were aware of that, or it may be that that this is a new sort of information for colleagues and a new confirmation that they can then take that next step forward in terms of what's next support wise from a HSBC employer perspective, but equally then from an RNID perspective, what other support is there?

And we know that we've had some sort of life changing feedback. As I mentioned earlier, we've had colleagues who've sought a formal diagnosis off the back of completing that hearing check

and have been fitted with hearing aids. So it's not just a content outcome, it's that real human impact.

Prompting the learner in that moment, I think was really powerful. And as I say, that deliberate decision that was absolutely the right thing to do to enable our colleagues to be able to go with that next step if needed.

And it wasn't mandatory, so it wasn't something that we pressured in any way. was open to, if you wish to take this test, you can, here it is.

And it was just that simple click. And it was a three minute test in the environment that you were completing the learning in.

So there was no assist, any further technology or anything further that they need to do, it was just in that moment. So we made it as easy and accessible as we possibly could.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I have to say if I had been in that circumstance myself, it might have been helpful to me because I ignored it for a long time. And I think there's an emotional response to thinking that you might be getting older or something's changed.

And so for it to be presented there, having just experienced something which is hugely empathetic, I could really imagine that that would be a good thing for people to experience and not the kind of the diminutive, because that's the challenge when you, you know, as I felt when I first got told that I had a hearing loss, it's like, well, I'm less than I was before. And that's just not true. But society kind of, you know, puts this pressure on you.

So this is just such a beautiful story for me to hear. Thank you so much for doing the work and thank you for doing it so tactfully and so kindly towards your colleagues.

I want to talk a little bit more about sort of the experience because this is a lot of people that you pushing this out to and/ or are you pushing it?

I don't want to be assumptive, but how are you getting people to complete the program?

How has it gone out into HSBC?

It mandatory?

Is it not mandatory?

How did you ensure that the experience is working for your workforce?

What was the actual logistics, if you like, of getting it out there Louise?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, so this learning wasn't mandatory, so it was a self-elected learning, so self-led.

And I think something that we worked really hard with the business on and the business took is that sort of stakeholder network of promoting the partnership and the piece of learning.

And I think the why behind it, so why was it that we were looking to do this and what was the sort of purpose of it, I think was really important with anything when you launch anything, it is around the why.

I think with the buried organization, as we've said, scale different roles, different business areas, they all operate in a slightly different way.

So if you've got sort of a contact center with the telephony team and a branch network colleague, so the one size fits all communication style wouldn't have worked.

So the stakeholder group that sort of managed that comms perspective really played into each of those different roles and tailored, sort of the awareness campaign that ran alongside the launch.

So it was really practical and felt relevant. And I think that's important and that ties back to that why.

So why should I take the time to complete this learning?

What benefit is it to me?

And I think telling that story, the purpose behind having a really tailored approach meant that the campaign as a really broad campaign really worked and helped with that engagement and adoption.

And I think also strengthening sort of the stakeholder network that we had around this as well to support. something that's actually emerged as part of the wider program was the Hear Together employee resource group, which is now up to nearly 100 members, which is a forum bringing together colleagues who are deaf or have a form of hearing loss or tinnitus alongside colleagues who don't have hearing loss, but maybe are passionate about inclusion, passionate about hearing loss itself as an open platform to bring together and champion inclusivity.

And it's a community space where people can feel safe to get together, share lived experiences, share support, guidance, and just talk in an open forum, which really, really helped the overall program and raising that awareness.

And I think going back to having colleagues within the learning, so as part of the filming who took a role within each of the scenarios, sort of we had advocates sort of, from that to create that buzz and excitement around something that we know HSBC is trailblazing in this space.

No other financial organization is currently doing anything in this space. So, you we wanted to really celebrate and be proud. And I think all of that combined has really played into a really strong take up and engagement that we've seen from our workforce.

Michelle Parry-Slater

So much to unpack in that you've talked about stakeholders and rollouts and the campaign. I'm just going to go back a little bit. You started there with thinking about this communication piece.

You were internally marketing this. You were advertising that this was happening. that was that what I'm hearing there?

Louise Bassiri

Yes, yeah. So an awareness campaign that went out to colleagues to talk about what was coming, why we were in sort of starting the partnership, what the learning was there to do and offer for colleagues.

I think that really helped at that onset to create that space of what's going on, you know, and why is it going on? And then to be a part of that in the right way, but tailored to each different area of the business that we have, so that it felt really relevant in in each individual's role so they could see the benefit of then going on to take the learning and complete and sharing those wider new stories.

So different platforms that we have within the organization to share snippets and sound bites of colleague feedback as and when it was taking place. So I think that's really powerful that colleagues then are endorsing the learning as we go through because again if someone's sitting there thinking well why should I complete this what does it mean for me?

Then you hear you read a colleague story where it's gone on to change their life in a way absolutely that is so powerful and I think you know having that sentiment really helped as well.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I do think colleagues love to hear from other colleagues. It's not, to your point earlier, Georgia, we weren't using actors. These are real people with real lived experience. And so it just is a human interest story, if nothing else.

But just to help me understand, you said you did a comms campaign and you did that bespoke for different audiences across HSBC. Is that what I heard?

Georgie Cooke

Yeah.

Louise Bassiri

Yes, that's right. Yeah, it's a really tailored approach.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It's just so good. There's so many really good things that the wider audience here can listen and learn about because when we run learning campaigns, when we put learning in that sort marketing mindset and we really target our audiences, the uptake is clearly there. This is what the story is telling us. Georgie, tell me a little bit more about the design of this. Did you design

this as a comms campaign? Were you involved in that in any way? What's your thinking around that?

Georgie Cooke

So the kind of ownership for the comms campaign piece was HSBCs internally. So Lou and the team were leading on that. But what we were thinking about from the learning perspective was how it needed to integrate with all of those things. You we didn't want it to feel like there was loads of hype and then what felt like a standard piece of e-learning dropped in the middle of it. We needed to make sure it all felt connected and...

One of the main things we did for that was we were really leaning into this idea of real HSBC colleagues so that they help be advocates and create the buzz and people knew that they would be seeing familiar faces within the learning.

So as well as using HSBC colleagues as our sort of actors and extras in simulations, we also created kind of like documentary style videos with a couple of colleagues who were really kind enough to share their lived experience and it was building in things like that that we knew would give the comms campaign those hooks, hooks to run with.

So it was about making sure that it all told her a cohesive story. And something I just think is particularly impressive about this in the work that Louise and the communications team did is that because HSBC is, you know, it's a regulated environment and there's a lot of mandatory training that goes on, which we know about because we work with HSBC in that space as well.

Something I was really conscious of is in an environment where there is already a lot of learning, you've really got to fight to make something that's not mandatory stand out and I really respected that the whole approach with this wasn't about pushing it out. It was about creating real excitement and enthusiasm so that people choose to pull rather than having it be pushed. And that just felt, you know, really refreshing for an organization of HSBC size and scale.

So yeah, it was just really refreshing to work on a project with an organization that was taking it that seriously and really putting the effort into that internal promotion.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It really does make a big difference when people want to pull learning. The engagement is clearly a lot there. So thanks for sharing on that. I wonder about the design. Did you design for the community? Louise mentioned earlier about hear together, so an employee representative group. Did you design for that? Is that a happy result?

Georgie Cooke

I believe that was a happy result. There was an existing employee network called Ability UK, who were involved in helping us shape these scenarios. But that network wasn't specific to hearing loss. It included a range of disabilities. So I believe the Hear Together one has actually been a

kind of happy, organic output of all of the work that's been done, the learning obviously being a big part of that, but the broader everything that's been going on as part of this partnership with the RNID, I think the Hear Together group has sprung up organically out of that, which again is just one of those, it's the kind of thing that you can't plan for and you can't force, but it's wonderful to have created enough buzz around this and enough people talking about it and people talking to each other about it for that to organically form.

Michelle Parry-Slater

When we talk about impact of learning, often we're counting, you know, how many people have gone through the program, how many bums on seats and that kind of thing.

Really what you've just described, Georgie, is genuine impact within HSBC. You like you say, you couldn't design for it. It's even better that way.

I mean, just talk to us a little bit, Louise, what is the evidence for impact? You know, what are the headline numbers and, you know, what other impact has this program had?

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, so I think for us what we've seen, mean, sort of traditionally we look at completions as a starting point. So over 4000 colleagues have now gone on and completed the learning, which is just fantastic in terms of it being a non assigned, non mandatory learning and is around, I would say 90 % completion on that as well. So I think it's fantastic to see some of the figures that we've had in terms of our learner evaluation feedback is really strong.

Looking at the number of learners that have gone on to take the hearing test, that has been really significant in terms of that being nearly 2000. So, you know, that that percentage of, you know, nearly 50 % have gone on to do that in that moment. It's really powerful. And then knowing that out of that population, there's circa 60 % who have or show signs of hearing loss, I think is really powerful and something that we're proud of to be able to help enable.

Alongside that, we're also looking at statistics around workplace assessment specifically for hearing loss. And we've seen a positive increase in that area. And also the number of colleagues who have now gone on and disclosed a form of hearing loss. We started with 16. That has increased by 400%. You know, our figures and that continues to grow. And I think that's something, again, that's really testament when we think back to those core goals and core objectives when we first started with the project team of what we set out to achieve. That's really testament to the learning, all of the feedback that we've had from learners.

And then equally the external recognition. So the partnership with the RNID is something that we're really proud of. The learning itself being shortlisted for two learning technologies awards, know, out of the sort of categories and the hundreds of other businesses that apply and we're up against, I think.

That's really sort of something that we're really proud of and I think is real testament to what we created and how the whole project team worked together collaboratively to really bring this to life. And we're always looking at the what next. So, you it's not just sort of a one and done campaign. It is how do we continually grow and sort of develop our workforce in this space? And something that we're looking at next is sort of how do we take this to customers? So how do we have that impact more broadly?

And something that is something I'm really pleased to share, really timely actually, is that we are going to be launching sort of BSL for beginners, which is a course that colleagues can take, it's open to all UK colleagues. And it will help and sort of promote that sort of basic BSL for our colleagues.

So if a customer was to walk into a branch, you would be able to greet with your name, welcome the customer in.

And I think, again, that's something that no other financial institution in the UK is currently doing. So again, sort of trailblazing in that area.

And the working group themselves are looking and working with the RNID at the moment around what else can we do for our customers? How else can we better service our customers? And there's an upcoming workshop that I'm able to share with you that is going to be taking place that will really take that problem statement and look at the what's next and how do we continually drive and really have an inclusive workforce and also for our customers, you know, to feel sort of a part of everything that we do here.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Can I just reflect on what I heard you talk about there?

So I asked you directly about the impact and evidence and you gave very typically what we do in learning and development, the completions. And then your voice was just so much more animated when you started really talking about the impact. And that's the difference, I think.

We're so stuck in L & D to count the bums on seats, which is important. We want to get reach, but the difference that this program has made, the fact that you've talked about people who've had life-changing diagnoses as a result of this program, the fact that you've talked about how people have come forward, your problem at the beginning was lack of disclosure.

400 % increase is fantastic! And then just for our global audience, BSL, British Sign Language, there are lots of other sign languages around the world, but now to be able to that to your customers as well.

This is a real culture shift and I think this is just such a good case study of when we think deeply, which Georgie clearly you have for this program, when we think deeply, when we recognize the problem to be solved and then we solve for it, then we do great work in learning and development. So I just want to say thank you for sharing it.

I'm really curious to know what's next for Lima Delta and RNID and HSB. You brought something beautiful together here, that collaboration between the three organizations. I wonder if there's anything you could leave us with that if others were looking to collaborate so closely with their clients. Georgie, what was the secret sauce in this?

Georgie Cooke

What great final question, secret sauce. I think for, there was definitely something in that really close collaboration between the three parties, like we talked about earlier, having the technical expertise from the charity who are really experts in this space, the learning design expertise from us at Lima Delta, and of course, HSBC's expertise in their organisation, their people, their needs. I think bringing those three things together was brilliant.

And I think more broadly, if anyone is looking to do a similar type of, I guess inclusion related cultural change piece. think my top tip, I guess, would be to come back to don't waste your time telling people they should care about something. Instead, really try and create a simulation or an experience that means they have no choice but to care because you've really helped put them in that situation so that they can experience it for themselves.

And perhaps one just word of caution, which is always on my mind when we're doing this kind of piece is that getting that balance right between really building on lived experience, not coming in with your own assumptions, build on lived experience, but don't make it the job of people who are already living with hearing loss in this example to do all the work for you.

So it's about striking that balance right, I think, between consulting with people, making sure they have opportunities to share, but also making sure that you have external expertise as we did with RNID in this example who can really provide that without you having to always go back to the same handful of colleagues in your organisation to do that work for you and I think I'm really proud of how you know the three parties involved in this managed to work together to get to the outcome that we did. I think that was probably our secret sauce but love to see what you think Lou.

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, no, I totally agree with that. I think it was that collaboration, having the expertise, having that lived experience and from colleagues within the business. I think that is so powerful. You build internal advocates. It feels real. It feels realistic. It's the right environment. It's what will resonate with individuals to strike that emotional connect to living in the shoes of not creating a piece of learning, which is just education and informative, but it's about - this is what it can be like.

And I think having sort of the RNID working with Lima Delta and bringing all of that together in the way that we did through workshopping and different scenarios helped to shape and create. And I think it is about that collaboration, but leaning in on the expertise of individuals that you have and for anybody out there that might be looking to do something similar is really the support that's within your business, you know, using internal advocates to help support, give that deep, rich insight, is so, powerful. And I think that's for this is what's resulted in that positive engagement that we've seen.

Michelle Parry-Slater

I love what you're saying there, Georgie, about the balance though, so you don't want to rely on it and then that's why you had the partnership with the RNID. That's really helpful for sure.

Is there one final piece of advice? What have we not talked about today about your amazing story that you would like to share that we haven't yet shared? Is there anything left to share?

Georgie Cooke

I think one thing I'd just like to reflect on because as know, as Lima Delta we partner with a lot of different organisations and we've done lots of different inclusion related campaigns and I guess I just want to reflect that I think the reason this one worked as well as it did and had this type of impact is because it wasn't treated as a one-off learning experience.

HSBC didn't come into this thinking that one 30 minute e-learning module was going to solve the problems that they'd identified in people reporting. They took this really seriously. They had a big two year plan.

Learning was part of it, but there was a lot, a lot of other things going on around the edges, including the comms that have been talked about. Now, for example, I know that there are British Sign Language interpreters at town hall meetings.

It's all, it's the stacking of all of those things that give a clear message to employees that we're taking this seriously. And that I think is what creates a safe environment where people can then come forward and report.

So this project absolutely was a success because it was a brilliant learning experience, but on its own, I still don't think that would have had the level of impact without all of those other pieces around the edges. So I just want to reflect on that and just, it was really amazing to be part of such a broader inclusion campaign that was taken this seriously.

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, I think that's definitely something is that ongoing education, ongoing support and guidance for our colleagues.

It's not just that one and done approach.

It is something that we continually look to drive and develop across our workforce and something that I would say that we did within the learning as well as we looked at different personas. So are you a hiring manager and you've got somebody in front of you potentially that's got hearing loss? Are you a colleague that has hearing loss? Are you a colleague that doesn't have hearing loss and wants to learn more about it. Are you a colleague that has hearing loss and may not know where to get support and what support is available?

So, we had different personas as well that we sort of wanted to thread through the learning and give really useful with the support of the RNID as well. What are those useful sort of best practices?

And then where can I go next? Where is that support? So it's again, it gives that real consistent messaging and guidance for colleagues and I think that's something that again would be another sort of hint and tip of mine if you like then is thinking about those different personas and where's next and how can you continually drive that so that it does build that cultural change.

Michelle Parry-Slater

It certainly seems to have done that, that's for sure.

So, thank you so much for sharing your story today. If listeners want to get in touch, we'll make sure that in the show notes, there are links for you to get hold of Lima Delta and Louise.

Are you happy to share your LinkedIn profile?

People will want to talk to you about this, I think.

Louise Bassiri

Yeah, absolutely.

Georgie Cooke

Absolutely.

Michelle Parry-Slater

Wonderful. Okay. Well, thank you so, so much. And until next time on Learning Uncut, we will continue our thinking about how can we be better at campaign learning?

Because this is a great example.

Georgie, Louise, thanks very much.

Georgie Cooke

Thanks, Michelle.

Louise Bassiri

Thank you.

Learning Uncut Episode 183

183: Hearing Loss Awareness Designing for Empathy at Scale - Georgie Cooke and Louise Bassiri



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