

**LEARNING UNCUT EPISODE 17:
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL – NEIL VON HEUPT**

Michelle Ockers: Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. I'm Michelle Ockers.

Karen Moloney: And I'm Karen Moloney.

Michelle Ockers: And today we're joined by Neil Von Heupt. Neil currently works as a Lead Learning Designer at easyA, but many of our listeners in Australia in particular will know Neil from his time at the Australian Institute of Training and Development where he was the Programs Manager up until mid 2018. Now, given that Neil was focused during this time on supporting professional development of learning practitioners around Australia, Karen and I figured he was going to be the perfect person to join us for our 2019 professional development special. So welcome Neil.

Neil Von Heupt: Thank you. So good to be here. I love talking about professional development.

Michelle Ockers: We know, that's why we invited you. So our first episode of Learning Uncut went to air in June 2018. As this one goes to air it's the start of a new year. So Happy New Year to everyone. And we've now had 17 guests across the episodes that have gone to air. At the end of every episode we asked all of our guests to tell us about the biggest thing they do for their own professional development. This is a little bit of a recap episode in that we'll be drawing on their responses to this question as well as throwing into the mix, our own personal practices around professional development to help people gather ideas, insight, motivation to help with your professional development in the coming year. So let's kick off with our first question and I'm going to ask you for your response to this one as our guest, Neil. Do you see any patterns or themes in the professional development practices of our guests?

Neil Von Heupt: Well, that's a little bit of a tough question because it's right at the start of the episode, and I don't want to be too tough on people, because the main thing I actually heard coming through from all the different responses was actually just the lack of a plan and I was a little bit surprised by that because as L&D people, they spend all this time planning for everybody else, but I just didn't hear a lot of people going, "Hey, this is where I want to get to, and so I've been doing this." A lot of the stuff that I heard was either around, like a point of need, so they've worked out that they needed to learn something, maybe it was skills or maybe it was knowledge, whatever it might be. So that is a point of need. Or it was just opportunity that something had come along and they were like, "That looks interesting. I'll go and do that." But I think it's so important for people to actually have a plan, like to think, "Where do I want to go? How am I going to get there?" And then to work that plan. So I was a little bit surprised by that.

I liked that reading kept coming up. It's kind of not as exciting as some of the other things like, if you say you're doing podcasts or you're planning in virtual

reality and stuff, that's already exciting, and to go, "Well, I've been reading a book." Sounds not as exciting. But I like the deep dive that you get in a book and that you take time to dig into a topic which you don't necessarily get in some of the lighter ways of learning. So I thought that was pretty cool.

And I was also a little bit surprised that not many people mentioned mentors. I thought that would come up more. I think that's a huge opportunity for people in terms of professional development.

Michelle Ockers: Does any of that resonate for you, Karen? I guess maybe starting with Neil's comments about no one really talking about having a plan. What's your take on that?

Karen Moloney: I think it's quite interesting actually given that we're a whole industry of people who spend our lives helping other people with their professional development in some way, shape or form and yet we don't really take in that much of a full approach to our own professional development. Well, not many of us. I think maybe the idea of the plan is too big, so even if you just say, "Well, this week I'm going to focus my PD in this space." And do a couple of things you can and join discussions about things, would be really helpful for people. I think a lot of it is accidental professional development is just thumbing through LinkedIn on the train. Kind of stuff. I see a lot of people interacting in that way.

Reading is good to obviously keep abreast of what's going on and keep yourself informed about trends and what's working and what's not. But it's the doing of stuff is where you push yourself out of your comfort zone and face the fear and get over to the other side where that real learning takes place. I found it interesting as well, you said that, with reading. I think Anne Bartlett-Bragg in Episode 10 was talking about, she started reading things that she doesn't necessarily agree with, so she has a point of view about something, she would go and find a book that supports the opposite argument and read that. I find that quite intriguing, actually. It's something that really stuck with me because I thought we tend to follow a path of, "This is what I want, so I'm going to find all the things that support that choice."

And trying to see the other side of an argument really does help you think differently about things and I always remember that from the school, I think in debating societies and stuff, they wouldn't give us a motion on whether we were speaking for or against. So the act of having to research something to be able to speak on a topic that I didn't agree with was a really big learning curve. So I thought that was just really interesting.

Michelle Ockers: That sharpens your critical thinking skills. Tony Dunford in Episode 3 talked about seeking people from outside of the corporate world. People who particularly might have a more radical view on issues as part of his work. So he was another one who struck me similar to Anne, although in the context of having conversations, potentially.

Neil Von Heupt: I hadn't thought like Anne, had in terms of reading things from opposing points of view but I'd definitely have people in my network, and I call them contrarians. Once, who are more likely to take a contrary point of view to things I might say. I think they're really important. Otherwise, things get too vanilla for me.

Karen Moloney: Yeah. I thought it was encouraging as well that lots of our guests are podcast listeners, podcast consumers, but that is just such a versatile medium and that's why we decided to tell these stories through podcasts, is because it's just such so easy just to tuck into them. But that was quite good as well, I think Nicole White in Episode two shared a few different podcasts that she listens to, but they are completely outside the realm with L&D. But informs her creative side in what she does in her work, about how they put together their podcasts and the subject matters. I thought that was interesting. Again, that was one of the big things for me was people stepping outside of the industry and the content supplied by the industry to inform their practice. It was really interesting.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. And I think Justine Jardine in episode 12 also spoke about reading really widely. She gave examples of a lot of magazines saying she'll pick up anything and look through it for inspiration, for ideas as well as watch just about anything to get ideas.

But when I looked back through the transcripts for the responses of our guests to that question, actually only four out of those 17 guests spoke about going outside of learning development to get inspiration-

Karen Moloney: Was it really only four? I thought there was more than that.

Michelle Ockers: I'd read all the transcripts because I had thought it was a much bigger thing, but I think maybe we've just mentioned on twitter every time we've heard it because for me it just makes so much sense and we see a lot of practices being picked up in learning and development from areas like marketing and product design and so on. So perhaps, our own biases have amplified that. As for people consciously talking about that it was a relatively small number of people.

Karen Moloney: That's really interesting. And I think maybe it's as well because on those particular projects the things that they implemented have such an impact on the business solutions and the way they went about things and the things that they learned. So maybe that's why you're stuck with this. That's interesting.

Neil Von Heupt: I think it probably reflects a shift in the profession, that there's still a lot of people who think of Learning and Development practice as delivering training, and so they read and do their professional development around that. But I have to say that the front edge of the profession are the ones who are starting to, say how do we deliver business impact here? How do we actually engage with the business and support what they're trying to do? I think that naturally pushes your professional development outside of the field of Learning and Development. So in one sense, you've got leading people as your presenters in

the podcast so it makes sense that they're the ones the last look beyond learning and development for input.

Michelle Ockers: I don't know if you've ever sat down and actually had a conversation with someone in an organization, that perhaps you're there to help support their learning. If you ask people how do you learn, people immediately think of formal learning but if you ask questions like how do you solve problems? How do you get better at your work? How do you pick up new ideas and try them out they'll give you different answers. And a lot of our guests about applying things from other disciplines. For instance, Agile was a focal point in a couple of our discussions. But when we asked that question about "What's the biggest thing you do for your own learning?," perhaps that wasn't top of mind. So it might be biasing the question, interestingly.

Michelle Ockers: I may have a slightly different take on that question about people being purposeful and perhaps that's because I'm a point of need learner. Recently I started a course on Artificial Intelligence in Human Resources but because I haven't had something to apply it to immediately I'm behind on the program, whereas if I was applying it right away I would be staying up to date. And quite a few of our guests put their learning very much in the context of their projects. So Emma Weber in Episode 7 was talking about reading Chatbot magazine to help inform her practices on the learning transfer bot that she spoke about in that episode. So perhaps people are more purposeful than consciously came out in their answers, but that it's around applying things.

Neil Von Heupt: Laura Overton's research had that kind of flavour, where they found the strongest motivator, for people doing CPD was actually just to do their current job better and faster. And it was really high. It was like 70 something percent of people saying that's their strongest motivator, but I actually think it's a little bit short-sighted, like there's a real risk in that, that you can end up just meandering in your career from one job to the next one or whatever comes up, rather than getting where you actually want to go. I think you can get a lot more out of professional development than just doing your job better.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. True, true. And that of course is the Towards Maturity Learner Landscape research, you're talking about there, Neil.

All right. The arm wrestle's over. We know we could be a lot more purposeful.

So you've already pre-empted my next question here, which was whether there's anything that our guests didn't raise or emphasize that you thought they might. You spoke about no one really talked about having a plan and mentoring, which I picked up as well. It wasn't mentioned as frequently as I thought it might be. Is there anything else that you thought didn't get the emphasis you might expect it to?

Neil Von Heupt: I thought webinars might get more of a mention because well, it feels like they're on every day because somebody's offering one somewhere and when I

turn up in one there always seems to be people in them. I didn't hear a lot of people talking about them.

I thought social media might feature more strongly. But again, I think that's around that question that you're asking people that still to have that formal learning is learning mindset and then not so much seeing what they're doing on social media as learning even though they have.

Karen Moloney: I've got a similar point there actually, I'm thinking things like people are saying that they read a lot, and I can bet that a lot of those people are finding things to read through Twitter and LinkedIn and things that people are sharing and writing on there. Because I had a similar thought around communities of practice. Lots of people talked about networking in different groups or meetups such that they're part of, but nobody coined that as a community of practice.

Michelle Ockers: I think Rob Wilkins in Episode 11 talked quite a bit about online networking and sharing resource and having conversations online.

And you know what nobody mentioned, something that personally I find really helpful. No one talked about reflection. No one talked about journaling and I don't think any of our guests actually are blog writers either.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah. Interesting-

Michelle Ockers: For me blog writing is a form of journal-

Neil Von Heupt: I come back to that John Dewey quote that I learned as a teacher, like a long time ago ... We don't learn from experience we learn from reflecting on experience. That has so stayed with me across my whole career that I totally agree with what you're saying in terms of there weren't people talking about, just sitting back and having a think about what they're doing.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. So that leads me onto the next question. Which of our guests are you most like in your professional development practices? And what is it about their practices that's most like your own?

Neil Von Heupt: It's interesting. There was a few that resonated, but it wasn't so much from the practice that they were doing but the mindset that actually lead to the practice. So for me what was resonating was a mindset of getting out of my bubble and getting beyond it now. Some people they did that for Nicole in Episode 1, she went to the MONA (Art Gallery) in Hobart and just spend some time there. Tony in Episode 2 was connecting with people a bit more radical in their views and reading books. That mindset of getting outside your bubble in your professional learning that was really what resonated, not so much the separate practices but having that mindset and then working out, "How do I do it?"

And the other one for me was ... And again, this has been an ongoing thing for me, was the human centred ones. So there's lots of things that we can do that don't end up having us connect with other humans in the process. I mean, reading is one of those things. But for me where people were talking about getting out and meeting other people in the business - Rob Wilkins talking about going and having coffee with people or Gail (Bray) Actually, in Episode 8 getting out and visiting campuses and talking with teachers and managers, that kind of stuff. That totally resonates. And I find that if I'm not actually engaging with people in the process of doing my professional development doesn't float my boat.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. And Rob Wilkins was one of my nominations, and it was actually him who gave me the final nudge that I needed to get online and get comfortable with spaces like Twitter and start developing my own network. And that was back at the conference in 2014. I think I'd had enough of hearing people say, "There's an amazing network available out there. People who are generous, ready to contribute and you're missing out on a lot if you're not a part of that network." And that online tools were a great way to do that.

I think I associated a lot with Justine Jardine and I don't know whether that's partly a consequence of she and I having worked together at some point in time, but in terms of just that point of need approach and needing to apply things which I spoke about, that's very important to my own development. Getting hands on this stuff rather than just the theory. How about yourself, have you got a doppelganger out there, Karen?

Karen Moloney: Yes. Nic White, Episode 2. It was quite funny actually when I was looking back through the transcripts to prepare for this episode and just picking up on all of the things that she does, that we do the same around podcasts, reading, networking. But interestingly again, some similar career trajectories around being Instructional Designers and then running our own businesses. So the learning, the professional development for both of us has got to the point where it's now not so much yet it's still the content around the skills and the practice of the industry but a lot about business and how to be a good leader and how to run a successful business and marketing and sales and finance and all those wonderful things. And then I think the networking then becomes about networking with other business owners.

And again is also stepping outside of the L&D thing again. It's like, what things are other people doing in different spaces that we can bring in here to bring something fresh to the industry? So I thought that was quite interesting. And also Emma Weber in Episode 7 about having a coach. I had a coach when I first started my business and I hadn't had one for a long time because I was happy meandering along in my little business, and in the last year I've decided that I just needed some help with direction. There were all lots and lots of things that I want to do with my business, but what to do first and sticking with that has been quite difficult being a solo business owner. And I've actually just found

having a coach is pushing me outside of my comfort zone. I think I've mentioned that already.

I do believe that the best things happen on the other side of the comfort zone. There are just some things I need to push through to get to that better part of me that's going to be able to do the work that I really want to do because I love my work. So I think having somebody challenge you, much like you were saying, having the contrarians around you and the people that do push you and question what you're doing and why you're doing it and how you're doing it just has such tremendous value. I've grown leaps and bounds in the last six months. It's been full-on but I really do think that, that has added a lot of value, so I can see where Emily's coming from there.

Neil Von Heupt: I had this mentor and every time we would meet his opening question was always, "What's the question that you don't want me to ask you today?" Good question because I knew he was going to ask it. So every time I was coming in I was reflecting on, "Okay, what am I trying to stay away from here?"

Michelle Ockers: Yep. And having someone alongside you whether it's a peer mentor or a buddy or a coach who can help hold that space is really important, I think. I've got several mentoring relationships which take on different kinds of structures and for different purposes, but I've got more mentors now than I've ever had before and I'm just finding that critical for not just pushing me through my comfort zone but accountability as well. Things can drift but if I've made a commitment to someone else, and this is partly why I blog as well, because sometimes I'm blogging or working out loud I'm making a commitment about something I'm going to do, and that level of accountability is really important for me to actually step up to it.

Neil Von Heupt: It's hard because your professional development stuff is so personal to you that in one sense the only person who's going to hold you accountable for your professional development is you. The manager may hold you accountable for it if it's going to affect your job performance. But in terms of your career and your long term professional though, it's you, like you actually have to take ownership of that. It's so important.

Michelle Ockers: Professional development is not just about the skills. It's not about the content. It's not learning everything there is to learn about micro learning or whatever it might be, it is about those things that challenge you to be that better person, whether that's a better facilitator, instructional designer, eLearning developer, leader, person, whatever it might be. So yes. It's the personal development that blends into the professional development too.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They all overlap and they're all connected.

Michelle Ockers: Starts getting into the realm of behaviour change and habit building as well. Right? Sometimes when we're learning something it's about forming a new

habit to actually apply it regularly. Ger Dreisen who is one of our industry colleagues in the Netherlands, talks about mindset, tool set and skill set if you're trying to do something new or something-

I think that mindset piece is really important and maybe as part of our own professional development to examine our mindset from time to time. I was fortunate early this year to run some workshops with Arun Pradhan. We used a persona based tool, and one of the suggestions he had was if your trying to learn something new, you're trying to grow, do a persona on yourself, do an empathy map on yourself to understand what's happening for you in terms of what are you feeling, what are you thinking, what are you doing in regard to the change. And I thought that was such an interesting approach.

Karen Moloney: Interesting and a little bit scary.

Michelle Ockers: You might want to get one of those resources to validate your little empathy map of yourself. I thought that was a really cool approach, a really useful thing to do.

Speaking of new approaches, was there anything in what our guests shared that has given either of you any surprises or fresh ideas? Anything new you've dropped your own professional development? Or anything you've done more of?

Neil Von Heupt: This year was the podcast year for me and I'm still not hooked on them. I know some people, they've jumped into podcasts and they love them and I'm still not hooked I'm still struggling to connect what I'm learning in a podcast, sitting back to practice. I tend to take less notes when I'm just listening to a podcast. I tend to not capture stuff in that I would do in other professional development, that I might do. Yep, 2018, the podcast year for me.

Michelle Ockers: So for me, one of the things I've been inspired to do more of is reading, like book reading. I'd really let that habit lapse. When Tony Dunford back in Episode 3 said, "I read two books a month," that blew me away, and looking to read more out of our own discipline. I've started reading a little bit more philosophy. It's a nice break and I'm finding hard copy books, just trying to reduce the screen time a little bit, particularly if I'm reading at the end of the day when the eyes get a bit tired.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah. I've found an app called Blinkist, I think it is, and it's like book summaries. And it's really interesting probably because I was experimenting with it and just using the free ones that they put out each day. And they just go all over place in terms of what you're reading. But even doing that, that was fascinating, just reading some things from completely outside my field.

Karen Moloney: For both of those I'm thinking about still trying to get myself to read one book a week. I have a pile of my nightstand, I actually read two pages of them then fall asleep. So I think it's still having that ... I think the weather is getting nice.

Neil Von Heupt: That's called a book log, it's like a back log.

Karen Moloney: It's funny, I removed the pile a few months ago because I was getting really stressed out. Going to bed is like, "I'm still not reading the books." But I think just having a plan around that and just mixing up my content as well because I've been quite focused, for many years I just read biographies because I was just really interested in people and their journeys and stuff. And then in the last five years or so it's been business books into some description or other things to inspire me to do what I'm doing. But I think reading one book a week is something is my own little plan for next year.

And also again, going back to that point I've raised already about Anne Bartlett-Bragg in Episode 10 but reading something you don't agree with, I think everything that I've been reading has been supporting my train of thought and my ideas about what I want to do with my work and my life, I'm maybe just picking something that I would never ever pick and just challenge myself to see if I can stay focused on it and actually get into it if I go in with a mindset of, "I don't agree with this." So I'll be trying that out, I think because I'm really interested to see what happens. What shift happens and how I think.

Neil Von Heupt: Have you seen a thing called the Festival of Dangerous Ideas?

Karen Moloney: No, but it sounds like something I need to get involved in.

Neil Von Heupt: That would be worth having a look at.

Michelle Ockers: Okay. Sounds good. It's slightly longer horizon, when you look back over your own career is there a period of a point in time that you felt was pivotal to your own development? And what was it about that point in time that was so significant to your own development? Can you kick off this one, Karen?

Karen Moloney: Yeah. When I thought about this, I thought it was for me, the thread was when I actually got involved in formal education in some way or other. So there were two big shifts for me, one was when I did my eLearning diploma back in 2004. I think just understanding what was possible with technology for learning just really opened up my mind to what I could do in the organisation I was with at the time and just shifted how I thought about learning delivery. And then a couple years ago when I did a diploma of business entrepreneurship, that was a completely different crowd of people that I was mixing with that I hadn't mixed with before.

But I think just the process of going through that formal education, and both of those are diploma courses that ran over a year or so. I think in both those

instances being able to apply what I was learning on my job or on my business was really, I think maybe pivotal in terms of how I was actually using that learning because I think everything else I've done has either been like little short courses or like you said, Michelle, meeting that just in time, kind of need for what I was doing at the time.

Karen Moloney: And both of those courses I understood because I need it. So the eLearning and stuff, I could see that there was shifts happening, so I was a CBT person for many, many years and just the way the technology was being used in the business and the tools that were out there were just shifting. So I actually made a conscious decision that was part of my professional development plan at the time was to engage in this thing. And what with over a period of time and the same, the diploma of business, I'd run a business for a number of years.

But it's quite different having a business where you've gone from being a contractor and have a great network and therefore get work to actually do what I've done in the last couple of years and just completely shift what I've done in business. And so I went back and said, "Okay, I want to sit down and work out. How do I do this business from start to finish? And push myself to conquer my fear of things like sales or finance." Which I absolutely did. So I think that those big pivotal things for me were engaging in that formal education and having some structure around my learning where I can apply it back on the job.

Michelle Ockers: Interesting. How about you, Neil? What did your pivot point or points look like?

Neil Von Heupt: I so miss uni, like being at university, for me that sustained deep dive into content that was just gold. I loved it like over years, just to be with a bunch of people day-in and day-out, just getting into the theory and the practice of what we were doing. I so miss that. I mean, I totally don't miss the poverty that you get or the debt that comes after it kind of stuff. But that deep engagement with your content, that was pivotal for me, like to actually get deep into understanding the theory of what I do and to be grounded in that, that's stayed with me for everything that I've done.

Michelle Ockers: That's so interesting because I'm the reverse of the two of you. I would say when I started operating in the network and I discovered the power of developing a personal learning network was when things really pivoted for me because I'd always been well, academically, so it was kind of like something I kept going back to. But I think once I got onto Twitter in 2014 I did a course that Jane Hart was running at the time, a Social Learning Practitioner Program. You had to set up a blog, write a blog about setting up your blog. You had to get onto twitter, start developing the network. I would say between that and Harold Jarche's Personal Knowledge Mastery course my whole approach to professional development has transformed. I would go so far as to say that it's actually transformed my career and working opportunities that are available to me and just how I live to some degree. Well, for me it was about letting go of the formal approach and getting involved in the network. Doing more short courses was what's really shifted for me.

Neil Von Heupt: I mean it's funny I was looking at the resources that everybody shared at the end of all of the things and I was just like, "They're probably all really good resources." But at the moment for me none of them are any use to me, because they were like the right resources for what they were doing at that point of time. And I'm at a different point of time. I actually have a plan. I'm going to get all of those resources and put them into Diigo and tag them so that when I come to a point of need I'll already have this curated list of really good content that's already been checked by, first of all the people who recommended it and then you guys check it before we actually stick it in with the episode resources.

And that's such a good way of filtering content that comes through. So for me an important part of professional development around the content that I get is about having a really good network of people who filter content for me. They actually shape the content that comes into my feed through who they are.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. So my next question is about one word or phrase. What's one word or phrase you'd use to describe your own professional development in the past year?

Neil Von Heupt: This is a little bit ironic having said all the things that I've said because I was thinking about this and my word was scrambled, and with all of the things that I know about professional development have this year changed roles and change where I live and all that stuff. And so, scrambled, personal word for me. I've fallen foul to all of the things that I prefer to wary of in terms of having a plan. But having said that, it's getting close. I have a rhythm to my professional development planning and part of it is annual and to second is getting close, I can feel it coming, as the days of November drawn near I'm like, "Okay, now I need to start thinking about where I want to go across the next couple of years and do that big ..." So the big picture planning for me is coming in December and then I'll settle back into something the next year

Michelle Ockers: And Karen, what about you? What's your one word or phrase to describe your development in the past year?

Karen Moloney: I've made a conscious decision months back to really push myself this year and try some things I haven't tried before and to change the way I think about what I do. So my professional development it's double sided really because one side is, obviously about running my business and making that the best thing I can make it but then also keeping my hand in an industry while I'm not hands-on practitioner, I don't run projects anymore. The industry, I find so interesting, that's why I got into it in the first place. So still keeping my hand in with what's going on out there and where the issues are and where the challenges are. What solutions do they coming up with, which is why doing this podcast has just been fantastic in terms of digging out and helping people tell those stories.

But I think for me, going back again to that, the coaching really has pushed me to challenge myself and explore areas in my professional development that I probably wouldn't have come across by myself maybe because it's hard and it's

that comfort zone thing, again. So it's been good, but it's almost like every day I get up and there's a challenge for me today. I'm learning new tools, I am networking in a different way and I'm thinking differently about everything. So it's been full-on but I have really, really enjoyed it. And I'm going to take some time after we do this episode and review all those transcripts and resources and things and just think about what does my professional development plan look like for next year because doing this in a more structured way, I think for me is going to be really rewarding.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. Absolutely. And maybe you look back on this as a pivotal year on your own development.

Karen Moloney: Oh, definitely.

Michelle Ockers: So to me it's applied and collaborative, is the phrase. I've tried a lot of new things this year and I have learned on the go and I've learned a lot from the people I've been working with. And probably a really good example of that is the project with the Learning and Performance institute to refresh the Capability Map. I was on Slack with 50 people leading experts and practitioners in our industry around the globe, who were debating and developing skill descriptions for our industry and what we need to do to meet the challenges moving forward. And I felt like I was doing a dozen MOOCs at once. A dozen online courses at once, listening to the conversations-

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah. That was a massive project.

Michelle Ockers: ... It just has some really rich opportunities to work with, some people who have had experiences that I haven't had and have expertise I haven't had the opportunity to build up. And it's been an amazing opportunity to learn alongside others.

So as this goes to air, it's our first episode for 2019 and many people down here in the southern hemisphere are going to be on their extended summer break, and it's a period of time where people think back, they reflect on the past year, they plan for the year ahead and of course, Neil's encouraging us all to be more purposeful and to put a plan in place. And what is one tip you would give to our listeners about something that they can do in the coming year to support their professional development?

Neil Von Heupt: I want to come back to where I started almost and say, get a pen and get some paper and write something down as a plan because I don't think there's one tip, like one different thing that I could say that would work for everybody but doing a plan will totally work for everybody. I would say there's three bits to it. You want to start with, where do you want to go, that question of direction in terms of you've got to pick a question and a career, and then you got to work out what

do you need to get to where you want to go and then how are you going to get what you need to get to where you want to go. So you've got three kinds of elements, like where do you want to go, what do you need to and how are you gonna get what you need. That's part of my planning framework stuff. That, for me, if people went away and did that, I'd be totally happy.

Karen Moloney: I think my newsletter subscribers last year, I actually put out a one page PD planner, just a really basic thing but I'll find it, and we can put it into the resources because I think it just starts you thinking.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah,

Michelle Ockers: Yep. And I'd encourage people to take a step back, as they're doing the plan they need to be thinking about, what is it I'm wanting to achieve, what are my goals for the coming year in terms of my professional life, maybe my personal life as well, because of course, this kind of planning doesn't need to be just about what happens in the workspace. What are my skills at the moment, and where are my strengths, that I can leverage and where might be some gaps and I need to build upon. So I think is some sort of assessment or baseline as part of the planning process, I would be encouraging people to do.

Neil Von Heupt: Yeah. I think, honestly stacks of people and they're in jobs, because I find myself constantly talking, like I met at the dentist and I say, "How did you end up being a dentist?" Or wherever I am, kind of thing. And I meet stacks of people who are in roles that they never imagined that they'd been. They're not particularly happy in them. And so I think for me out of that planning thing is a really long-term thing to say. Not just what more skills do I want to have in 12 months time. But in 10 years time is my career going in the direction that I want it to? Kind of thing. We can't always come make it go in a straight line but we can steer it in the direction that we'd want to.

Neil Von Heupt: And I think there's a huge opportunity for us as learning and development professionals to enjoy after me, is a whole lot more. But I think if we're doing it then we're also modelling it for the people that we're working with. So if they see us working towards a long term plan and engaging in professional development, and that's actually motivating for other people to get on and do it for themselves as well.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. One of our roles these days is to support continuous learning in others. So having good practices in place ourselves is critical. Any final thoughts from you Karen around tips?

Karen Moloney: Yeah. I think to challenge yourself and do things differently. so if there's something that you want to put on your PD plan, around either, maybe is a skill that you wanted to learn rather than doing it the way you've always done it by either, maybe reading or getting an online course. Find a community of practice or find a face to face course that you can go and do or find a podcast that talks

about it and try and learn differently and just see how that shifts your mindset and again comes back to that, be brave, challenge yourself, push yourself out of the comfort zone a little bit and just see where it takes you. Just experiment.

Michelle Ockers: And I think to the point about getting out of our bubble. Personally, I think having a network and engaging with other people is really critical, particularly when so much of the practices in our industry are emerging practices. Finding people to learn from, I think is actually quite important in whatever format that looks like, but using other people as a resource for you and development and engaging with them through contribution and generosity, sharing what you know as well. And trusting that always comes back to you, the network will always look after you if you are generous, engaged and contributing.

Karen Moloney: Yep. Definitely.

Michelle Ockers: And on that note we're going to include a link to all of our LinkedIn profiles in the show notes. If anyone wants to get in touch with any of us to continue the discussion about professional development. I think we'll ask some questions on LinkedIn in the New Year to ask others to share what they're doing for their professional development, There'll probably be some more but two key resources in the show notes. One is we've created a copy of all of the responses to the question about professional development from all of our guests in 2018 and put that into one transcript. And the other resource is a separate list of all of the resources that they mentioned, that they used for their own professional development.

Alright. So a big thank you to all of our guests from 2018 for sharing, not just their stories with us, but also their professional development practices and so fuelling our own development along the way. Thank you to Neil for joining Karen and I and sharing your insights with us. And Karen, a big, big, big personal thank you from me for all that I have learned from working with you this year-

Karen Moloney: And right back at you. And same to Amanda as well. I think we've all been on a very steep learning curve to this last year, but it's been the most work fun I've ever had. And I think we all bring something different to the table there. So thank you both as well. It's been awesome.

Neil Von Heupt: I'm maybe being overly responsible here, but I actually going to throw in a thank you to you guys as the team. So, Michelle and Karen and Amanda in the background spoke, putting this podcast together. It's gold. It's so good. And I love the finishes with this question every time and particularly pulled together and the way you've handled the dialogue, just ask outstanding.

Michelle Ockers: Thank you Neil. More to come in 2019.

Neil Von Heupt: I'll be listening.

Michelle Ockers: Thanks and Happy New Year everyone.

Karen Moloney: Happy New Year.

Neil Von Heupt: Bye.