

**LEARNING UNCUT EPISODE 19:
MAPPING THE LEARNER JOURNEY – TANYA LAU**

Michelle Ockers: Welcome to another episode of Learning Uncut. I'm Michelle Ockers, and today I have the pleasure of talking to Tanya Lau from Transport New South Wales about her use of employee experience journey mapping to identify and explore performance issues and develop targeted solutions. Welcome, Tanya.

Tanya Lau: Thanks, Michelle. Thanks for having me.

Michelle Ockers: It's a pleasure, and Karen sends her apology. She was unable to be with us today. Tanya, can you briefly introduce Transport New South Wales, and describe your role in the organisation?

Tanya Lau: Well, my current substantive role is more in the e-learn, digital learning space, but at the time when I was doing this journey mapping, experience mapping, I was actually seconded as an Organisational Development Business Partner, embedded within one of our operating agencies. That's State Transit. They do the buses.

Tanya Lau: Our L&D was embedded within OD, and we had a Business Partner model, so basically we embedded OD Business Partners that were sort of working within the agencies to do the needs analysis part, and then we had a central sort of OD space as well. That just helps provide a bit of context around what we're actually about to talk about, because, yeah, it did enable me to more easily have some of those stakeholder conversations, and understand the business much more intimately.

Michelle Ockers: Let's talk about the challenge that you were working on at the time, that you ended up applying journey mapping to help analyse. I understand there was a challenge with bus drivers familiarising themselves with routes, and that also there had been previous projects undertaken to try to tackle the problem. So it wasn't a new problem, it was something that had been around for a while. Can you tell us a bit more about the challenge?

Tanya Lau: It was essentially a problem around bus driver route familiarisation. Just to sort of paint a picture of the context that bus drivers are, I guess, thrown into, basically, there's a number of different bus routes that they've got to learn very, very quickly, and although they are stationed at a depot when they first start, at around the 12-month mark, they start doing transfers across different depots.

Essentially, I guess the problem space was that, basically, as very new drivers, they're also on the road within the first basically four weeks of starting. They are supported, but essentially, they're pretty much driving routes on their own within the first six weeks of their employment. The problem was basically that, with the number of routes that they need to actually be across, and when you're actually in the driver's seat, you don't really get much time.

Very high pressure, and you've also gotta deal with customers as well, and learn everything there is to know about that job on the spot. So route familiarisation was one of those areas where, basically, the organisation was finding that the drivers were struggling with, particularly within that first really six to 12 months period.

It was causing a lot of stress, and potentially causing drivers to actually exit early. Yeah, and again, as you mentioned, and as I've sort of mentioned, it was a known problem, and there had been a number of solutions kind of canvassed, including a number of solutions that were already in play at the time that I kind of entered the organisation, and was tasked with looking at it.

Michelle Ockers: Tell us briefly what is journey mapping, and why did you decide to use it in this context?

Tanya Lau: Basically, journey mapping is essentially ... I sort of refer to it as like a visual narrative of an employee's experience, or of a person's experience, and in this case, I basically chose to use it to map out the employee initial training experience, specifically around route familiarisation. Journey mapping, basically, it's used a lot in the UX and customer ... to understand customer needs

Michelle Ockers: Around products and service development, and marketing?

Tanya Lau: Exactly, in the consumer space.

Everyone agreed that it had quite a big impact on particularly employees, and had that sort of emotional impact on employees in terms of their experience as a new employee and as a new driver, so there's that experiential kind of component to it that I wanted to explore through the journey mapping process, because that's actually one of the strengths of the journey mapping process, is that it is really a visual narrative of experience as opposed to just...

Michelle Ockers: It's not just about what someone does, it's about their experience and what they're thinking, feeling and doing through the experience.

Tanya Lau: Exactly, and through that experience over time as well. Basically, I wanted to use it to understand not just what that experience was like, but what the issues were at various time points within particularly that first 12 months. What I had been hearing about the problem was that, yeah, it was a really big issue, but what I found as I started to ask some questions and spoke to different people about it, was we weren't collectively, as an organisation, that certain about exactly when the issue was a big problem.

There were a lot of ideas in the mix, and a lot of anecdotal evidence, particularly, around the nature of the problem, but I wanted to actually use it as a way to present that holistic view of this is what the problem is, these are the impacts that it's actually having, both on experience as well as linking it to actual

quantitative data that I knew we had. That's the other real benefit of that whole journey mapping or experience mapping process, is that it does actually enable you to visually pull together a whole range of qualitative and quantitative data in the one picture.

That's really what I wanted to use it to explore, so that everyone could get on the same page about what this problem was, so we could start to pinpoint solutions, and work out which of those solutions was gonna fit at what point of that employee journey, to make the most impact.

Michelle Ockers: We will put in the show notes links. You've done two fabulous blog posts, quite detailed, about the what, the why and the how of putting together the journey map in this particular context, and there's some really good images that show people the structure, the format you decided to use for this visual representation of this experiential journey over that first 12 months in the role. That will be something, no doubt, that people will want to go and have a look at. It's an approach, we talked before, traditionally used in product or service development or by marketers, rather than learning and development.

Tanya Lau: Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: How did you come across it as an approach, and what research did you do around it to figure out whether it was going to be suitable to explore the problem you were looking at?

Tanya Lau: Yeah. Well, basically, I first came across this whole concept of journey mapping. It was actually through a LinkedIn article, and I think it might have been through the design thinking LinkedIn group, which I'm a member of, and yeah, I mean, they share a lot of really valuable stuff around design thinking, because, essentially, journey mapping is kind of a design thinking tool.

This was about probably a year or so prior to me actually engaging in the process myself, but I'd read about it, and really just filed it away as something useful that I really wanted, if the opportunity came up, would be a really great thing to explore myself. I saw this as the perfect opportunity to really just explore it as a tool, and use it as an actual professional development opportunity for myself as well, to gain some practical skills and knowledge in actually applying it as a tool, to really test it.

Michelle Ockers: You actually worked to a pretty tight deadline to pull this together, didn't you? It was something that, because you were prepared and you saw the opportunity, you were able to actually do it.

Tanya Lau: Yeah, yeah, pretty much, and that deadline was really framed around ... Because we'd already engaged a supplier, basically, that was the sort of situation, to explore this 360/VR solution as one potential option. That had already happened, and it was actually ... I sort of had a bit of light bulb moment about

week or so out from the kick-off meeting, and having had some of the conversations with some of the stakeholders already, thought this would actually be a really good thing to bring to the kick-off.

Michelle Ockers: Can you talk us through your approach to data gathering, both qualitative and quantitative. It sounds like there was a lot of data available already, or you were part way through the process of data gathering through analysis when you came across the thought that the journey map would be a great way to represent it.

Tanya Lau: In the lead up to actually undertaking the journey mapping process, I'd actually already started to have some conversations with some of the stakeholders about the problem and about this, with the view that this may be a possible solution that we might be exploring.

Michelle Ockers: The solution being the video solution.

Tanya Lau: Yeah, yes, this video solution that had kind of been proposed as an idea to prototype. I guess, from that perspective, I did have more than a couple of days, in terms of for that data-gathering phase. I think I'd been collecting that data probably over ... It wasn't even that long. Maybe over a couple of weeks, and it was just I had the benefit of being embedded within the organisation, so that made a big difference as well, and it is actually one of our smaller agencies, so I had a lot of access to people, which made a big difference.

I talked to a whole range of people, and a lot of these people were on site, which obviously made a huge difference as well. There were schedulers, rosterers, the actual trainers themselves, workplace trainers. There was bus drivers that I spoke to, and in fact, this whole project was sort of off the back of quite an enterprising bus driver who we had, who had actually created some of his own videos as a resource for himself and some of the drivers in his depot.

I spoke to him about his experience, and to get an understanding of what that experience for a new driver is like as well, and some of the resources that would actually be materially helpful in the context of being a bus driver. If you do do any sort of formal training you have to be rostered off shifts, and so a lot of their learning around routes was essentially being done in their own time as well.

One of the really critical things around data gathering, I would be advising, for anyone who's interesting in exploring this approach, is really to gather data and this qualitative data really widely and look very holistically at the problem. The way I actually gathered this data was simply through just a lot of informal conversations, and I have found ... There's a number of different ways that you can do that, but I have found through a lot of my experience through doing analysis work, and needs analysis work, is that, personally, I actually find you get a lot more data and a lot more authentic data talking one-on-one with people,

as opposed to getting everyone in the room, and kind of thrashing it out, because what I have ...

This is just my experience, and I'm sure everyone has had different experiences with this type of data gathering, but I often find that when you've got sort of ... especially when you've got too many people in the room, you often get that sort of decision-making by committee, and kind of group think and consensus, so that's, personally, the approach that you prefer to take, the one-on-one approach, if you've got the opportunity to do that, and that was simply very casual, informal, and quite short conversations, in a lot of instances, and then I just was making notes.

A lot of them were phone conversations as well. So I gathered a lot of that, what I refer to as qualitative data, over a period probably of about two weeks or so, just through these informal conversations. Then the other dataset that I got, once I actually started doing the mapping process, was some hard data from HR around business impact metrics. Once I actually started to get a picture of what the experience was like through the qualitative data gathering process, I basically then mapped out, kind of started storyboarding what that experience was like, and I describe all of this, as you mentioned, in the blog post, so if anyone wants detail.

Then I, from there, once I got a handle on, well, what are all of the potential impacts from this problem, was able to start identifying, well, how does that then translate into some business impact metrics? Things like exit rates, things like absenteeism, sick, and some of these ideas I actually got through speaking to bus drivers, and particularly trainers as well, who were really in tune with what that initial employment was like.

The other thing I'd advise about, anyone attempting to do this, if you're sitting within the L&D space, is really to actually reach out to your HR partners, because there is such ... Part and parcel of this entire approach is that holistic journey. Going from understanding what that employee experience from the very start, from recruitment through to onboarding, and understanding that sort of holistic impact, and a lot of that business data in relation to that employee experience around recruitment and onboarding essentially comes from HR as well. That's where you can get that really marrying the qualitative with the quantitative data.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, fantastic, and that idea that you're talking about there, that when you think about experience, it's a whole experience. It doesn't matter who is at the other end of the experience, or the employee, in this case, the bus drivers. They're the focal point, so it's very employee-centric, or people-centric.

Tanya Lau: Absolutely, and that is the nature of this entire approach, and really most design thinking tools as well. It's getting to the heart of what that experience is like. You're using it as a tool to gain insight and empathy into that experience, and

being able to translate that into that visual narrative that anyone can pick up and instantly understand what that experience is like.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah. Once you had all this rich, holistic data, how did you go about actually designing the journey map?

Tanya Lau: Yeah. This was now, in terms of time as well, this was kind of really done within a two-day timeframe. I kind of started with that original article that I had read, went back to that, and from there, I think I did a bit of googling. There might have been some links from that article as well to a few other resources, but I've got the links to the articles I used in the blog post. There were about three really useful resources that I had found that had a direct link to what I was trying to do specifically in this case, and that really helped me to gain an understanding of, what that kind of journey map might actually, physically look like, as well as some of the how.

How you would actually go about doing this, and one of my biggest learnings in reading some of those articles, and thinking about how I might apply that learning to my specific context is really just understanding that there is actually no standard format of a journey map. It's really you do have to ... This applies to any kind of needs analysis or problem identification in any space. It's so critical to have a really clear idea of what your objectives are, what you are trying to communicate through this journey map.

Once you've got a clear idea of that, that really helps you to identify exactly how you're going to lay it out, what data you're going to show. I took elements from different maps, so there was one in particular that was quite aligned to what I wanted to show, but not exactly, so I just basically adapted that kind of layout, and included some of the other data points that I wanted to show as well, but pretty much took elements from different maps, and kind of created my own version.

Michelle Ockers: How did you use the journey map once you'd put it together?

Tanya Lau: Yeah, well, the primary reason I was producing the map was actually to frame up this 360 video project. I took it to the kick-off meeting, and I also, just prior to that, I had sent it out to our Exec. There were a couple of Execs from the team who were kind of, I guess, sponsoring the project, and who would be at the kick-off as well.

It was more just kind of sense checking with them that this was, it was a direction that they wanted to go in, and that they found it useful. I got some really good feedback around that, and I think one of the things that I found, just actually going through this process, and producing it, and showing it to different people, is it's a really useful tool, particularly when you're dealing with exec-level sponsors and stakeholders, for them to actually get an instant picture of what's going on, and that was actually the primary objective, really.

What I find, and you've probably found the same as well, particularly when you're dealing with exec-level stakeholders, they're extremely time poor. They don't have the time to read even a two or three-page report, which is incidentally something that I also produced as part of the analysis phase. If they can pick up a one-pager, a one-pager visual, and it instantly communicates this is the problem that we're dealing with, then that's actually really effective.

That was one of the ... I guess what I'd describe as an outcome, because it's ... Part and parcel of that, especially at the beginning of a project, is that stakeholder engagement piece as well. Getting everyone on the same page, getting people to actually care about it as a problem, and understand the impacts of it on the organisation, as well as the people and employees, it is a really important piece of the puzzle.

Michelle Ockers: Were there any fresh insights that were gained as a result of doing the journey map and looking at the data in this way?

Tanya Lau: Yeah. I think really understanding the complexity of the problem as well. Seeing that visually as well. One of the things that ... I can't remember the exact wording, but the CO said to me was, "Oh, it really gives a good insight into all of the dimensions of the problem," and I thought that was probably a good way of expressing it as well, because there's always a reason why problems aren't solved within organisations, and usually it's because there are so many complexities around it.

It's not an easy problem to solve, and so, yeah, I think, for me, and for the organisation, and everyone who was involved, it was a good way to just really get that picture of what was happening, where the impacts were, just how kind of ... It was quite revealing to me as well how stressful that not actually knowing where you're going when you're driving a massive bus around narrow streets in Sydney, just how stressful that is for a new driver.

Michelle Ockers: In terms of impact, then, on the solution to the problem, either the video solution or any other solution, and I know you were in the role on secondment, so perhaps you had the opportunity to see it right through, but has the journey map had an impact at all on what kind of solutions are now being incorporated in the mix, or on the video solution itself?

Tanya Lau: Yeah, yeah. Well, it was interesting, because once we actually started going and prototyping this 360 video solution, that was interesting in itself because that actually threw up some other aspects that possibly maybe hadn't been fully considered sufficiently prior to going into that, but it would be good to also build into that journey map, and one of those aspects was the actual technology infrastructure, and the organisational readiness for that type of solution, and there is actually ...

I mentioned on my blog, there's actually a part three that was inspired by you, but I haven't quite written yet, I've mostly written, that kind of speaks to some of those ongoing outcomes from a journey mapping process, and that is that the other useful benefit for mapping out a journey like this and an experience like this is that it can actually enable you to basically identify those moments of need, and how different solutions, particularly technology solutions, because this was gonna be my next step in the process, can actually map to those different moments of need.

Because you are actually mapping out that employee journey, it then becomes so much easier to actually identify where those moments of needs are, and also, by extension, what types of solutions best placed to actually address those moments. That was, I guess, one of the outcomes of that journey mapping process, and how it influenced solutions, was really around that, that piece, identifying ... Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: Mosher and Gottfredson's Five Moments of Learning Need.

Tanya Lau: Yeah, exactly. That's right.

Michelle Ockers: We'll put a link to that one in the show notes as well. It's a really useful way of looking at when and where people could do with support, and I can see how it would work in really nicely with the journey map.

Tanya, we like to be quite practical on the podcast, and you've already given a couple of great tips for the podcast listeners, particularly when we were talking about data gathering. If somebody wanted to try journey mapping for themselves, what tips would you give them on having a go at it?

Tanya Lau: Yeah, I think one of the biggest tips is just to actually start, first of all, and just approach it with the mindset of experimentation as well. One of the challenges that I found, particularly doing it within a very short period of time, was just filtering through the vast amount of information and knowledge out there about the different tools, techniques, and ways to do it.

What helped me in my context was actually having done that initial file away of the idea, and just probably collecting resources as you go, and just keeping them in the back of your mind as well, as to when they might potentially come in handy, so that then, when the moment does actually come that you get the opportunity to apply a new tool or technique, you've already got some knowledge bank that you can leverage and activate quite quickly, but yeah, there's no substitute for actually just applying stuff, so yeah.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, rolling up your sleeves and giving it a go. The good news for anyone listening to this podcast, we'll put a connection to your LinkedIn profile in the show notes, so you've done a lot of that filtering in terms of journey mapping already. It's in the blog posts, but people could also get in touch with you via

LinkedIn. You're now part of the network of everyone who listens to this podcast, right?

Tanya Lau: Yeah.

Michelle Ockers: What are the biggest things you do for your professional development?

Tanya Lau: Yeah. I think one of the biggest things is actually just regularly, and kind of related to the last point, regularly connecting with your network, because you only see things if you're actually on there, and that was how I originally came across the article relating to journey mapping in the first place. I quite regularly look through my LinkedIn feed as well as my Twitter feed, at least a couple of times a week, and what I actually have found really valuable as a way of processing as well as building your network is to comment on stuff as well, and I actually use that as a technique for processing, because if I read something and I don't do something with the information, it's gone.

But I've also found that it's a really good way to build and develop a deeper network and relationships with people in your network as well, and just engaging with stuff that they're posting or sending out. Yeah. What I've found over the years is that that has absolutely been one of the most beneficial things for professional development.

Michelle Ockers: Tanya, thank you so much for speaking to us today about I think what should be a standard tool for all us in learning and development to have in our toolkit these days.

Tanya Lau: Yeah, absolutely. I've found it so valuable, too, and even just that concept of looking outside of just the L&D space at different tools and techniques, and how people do that needs analysis piece in other industries and contexts, and there's a lot that we can learn, I think, particularly from that kind of consumer space.

Michelle Ockers: Yeah, absolutely. Thanks for your time today, Tanya. Really appreciate you sharing.

Tanya Lau: Yeah, likewise. Thanks, Michelle.