



# The Future of Expert Creation Verses Crowdsourced Curation

## Podcast 24

[00:00:00] **Joanne Bentley:** Hello folks, and welcome to the Leaders in Learning Design podcast, by Blue Consulting and Resourcing; the place to get up to the minute information for cutting edge learning design. So, listeners Graham and I are here today with a colleague of ours, Linnaea Marvell, and we are wanting to dig in. We got such a lot of interesting comments from our last podcast.

Really trying to figure out where we are going to put emphasis in the next few years. The future of [expert creation versus crowdsourced curation](#) is still quite a hot topic. Graham, why don't you kick us off?

[00:00:43] **Graham Edmondson:** Well, you know, last time Joanne we were talking about particularly the changing role for the instructional designer, or even whether instructional designers were going to become obsolete in the face of this kind of shift.

But Linnaea started talking to us along with the other people around the fact that one thing that's changing, that's driving a lot of this is the learner themselves and the learner's approach to learning. So, tell us a little bit more Linnaea about how you see the learner and the learner's approach being a little bit different than how it used to be.

[00:01:21] **Linnaea Marvell:** Sure, I'd be happy to. When I think about our learner today, I actually think about an experience that I had nine or 10 years ago watching my grandson playing soccer. And I happened to turn to my daughter-in-law and use an idiom she didn't recognize. And she said to me, "What is that? What do you mean? Where did that come from?" And I didn't really know what its origins were.

And as we sat there, I looked down at my phone and realized that sitting in the middle of the soccer field, I could actually use a browser, go online and get the answer to that question. It was novel for me 10 years ago. It was novel for a lot of people 10 years ago. (Or maybe perhaps a little bit more.) But in recent years it's just become what we do.

Today people talk about Googling. It's become, you know, common language to Google answers to things. So have our learners changed, maybe cognitively they haven't, but I do believe that they have changed significantly in terms of how they have learned to learn. And schools are taking advantage of you know, available resources and information in the cloud. People are used to going out and doing research and gaining information from online sources. So, I think it shapes the way in which learners see themselves.

The way in which they approach or think about learning. And it means that most of the learners today come to us with a skill set they didn't have 10 years ago. So, where they used to lean on a teacher to purvey information to them, people now lean on pre-developed information whether it's videos or blogs or whatever. They're just leaning on content that somebody else developed. So, that's the way in which I think the learner is changing.

[00:03:39] **Graham Edmondson:** So, well, that makes sense. I think, Linnaea in the sense that so much more information is available to people accessed in different ways. And I think what we were talking about last time, Joanne and I, was the fact that some of the information that people are accessing is not always the best information or the right information. You know, we can Google something and we can end up on the wrong webpage to get the information we want.

It may not, for example, be reliable. It may not be packaged well enough for us to, to consume or whatever. That was some of our concern around the fact that the content may not be as robust and as well put together as we might hope.

[00:04:25] **Linnaea Marvell:** Absolutely. And I think that's a viable concern. I think that when we look at how our role as instructional designers is changing, we have to consider that part of what we are responsible to now is helping to structure the learning journey that an individual participates in. So, we help to structure the context in which they seek content or we're structuring the available content to them.

But I think it also requires us as instructional designers to get much clearer about what the learning objectives need to be about what the learner is learning. So, competency models become much more important. Learning objectives become much more important because they helped us structure the context within which people are seeking learning.

But I do think one of the exciting things about this possibility, about the direction that I think instructional design is pushing us at the moment. Is that learners can in fact learn from more than one person about the same content, which is kind of exciting in the sense that not everybody receives everyone that same way. Or responds to the same verbalization of things. So, we have an exciting opportunity to bring people perspectives on the same content that we don't have if we're the deliverer of the content.

[00:06:05] **Graham Edmondson:** Yeah. So how would we, as instructional designers, go about helping learners in this new kind of world?

You know, because I worry that a learner who wants to learn about coaching in LinkedIn learning will find probably about 70 to 90 different options, without a clue to knowing what is within those options, and whether that's gonna help them with the particular coaching question or challenge that they have. How does an instructional designer possibly help what could be a fruitless search through just a myriad [of options]? And it becomes for me, a very inefficient learning process.

[00:06:51] **Linnaea Marvell:** Yeah, I think that's a great question, Graham. I think it's a question we don't necessarily have all the answers yet. Our world is changing, you know, that's a fact. [It's harder than ever to determine where the training dollars should go.](#)

We are increasing the amount of knowledge available exponentially every month. And so yeah, I do think that as an instructional designer, we have the responsibility to help people understand how to gain the knowledge that they actually need. And to do that, I think we have to put it in context.

That is I can go out and be educated to a particular topic, but as instructional designers, at least in the corporate world, our responsibility is to help people translate that into something that they can use on the job. And I think this is where we come into play in a much more powerful way. We can do that in a number of ways that I can think of today.

One of them is just the methodology through which that content gets delivered. We can do things for instance, like pre-assess and then help people based on the assessment of the knowledge we've structured. [Especially if] we've structured that assessment based on how they're going to use it. Then we can deliver content that speaks directly to that need.

The learner has some choice about how they're going to receive it, but we've already said this is viable content. So that's one way in which I think we can do that or one example. I think we are called upon right now to be much more creative. I think coaching or mentoring somebody who helps answer the question for learners. Am I doing this right? You know, did I get what I needed to get out of the content? Becomes a much more important question for us to ask.

[00:08:49] **Joanne Bentley:** It almost sounds like you're asking for an [instructional design ingredients label](#) on courses. Like you would on a soup can. How much of it is this sort of activity? How much of it is this kind of content?

When do we teach learners to be savvy consumers of that kind of information, because as instructional designers you'd have to put the label on. But even in the grocery store, we're not very good at looking at what's in a package. It's that [informed] consumption that really concerns me.

[00:09:21] **Linnaea Marvell:** That's an excellent point, Joanne. I think that's a super important point. If we think about the direction that instructional design seems to be going at the moment, then that particular point you just made becomes terribly important.

It's our responsibility now to think about teaching learners how to learn in this context. How to make an evaluation about what is going to be usable or good or excellent content. It may be that we have to teach them how to read labels in addition to creating them. But our responsibility shifts as we look at how content gets delivered to people on the other hand, we could make it a really exciting and viable opportunity as instructional designers, not just shove a lot of content at people, but to seriously explore the question of how we deliver content in a way that makes it meaningful, even if we're not the developer.

[00:10:22] **Graham Edmondson:** I think in our last conversation, Joanne, you and I talked a little bit about this idea, and we used the phrase, "[a wrapper.](#)" Where we talked about providing something that gave context to the actual core content. That made content more relevant to the situation the learner might be trying to address. Is that something which you agree is the direction we should be thinking in terms of instructional design?

[00:10:56] **Linnaea Marvell:** Absolutely. I think it's another form of the solution I mentioned earlier.

I do believe it's exceptionally important to help learners make the translation between the content that they're learning and how they're gonna use it. This whole question of relevancy speaks to retention. And so, if we aren't helping them to make that content relevant to the context in which they're learning, then they're just acquiring knowledge they haven't necessarily made that leap to employing that knowledge as a skill.

[00:11:37] **Joanne Bentley:** I think that is a really good point because the research is pretty clear today that unguided or minimally guided learning approaches, no matter how they're structured, just are not very effective. They leave the learner unsure if they have a full mastery because they may have unintentionally and unknowingly missed things.

So, I think that a wrapper is really critical to give context and meaning that encourages that application. Learn this. Now, try and use this on the job in this kind of way.

[00:12:11] **Graham Edmondson:** I tell you what I think is interesting as well. And I think you folks know that I'm probably at the more cynical end of the spectrum here, because if I'm being cynical, I think that sometimes learners when accessing a range of possible solutions without this kind of wrapper I think they'll be inclined to pick the easiest, the most appealing. You know, if I look and see 80 things on coaching my first inclination is to think, "oh, there's one only four minutes. I'll do that. I think there's only four minutes. I can deal with that." I'm not gonna look at that four-hour piece that looks like a bit of a long-winded way to get what I need, you know?

So, I think people might be accessing easy solutions rather than correct or appropriate solutions, but I'll tell you what makes it interesting to me. I think a lot of responsibility for, if you like telling learners that they've got what they need, that responsibility probably comes down to a manager and a supervisor now doesn't it.

Rather than in the classroom, you know, we used to be able to present an idea, see an idea, demonstrated, give some feedback, and then say, how does that apply to reality? A lot of times the wrapper's gonna have to do some of that. How does that apply to reality? But the manager in the day-to-day coaching is the person who's going to validate and reinforce what's being learned, or am I putting too much onus on the manager in that concept?

[00:13:53] **Linnaea Marvell:** Well, I think that depends on how well we do our job as instructional designers Graham. Because if we can help learners set the criteria or to know the criteria by which they will know that they have adequately acquired the learning that we wanna help them acquire. Then I think we've done our job well.

And I think this is one of the things that as instructional designers, this is not new. This has been an ongoing challenge for us with subject matter experts who want to shove tons of content at learners, organizations that want us to grab content very quickly and put it into a context without actually really seriously examining upfront, what are the learning objectives and what's the minimal content that we need to provide in order to get to that end state. So now it requires us as an instructional designer to be much more disciplined about this. It becomes our responsibility now, I think, to help the learner, get what they're aiming at. To understand what the target state looks like and the criteria by which they'll know that they've achieved it.

If we don't do that, then you're absolutely right. We end up pushing learners into a place where they have to lean heavily on managers or coaches to tell them that they got it. One of the concerns I have about wrappers, and I do think that they're an excellent way of helping to structure the, what you're calling crowdsourced content.

But I think that they can also be a disadvantage in that time is another piece that is changing for learners today. It's especially as a result of COVID, we have people who are much more inclined towards work life balance than they've ever been before. And the workload hasn't changed.

So, what that means is that people are having to be much more efficient about what they're doing. Their time gets consumed with needing to meet deadlines for work and finding the time for learning, often gets eclipsed by that. And I think also in that context, learners are much more accustomed to a kind of sound bite culture.

So, they're out there looking for answers that they can get to as quickly as possible. If we structure things in a way that doesn't support them for just in time learning opportunities, for opportunities to get pieces of that learning in between other things that they're required to do.

We don't support them in the environment in which they live well. So, I think we have to look at the environment that's changing around them, the culture that's changing around us in the context of how we structure things. So, wrappers are one piece of what we can do. And I think we have to look at things like what great looks like.

To lean much more heavily on defining [what it looks like if you do the job really](#), really well, and what it takes to know how to do each piece of that.

[00:17:07] **Joanne Bentley:** It's an interesting thought that you bring up here to dig into really understanding that domain knowledge of what does it take to be really good at a role, or what does it take to be an expert in a domain of content?

I worry that curation has become synonymous with crowdsourcing recommender systems -- How many people liked "this." People like you; also liked this book, or this course, or this piece. It's not really a good representation until you have millions of people looking at it. And then how do they define, "like you".

Just because you work in a call center doesn't mean that you have a similar crossover or just because you work in a bank doesn't mean you have similar crossover to everyone else who works in a bank. I think we've got to really think about what that curation means.

It's exciting to have access to "good" content, but it's the good part that just makes me wonder how we are going to figure out this new direction. It used to be that instructional designers worked with experts. We created deep content that was tailored to a specific need. And now that specific need gets lost in large repositories. And unless the content's very granular, it's hard to reuse it.

And so many folks aren't reusing. They're still creating or leveraging other sorts of databases like Degreed or LinkedIn; where, I just think we need to be more active participants in the future of instructional design.

[00:18:51] **Linnaea Marvell:** I think it would be very, very interesting to probe both the learner's experience of this and to probe what other instructional designers are doing to help structure amorphous content into something that has relevance for specific companies and specific roles and specific applications. I think it could be a very exciting topic to look at what we're

doing, because it's an opportunity for us as instructional designers to grow --  
And maybe to get better at what we do.

[00:19:25] **Joanne Bentley:** I like it! Listeners look for more from us as we discuss how much the direction of learning is really changing and what we could do to redefine our role so that we are more active participants. Listeners, you've been listening to the Leaders in Learning Design podcast by Blue Consulting and Resourcing a regular podcast for cutting edge learning design.

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