

The eLearning Coach Podcast #23
ELC 023: Why You Should Show Your Work with Jane Bozarth
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Hello everyone, and welcome to episode 23 of The eLearning Coach podcast. In this session, I speak with Jane Bozarth, about the benefits of showing your work to make you tacit knowledge more evident. Showing how you get your work done is an efficient strategy for spreading knowledge and making everyone smarter, yet most people don't use it. So it's fun to have a conversation with Jane. I hope you enjoy it. Here is the interview:

Connie: Hi, Jane. Welcome to The eLearning Coach podcast.

Jane: Hi, Connie. Thanks for having me.

Connie: I've really been into your book *Show Your Work*, and I was wondering how did the idea for it emerge?

Jane: I wrote about this in 2012 when a friend of mine, who is an elementary school art teacher, had to have surgery on her dominant hand, and they told her she needed to get a hobby or a craft or something that would help her exercise it, and she decided to learn to make the bakery style, fancy, decorated cookies. She started doing this and posting pictures about it on Facebook as she was learning to do it. In the first pictures she had a comment like, "All I did was make trash, but it turns out husbands will eat trash if it's cookies." And across several weeks she started sharing photographs of what she was working on, and she was clearly getting better and better, so she started offering opinions about, "I like the butter cream frosting for this, I don't like it for that." And then she would try a new tool, like how she was using an air brush, and people started talking to her about what she was learning, like, "Do you think the air brush is worth the money?" So I watched this interesting journey unfolding on Facebook about her learning that she was sharing with other people, and I watched that other people were really, truly interested. It wasn't so much that my friend Gloria got up in the morning and said, "I am going to document myself direct a learning journey," it was just, "This is what I am doing today, and here are some pictures of it, and I tried this and it didn't work, or I tried that and didn't work, and I made these and sent them to my granddaughter," and everybody was interested.

This was a kind of light bulb moment for me about how much we do all the time that would be helpful or interesting to somebody else if we ever thought to just say this is what I am working on, this is what I did today, this was a problem I had and how I solved it. My world, in State government, is largely made up of things like status reports and staff meetings, and I think most of my friends in the corporate world would say the same thing, where we are asked to share activities, we're asked to share important moments, we're asked to give a recap, and that may tell people what we did last week or last month, but it doesn't really say how we got things done.

My dissertation work was around social learning and social learning in a community of practice. One of the issues that came up over and over again was the problem in organizations of people having very good processes for sharing explicit knowledge, but not very good processes for sharing tacit knowledge, like 'how I got this done', not just 'follow these three steps', but what to do when the machine breaks, what to do when the staff is out with the flu epidemic, what to do if the person who cuts the checks is not there the day you need the check. How to get things done. And when I started looking for it, I was seeing examples all around me, which ended up being a gorgeous picture book.

Connie: Yeah, your book is beautiful. So you saw this happening from a friend, and it started out with cookies, and you took that concept and applied it to the workplace?

Jane: I would say more I started looking for how it was already happening, and then extrapolating from there. I will say that when you start looking for something and start seeing it, I realized that YouTube is almost nothing but people showing their work. Millions and millions of 'how I patch the dry wall', 'how I put the tires on the car', 'how I play the introduction to *Stairway to Heaven*', 'how to gut a fish'.

Connie: Oh yeah, I go there all the time.

Jane: It's all about people who know something, who had to figure out how to do something, who maybe had to learn something the hard way, who want to share that with other people. The other thing I thought was really interesting, that I saw happening with the cookie example, was that my friend was interested in making cookies and she got pretty good and that, and a sort of community arose around it, other people were talking to her, and they were talking about cookie bloggers they were following, cookie videos they liked. It was a really interesting shared-learning experience.

But the other thing I saw happening was what I have come to call spin-off learning. Gloria was learning about cookies, but she then got very interested in photographing

those cookies. So she developed an interest in photography. The daughter, when she opened her own cookie business, taught herself web design. So we don't always follow a straight path, and I think sometimes that's an issue in our industry where we act as if everything is so linear, and if you learn A, then you're going to do B, and then that leads to C. Really a lot of it depends on where your interest takes you, what your friends happen to be talking about. It was the perfect example of what happens and the messiness and the lack predictability sometimes you see when you start talking about what happens when people talk to each other. When you're learning something, it's not always on a really straight path.

Connie: That makes me think how I discovered that learning is a squiggly kind of line. I was really interested in the home schooling movement, mostly because it showed how people learn naturally. There was a book at the time where teenagers were telling how they were home schooling and teaching themselves things. They would get interested in theater, and then perhaps the person would get into role plays, and then the person would get into history, and then the person would work for the civil war reenactments. It was just fascinating to see the path that they would take, how one interest would spin off another. And that is so beautiful, isn't it? I wish there was a way could foster that and promote that.

Jane: One of the things we make mistakes about in the workplace when we talk about management is that one person may be very interested in photography and somebody may develop an interest in web design, and figuring out how we can help them pursue that passion and that interest, and let them do what they really want to work on, and let them sometimes start in one career and shift into another. My whole career has been moving from one very specific job role to something new that it morphed into as technologies changed. That's my life for the last fifteen years in the workplace.

I do want to be clear that I did not invent this. There has been a lot of talk for a number of years around ideas called 'narrating your work', 'showing your work', 'making your work more visible'. Other people have talked about this too. I would say probably I am the first to do a book about it and I am the first to aggregate so many examples, but I have seen it, it is not some brand new concept pulled out of thin air. Even going back into some literature you can find Collins and daWood talking about the fact that we need to create maps for our workers so that they have landmarks and roads to follow, rather than the traditional methods of documenting work processes and protocols.

Connie: Some of the showing your work that you're talking about is completely explicit, but then some of it is tacit, can you talk a little bit about the difference between the two, what tacit knowledge is?

Jane: One of the examples from the book is David Siksey, who set out to teach himself how to code. I'm sure there are prescribed programs for that where you go and enroll in a community college course, or you take an academic program somewhere, or even you find some online step-by-step tutorials that you might follow, and you could probably teach yourself to code. But what David is was he devoted eight weekends to this, that is how long it ended up taking, but he documented what happened as he was learning. And what he found was that not one particular online course was meeting all his needs, and so as he is talking about learning, he is also talking about how to use the available resources to your advantage. For instance, he will say things like, "If you use the ACNE course, you want to do those in order and be sure not to skip the introductions. But if you use the BETA course, then you can skip around, but be sure you print out the job aids." So he followed steps A, B, C, D, and that is the explicit part of learning, but his commentary and the second part of that are more of, "But this is really how I got this done. I didn't just sit down and follow Course A all the way through. I jumped around and I skipped around, and sometimes I went to Course B." And I think that is how our days go mostly.

Connie: So it's the knowledge that we get through our experiences, and we almost never even think of stating it. There is just this internal knowledge that makes an expert an expert that is almost never stated.

Jane: Explicit is how we do things, but tacit is often how we get things done. Here is another example. We had a guy in our office by the name of Radar O'Reilly, and he knew everything before anyone else knew it, and he knew what you needed before you needed it. He was very good at that kind of thing. We had that guy in my office. He was our budget guy, which is a huge deal. In a state government if you can have an employee who understands how all the purchasing and stuff works, you were way ahead of the game. Because it is labyrinthine, if you've got an employee who gets it, you're doing really well. His name is Grant, and he is still around, but Grant knew how to get a check cut on a day that they didn't do that. Grant knew who you needed to talk to if you wanted to try to get the Vendor Demo in the next day, or if you wanted to get the educational pricing, or if you wanted to extend the free trial. Grant knew how to do all that stuff like in his sleep, and it was magic. But he had a boss who was always at odds with him, I think she was a bit jealous actually. When we heard Grant was leaving – and

he has been promoted about ten times since, he has had a very good career since she left us – she had Grant sit down and write down what he did. So Grant leaves and she sits down and looks at it, and he did write down exactly what he did, but she can't replicate that. Because a lot of what he did was you need to go and be nice to Jennifer a couple of times a month so that when you need something from her later she'll do it for you. A lot of it was social connections, it was networking, it was doing somebody a favor once a while to get what you needed when you needed a favor later. It's not the stuff you write down.

Think about a new hire orientation program where the employees come in, and we talk about dress codes, and help them fill out insurance forms, and we tell them how they're going to get paid, and all of that kind of stuff, that is not how we learn in the workplace. Which boss can take a joke, which coworkers makes promises they never keep, who knows how to troubleshoot the printer when nobody else can ever seem to the thing to work, that's tacit things that you learn by working and living in the world, not so much explicit stuff anybody is going to sit you down and tell you.

Connie: Can you imagine an orientation for new employees that told real stuff? That would be funny.

Jane: Orientation-- that is what we call the sacred story, and life is what we call the real story. We are great at documenting the explicit, and I think it doesn't prove very useful a lot of the times. Anybody could tell you about the time an employee left an organization, and we had lots of documentation about what they did, but the new person could not begin to replicate that work.

Connie: Therefore, one of the benefits of people showing their work in the workplace and telling people how they really do things is for succession planning, so when those people leave other people will be able to do the same things. What are some other benefits in the workplace?

Jane: For the organization, it surfaces common issues. Managers, especially higher up, don't realize how often the same questions are getting answered across the span of their organization daily, over and over and over. All of us have had the frustration of finishing a project and then finding out somebody had already done it. Many of us have had the problem of struggling to learn something or to execute something or get something done, and find out later that somebody in another building has a degree in that. By servicing this a little bit better, we can help the talent pools in an organization to connect, we can help surface who really has expertise, which may not be somebody in

a formal hierarchy. The guy down in the basement, like the code monkey, may very well know something that nobody else does and is struggling with.

Atul Gawande does a lot of medical writing, he has written several good books, including *Complications*, and a new book on mortality, end of life stuff, which is quite good. He publishes his essays in *The New Yorker* before they're collated and then published as books. One of the things he talks about was an example in a hospital where it turned out the solution was something that the janitor knew, but nobody ever thinks to talk to the janitor. So by making it a little more explicit, we can surface some of the stuff nobody thinks to mention or they don't think it's their place to mention, or we don't realize that what we know might be relevant to somebody else's issue.

Connie: There are so many benefits that it seems crazy not to do this, not to find ways to do this. But I know that people must have concerns, and the concerns are what if I let people see what I am doing, or our work proprietary, etc.

Jane: I have that come up every time I do a presentation on this. I find that when we are talking about a new idea or a new approach – and this has applied for many years to things like eLearning tools and social tools – people have very much this all-or-nothing response to a suggestion of doing something a little different, like, “Well, everything I do is proprietary.”

For one thing we need to talk about what to share where. I don't need for you to be tweeting every minute of the day about every pencil you sharpen. “Oh, I had to sharpen eight pencils, I don't know why they're going flat. We just decided to go with a number four lead, instead of a number two.” Nobody cares. So you do need to decide which things need to only be shared with your boss, which things need to be shared with your work team, which things can be shared with the whole unit, and then radiating out into concentric circles.

There are some things that you should probably not be putting anywhere electronically. There are some things that might be worth sharing just internally, and you need to have both the judgment and some explicit decisions about what is appropriate to share where. My example of that is that a number of years ago the Governor's office – and I'm not all that, they just have heard I'm a write, I do books, so they call me once in a while for a stuff, and it was the past administration, it's not our current Governor – the Governor's office called me and they were just on fire about having to have a code of conduct right away for all state employees, which is code for, “We've got a sandal which is about to hit the papers.” So they had drafted this thing that had seven points on it,

seven behaviors, but I want you to think about the State government workforce. We have kindergarten teachers, highway patrolmen, doctors at the hospitals, prison guards, healthcare technicians, social workers, people who work at the department of revenue, we have everybody in the State government workforce, so when you want to do something that's for all of them, it becomes a really challenging task to make that relevant. I don't know that it is even possible, but we like to do it every now and again.

So they sent me this document that had these seven key points, and it was okay, they had a done a draft, but one of the points was professionalism, and it is extremely difficult to nail down a definition of professionalism that works for everyone, and it is a difficult conversation for managers to have, it is a really vague term. I already saw the problems with this, I had dealt with this for years with performance management to process this stuff, so I set up a shared Google document, I tweeted it and I said I need help with a project for the Governor's office, I need a definition for professionalism for the entire workforce. Can anybody help me out? I went to work on the rest of it, and I checked in an hour later, and people like Dave Ferguson, Jason Molinsky, Simon Fowler, and a few others had popped on and drafted out this fabulous definition of professionalism.

And one of them talked about the Latin roots of the word, one of them talked about the Latin roots of the word, and it was all over the place, and I said could you come up with a consensus on this, can you get me one final answer. And I know it's long for a podcast, but I want to read you what they did. This is the definition of professionalism I want you to think about a definition for our entire workforce is going to be just one of seven points on the front of page. Professionalism:

“Approaching work in the spirit of collegiality, commitment and accountability. Putting in an honest day's effort while caring about the work and working towards successful accomplishment of it. Doing things well even under challenging circumstances, and carrying out our work because it is the work we accepted to do.”

Very good. I couldn't have done this. So this is what happened, I put that verbatim, I finished up the rest of the document, I put their point verbatim in there, I thanked them on Twitter, I sent it across the street to the Governor's office, I never heard another word.

And that is another benefit. All of us have also worked on stuff that, for one reason or another, ended up dead in the water, and it just sits in a folder somewhere. So you do this work and nothing happens with it, apparently this scandal went away or it wasn't

going to be in the paper or what have you. I used this as an example in a presentation a year later. I was in Chicago presenting this, there was a fellow in my audience from Australia, and on Monday he sends me an email and says, “Jane, I love the quote about professionalism. I made it into a poster for our break room. I hope you don’t mind.”

Back to your question, when you talk about what to share where, there is no reason for me to keep that story a secret. There is nothing proprietary, there is nothing about patent research, there is nothing embarrassing for my organization, and it is fine to share that. And the worst that can happen is that somebody else might have use for it.

And that brings us to something else, and you mentioned this in the questions you had me ponder, and it was about why people share. One of the things I ran into back in my dissertation research were ideas around the problem of a tension between the organization that believes they own our brains, they own everything in our brains like little pieces of data that can put into a spreadsheet and retrieved later. Whereas employees for the most part, about most things, tend to view knowledge as something for the public good. So when Jane spent an afternoon creating this thing that ended up not getting used, why wouldn’t Jane let somebody else use it? There are organizations that are like, “We paid for that. That’s intellectual property. You did that on our work.” Well, so what?

Back to my point of we’ve all struggled to work on something and found that it was already done, or we had to struggle to learn something and found that somebody knew it, I think the employees’ perspective on that is why in the world would I need to keep all that to myself? Whereas some of the organizations feel like we should keep that all private and internal and secret. In my case, the worse that could happen is somebody else can use the thing. Also, I work for government, and we’re supposed to be transparent, so that’s a little different for me too. But share it appropriately and judiciously, and remember the fact it can be shared doesn’t mean it should be. Again, we don’t want everybody sharing everything they do. A good rule of thumb is who else could learn from this, who else might want to know about this?

Connie: That’s a good rule of thumb for the whole proprietary thing. Also why people are motivated to share what they know. On the eLearning Coach site, when I write a case study article, I know that it’s going to help people to learn from my mistakes, or to learn how I got something done very quickly. What do you think it is that motivates people to show what they know?

Jane: I had to work on this, it took me a long time to learn it, I had to learn it the hard way, I think I could save somebody else the trouble. I would turn the question back to why in the world would people make 80 million YouTube videos about patching a dry wall, or fixing the mixing the mirrors on the their cars, or knitting. Every time I ask people what they've learned from YouTube, I get knitting answers. Something about, "I know how to do this, I'm proud that I learned it, I want to share it," I think it speaks to all of that. But we also have people – and I hope that they are moving out of the workforce, I see less of it as the years go by – we have people who hoard that. "I know it, and I'm not going to tell anybody. If I tell you, then you can do it, then I won't look so special." So I do think there is an underbelly to it, or a darker side to it with people who don't share or people who do hoard or withhold information that would be useful to the rest of us.

But I think we're also seeing the end of what we used to think of as expertise. In my organization we've had folks who have been jobs literally for 40 or 45 years, who have been regarded forever as the go-to. If you have the question about this policy, this person is the go-to on that. We're reaching an age where everybody just cannot manage all the information, we can't expect one person to effectively hold everything there is to know about something anymore. So figuring out how we can document it better and share it better is a challenge. But I would argue that most people who share what they know have a sense of pride about it, or had to learn to something and want to share it, or want to save somebody else the trouble. I think a lot of it altruistic, and maybe we've just not used to thinking about that in those terms, "I'm doing this because I think somebody could learn from it."

Connie: Yeah, why have somebody else go through the hell that you just went through.

Jane: But I'll tell you what I find confounding, I go to YouTube and see people who make 80 million videos about how to do a particular stitch for a sock, or how to fix the dry wall, or how to fix the plumbing, they do that all the time in their free time, they do that all the time when they're home, but they don't think to do it at work. And I don't know what it is about work that has it so programmed that we don't stop and say, "I should take picture of that," or "I should make a little quick video about that." But we do it at home without even thinking about it.

Connie: That's so funny. Another reason why people may not want to share what they know is because they might be scared that someone else might take their job.

Jane: Yeah. And I think you would see that in an atmosphere or culture where there is a lot of competition, like where you've got sales people who are competing against each other for sales prizes and stuff, they would not want to tell somebody else how they closed a sale or how they overcame an objection, because that could be used against them, and somebody could steal their job or their sale.

But before I move on, I did want to say about the issue of we don't think to do it at work but we do it at home all the time. Virgin Media recently bought Snagit for the entire workforce so that they could do this more easily, and they made it almost seamless for them to do that in the workflow, which is also one of the challenges, we just don't think to stop and take a picture of our desktop. And I do, I have more than I can manage actually, I use Snagit way more than I use any other tool I have.

But I do think that there are situations where we have individuals or organizations that are not with this whole sharing this. So I try to use even different words when I can. We went round and round about the title for the book, a popular phrase is 'working out loud', and I've had a lot of pushback from senior management about that, "It just sounds like more noise, it just sounds like more of that social stuff." So I try to talk about knowledge transfer, knowledge management, tacit, explicit. I try not to use too many words like 'sharing', because it seems to create this bristling amongst certain people who somehow think that won't be professional, or it's too touchy-feely, or what have you. And if they're bristling at the word 'share', that tells you something.

Connie: They need to go back to kindergarten. The interesting thing about working out loud is the metacognitive state that it promotes. Because when you narrate what you're doing, it makes you become more aware of the mental processes that you use, it brings forth your tacit knowledge, and in a way it makes you smarter about what you're doing, because it all becomes more conscious. Have you heard from people that they experience this?

Jane: I've heard from people that they experience it, but I will tell you even better than that. There was a study at Vanderbilt in 2008, involving four and five year olds, divided into three groups. They were given a pattern matching test that involved colored bugs or dots, and the children were to predict what the next color sequence would be. The first group of children were told to just state their answer, the second group was told to state their answer and think about why they chose that, and the third group were told to state their answer and explain to their mothers why they thought that would be the next bug. Which groups do you think did better on subsequent tests?

Connie: Yeah, I know the answer, the working out loud group.

Jane: Articulating our decisions helps us learn. And that is really critical. I see it all the time, and I'm sure you do too when we do conference presentations, people are very frustrated. Say a designer designing an eLearning program is very frustrated about why they have to spend a lot of time arguing about the color of an avatar sweater, or why we don't want to have 500 multiple choice questions, they aren't very good at articulating their work. And they get frustrated because they can't help stakeholders understand. So learning how to talk through that, learning how to explain the rationale, learning enough about learning theory or about how adults learn can help you explain that to those stakeholders, but until you can rationalize your decision, all you're saying is, "Because I said it's wrong." Learning to articulate why we do the things we do can help us learn from that.

One of the examples in the book I think is fascinating is from one of the Basecamp people, with 37 Signals, who writes this long, eloquent blog post about why he chose a particular font, which is something the rest of us can't begin to appreciate, and basically his rationale was, "I didn't want my readers to just see text rendered on a screen, I wanted them to have an elegant reading experience." It is very nice, but it is something the rest of us probably don't ever give any thought to, and we certainly don't think it would be worth the whole blog post, but it's fascinating to read his thought process. And if more of us could explain why we do some of the things we do, or why we chose this path versus this other, it would help us learn, and it would help others learn from it.

Connie: What are some tools that you've come across that are common for people to use when they're sharing their work?

Jane: First of all I want to say there may not be any tool at all. You may just be in a staff meeting and explain how you got this check cut on a day when they don't do that. It may not involve any technology at all, it may just be talking to each other about something. But the conversation shouldn't be, "Here's a list of things I did last week." The conversation should be, "This is a problem I had to really wrestle with," or "This is something that ended up being hard to solve," or "This is something I was able to get done," or "This is something I had to learn in order to get this done." It shouldn't just be, "I made six calls and answered 43 emails and went to four meetings." Our problem now is that we spend way too much time sharing information that actually isn't of any use to anybody. So it doesn't have to be technology, and I can't emphasize that enough.

But when I look at technologies, I don't know that there's one I would recommend. What I do recommend is choose the thing that makes sense. If you're repairing a machine, it would make sense to do something visual, like use some photo-sharing something, or a video-sharing something that would let you put it there. Trying to write out how to fix the bicycle tire, without taking pictures, brings us right back to the problem with explicit vs. tacit. We aren't really good at writing down what we do, we aren't very good at that. So if it is something very visual, figure out how to make a visual of it.

One of my concerns about a lot of our conversations in the last few years about social tools and sharing is that so many of the tools have been text-based, they are blogging, or they are wikis, or they are even Facebook for a long time, and certainly LinkedIn even now is heavily text-based entries where you type a status update. Twitter is the same way. Those things may have photograph capabilities, but it is not overwhelmingly what they are. And I want to be sure that we are not excluding people in our workforce who have something to say but who may not be the best writers.

And I don't mean to over-generalize, but in my work we have perhaps a quarter to a third of our workforce is food service workers, housekeepers, grounds keepers, guys who work on the roads, and they're not going to sit down and write reflected essays about how they chose this grade of gravel or whatever. Choosing tools that include them easily, like a simple place to upload photos or videos, using a tool that lets them post by voice, being able to do just do a quick audio update, would be very freeing and enabling for a number of the number of people who maybe are being excluded or marginalized now. If it makes sense to just make a quick audio comment, do that. If it makes sense to draw a picture, do that. If it makes sense to write a longer blog post, do that. But choose the technology that works for the situation.

A while back Alison Michaels, who was with Yammer, said that sometimes late, like on a Thursday when everybody was cranky and tired anyway, she would just pop up a message on Yammer that said, "Quick, what's everybody doing right now?" And it gave her an excellent snapshot of everybody's day in a way that you're not going to get from a status report. This was really interesting. I tried it one day at my office, I said, "Quick, what's everybody doing right this second?" It turned out that six out of eleven of us were basically answering the same question from the same client who had called up and down the hallway, and it was a very illuminating moment. And in that case the tool that surfaced out was something that was quick for instant messaging, it would probably not have ever come in a meeting, it would not have come up if we had been blogging. So having an arsenal or a toolbox with different tools, or having a good, robust tool that you're using makes sense, but do the thing that works for the task and for your

organization. I'm really interested lately in the photography tools, the Flickr and the Pinterest. I did one of the most popular social tool things I have ever done in my whole career, it was a Pinterest board called "Your First Day."

Connie: Yeah, you did show that to me. I loved it. I showed it at presentation.

Jane: Hands down, that is runaway the most popular thing I've ever done. It has been copied and replicated and remade, and it took me five or six minutes to go around our building taking pictures.

Connie: Can you explain to everyone what it is, because it's so cool.

Jane: We have a building that has a lot of hallways and corridors, and it's confusing if you're new there. So I created a Pinterest board, and the first screen is a map of where we are, the second screen is that you need to walk in. And then this is Vanessa and there is a picture Vanessa. And you will ask Vanessa for a parking pass. And then you wait in our lobby, and there is a picture of the lobby. And there is a picture of our Director who you meet with sometime that morning. And there are pictures of the classrooms and the break room and basic directions through the building. But the point is that it took me five minutes. And it is a link we can just send out now ahead of time and say, "This is what to expect when you come," and nobody has to keep replicating that information, and it's very visual, and people get a sense of what the physical space really looks like, they get a sense of our attitude towards it, we are not very stuffy and formal, we are not all in neckties, we are pretty business-casual. And you can see a lot just from pictures.

Connie: My first thought when I saw it was that this would make me feel so much more comfortable and less nervous on my first day at work.

Jane: One of the common uses I'm hearing is that schools are using it for their substitute teachers, so that they can see what the layout is, where is office, where the break rooms are, stuff that somebody may not always think to tell the subs.

Connie: When you see people showing their work, because now you've researched this a lot, have you seen some common mistakes that we should avoid?

Jane: No. [laughter] I saw your question about that and I meant to say let's drop it. I have not seen disasters, I haven't seen mistakes. Again, the mistake is that we don't

think to do it. I will say it again, we will stop and take a picture at home, we will stop and make a video, but we don't do it at the office, and I don't know why.

Connie: I guess you're trying to change that culture. My final wrap-up question to you is how do you think an organization can change its culture so that it promotes the value of showing your work and encourages employees to do it?

Jane: We've said this about every change we talk about, senior management needs to do it. There is a fellow who runs a PR firm, who does his own blog where he talks about this is what is going on at work, and one of the best posts he has ever put up was about why he changed his mind about something. "I know that I said this a few months ago, I've thought about it, and this is what I'm thinking now, and it's why we're going to change what we're doing." Management doing more of that, you end up with a much more trusting and engaged workforce. If they feel like you're talking to them and you're working with them, and you're not just dictating from above. I think there are a lot of advantages there. We should recognize when people are doing it and say that it has value. I was the first person in my organization to put screen shots in a weekly report, and nobody knew what to make of it, but they were like, "Wait a minute, this is actually very useful, look what Jane did." It was a screenshot from a webinar where a lot of people had helped me generate answers on a whiteboard, and it was the answer to one of their questions.

Connie: So far what you're saying is that, one, get senior management to buy into it and to practice it, and, two, start doing it and show how?

Jane: Start making it more public, start putting it in a weekly report, even though you're not told that you have to. A really common phenomenon in the medical world is what's known as M&M (Morbidity and Mortality) conferences. It is a standard practice where basically the doctors get together periodically in a meeting – it's not public it's just back to who shares what when – to talk about cases where someone died, and what went wrong, and what they would do next time. They're very upfront about it, they're very honest with each other about it, they talk through it together. And I just wonder if doctors can do that, why the rest of us think we can't. If that's such an accepted practice in medicine, where you would think they would sweep all of that under the carpet when they could, if they're that explicit there, why is it that we're hesitant to do it elsewhere? I don't know what we have to do to get a culture where people can sit together and say I worked on this and it was a struggle, and I think if I did it over I would change it, what are your ideas? We're so desperate to hide mistakes and shortcoming and I-don't-knows. I don't know what the answer to that is. Some organizations naturally are going

to lean more towards this than others. So I would say try to leverage what you are where you are, start doing it, and let the people around you see that the world keeps turning when you do it.

Connie: I understand how management needs to get involved, but even just at a peer level, people can start doing it for each other?

Jane: One of the problems is when it moves from, “Wouldn’t this be cool and we should do more of this,” to “We’ve got regiment, and control, and program it.” I was doing this for ATD meeting several months ago and someone came up and said, “We have told our people we expect them to share something every Tuesday, and they don’t do it.” Really! Talk about missing the point! It’s not supposed to be every Tuesday, it is supposed to be the day I have really work to figure something out, or the day that I realize it took me a long time to learn it, or the day that something didn’t go according to plan and this is how fixed it. Most of us we talk all the time about knowledge workers in this business, and the reason we are knowledge workers is because most of what we do is exception handling. If we were doing things by rote, step-by-step every day, they wouldn’t call us knowledge workers, they would just call us assembly-line workers. So recognizing when we are handling those exceptions and making useful notes for someone else or for ourselves for later would be one way to think about it.

Connie: That I think is the only mistake that I have heard you mention, which is forcing people to do it.

Jane: I need to be fair, I haven’t been looking for that. I’m sure somebody shared something they shouldn’t have, I’m sure somebody shared something publicly that they weren’t supposed, and I’m sure that’s happened, but probably way more is the cost of not doing it and the mistake of not doing and the expense of re-work and duplication of effort and frustration that comes from people not showing their work when it would be useful.

Connie: And that is a perfect final statement, Jane Bozarth.

Jane: Thank you, Connie.

Connie: Thanks so much for giving us your time, Jane.

Jane: Absolutely. Thank you for having me. Always a pleasure.

Connie: I hope you enjoyed the podcast. I wonder if you were thinking of ways that you can help create a sharing culture in your workplace. What would you share? You can leave comments about showing your work, and get the show notes at thelearningcoach.com/podcasts/23. Thanks for listening. Take care, and I'll talk to you next time.