

Ep.2 eLearning platforms and how to pick the best option

[00:00:00] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:00:00] Good morning, good evening, good afternoon, whatever time you're listening to this podcast. Welcome to the Talking Tech for Good podcast powered by the Bertha Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship in collaboration with Capacitate, we're passionate about helping you understand the possibilities of tech and social impact organizations.

[00:00:23] Never have we had to adapt so quickly and I know this can be very helpful. We're here to have conversations onto some pertinent questions, and hopefully we can all move towards harnessing the power of tech for a better world. Welcome

[00:00:36] **Jason Bygate:** [00:00:36] Welcome to another episode of Talking Tech for Good with myself, Jason Bygate and my cohost Luvuyo Maseko. [00:00:43] This is the second episode in a pilot series we're doing on how technology can be used for good specifically in social benefit organization.

[00:00:51] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:00:51] Jason and I have years of experience working in this space and in my case specifically in youth development, and we saw a need to create [00:01:00] conversations and helped create resources to help organizations adapt and transform in the ever-growing digital landscape we find ourselves in. The reality of tech and migration can be a scary one for organizations and in episode one of this podcast, we explore the concept of digital migration and e-learning, If you missed that episode, do take a listen, today, we're going to delve a little bit deeper into how to identify the right e-learning platform for your organization.

[00:01:30] How do you make sure that you're picking the right solution? How do you go about making those decisions and what are some of the do's and don'ts from people who have walked this road already?

[00:01:40] **Jason Bygate:** [00:01:40] Thanks Luvuyo. Something that excites me about the guests that we're getting on this podcast is that they're knowledgeable, have firsthand experience and are willing to share their wisdom and experiences with us and our listeners. [00:01:52] What are some of the challenges that you've seen organizations dealing with that are engaged in the whole e-learning platform and [00:02:00] digital transformation idea?

[00:02:01] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:02:01] You know Jason, maybe if I just take a step back then maybe directly talk to our audience, Jason and I obviously do some planning before this, this isn't all just off the hip. [00:02:11] Um, and in thinking through one, this question, I was a little bit stumped and the reason for that is because we have an audience, all of whom have different needs and all of whom are looking to take out something specific from this conversation and discussion. So how do you create a sort of discussion that's both generic and contextual enough to make sense.

[00:02:33] And I think for me, the easiest way to think about it is to break everything down into two parts. So, there's backend and there's front end. Right. And if you, if you follow me on that sort of trail of thinking on the front end, particularly within this African context, one, can't look outside of the issue of data and connectivity.

[00:02:53] I'm assuming that a lot of the people listening in operate in situations and environments where data is an issue. [00:03:00] So one needs to think about always going for a platform that is as data light and user-friendly

as possible. And to understand which devices the platform will be compatible with. Um, from the backend again, just following my framing of the front end and the backend one also needs to think about the content.

[00:03:19] Do you go with a platform that has content already on it that can meet your objectives in a similar way? Or do you go for platform that that is somewhat bare that allows you to create and implement your own sort of content? Uh, lastly, I think, one of the biggest issues revolve around people not being fully aware of the different elements that go into this process.

[00:03:42] There are so many different things to consider and the team it suits, I'd advise you ought to just have another listen to the podcast last week, its a canine and go to their website so you can get a little bit more information at this. They break it down in four ways. So the things you need to consider a cost design, content creation, student engagement and assessing learning. So, some organizations may pay too much emphasis on the content creation and not on the, the way in which learners are going to be assessed or in the student engagement or in creating a really cool design in terms of the course, but fall short on the content.

[00:04:20] So I think we, it needs organizations need to be aware of the different elements that are mutually reinforcing across this whole process. And, and, uh, and Jason, right back at you from a bird's eye point of view, what are some of the things that you've experienced or what, some of the things you've seen that organizations are struggling?

[00:04:39] **Jason Bygate:** [00:04:39] Thanks Luvuyo. Yeah, as the tech geek in me, certainly likes the analogy of the front end and the back end. Um, there's a number of different components to approaching this journey, um, certainly the experience of the users on the front, the ability to manage and, and deploy content and keep a [00:05:00] view of how it's being used. Um, and certainly the cost factors is really a considerable one within our South African

context. Um, I also like the idea of, um, taking a measured approach, um, as we discussed in the first episode, the idea that if you build it, they will come is, is certainly a flawed one and it's one that you need to consider when approaching this journey.

[00:05:26] Uh, COVID has accelerated the migration to online learning platforms for many organizations. And the challenge is really knowing what options there are, what's most suitable for our needs and how are we going to implement them? Most organizations have got really limited experience when it comes to technology and they're often under pressure to make a decision with those limited resources that you were talking about. So, I think it's, it's really about taking a measured approach, building out a foundation and a strategy that will guide you in the journey and [00:06:00] selecting the most appropriate solutions based on the users that you have and the context in which you're working.

[00:06:07] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:06:07] Thanks for that Jason, I always enjoy seeing your nerdy side to come out and, uh, there are a number of e-learning platforms available and I'm sure that there are many listeners who have engaged with some of these already. So, what are your options? Well, there are learner management systems like Moodle and Google, which outside of being really fun words to say our learning management systems that allow you to create the content you'd like to.

[00:06:34] And then there's also the option of a system plugin on a content management system, for example, WordPress or Drupal. And then the other platforms like Udemy, Skill share, edX, and Coursera, where the content is already developed by someone else. I guess one of the most important things to understand is what you're hoping to achieve with your e-learning strategy and then deciding from there, which platform works [00:07:00] best for you.

[00:07:00] **Jason Bygate:** [00:07:00] I think you're really getting to the crux of things there Luvuyo, aside from enjoying you say Moodle and Google. I think that, really the key is to be structured about the process and to look at what you actually need. Is it something that's off the shelf? or do you need something that's custom built or perhaps a combination of the two and most importantly, what are the cost implications? How do you ensure that you don't just create something in the hopes that if we build it, they will use it, but rather being clear about how you're planning on getting people to actually use the tools that you have in place and to learn using the systems that you have deployed?

[00:07:42] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:07:42] All great questions Jason, and something that we'll be discussing further with our guests coming up

[00:07:49] **Jason Bygate:** [00:07:49] Today, we're so excited to have Simone Peinke and Regan Jules-Macquet joining us for a conversation about e-learning platforms. Both of our guests have been working in the trenches, so to speak [00:08:00] and have some really valuable insights and wisdom to share. Unlike your hosts, they have a significant amount of knowledge that they're willing to share.

[00:08:07] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:08:07] A lot more, at least appropriate knowledge Jason. Simone wears a number of hats and is currently working on a few different projects within the DG Murray Trust. One of these being Jobstarter, Jobstarter is a team of young, vibrant individuals who are inspired by South Africa's potential. The team works to inform the youth through learning modules, work readiness assessments and connecting talent and potential employees free of charge.

[00:08:37] Regan is a consultant at NICRO, has a number of years' experience working in the social development sector in project management, research, monitoring and evaluation, media and marketing and program design and

development. NICRO is a national NGO that aims to build safer communities by seeking to address the impact of crime and violence on [00:09:00] victims, families, friends, and others through various community-based intervention.

[00:09:05] Welcome to you both and thank you so much for joining us. You've both been involved in your respective organizations in the digital space, and I'd love it. If you could share with us what that journey has entailed and how e-learning has become a significant part of your offering. Regan, let's start.

[00:09:23] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:09:23] So I think everything kind of gained momentum during COVID when there was so much pressure for organizations to migrate online and look at how they could take their face-to-face services digital. So that put a lot of pressure on the various organizations that I'm working with to look at online platforms, such as learning management systems and to start the process of taking their traditional face-to-face program offerings and convert that to a different format where people could complete their program requirements online.

[00:09:52] So it's been very interesting journey, challenging because for many of these organizations, this is a completely new space [00:10:00] and internal to their organization, they don't necessarily have the technical knowledge or experience to manage those processes. So that's really why someone like myself was brought in to assist with those processes. And I have worked on digital platforms before, so fortunately I was able to assess NICRO in this regard.

[00:10:18] **Jason Bygate:** [00:10:18] Thanks, Regan. Um, and what about you, Simone?

[00:10:22] **Simone Peinke:** [00:10:22] Okay, thanks. Jobstarter for young people is positioned as a, as a digital career coach. Um, for those looking to connect with opportunities, uh, we've always been an exclusively digital offering, um,

but in the last year so, the e-learning component has become a much stronger focus for us. Um, and so we now have this expanding repository of online learning that prepares young people for the world of work, but that also helps to flag competences, uh, to perspective employers. And for us as the e-learning component became a [00:11:00] stronger focus, uh, we realized that outsourcing the development and hosting of the e-learning, um, didn't really make sense for us, it didn't offer us the kind of flexibility and control that we wanted and it didn't appear a scalable solution. So, we started looking at different software options and like Moodle talent elements in Jimmy where some of the ones we looked at.

[00:11:24] Um, but we really wanted to reuse as much of our existing system as possible. Uh, while at the same time, creating the internal capacity to, to build the e-learning modules ourselves. Um, and so based on kind of where we're at, at the moment, uh, we've gone for quite a, quite a simple form builder, um, the price of structure and the integration options for us really made sense. They were highly competitive um, and I think from our experience, we found that form builders and survey tools can be great alternatives [00:12:00] to more traditional LMS options, um, but obviously that depends on how, how you plan on delivering your content, as well as kind of how much interaction you want to get, the individuals who partake in the e-learning.

[00:12:18] **Jason Bygate:** [00:12:18] Thanks, Simone. I think in listening to what the two of you have said and, um, really thinking about different organizations and the sorts of needs that they have. I think there are a lot of similarities, um, even in the beneficiaries that are being served, but there's definitely not a one size fits all approach to e-learning and platform selection in particular, uh, Regan, I know that you've done some extensive work before and deciding, um, how to go forward with a, an e-learning solution. So, when you are looking at those solutions for NICRO, perhaps you could share a bit

more about how you went about that process in selecting potential options, and then making the choice that best [00:13:00] fitted the organization itself.

[00:13:02] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:13:02] So I first started with landscaping exploration as to what was out there, both vocally and overseas. And there are a lot of learning management systems available at different price and categories, obviously the more affordable ones have less, less functionality. NICROs requirements are quite robust in that they refer; they work with people referred by court, so there's legal processes underway and there has to be quite a rigorous record keeping about, has a person completed their program? Are they compliant with their sentence? We need to show evidence that there's been some form of behavior change, at the same time we needed to make a platform accessible to people who in the most part of the majority of NICROs clients are unemployed.

[00:13:46] They don't necessarily have high digital literacy skills and they don't have access to data or very much data. So, we had to balance a lot of considerations when choosing the final platform. In the end, we went with Joomla LMS in terms of affordability, uh, and functionality. We felt it was our best bet.

[00:14:07] They were cheapest systems, but they had less robust reporting, less robust, um, group management because we have to secure people's privacy. So, we can't have one staff at one office being able to see the individuals' details of people at other offices. We had to work with restricted groups and have different levels of permission, different access levels within the staff.

[00:14:31] So Joomla LMS worked best for us in terms of affordability plus, um, giving us the functionality, we needed, but it was very difficult to go through all of the options available because there are just so many LMS aren't there,

but in the end, we were guided primarily by budget and by our operational requirements, in terms of privacy controls, reporting and data management.

[00:14:56] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:14:56] Simone, maybe if I can ask you here, perhaps the same question, what have some of the challenges that you've experienced in choosing the right platform and how did you go about selecting the right one for you?

[00:15:09] **Simone Peinke:** [00:15:09] Yeah, I think for us, the main challenge was determining whether to build a new system using open-source software or buy something off the shelf. Um, and for us, yeah, we, we were guided by questions around, you know, how many monthly users we wanted to reach, how many modules we wanted to develop, um, how we wanted the e-learning to integrate with our existing platform that had already been developed, uh, and, and also how important it was for us as a team to, uh, have the internal capacity to develop, uh, the e-learning without having to rely too heavily on external providers.

[00:15:47] And as was mentioned, there are so many options and so it can be quite an overwhelming, um, process. And there's lots of different pricing models, but there are so many free trials available and so [00:16:00] we rolled up our sleeves and got our hands dirty and tried as many options as we could and yeah, I'd strongly recommend for other organizations who are looking to, uh, to find an option that would work for them to do the same thing. It's, it's really the best way to figure out what's available, um, and, and out of those things, what, what would best meet your needs and your budget?

[00:16:24] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:16:24] And before I move on to my, to my co-host to the next question, how, how long did this take you to do that?

[00:16:31] To do some of the trial and error, to free trial, some of the, or rather to test some of the other options, Regan, you mentioned earlier, that uh,

COVID forced you guys to pivot and I wonder how long did, did, did it take for you to make that decision based on all the different options?

[00:16:48] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:16:48] So we would have started the process last year in about June and by August, we had made our decision and we're starting with the initial bold. So, it was very rapid and because the pressure was on, we had people referred to us by the courts who had to complete their programs, but obviously we were in lockdown, so we can't meet with people. So, we had to come up with a very rapid build solution. So, the people would not end up being non-compliant with the courts and we were able to vendor the services they needed online. So, we were under a lot of pressure, so, we worked very intensive, it was a number of people involved in that process. And, um, had it been in a different situation, we might've taken longer to go through, um, more options, but we're very happy with the one that we ended up going for. But, um, yeah, it took about two to three months to start and complete that.

[00:17:36] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:17:36] And Simone?

[00:17:37] **Simone Peinke:** [00:17:37] I think for us, the time requirement to find the right solution and to build something that works is a huge challenge. It's very time consuming and something we definitely underestimated initially was the amount of user testing and, uh, iterations that would be required. I think for us, a challenge has been that we, we target young unemployed people, you have a metric or less and so, as we mentioned earlier, the digital literacy levels and internet access, it's a huge challenge in that audience, um, and although our content and the e-learning was designed to be data light with plans to be zero rated at some point in the future, we know that data, also isn't the only barrier to internet access. So, a lot of our users also have challenges with network issues um, they may not have their own devices or they may not have devices that have sufficient capability that's conducive

to, to a quality e-learning experience and so we, in fact recently completed some research, looking at how our users experience the e-learning component of our platform and found that for a lot of young people, they arrive at our platform with this very urgent need to find paid job opportunities and so them coming to the platform with this urgent need for, for paid work, sits at odds with the time investment that's required to compete in e-learning process. And so, for us, the challenge has been how do we involve our users throughout the design and testing process to make sure that we're delivering something that they'll actually use and engage with, um, considering they coming many are coming to the platform at seeking out job opportunities that they want to access to immediately.

[00:19:37] **Jason Bygate:** [00:19:37] Perhaps I can come in this, Simone, and just, um, as we're talking about how users are engaging with your different platforms, um, how have you driven engagement on the platforms? You mentioned that there's a, there's a challenge in, in managing that urgency um, but how do you, how do you navigate that, that urgency? Um, as well as the continued engagement with the systems that are in place to ensure that there is this consistent engagement.

[00:20:03] **Simone Peinke:** [00:20:03] What we believe has helped to drive the engagement was the design process, um, which for us, it's taken almost a year now. Um, so we heavily involved users throughout the design and testing phases, um, and I think we've received through that process of just received so much valuable feedback and insight on user behavior, on small tweaks and changes that we would have overlooked in the initial design that help to engage, um, and capture the attention of our audiences.

[00:20:41] I think we all have so many inherent biases and so, designing with users is definitely one way to keep some of those in check and make sure you're building something that speaks to a user's preferences, um, and, and

not, and not to your own. Um, we've also seen and discovered through, through working with users over the past year, that for our audience, exclusively digital content, um, doesn't have the same levels of engagement and quality outcomes as a kind of blended learning approach, obviously with COVID this imposed a challenge, um, but we did have to think creatively around how can we, um, create some kind of blended learning model where some of the learning was, was self-directed online, and other components were done with the facilitator, yet it's still online through you through some kind of digital platform. And so, we found that that approach has really helped to drive engagement where there is some, um, where there's some more explicit and individual focus on the learner, combining that with having, you know, self-directed learning has been, yeah, one way we found has, has impacted positively on engagement.

[00:22:04] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:22:04] Your, your inputs have, have brought something to mind for me. And, uh, one of the future episodes, we would like to have a discussion around change management, but I think there's a lot of learning that we can, that we can get from you guys in this regard and how have you brought the staff along with this journey? Have you found that the change management on that side has been easy? Um, uh, has there been training that you've had to consistently provide to your staff to as well be comfortable with, with the new way of doing things?

[00:22:35] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:22:35] So NICROs experience was quite different because most of our staff are social workers and they are not used to working online. So there was a large organization, wide change management process that was ended and at the same time that we were building the system, we did a lot of staff development and capacitation. I still run a weekly demo session where people who want a refresher can just come and watch me demonstrate how to use the system.

[00:23:00] I also made videos that staff can watch in their own time and we started small, we started with a few of the offices and as they became comfortable, we bought more and more officers on board. And now we are at the stage where all of the participating officers have their own staff and maybe who is responsible for just overseeing how the office works on the MLS. I do the national level and just make sure everything's in place, but the officers are not at the stage where they can manage their own loading of clients, marking of assignments, downloading the court reports and, um, removing clients who've completed. So, it's been a process where we've been working in small stages.

[00:23:40] I didn't want to overwhelm the staff because everybody's overwhelmed at the moment. There's COVID, there's all of these things going on. So, we had to bring this in, in small stages, small, manageable stages, while still making adequate progress to meet our obligations to the clients and the courts that we work with. So, it was challenging, but I think we've been successful. Um, all of the staff that are using the LMS really do see the benefit of it. There was no resistance to using an LMS for online programming. The staff were very keen on that because it provided a solution to the problem of how do we work with these clients when you can't meet with them face to face.

[00:24:17] The only challenge was the own comfort levels. In working with the system, they have to monitor their kinds of progress online, they have to mock the client's assignments, they have to download the court reports and so forth. So, it was getting the staff comfortable in working with those tools, which I think we've, we've managed to do successfully, but it had to be planned and it was done in stages, says not to make the staff feel like I can't cope, there's just too much going on.

[00:24:41] **Jason Bygate:** [00:24:41] Yeah, thanks for raising that point Luvuyo, I think that's certainly there. It does help highlight the importance of the human component, because the technology in itself is not going to solve the problem. Um, and often when it comes to a system deployment, the problem can frequently [00:25:00] exist between the keyboard and the chair. So, it's really important to make sure that your, your staff and your team are on the same page and Regan, just in talking about that successful process on your side, if we're trying to support organizations that perhaps have less technical expertise um, then you guys have, um, both in terms of, um, the human resources, but also the technical components. How would you summarize perhaps some of the successes that you've experienced and then if you're happy to share some of the things that weren't so success when you were implementing the system, um, perhaps you can start with you Simone?

[00:25:42] **Simone Peinke:** [00:25:42] Perhaps to start with the successes, so, I think we'd have recently, just as, as I mentioned, we've recently completed, um, a user testing and design phase, um, over the last few months and we found that was really successful because of the valuable feedback we received that enabled us to, to reshape what we had originally booked, which, which was really exciting to actually see, see the product change as a result of the feedback we were getting. I think what made it a successful testing phase, um, is firstly, we collaborated very closely with our nonprofit organizations and I think this lent some credibility to the testing process. So young people were really engaging with it, uh, they trusted, you know, who we were because we were associated with an organization that they knew and trusted uh, but similarly, the nonprofit organizations were able to provide us with really valuable feedback that gave us a bit more of a nuanced understanding of the feedback we were getting from young people. So the other thing that made the testing and design phase successful was that we didn't go in with a kind of refined polished product. So, we used a very kind of

rough prototype for the testing and so the young people, I think, felt far more comfortable providing critical feedback on something that was clearly a work in progress.

Um, but also for us as an organization, the benefit was that we hadn't been invested a whole lot of money upfront in something that would need to be changed. And so, we were able to quite easily iterate and, um, respond to the feedback that we were getting in terms of, yeah, some of the challenges or, or failures that we have experienced, I think definitely initially it, it was not doing enough user testing and I think for many organizations, there's a practical limitation there, there's, there's a cost and time implication with testing that for many organizations just isn't feasible. And so, um, I think, you know, we, we understand that, but we've just seen the benefit of what, um, really extensive user engaged yields over, over kind of design process.

Um, I think linked to that, we, a mistake we made previously was, was also not appreciating the diversity of our audience. I think in South Africa, that there is, this perception that young and unemployed people are a pretty homogenous group and we just learning more and more that that's, that's simply not the case. Um, they have many different needs and motivations and, and approach e-learning very differently. So, for example, a young person who's just come out of matric, um, and perform quite well in school may be more inclined to complete an e-learning process because they don't have that same urgent pressure to find a job.

[00:28:50] And they've had a pretty positive experience with learning compared to someone who's perhaps been unemployed for a number of years and has had negative experiences with the education system. They, they are going to be a lot more difficult to try and, um, engage. And so, this, this realization for us has resulted in us doing a far more thorough segmentation of our existing audience so that we can try and create

e-learning that is more responsive to the different needs, uh, with, within our audience.

[00:29:25] **Jason Bygate:** [00:29:25] Thanks, Simone. Um, and from your side, Regan, what would be some of the successes and challenges that you would highlight in the journey?

[00:29:33] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:29:33] So from the successes side, I think the fact that NICRO was able to make that transition within a relatively, very short space of time and do so successfully is a major success because it was the first time, I'd ever done anything online, and the whole organization came on board and fully supported it. So, I think that is a major success. It was such a happy day when we got our first client to successfully complete their program online, everybody got very excited. And I think the other successes are that we, as Simone mentioned to ongoing user testing, before we make a program live, it goes through user testing by staff to check for language levels and comprehensibility and all of that.

[00:30:14] And then each person you complete the program on the LMS evaluates, not only the program, but the LMS experience itself. We did a three-month review and we made some changes to the way we do the programs and we've got the six months review coming up soon. One of the things that maybe were not so successful is we focus very much on the data issue and we wanted to make the system lightweight. So initially offers few programs did not have any audio. It was just text and our reason for doing that by adding audio to a video, you make the file size larger, so you'll be consuming more data, but the feedback we got from the users at the three-month review was that it really does need to have audio to make it more engaging.

[00:30:57] So all of our programs going forward are going to have audio and then you're going to have to go back and redo the earlier programs and add

audio to that. The only other challenge I think was overestimating the average NICRO client's digital literacy skills, a lot of the social workers were like, no, my client can definitely manage the system, no problem and then we found that many of them could not. So now the social workers as a screening, more carefully, when they do the, um, client intake to find out, is this person actually going to be able to do their program online or are they just saying they'll do it because they don't want to come into the office.

[00:31:32] So we're being more selective now about the people we load onto the LMS than previously, and that I don't think is a bad thing, but we do need to look more broadly at digital literacy skills across the board, so more people can access these online opportunities because having to come into the office places a time burden, it exposes people to potential risks and there's the cost involved in transport. So, to make things equitable and accessible, we really do need to look at the board levels of digital literacy in South Africa because there are these opportunities online, and many people just can't access them because they don't, they're not comfortable using what is not a complicated system, but still, they're just not comfortable working with things online.

[00:32:18] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:32:18] Thanks guys, and, uh, just to the audience, I think you guys can get us into why we were just so excited to have both Simone and Regan join us because the learning's are really fantastic and it's just practical, recent experience as well as we move towards the end of the discussion. I just maybe I'll start with Regan this time, um, what, what would your advice be to organizations? Either looking to incorporate e-learning platforms in their offer? Or those who have already, perhaps started on that journey.

[00:32:50] **Regan Jules-Macquet:** [00:32:50] I'll talk first to those that are thinking about it, don't be intimidated by the process as much as it may be

something new and completely unfamiliar, do it in small steps, work with, as Simone suggested the trial versions of what's out there so that you can get used to these kinds of systems and each system does things differently, some are easier to us, others are more robust and complicated. There are also free platforms like Google classroom that you could possibly use. So, just get out there and start experimenting and put something up and test it and see how it works. I think a lot of organizations see the value in it, but just don't know how to start because they've never done it. Just get out there, have a go at it and put something up and get feedback on it and take it from there to start the process.

[00:33:37] For the established organization, constantly review, get feedback, tweak it. It's an ongoing process, revisit how you, you bulge all programs, the learning content, remember that you contact offline content like traditional program manuals, and then just copy and paste that over into slides and make that online learning. You have to convert your content to much simpler language, um, very condensed key learning point. So, our online version of an offline program actually looks very different from the offline program, the one that's typically done face to face, there's a lot less text, but the key learning points are there. So, you can't just copy and paste, you have to actually convert your content and make it simpler, more accessible, change the language, remember you're not going to have a facilitator guiding people through the process, so your colors or images or language needs to be as engaging and attention holding as possible.

[00:34:33] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:34:33] Thanks for that and, um, and over to you now Simone.

[00:34:37] **Simone Peinke:** [00:34:37] The first thing from my side would be to know your audience and their contexts and engage them, um, as much as possible in the, in the process, as well as the curriculum developers that you're

working with. Um, start really simple, as Regan mentioned, use prototypes, as much as you can, use free tools where you can to test, don't invest too much upfront and I think importantly, don't assume that the best, fanciest tech option is the best solution for your audience. Um, it sometimes might be quite as simple, um, technological response that's required that that doesn't look as fancy or exciting, but it meets the needs of your users. Um, collaborate with organizations as much as possible.

I think there are other, uh, organizations who are ready, perhaps creating content that works really well on a similar topic to see where you can collaborate, it is an expensive exercise, um, it is a time-consuming exercise. And so, where, where possible, I think collaboration with, with other partners is, is a really great way to try and streamline costs and, and efforts. um, and I think, look at the research. I mean, there's a lot of information and research available on how to use, um, e-learning in, you know, for social impact, uh, there, there are lots of examples of, of, you know, where, where it's worked really well and equally from, from what hasn't and I think as, as a bit of a plug for this conversation listened to these types of podcasts, I think it's really great to, um, hear from what people in the South African context are doing, what's worked for them and what hasn't, which is really, really helpful,

[00:36:27] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:36:27] Some really valuable insights there, really highlighting the importance of doing the groundwork well, when it comes to e-learning and digital transformation, I really enjoy that. In our next segment, we take some of your questions on tech, specifically on e-learning platforms and we'll do our best to answer them.

[00:36:46] **Voice note:** [00:36:46] I think what's really been amazing about e-learning platforms is how, especially during the pandemic, how they've allowed organizations to move their content and learning materials online, and specifically to actually scale up, how many people they're able to reach

and I think that's been amazing to witness and sort of the pivoting and the learning that organizations are having to do during this period has been in leaps and bounds. However, in the work that I do, some of the gaps that I see is that for a lot of organizations, there might not necessarily actually be the resources to be able to deliver really high quality online learning platform experiences, whether it's for the students or for their beneficiaries who are participating in online programs, because often when you're delivering or designing an online course, you actually end up taking more time and more resources to be able to deliver the same, if not a higher level of quantitative learning for participants.

[00:37:48] And I think what I'm curious about is what mechanisms or resources or support systems are they for organizations to be able to build the internal capacity so that they can actually continue to scale up their learning management systems, but also to ensure that they're reaching more people, but at the same time to ensure that what they're doing and what they're delivering is of a good enough and high-quality standard.

[00:38:14] **Jason Bygate:** [00:38:14] Yeah, that's a great question. I think the pandemic has certainly accelerated the urgency of driving change within the way that programs are delivered and organizations operate. I think it's also, what's primarily motivated us on this podcast is to provide some of those resources to help organizations navigate that digital transition or that migration into the use of e-learning and other technologies and delivering programs. And in particular, supporting youth transition. I think for me, one of the key learnings off of some research that I've done and also in working with lots of different organizations is the fact that most organizations have not been investing in their own teams, they haven't been providing training, they haven't been supporting that internal development.

[00:39:05] So I think first and foremost, the starting point is to start focusing on that investment in teams to build out those skills, in terms of the resourcing as always the internet, as a wash with, with resources, um, simply going to Google as a great place to start in looking at how do I structure my e-learning process, how do I build content, sometimes when it comes to searching online, it's just about how you phrase the question into the likes of Google or search engines like Google. And I think just in some of the comments that we heard from our guests today, um, that willingness to try new things and being willing to fail forward, uh, I think there's a real reluctance to try something new and, uh, unless we're, we're willing to accept those failures where we're not going to learn.

[00:39:59] **Voice note** [00:39:59] Does the use of, um, an e-learning platform require a lot of data from the person who would be using it?

[00:40:12] **Jason Bygate:** [00:40:12] Luvuyo, I think we can take this one together, I think the answer here is how long has a piece of string. So, I think there's, there's, it really depends on what content you're, you're going to post, um, through your, your learner management system. Um, what has your experience been in this Luvuyo?

[00:40:29] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:40:29] Pretty much the same, um, it's dependent on the objectives you're trying to meet. I think as a principal, particularly in our context, one should always think about the data issue, uh, and particularly this is more on the curriculum or the nature of the content. So, is it videos as opposed to text, um, but as, as Jason said, how long is a piece of string? It, it is very much dependent on, on, on, um, what you're trying to achieve, but importantly, to say there are options for data light platforms or content as well as potential to get your data zero rated as well.

[00:41:08] **Jason Bygate:** [00:41:08] As we've said a few times now we really want to keep this podcast practical. So please feel free to send us your

questions via WhatsApp voice note to 076 397 2981, we'd love to hear from you and remember there are no stupid questions only stupid answers. So, so what now, how do you move towards the next steps in wrapping up this podcast? We wanted to share a few practical tips on how to get started.

[00:41:34] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:41:34] Now at the risk of starting to sound like we're repeating ourselves. My first point is strategy, strategy, strategy. I kind of feel a bit like a real estate agent saying location, location, location. So, if there's one thing you remember from this it's strategy, strategy, strategy, I think it's easy to leave this step out and want to drive straight in, but if you do this, it really does create a lot of challenges down the line or rather, if you don't prioritize the planning beforehand, Jason, what have been some of the key points for you to consider when considering strategy?

[00:42:10] **Jason Bygate:** [00:42:10] Yeah, I think you're a hundred percent correct there Luvuyo, planning really is a key component in starting out this journey and I think the guests have given us a lot more to think about, especially in terms of the process that they followed and the willingness to, to try something, to be willing, to fail, to be able to iterate and to build a momentum around the process. And for me, I always come back to one of my mantras, which is think big, start small, start now. And then recently I've added to that, which is, um, do it together, so really, we want to think about the big picture, start small and start with something that's accessible and affordable, start as soon as you can, because technology waits for no one and certainly the need is not going away. And then finally, you certainly, this was reinforced in the session today, we have to do it together, so what are the resources we can share with other organizations?

[00:43:15] What can we learn from other expert organizations and how can we help to deliver more impact by collaborating? Because there is, uh, an enormous need and the only way that we're going to start to address those

needs is by working together. Like we said, in episode one, it's not just about taking your existing content and putting it online. You really need to think about how you're creating and delivering your content and we'll dig into that and future episodes in particular, when it comes to generating and developing your own content. You can find more helpful resources at techtalk.org.za. and please be sure to check out our show notes of this episode, to find out more about these and other resources that we will have been just shared with you.

[00:43:57] **Luvuyo Maseko:** [00:43:57] That's all the time we have for today. Thank you for joining us for episode two of the talking tech for good podcast. Make sure you subscribe to this channel and share with anyone you feel could benefit. The more we talk about tech and really understand its benefit, the more we can go about harnessing the power of tech for a better world.