

Peter: Welcome everybody. I have as my guest today a very good friend of mine and partnership through the Business Learning Institute and really who makes the Business Learning Institute to move forward. I am very thankful to have been able to get on Pam Devine's calendar for one. So I am very appreciative of the fact that I have been able to grab you, hold you down here for a few moments and have a conversation from a conversation that we had just the other day. So thank you.

Pam Devine: Thank you Peter. I am really happy to be here with you today.

Peter: I am looking forward to this conversation because we briefly touched on it the other day when I said I would love to get this content out there to my audience and I'll let you do the talking but you were to tell me that you recently attended the Bersin conference and if you could inform the audience what is the Bersin conference, the background behind it and then what were the big takeaways you walked away with this year.

Pam Devine: Sure. Thank you. So let's back up a little bit and, and do an introduction to I guess me and the Business Learning Institute and what we focus on. As lot of people know the Business Learning Institute is an affiliate of the Maryland Association of CPAs, and we were formed 17 years ago as a result of, I know long time ago it seems like wow!

Peter: Wow!

Pam Devine: As a result of what we were hearing in the marketplace. We were out talking to CFOs and managing partners about onsite training and learning, and they said to us, "You know MACPA has really great technical training but what we really need and what the skills that are missing for our workforce are leadership, strategy, communication, the skills that make a better business professional. So over the last few years, leadership, strategy, communication has actually taken a forefront in the training areas in public companies, in

accounting firms and organizations of all shapes and sizes. And I and my team have had the privilege of attending some learning conferences, specifically the Bersin conference. Bersin is a division of Deloitte but does not focus just on accounting and finance learning. It focus on learning and HR in the greater market and there has been a lot of talk about the gap in the leadership pipeline. So we have 50 somethings in the marketplace, we have 20 somethings in the marketplace and the missing generation of talent are in their 30s and 40s. And there is a whole missing generation where we need from millennials to get up to speed in training and leadership learning is the most coveted job benefit there is. In this conference we heard that 83% of employees want to learn something every day. So the culture within an organization in order to really encourage millennials to stay, really should focus on learning. And there is a saying that “the learning curve is truly the earning curve”.

Peter: Oh! Say that again.

Pam Devine: So learn, the learning curve is the earning curve. Learning is what gives an organization a competitive advantage. So traditional learning and development is not just about skillsets but about really creating a culture within your organization to grow your business.

Peter: So, I love that learning is the earning curve but it maybe think about what Tom Hoods says about learning and you could repeat his famous saying.

Pam Devine: Yeah. So one of our friends here at the Business Learning Institute tells is that L must be greater than for people to see or in other words, your learning must be greater than or equal to the rate of change or change squared in your environment in order for an organization to compete in this rapidly changing environment.

Peter: And you guys have been using that example of L must be greater than, the learn has to be greater than the man has to change the marketplace for how many years now?

Pam Devine: Oh gosh! I can't even remember how long. We were early adopters in that space but right now as the shift in the marketplace is trending towards learning, we are seeing that it makes more sense than ever. In fact one of the statistics from Bersin was that leadership development spending grew by 14% last year.

Peter: Wow!

Pam Devine: Which is really great obviously for the accounting profession and for what we are trying to do at the Business Learning Institute.

Peter: I mean you have been with the Business Learning Institute since its inception. Correct?

Pam Devine: Yeah. That's correct.

Peter: That's correct. And if I remember correctly you have used, you started off part time.

Pam Devine: Mm-hmm.

Peter: And you developed the team and over those years you have really grown this business so much so that-by the way are, are you a CPA?

Pam Devine: No, I am not a CPA.

Peter: But you know that you have made a good person drive your, driving your business, who can sit across room from CPAs and basically talk their language to the point that they actually think that you are a CPA.

Pam Devine: Yes. So I know enough to be dangerous Peter. So my role here is to listen to our customers, listen to what they are talking about, listen to what's going on in the environment and bring resources that are a good fit for them and so I hear things about revenue recognition and lease and some of those technical topics. So I have been able to pull a few people a lot of the way into thinking that I am a CPA you know. Obviously I don't try to do that because I do not know, I really don't know what I am up to. I am just know enough to be dangerous, let's just put it that way. Okay?

Peter: But I think that is such a wonderful skillset that you are able to do that because basically you are speaking the language. You are talking to them in a way that connects with them even though you may not have the three letters behind your name or did all the, take the CPA exam but you know enough about your customer, you know enough about your, your clients, you know enough about the profession that you can have that conversation with them that you are not deemed or perceived to be an outsider.

Pam Devine: Oh thank you. I take that as a compliment.

Peter: Oh good. That's how it was meant.

Pam Devine: And, and I know enough to surround myself with really smart CPAs or really, really smart experts in their field that help me look good on occasion.

Peter: Oh, you make us all look good Pam. Trust me. So at this Bersin conference where you were talking about this leadership and learning and earning. What were some of the, I mean you were sitting there listening to this and I have already heard you tell them for an earlier podcast and I mean you guys are visionaries. You guys have been talking for this for long time. How does it feel when you are now hearing it as part of the mainstream that the we are gaining the understanding that the power of leadership, the power of communication skills are needed in today's workforce? But you guys have been talking about that for a long time.

Pam Devine: Yes. So, for me it's very, very exciting in terms of our ability at the Business Learning Institute to be truly customer focused and provide what the market is asking for. One of the big takeaways, and you and I talked about it last week was that, was the way Bersin talked about a learning architecture and how learning has changed from more than just education. Education is a instructor led training, on demand training, e-learning, is just a component of a learning environment, and they talked about four Es, and four Es that had to be in place in order for an organization to be, to have a truly competitive learning environment. And those four Es are education, exposure, environment and experience. And what hit me as an employee of an association, of a non-profit CPA association was that, that's exactly what the Maryland Association of CPAs is all about, in addition to what the Business Learning Institute is offering. So when I think of the association model, we are really set to be able to provide or help organizations create this learning architecture because we are all about exposure, environment, experience as well as the education piece, if that makes sense.

Peter: It, it does. Can, can you expand on the environment piece?

Pam Devine: Sure. So when I think of environment, I think of our environment here actually at MACPA. We have gone from a real traditional office space where we all had offices, where you could close the door and shut the door behind you when you are having a

meeting to a totally open environment. We are working today in an open collaborative environment where our CEO is sitting across from our CFO is sitting across from my sales team. So we are hearing each other talk, talk and, and respond to the market all day long, we are learning from each other and it's a collaborative, open learning environment that we are actually working in here at MACPA and BLI.

Peter: Just for the record, for the audience, they do have a private like phone booth type of room where you can have some privacy. So that's for Pam is right now versus out in the bullpen area. But as you are, we were talking about the environment and you were describing that which takes me now and thinking about firms. I know here in Columbus, I haven't seen it personally but I have heard others who have, where the EY office has been totally re-designed, somewhere in a very similar manner, much more open, much more collaborative, not the hard woods and the dark woods and all of that I grew up in accounting firm and what I was just presented at the client the other day, the EY office in Chicago hadn't had changed yet but PWC and I believe they say KPMG offices have moved into this more open type of environment. But how is Bersin tying that, that into the whole learning architecture? What, what does that the office openness do with learning?

Pam Devine: Well I think, I think they are talking about how people are learning from each other in teams, they are working in open teams, collaborative teams and so they are, they are exposed to people at different levels. So you may have a young millennial sitting next to a director and they are working together and teams and collaborating. So I think that's, that one thing they were talking about. So the learning environment itself has changed.

They also were talking about not just sitting in a standard classroom. So your learning environment can be a team base or in an environment it can be e-learning, it can be learning from a Twitter stream, that type of thing as well.

Peter: Well there is a difference between learning and CPA? Correct?

Pam Devine: Of course.

Peter: Because, I don't know maybe someday that whatever that person is working with partner and they put some kind of documentation and let the person that would qualify as CPA but this goes way beyond the 40 hours or whatever from the compliance perspective.

We're talking about true learning on the job, in a collaborative manner and just an environment that from colors and structures and stuff just much more brighter, brings- I guess the words I'm looking for-brings a lot more energy into the room.

Pam Devine: Absolutely. That's definitely true. These four Es don't operate in a vacuum. They feed off each other. In a true learning environment is going to give your employees exposure to employees at a higher level, at a younger level, at all different levels. That also feeds into this.

Peter: When you're talking about exposure, my mind's going to how I start most of my CPA programs. What the topic is don't keep this to yourself. This is not proprietary learning when the best things about CPA is to give the gifts I'm giving. Can you take what you've learned there three - four takeaways. Take it back to the office and share with people in the office.

Pam Devine: Exactly. Exactly. You can also think about conferences. Firms that send their professionals to a conference or organizations that send their professionals out to a conference, they do that in order for their professionals to be exposed to different professionals in the field. Also expose them to people that might bring them business. The exposure component is huge as well.

Peter: What you described as the ability to go to a conference, a CPA event no matter what the topic is, it actually network with your peers.

Pam Devine: Yes.

Peter: It's amazing because at in any CPA event whether it's in house or outhouse conference whatever. I make that comment at the very beginning of the class to say, "Does everybody know everybody else" and obviously most will say, "No". Then did you bring any business cards, go introduce yourself and go network and the blank looks that I get. I look at CPAs as great places where people come together that we may all be CPAs but they all have different backgrounds. Have different people in our network and how we can help each other out. Those are really long way. Then the lightbulb goes on. I've heard many people in the profession go, "I never thought about networking in a CPA event."

Pam Devine: It's just about learning the tax code. But really, the four Es are at play. I was thinking the other day about something we do in Maryland that's really the perfect example of the four Es we do in January every year, CPA day and in Annapolis. So when you think about all of the Maryland CPA's descending upon Annapolis, you clearly can see that there is an educational component-

Peter: Mh-mmm.

Pam Devine: In terms of learning how to work with legislators and understanding what's going on in the legislative environment. There's the experience of for our members that may never have gone to a state capital. May have never experienced working with senators and congressmen. Then there's the environment in itself! How cool is that? To get out of your office, to get out of your work environment and descend upon your state capital and then of course there is the exposure. I love that example within Maryland is truly a warming event that encompasses all four Es.

Peter: Well, Very well said, which takes me back to, we use to do that years ago, at Ohio with ASAP. We go to Washington and send in congress we had the board and the jury's will go but they open it up for others who wanted to attend and pay all their way and I was one of a handful that would take them up on that offer and go. I never put it into the four Es. But yeah, I used it now ahead, it was an experience, it was exposure, it was learning 101.

Pam Devine: So I think what we're seeing that's different in the market place Peter is maybe we'd always been doing this, or so the association has always been doing this but now the corporate learning professionals are thinking about learning as an architecture. So there's a way to think about a systematic approach to learning in composing all of this. The other thing they talked about is the mindset. The millennial generation mindset and what needs to be in place in order to make this effective and they talked about the curious employee, the network employee, the holistic, the agile, and innovative employee and if those things are on place, they really make - this mindset is really important to making the architecture work.

Peter: So let's say, a non compliance mindset basically.

Pam Devine: There is.

Peter: It's is not the way we learned in 70s, 80s or 90s. I would agree with that because the client that I just came from, very millennial or and younger X-generation group in there and they weren't there to check the box and you could feel almost immediately. They were very engaging, they were very communicating and sharing ideas. Running some stuff the that we are talking about. We went down some past that I didn't think we would go down. So I can see that, in the learner but thinking about those. I'm going back to something you said earlier. You said something about Twitter?

Pam Devine: Yeah, I did say something about twitter.

Peter: What? Tell me about Twitter and learning.

Pam Devine: I assume you're on Twitter but when we go to conferences, we take actually notes in Twitter. So that if someone wants to pull off that that conference's hashtag you'll see series of tweets from the conference that really are probably are insights into the learning, if you will. Their bits and pieces. Obviously I think it's a 120 - 140 characters bite size bits of learning that are relevant to us and our insights into what we're learning at the conference. So it's not regurgitated slides. It's why is this important to me? Why is this important to us? And so, at the Business Learning Institute anytime one of us is attending a conference like the Bersin conference, we will be tweeting from there and anyone is welcome to follow on. Just follow us on Twitter.

Peter: What was the hashtag that you used in this Bersin conference? Do you remember it?

Pam Devine: I should know, yes. Yes. Impact HR.

Peter: That was hashtag-

Pam Devine: Hashtag, yes. That was #impactHR

Peter: #impactHR. I'll visit that Twitter stream and I know you guys have been doing this for a long time and it is a great way of taking notes. I made a comment recently that at any group I'm speaking, I don't care what size. Take out your phones and you want to tweet, use this hashtag, let's get a stream going, and I suggest. It's not going to offend me at all. Now I may have not said that five years ago, but now I'm wanting them to go out and tweet. It's also, to some degree, it's almost instant feedback.

Pam Devine: Oh, I would agree it's really funny, I was at a conference last week and at the break I went up to the instructor or the thought leader, and I said, I'm not texting back here, I'm actually tweeting, and he had a hashtag, so we were obviously including him in our tweets, but I'm from the old school, and so I always like to let the instructor know that I'm not back there texting and doing work, I'm actually doing something that the millennials do.

Peter: Exactly and that's great. When you went up to the thought leader and told him that, did he laugh, was he thankful for it, was he-?

Pam Devine: Well it was really funny because the presentation was on generation of differences. He said, "No Millennial would ever tell me that." I was concerned about he might consider me rude.

Peter: That's funny. Wow. I know that you guys to attend every year, you walk away with some great information as related to learning in 2016 and beyond, any last take away that you have that you want to share with those who are listening? The millions and millions and millions of people that are listening to this right now?

Pam Devine: I think one of the statistics that stood out for me and still stands out for me, is a quote that says, "Train your people and they are 92% more likely to stay and be loyal."

Peter: Wow. Train your people and 92% of them will stick around.

Pam Devine: So you're investing in their future.

Peter: You said a very important word. You said, you're investing into somebody's future. It's not a cost of doing business, it's an investing end. And we all know that it takes so much more to replace an individual, train someone new, get them up to speed versus, investing in their career, investing in themselves. Which I always-You're now getting emotional equity into the business. Now they're becoming more and more part of the business because you are bringing them into the business and you're helping them grow.

Pam Devine: Correct.

Peter: Such a simple concept, why is it so hard sometimes?

Pam Devine: I know. Just remember, learning is the earning.

Peter: Learning is the earning.

Pam Devine: The earning curve.

Peter: Okay. I'm going to pause here for just a second. I need to write something down, a couple things. So, or I might just do this completely off the cuff. So what I'm doing, I forgot to write this down. At the end of every podcast, I go through my rapid 10 questions, so we can get to know you just a little bit better and I forget to write them down. And I know you so well. Okay, got it. Okay. So, I can't thank you enough Pam, for taking the time to share this information from the Bersin Conference, but I'm not going to quite let you go yet, because what I like to do at the end of my podcast, is do a quick 10 questions, rapid fire, whatever we want to call it, just so we get to know you just a little bit better.

Pam Devine: Uh-oh.

Peter: Are you up for this?

Pam Devine: Sure.

Peter: Okay, first question. Crab cakes or steak?

Pam Devine: Crab cakes.

Peter: From Baltimore of course. What's your favorite movie?

Pam Devine: Oh boy, that's a tough one. An oldie but goodie. The Sound of Music.

Peter: An oldie and a goodie, exactly. What's your favorite restaurant in the Baltimore area?

Pam Devine: Oh, Waskala, down in Little Italy.

Peter: So I take it's an Italian restaurant.

Pam Devine: It is, yep.

Peter: And do you get crab cakes there?

Pam Devine: No.

Peter: What do you get there?

Pam Devine: How about a nice veal chop.

Peter: Sounds good. The Ravens, or the Orioles?

Pam Devine: Oh boy, I'm from New England, but I'll have to go with the Ravens anyway, pretending like I really am from Baltimore.

Peter: Okay, so let's try this again. Ravens or the Patriots?

Pam Devine: No, I'll still go with the Ravens.

Peter: Chardonnay or Merlot?

Pam Devine: Oh, Chardonnay.

Peter: Didn't have to think about that one?

Pam Devine: Nope.

Peter: That's like asking me Bourbon or Scotch, right? Okay. Do you prefer biking or running?

Pam Devine: Oh that's not fair. I love them both.

Peter: I think you have, from what I have known of you over the years, I think you have a passion for running more.

Pam Devine: Running. Although with my latest injury, I may have to switch to biking.

Peter: Go biking? Yeah, it happens to the best of us. It happened to me many years ago.

Pam Devine: If it's winter though, you'll find me on skis.

Peter: On skis, of course, because you are from New England. What's your favorite city to visit?

Pam Devine: I actually love Portland Maine. Small city.

Peter: Small city. I've never been but I've always wanted to go.

Pam Devine: You like lobster?

Peter: I love lobster. My wife's from Boston where you talk to [inaudible30:53] So yes, I do love, I do love New England food. Steamers too.

Pam Devine: Yeah.

Peter: And Grinders. I get the lingo. Who's your favorite actor? Or actress.

Pam Devine: I don't really have one. Seriously.

Peter: Not one? Okay. Okay, we'll just keep moving forward. You may have already given us this, but what is your favorite quote?

Pam Devine: Oh, I guess it would come from Tom Hood and it's, "L is greater than or equal to C." We live it and breathe it and eat it here.

Peter: Exactly. I didn't know if you were going to do that one or the quote that you got from the Bersin conference. And last but not least, on your bucket list of things to do, you can now check off being on my podcast as one of those on your bucket list. Right. What's one of the items that are on your bucket list?

Pam Devine: I would actually love to climb Kilimanjaro.

Peter: Really?

Pam Devine: I would. I don't know if I'll get there, but I would like to do that and maybe try a triathlon at some point.

Peter: Okay, you blew me away with Kilimanjaro, that was not even in the realm of-So do you climb at all?

Pam Devine: I used to.

Peter: You used to.

Pam Devine: I use to and I feel like I could get up, to get up to speed I'd have to obviously become part of a team, a training team in order to do something like that, but I would love to do it.

Peter: So Everest is out of the question?

Pam Devine: Right.

Peter: I do love it when, I started putting this rapid fire 10 questions in because I've learned new things about the people who I've been interviewing that some of them I've known for many years, and it's like wow, learn something new every single day. So, first and foremost, thank you again. I always enjoy the conversations we have. I'm greatly appreciative that you could carve out some time in your busy schedule today to share this information from the Bersin Conference and really talk about the architecture of education that have the four E components. So thank you very much Pam.

Pam Devine: Thank you Peter, it's been my pleasure. Talk to you soon.

Peter: Alright, bye.

Pam Devine: Bye.

