The Measure Pod: #75 Learning design in analytics (with Phil Gomm and Tony Reeves @ Ding)

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### Intro

[00:00:15] **Dara:** On today's episode, we're joined by Tony and Phil from Ding, who are a learning design consultancy who've actually been working with us at Measurelab to build out our [GA4 Immersion training course](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/training/cohort/google-analytics-4-immersion/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=75).

[00:00:26] **Daniel:** You can find more details about the [GA4 Immersion course](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/training/cohort/google-analytics-4-immersion/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=75) that we talk about on our website at measurelab.co.uk, and you can check out all of the links to everything we discussed in the show notes, especially check out [Ding's website](https://ding.global/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=the_measure_pod&utm_campaign=75), and including [their podcast](https://ding.global/the-ding-o-meter-podcast/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=the_measure_pod&utm_campaign=75) on all things learning design. Enjoy.

[00:00:41] **Dara:** Hello and welcome back to The Measure Pod, a podcast for analytics and data enthusiasts. I'm Dara, I'm CEO at Measurelab.

[00:00:48] **Daniel:** And I'm Dan, I'm a consultant and trainer at Measurelab.

[00:00:50] **Dara:** And we're joined today by Tony and Phil from Ding, who are a learning design consultancy that we've actually been working with at Measurelab recently to build and roll out our new GA4 Immersion training course. So Tony and Phil, firstly, thank you for agreeing to come on the show and chat to Dan and myself today. So we don't even attempt to do a bad job of introducing our guests, we give that horrible job to the guests themselves. So this is your chance to introduce yourself to our listeners. So maybe just give a little bit of your background, what got you into learning design, and then you could tell us a little bit about Ding and the work you guys are doing in this current day.

[00:01:30] **Tony:** Sure okay, I'll kick off and give you a quick introduction to Ding. Okay so the brief history is Phil and I have known each other for quite a long time. We've had quite a few adventures in higher education through the years. And then in sort of 2019, we decided to set up Ding because we could see there was a demand for learning design. I mean, this was sort of just as the pandemic was kicking off. So obviously there's been a big shift through emphasis on online learning design through the pandemic, and that was where our initial, our initial focus was. But broadly speaking, I mean, first with all the best startups, we started not really knowing that we were about learning design. We thought we're just going to build some courses for people. But it very quickly became apparent that learning design was a thing. We've spent the last, I suppose three years trying to figure out the shape of that thing and who needs it and why people need it. But there's clearly a need for learning design and at ding we, I suppose, work to just build out learning experiences for people. Phil?

[00:02:18] **Phil:** I would just add that I often look to Tony at moments like this when he's introducing Ding and I say, please tell people what learning design is. But within that conundrum lies the reason why you need a learning design consultancy I guess, because it's very hard to ask for. It's a deficit that people often have that they don't necessarily have vocabulary for the deficit. They just need a thing, they need their expertise prepared or post produced in a way for other people. And that deficit or that request you know, when you look at it tends to sort of pat down as learning design, even though often I'll talk when I'm talking to other people, I use lots of other words for it all the time and then look to Tony desperately for him to say, a learning design. So as a learning design consultancy, I would say that we've got much better at talking to it more succinctly by dint of having done it for lots of different types of clients and different curricular and different types of learning.

[00:03:15] **Phil:** I suppose Tony and I are possibly, because we come from a higher education, I come from a creative background, to discover that I've been spending a lot of time working with, you know, data analysts on the subject of data. I sometimes feel like I'm a long way from home in that sense, but the learning design part of it is familiar and recognisable and our place of expertise.

### Topic

[00:03:33] **Daniel:** So it sounds like there's lots of parallels actually between sort of learning design and digital analytics. I was actually just thinking of that as you, guys were talking, especially around how it's a maybe a word or a phrase that people know, but probably struggle to define or to place in an organisation. And they might not have a learning design team, the same way they might not have a digital analytics team, they might have other teams that kind of overlap in the venn diagram of things over the same kind of subject matter. Something you've alluded to, but maybe a silly or basic question. What is learning design and why is it a separate thing to all these other things that it might overlap?

[00:04:07] **Tony:** There's lots of ways to describe a learning design, and I suppose for me and for Phil, it's about achieving outcomes, it's about getting people to do things differently. If I was to boil it down, one of the most important things in learning design is what do you want people, what do you want people to do differently? You know, ultimately that could be in a strategy context, it could be in analytics context that could any kind of context. If you want people to do something differently, they probably need to learn something, and learning design is about constructing the series of steps, activities, events that enable them to do that thing differently.

[00:04:38] **Tony:** One of the phrases that's often used in learning design is backwards design and really it's about starting at the end, working backwards. So, I mean, we could use the experience we've had with yourself, Dan, as an example, is you had an idea of what you wanted to build. We spent the first bit of our engagement together looking at what is it you want people to learn through Google Analytics training? So let's look at what we want to do differently at the end. And then the process that follows is a design process where you construct an appropriate series of experiences for those people to be able to do that thing differently. So I'd be interested to hear your thoughts as to if learning design is now clearer you as a process than perhaps it was when we first started working together.

[00:05:16] **Daniel:** Yeah, I don't know if it's any clearer necessarily, but something that you said right at the beginning of us working together and something that's come out, come throughout, which I've very much picked up on, is the fact that we're building like a learning experience. And so you've never come at this saying, let's build a video course, let's build an in-person workshop, let's build something else. It's more around fitting the how to the why. And so like you said, for Tony that kind of backwards re-engineering or backwards engineering and saying, okay, this is what we want someone to be able to do. And I think, or at least my perception of that learning design is saying, okay cool, we've got a bunch of different tools on our tool belt, how would we apply them to learn this the most effectively depending on the situation, the group of people and the environment we're in. Rather than how do we make a good video course for teaching this necessarily. Because it doesn't have to just be videos, it doesn't have to be in person. It can be, these are just tools to achieve a goal rather than, you know, you're not trying to adjust the goal to fit thee means.

[00:06:10] **Tony:** Yeah, that's one of the key aspects of learning design. And I think that's where it overlaps with other areas, like for example, setting strategy. Often in a strategy someone will say we want better leaders, or we want this, and they'll state the outcome but they won't necessarily state what they want people to do differently. And that's why one of the key things in learning design is, is basically just turning it into a series of verbs. It's, is it use Google Analytics more effectively? Is it apply a range of techniques to solve business problems? Those words are so important because they state what you want people to do differently. And unless you get those pretty spot on, you can spend a whole lot of time playing people videos or creating a whole bunch of experiences that actually aren't very useful. And I think you focused in on the word experience Dan, which I think is, is so important.

[00:06:52] **Tony:** It is about what is that experience, what does it look like? Because you can go learn anything anywhere, right. I can go to YouTube and I can watch a video course about anything. It's not really an experience. I'm going to experience a video, but I'm probably not going to do a huge amount differently at the end necessarily. So learning experience design is really what is the sequence of events that enables somebody to do something differently at the end of that. Phil, would you say?

[00:07:14] **Phil:** Yeah, and I would agree. And I would also say that one of the challenges I think for learning designers, and this will sound and for people who are working with learning designers, is this sort of slight shift around the concept of expertise, because I think expertise, as in having all the knowledge and having breadth and depth and just being sort of just having this incredible sort of three-dimensional knowledge of a subject. When you know something really, really well, your knowledge starts to sort of become invisiblise because you're so used to it and it becomes very innate and it becomes something that you just know.

[00:07:44] **Phil:** So we don't sort of think about the individual letters and the words that we're using when we speak, they just become a blend and they become an expertise. So when you're working with experts of any stripe as a sort of a learning designer, learning design begins with a kind of unpacking all of those hidden innate parts of curricular, the knowledge that is just knowledge, the stuff that we just know. You sort of realise that knowledge has to be sort of confronted and sort of made and re-complexified, and you have to say, well, why is it important for people to know that, why is that like a, an obvious thing? Why is that like an inherent concept around, you know, data analysis? Why, why, why, and you do find in the early stages of learning design that you are a little bit like that child in the backseat of a car going, but why? But why?

[00:08:30] **Phil:** And we often play the imposter syndrome card purposefully because I would absolutely say hand on heart, you know, working with you guys, that your expertise and the, the sort of the nuance, the detail, you know, all of those things there that you can be encouraged, I think sometimes to just sort of nod politely and think, yes. And it takes a bit of courage I think to sort of say, sorry, I don't know what you're talking about, or why is that obvious or why does sort of, why is it in that sequence? And often once it's explained, what you start to realise is there is this philosophy at work or there's some sort of foundational principle or something that's really interesting that's actually not being given justice to because it needs to be unpacked. The learning design is that sort of intervention around expertise and around experts.

[00:09:14] **Dara:** So how does that process actually work then? I can grasp that, I get that conceptually that if you're the subject matter expert, there is just knowledge you have that you've built up and you don't necessarily know that someone you tried to teach that to won't understand it. So how do you use the learning designer, how, I guess maybe the simplest way to ask this question is how deep do you dig? And how do you know when you've reached, I'm going to kill this analogy, but you know, how do you know when you've reached deep enough? Or how do you know when you've got, you can tell where the edges are. I guess for every technical subject that you aren't yourself an expert in as the learning designer, you know, that it could be, you could have to dig deeper, or you could have to dig wider. So, what does that process kind of look like to figure out when you fully unrolled the map?

[00:09:57] **Phil:** No, I like it, I like it. I'm totally with you. I was just going to say that I thought that we're it, that by now with you guys, I feel I'm in very deep yeah, sort of, urchin tracking modules anyone - just throwing that in. I think, well, I think it comes right back down to the asking very good questions about what it is that you want people to know and just being very alive to assumed and hidden curricula. So I'll give it a good example of this is that when I was putting an overlay together on UTMs, you know in the videos, I saw that it said module, UTM module. I'd written the word module and I suddenly thought, now hold on. I'm a learning designer, we're working in modules to build out this video. Have I just kind of projected into this space? Is it module that I had to go off onto a, to a spreadsheet and just double check myself? And so, in a way, I'm trying to remain vigilant to the language that I'm beginning to be much more comfortable around in case I'm actually getting that wrong or sort of making a mistake or something. So I would say vigilance is key, right Tony? To sort of hidden curricula and sort of stopping asking the questions about why things are in the order that they are.

[00:11:09] **Tony:** Yeah, absolutely. As a learning designer, you have some key roles. You right, you need to be vigilant around the breadth and depth of this experience, the danger is, well, it's not a danger, it's part of the job. But when you're working with a subject matter expert, they're an expert. So they will happily tell you as much as they can about the subjects. That's, you know, that's what they're there for, they know everything about it. As a learning designer, one of your key roles is to scope the experience. So you have to decide what people need to know at the end of this experience and to do that, you really need to know broadly who they are coming in.

[00:11:38] **Tony:** So one of the tools that we often use is called Learner Persona. So sometimes you'll be given a persona as in who's the intended audience for this. Sometimes you have to scope it yourself, but that's super important, right? Because you need to know who's coming on the course. You need to know if they've got prior experience, what kind of experience, the depth of that. Otherwise you're going to pitch it at the wrong level. And the worst thing you can do in a learning experience is try and build it for everyone, because then no one learns anything. So your role is really to focus in and say, okay, where does this need to start? Where does it need to end? And what is the difficulty level? So the subject matter expert may tell you a whole load of useful stuff and out of that you might say, okay, well there's two courses here. There's an introductory one and there's a more advanced one, or maybe even another one. And we have to sort of unplat that experience and say, well, if you've only got six weeks, you're not going to cover all of that.

[00:12:26] **Tony:** You know, it's all great stuff, but this is what basic looks like, this is what intermediate looks like, this is what advance looks like. So our role is very much to just download the experience of the subject matter expert, but have confidence to push back and say that isn't achievable, or who is this for, who is the intended audience here, and what do they need to do at the end? And sort of gradually triangulate down and focus in on a structure that says, right, we've got six weeks, it's for intermediate people. They've got some previous experience, say, let's say Google Analytics, so we don't want to teach them to suck eggs, we assume that they will have some knowledge and we need to get them here at the end. So that's broadly the sort of the framework that you are working within is to take the expertise and just work out what's achievable and what's relevant to the intended learners, I would say.

[00:13:09] **Phil:** Can I ask you a question, Dan? Because you've been at the sticky end of a sort of unplatting, you know, this notion that there's the, all the ball of all the knowledge, and I know you've developed some strategies now in terms of sort of planning the curricula and, and sort of the GA4 Immersion course. How have you found the challenge of boundrying your expertise and sort of parcelling it up in particular ways, and then sort of off worlding other bits and bobs. How have you found that kind of how, how have you stayed vigilant, I guess, around your own expertise? And how have you kept it under control in that sense?

[00:13:41] **Daniel:** I was actually going to mention that next Phil, because I mean, probably the most interesting and the biggest thing that I've learned from you during this planning session where I was, you were downloading my experience, my expertise around the Google Analytics platform is this idea of off-worlding. And there was lots of questions, which quite rightly you asked was why do you teach this in your existing course, why do you teach that? And I'm like, well because I find it interesting is the answer a lot of times, rather than they need to have this knowledge to get from A to B. And what I realised through that process and some of the, now the kind of processes in, I suppose we can call it learning design that I've adopted, is thinking around, okay, well what is it that needs to happen from A to B for them to get them the most effectively, to get the best learning experience, to have adopted the knowledge in the best way possible. Rather than I like this and I want to teach this because I know it, or probably the worst way is that, that's how I learned it, so I'm going to teach it this way, which is probably the complete worst way round.

[00:14:35] **Daniel:** So for me, it's that off worlding approach and saying, well, look, realistically, I find it important and interesting to do that, but I live and breathe this stuff on a day-to-day basis. Most people, I would even guess everyone that attends this training course is not going to live and breathe Google Analytics on a day-to-day basis. So I have to kind of selectively pick out things to make the overall experience better and stickier, I suppose, so that they get what they need from it. And what I loved your analogy when we were building this course is a kind of choose your own adventure book. And so, I'm not going to remove those bits entirely. We'll still create those nuggets of knowledge and those learning pockets, those experiences, those videos, those blogs, those guides, whatever it is but you make them optional.

[00:15:15] **Daniel:** And so, the people that want to go down those rabbit holes and go off on that little adventure, they can, but it's not going to hinder other people from not doing that because otherwise you're preventing a lot of people from getting through this journey, through this experience, because it's something that they have to get through but don't actually need. So I think, to answer your question, Phil, I think that's my biggest takeaway from this is really getting out my own way and not thinking what I find interesting, but actually thinking what the learner needs. And that's been, I know it sounds almost obvious to listen to this probably, but that's probably the biggest revelation for me, and I think that's changed my whole approach to designing education obviously from my perspective around the Google Marketing Platform products.

[00:15:53] **Tony:** That is one of the big shifts when you are doing any kind of learning design, because before you start to think about your learners, you think about your knowledge. You are thinking about teaching and so often one of the first things we do, we look at learning outcomes and they're about what the course is about, which is great, but that's, that's an aim. This is what I want you to explore. But it's not an outcome, which is I want, this is what I want people to do differently. One of the wonderful things about working with yourself, Daniel, on building this, has been that off-worlding, seeing all of this stuff coming out about all the, kind of the deep dives and things and it's like, great, there's a ton of stuff here if you want to explore it, it's all there. It's not necessarily all core to what they need to do, to what learners will need to do to use GA4. But it's all really interesting and like you say, this is where the choose your own adventure bit becomes really useful because if you want to go on a deep dive and figure out the history to GA4 or go what's a session?

[00:16:40] **Tony:** It's like brilliant, it's there, but I don't necessarily, I can do that when I want to rather than this is what I need to do to pass the course.

[00:16:46] **Dara:** So should those learning outcomes, should they be fairly high level then to make sure that, maybe I'm confused in two different things you're talking about, but just with that off worlding, I'm thinking if somebody wants to go much further, they can, but that's slightly removed from the core learning outcome of the course. Is the learning outcome like a common denominator and then people can go further if they want to, or is that not really how it works?

[00:17:09] **Tony:** It's a good question because I think a learning outcome, the art is the simpler the better. But they do need to be very specific. The idea of a learning outcome is that you are trying to make the learning visible. So you want to see what that learner has learned at the end. So if it's apply a filter in a data table, that's the learning outcome. So often, they need to be specific because you need to be able to measure whether that person has achieved that outcome. If they're too high level and too generic, it's very difficult to measure. So the outcomes are often very simple, but very specific about these are the things that you need to be able to do at the end to pass the course or to achieve the intended outcome. But the aims are the more exploratory stuff, so the aims might be, so to immerse yourself in the landscape of Google Analytics or to explore a range of techniques for analysing data, that's your kind of, your big picture stuff. The outcomes tend to be super specific if that helps.

[00:17:59] **Phil:** There's a course philosophy and there's always sort of in higher education when you were preparing documents you know designing undergraduate programs for people, when it came to that mountain of paperwork, there was always learning outcomes, there was aims, there was a bunch of other things, there was always a course philosophy. And the course philosophy would often be of not a brilliantly written piece frankly. But I think course philosophy is about, often about producing the kind of mindset you want in the people who are leaving your course. But a lot of the stuff that, Dan, you're producing sort of the deep dives and the off-worlding, there's a strong sense for me that you are trying to join the dots for people, that you are trying to take the magical thinking out of the technology. You know, why does this need to be like that - just because it does. Actually, no, it's because there's a bigger picture and there's, you know, I'm from the imposter place just, you know, I'm listening to you a lot, watching you a lot. There's obviously an ambition to produce a mindset, a joined-up place because obviously you can use any tool without that joined up thinking.

[00:19:03] **Phil:** If you need sort of the red light to come on, you press that button. If you need the green light to come on, you press that one. But under that dashboard somewhere, there will be sort of a reason that, you know, there will be all the joint up thinking that produces the logic, and you are sort of colouring that in for people. It's not core, but just like a course philosophy does that the sort of graduate who leaves a well designed course will have all of the knowledge, the empirical knowledge, they'll have all the nuts and bolts and all the mechanical knowledge, but they'll also have this vantage point. They'll have a space that they're in, and I think that's a, for me, a good description of the difference between a learning outcome, which is, can you do X, Y, and Z? And also are you sort of more awake than you were? Are you more alive to the way a thing works? And I think that all of the stuff that you're doing in your deep dives is producing that effect or will produce that effect in the people who go on that journey with you.

[00:19:55] **Tony:** And I think there's another as aspect of that, which is the, the cohort bit, which is the, you know, learning in a group. I think it's one thing to learn individually. We've all done it, we've all watched videos, we've all done training courses, or a lot of people have, but actually learning in a group is a different experience. And Phil and I always talk about community as the secret sauce of learning design because we think it is, you know, you can learn something perfectly effectively without learning in a group, without being part of a community. But it is often the community, even if it's a, you know, a six week community it's that which produces the mindset that makes you a different person at the end of it and that's what's going to make you more effective in whatever subject that you happen to be learning about I think. So, I think the community aspect, the cohort, the group, learning from other people, being able to see what they're doing, seeing how they're making their learning visible, that's hugely valuable in a process of learning. So it's not just you and the content, it's you, the content, a group of other people and a good facilitator.

[00:20:44] **Dara:** Why is that? Is that because people will learn differently from other people that are like peers versus the trainer? Or is it just that, I mean, what do you think that is? What is it that they're gaining from learning alongside other people that they wouldn't get just from a kind of one-to-one training relationship with a trainer.

[00:21:02] **Tony:** I could probably talk for about an hour on this, but I'll try not to. I think broadly in educational thinking, in educational sort of theory, philosophy, the dominant way of viewing learning is that we learn socially, that's what sets us apart from other animals, is that we're social creatures. So right from when we are born, we are learning in a unit, in a family, or from other people or from other humans so social learning is what we do. Formal programs of learning are more focused on teaching and they're a bit more artificial.

[00:21:30] **Tony:** So I think we are hardwired to learn from other people. You know, whether we like it or not, we, that's just how our brain works. We look at what other people are doing, we benchmark ourselves. We see why they found that interesting and I think that's why social learning is so important over and above just training in inverted commas. Would you say Phil?

[00:21:48] **Phil:** Yeah, no, I think this is where the art facilitation's really I important because I also think in my previous life I was a course leader for an animation degree, and that may seem like a million miles away from what we're talking about, but it was an interesting subject because it was always about, there's high levels of technology on that course. It was 3D animation, but it was always about trying to get sort of undergraduates to get their stories or their sequences in the right order for different audiences. So in terms of the basics of learning design, the basics of ordering things it was there. I bring it up because that group of students were, I don't want to generalise, but, and maybe this is true in data or STEM subjects, because my subject was interesting because it had a lot of computer work in it and it was also in an arts space.

[00:22:38] **Phil:** So there was a lot of introversion in my cohort. Not all the time, not always, but there, it was an introverted cohort. And so the community learning, the communal learning could often produce a further inhibition because people didn't want to learn in public or people didn't want to demonstrate that they didn't understand something right away. And I would say that for the facilitator point of view, and from a learning design point of view, to be aware that people learning together creates new responsibilities other than just diffusing the knowledge into the room. Because you've got to be able to find ways to break inhibition, to help people discuss, create different modes of interaction or everyone on an online call, for example, is going to do what we are doing, which is to sort of happily sort of just project into the space. Some people are going to have loads of ideas but say nothing. Some people will prefer to write in the chat, whatever it is.

[00:23:34] **Phil:** So I think people absolutely learn socially, but cohort learning sort of, for the facilitator, and I know that Dan, this is your role. I was going to ask you about what's your view, what's your strategies on bringing, you know, like 40 people into a learning experience. Or in your experience of training data analysts and introversion and inhibition, you know, what's your take on some of the challenges that may come next in terms of this as a learning experience for the, for your learners?

[00:24:01] **Daniel:** It's a tough question because I only know what I know and what I've done and what I've found work and what I've sort of had applied to myself in terms of my own sort of education. But the, the introversion and the kind of, I suppose the lazy way of explaining it or kind of talk about it is in terms of like learning styles or like preferences, rather learning preferences. And I do remote workshops, training, and so it's all Zoom-based, you know video cameras can be off, people could be, I've had people dial in on their mobile phone, in their cars before, right? And learning Google Analytics, which has been an interesting experience. And I've done in-person workshops as well, in-person training courses over multiple days as well.

[00:24:37] **Daniel:** I have a preference, and I have a preference not just from my own style, but like I think I have a preference from what I believe to be the most impactful. And that is an in-person experience. That's only because that's what I've designed it to be, right? Because I've designed the course, I've built the course with, and this is prior to working with you guys. So, I didn't have a learning experience, I had a 10 years of trial and error from a subject matter experience. But I think that the best way that I've come to realise is that if I just answer everyone's questions it's very, very rarely would someone kind of truly learn something. And so interacting with people on a more kind of like, how would you answer it or get someone else involved or kind of pass the question over or get the community to self-serve without me just kind of flexing my subject matter expertise muscle and just answering every question and asking for more you know, that's the worst thing.

[00:25:27] **Daniel:** I even say this in the workshops that I run, one of the worst things you can do is talk to someone for six hours and then immediately say, do you have any questions? No okay, fine, we'll go then. Because you know, they're still processing, they're still ‘chewing’ on that information and it hasn't really kind of made its way into figuring out what it is they'll learn or kind of keep hold of what they're going to put into practice, what's useful for them. And I think this is the kind of the perfect thing with the longer timeframe. So rather than doing a one-day workshop, this is a, well, we're talking about this GA stuff. It's a six-week program, so that over six weeks you can learn, apply and ask stuff that happens, and hopefully the community will be there to support and be on the same journey. And yes, I'm there to facilitate, but I think that's the biggest thing that I've learned through this process. I'm not there to tell or teach, I'm there to facilitate and facilitating learning through a good experience means you don't necessarily have to be a knowledge giver, a teacher, because the experience is designed to do that. And you are there to facilitate a good adoption of the, or a good kind of travel through the experience. But actually, if the experience is designed well, you don't have to shove information down people's throats every time they need it right? And I think that's where I'm realising the better the experience, the more of a passive role I can play being a facilitator rather than a like I say, a teacher.

[00:26:42] **Tony:** It's really interesting to hear. And so just to follow on that, Phil and I are always looking for these sort of irreducible concepts in learning design. And I think you, you've made a really good point there around duration. Duration's one of them, it takes time for people to do things differently and that's the value of a longer experience and to return to this, the idea of why social learning is useful. Phil and I use something called accountability and I think that's such an important lever or manoeuvre in learning design. Unless you have to be accountable for your learning in some way and you know, show up and do something differently, often people don't. You know, you've got these massive open online courses and they're great, there's a ton of content out there. But unless I have to show up and present something or show what I've done, I'm often, much less likely to do it which is why you have such low completion rates.

[00:27:26] **Tony:** So with social learning, it's not as if you're trying to force accountability on people, but you put people in a room with others and you can start to, to use this idea of accountability to say, okay, on Friday I just want you to show us what you've done, or I want you to post it on Slack and then I can give you some feedback and that. The fact that you are asking people to show up and show what they've learned, even if you're just asking them to show up and say what they've done. That's really powerful in learning design because it's a big engine of motivation, it makes people actually do the stuff. Whereas if you don't have that accountability or that, that kind of social group, often they'll be like, yeah, this is great, but actually I had, you know, I had to take my dog to the vet or something and I don't have time to do it, so I'm not going to do it. So I think accountability would you say Phil? It feels like is one of the key manoeuvres that we're always trying to harness.

[00:28:11] **Phil:** Well certainly there's nothing worse than being in a room where nothing is happening. I think, you know, we've all had learning experiences be that at school or at university or whatever, where the lecture theatre or whatever the learning space was, it was dead. And socially people just sort of, I think they smell blood in the water and don't participate and it feels like, well no one's doing anything for this, so I'm not going to do anything. So I think accountability and producing engagement is just so key because in the end, you can have all the backwards design that you want, you can build out all the resources. It can be beautiful, it can have all the bells and whistles, but if the room is empty and there isn't some chatter going on, then you don't have a learning experience. So yeah, you've got to produce the conditions for a satisfying learning experience.

[00:28:54] **Phil:** And that's a social thing, it's a people thing. And there are some techniques and manoeuvres to make that happen. You can't guarantee it, but there are some things you can do to sort of, to produce the most ideal conditions to get people to enjoy not knowing something and to choose that point where they still don't know, but they're with friends and they feel held and they feel that they can be vulnerable because they don't know it, and they can ask a question and that can feel positive as opposed to feeling exposing. All of those things that learners can often be very, very, very inhibited people because to learn something new is to put yourself at risk. It's to let go of what you know, which is why a lot of people don't learn and why people procrastinate and put things off, it's a mode of vulnerability, I think, for whatever it is, whatever the subject is.

[00:29:41] **Phil:** People who have to do training, people who get put through training, people who sort of feel that they're in deficit and they've got to take this thing on or else. There are all sorts of ways that learning can feel like an imposition or it can feel like a challenge to your self-esteem and anything that you can do. And I think just to bring it back to what you've done, Dan, the sort of the off-worlding and the ability to produce core, a core journey with the expertise, kind of pick-and-mix the sort of the grazing and the buffet. To me, they are all strategies to help people feel that they can take that expertise on themselves as opposed to, I'll never know this. I don't know what he's talking about, I'm out. So I think very practically the way that you've sort of diffused your knowledge out in those ways, I think it's very learner-centric in that way.

[00:30:29] **Daniel:** So does that change, does the approach to learning or designing a learning experience or the facilitation all these kind of resources you've got to kind of encourage engagement and accountability. Does that change depending on what kind of subjects that you are building the experience for? I mean, thinking specifically around, you know, STEM subjects, especially when we're talking about Google Analytics. It's very, obviously it's data focused, it's for analysts, it's for people that are more comfortable with numbers and less of the, you know, it is not an opposite, but you know you said Phil, that you taught on a, on the kind of an art course, basically. And this is the, in a sense, if we were to draw a line probably on the other side of that spectrum, and I'm just wondering how the approach from learning design changes depending on the subject or if it does at all.

[00:31:09] **Phil:** I would say, you know, I just spoke probably too in a too long way about the mode that most learners are in regardless of the subject they're taking on. So whether they be art students, whether they be data students, whether, whatever they are, that I think to remember and imagine that's not true for everybody, but that role is specific, you're a specific character when you're learning something new. And learning design I think should always remember and should always design for that characterisation, which is somebody who doesn't know and might be pretending that they do know and might have a bunch of inhibitions and reasons not to. So I think some of the strategies around like hidden curricula is a classic because hidden curricula is often the thing that stops people from learning. Because what they confront is the idea they should have known something and they'll never know it. And it's day one, someone's just used an acronym or someone's just asserted something into that room. It doesn't matter what the subject is, what discipline you're in, there's an assertion going on and that someone is taking fright.

[00:32:10] **Phil:** One of your learners is deciding they should have known that. Because they didn't, they shouldn't be there, this has been roped off to them. I think a lot of the techniques, a lot of the empathy that you need to do learning design. It doesn't matter what subject, it's about that imaginative space, it's about that start position would you say, Tony?

[00:32:28] **Tony:** Yeah, I was just making a note that there's some things there. I think you're absolutely right, I think almost the dynamics of learning are pretty much the same regardless of the discipline, because you're looking at things like how people respond emotionally, how they feel when they don't know something. And that's the same for data as it is for animation, as it is for film production or fine art. If I don't know how to do it, I am fearful of other people who might know how to do it, or I'm fearful of taking that step. So that's common across disciplines, that sense of vulnerability that you feel that we have to anticipate as learning designers and teachers.

[00:33:00] **Tony:** People do feel vulnerable and you kind of need to be vulnerable to learn anything new because you've got to accept that you don't know it and that it might be difficult. So you've got to walk into that space, you've got to be able to see yourself in the experience. So we talk a lot about inclusivity and learning design, you know, and this things like the images that you use, the references, the case studies. If they're all white western examples, then people of colour won't see themselves in that and they won't see that they can succeed in that. So that's a commonality, you've got to make sure that there's representation of diversity in there. People need to feel valued because otherwise it's like, well, why am I doing this?

[00:33:31] **Tony:** If, you know, if the facilitator is really overbearing or you know, overly critical, then you're not going to want to do it, that's common. And also experiencing success, and this is something that one of our colleagues Nicholas from the Ding team always reminds us of. So often learners have forgotten what it's like to experience success in learning, they might have had a terrible experience at school or university and they found it really difficult. And actually one of our jobs in learning design is to help people feel that they can do it and that's true regardless of discipline. So I think these are, some of these core dynamics are really what underpins all of the learning design certainly that we do, it's about how do you enable people, how do you create the conditions whereby people feel able to achieve something, they can see themselves in it, that they can be okay with that vulnerability that they're, you know, they can open up and accept and walk into that space with some degree of confidence. So yeah, I think that's the learning bit and you can transfer that to any discipline, STEM, arts or whatever I think.

[00:34:24] **Tony:** There's always a danger that we assume learners are ready to learn. And Phil sort of touched on this before, and actually they're not for all sorts of reasons, personal, but also they might have just been told to do something. And a key part of designing a learning experience is to make sure that by the time you get to day one as much as possible, you've dealt with some of those things so that they are broadly ready to get going, but that's a learning design manoeuvre. That first bit, that onboarding is super important.

[00:34:47] **Dara:** Both in terms of the kind of initial preparing the learners for what they're, for the experience they're going to go through, but then the actual experience itself as well. How much can you reasonably do to, like you mentioned inclusivity earlier, and my mind also jumped to, in a cohort environment where, even if the facilitator is brilliant, what if you have a bad actor in the group? Maybe that's making them sound very sinister, but if you have somebody who's dominating or somebody who is constantly trying to show how much they know about the subject, is that a mixture of accounting for that in the learning design and then also having really good facilitation as well, and then maybe some group police as well where the group themselves have to play a part in telling that person quietly to just maybe back off a little bit. I mean, how do you account for, sorry, I feel like there's more than one question there. So how do you account for difficult people in the group? And maybe as well, how do you account for different types of personalities in general who might experience that course in different ways, just simply because of who they are and how they interact with people.

[00:35:46] **Tony:** Phil's got a lot of experience of dealing with difficult groups, and then I'll just say before Phil goes into that, what we try and do is there's various principles. There's something called universal design for learning. So the idea is that you design for difference, so from a learning design perspective, you can create multiple ways into the content videos like we're doing with the GA4, you know, videos, resource guides, books, group work activities. So you can design a range of ways for people to engage with the content in terms of how you deal with difficult people and group work. I mean it's always bloody, but I'll hand over to Phil on that because he's got a lot of experience with this.

[00:36:17] **Phil:** No, no I don't want to you know, yes it's true, but I think some of the practical things you can do, I think is when it comes to group activities is for them to be quite clearly spelt out. So if the icebreaker, if you're doing an icebreaker, then the icebreaker or whatever is, is the conditions of that is produced by three distinct questions. In other words that you, everybody has the same turf. I think sometimes bad actors who are more confident or often I think the bad actors I've met are the ones who were the most insecure and they're just projecting into that space in order to sort of, to self-medicate in a way.

[00:36:52] **Phil:** But if everybody has got the same three questions to answer, if there's time limits for presentations. I learned this very early on, that you can mitigate practically by ensuring that if someone is overbearing, there's a time limit so you can signal to everyone else that the conditions are the same, so you can produce these kind of conditions for fairness. Everybody knows when there's a bad actor in the room often, but you can't signal that person out. You can't sort of, you have to be very careful about those things. So for me, it's always been, if you're going to do a group activity, make sure there are boundaries, that there's guide ropes, that there's clear time limits because it just means that the facilitator has the ability to return someone to the third question they were meant to be asking, or, sorry we're out of time. It just produces a ability to be quite objective and third person about it, even though you might be experiencing frustration, if you know what I mean. That is a learning design thing, definitely.

### Wind down

[00:37:48] **Dara:** Okay, just a couple more questions for you guys before we let you go and really appreciate you joining us this has been fascinating and although if you've listened to our show, you'll have heard us say this many times before. We always say, oh, we could bring you back on and have a second part. We definitely could here, and probably a third and fourth and fifth conversation. I think I've written down more questions than we've had a chance to answer. But just two more, and then you're free to go. First one is how can people find out more about well you guys individually or especially about Ding if people want to know a little bit more about how you could help them, what's the best way for people to get in touch?

[00:38:20] **Tony:** Sure, that's very kind to ask, through the website, [ding.global](https://ding.global/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=the_measure_pod&utm_campaign=75), everything we've got on there, so you can, you can access the blog, [our blog posts](https://ding.global/the-blog/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=the_measure_pod&utm_campaign=75) on there. We write a lot about inclusivity and learning design and learning design manoeuvres. And there's some YouTube links on there and links to [our own podcast](https://ding.global/the-ding-o-meter-podcast/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=the_measure_pod&utm_campaign=75) as well and also just a summary of what we do and how we do it really. So that's probably the best way to find us. I'm probably overly prolific on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/tonyjreeves/). So if you just look up the [Ding company page](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ding-learning/) there's a bunch of stuff there.

[00:38:45] **Dara:** And then the hard question. What do you do in your free time to wind down from work?

[00:38:50] **Phil:** That's an easy question. I would, although I hate saying this out loud. You know, I hate the word when people say, oh, I'm a practising artist, or, you know, whatever those things are. But I make a lot of creative content, so I write a lot and I take a lot of photographs, I make a lot of short films. [I have always been a practitioner of stories](https://philgomm.com/). I have always been a practitioner of sort of the use of the English language. I always take a lot of photos, my background is in art and design, filmmaking, theatres, design, all of those things. So I've always been interested in world making and for me, I think that, one of the synonyms that I use around learning design is I just think it's about really good storytelling. That's how I recreate, yeah.

[00:39:34] **Tony:** And for me, music. So, prior to all things learning related, my background was music, writing obscure electronic music at the intersection of electronica and jazz. So when I'm not learning designing, you'll find me in a studio surrounded by samples, making odd noises basically. That's what I do best.

[00:39:51] **Dara:** Amazing, well thank you both again for joining us and for taking time out of your schedules to come on and talk to us and enlighten us about learning design.

### Outro

[00:39:59] **Dara:** That's it for this week to hear more from me and Dan on GA4 and other analytics related topics, all our previous episodes are available in our archive at [measurelab.co.uk/podcast](https://www.measurelab.co.uk/podcast/?utm_medium=podcast&utm_source=transcript&utm_campaign=75), or you can simply use whatever app you're using right now to listen to this, to go back and listen to previous episodes.

[00:40:17] **Daniel:** And if you want to suggest a topic for something me and Dara should be talking about, or if you want to suggest a guest who we should be talking to there's a [Google Form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeMwfzg9TdNKeZYRxHci_y0D9up4EyAL5zNMYZNE9P_82fz3Q/viewform) in the show notes that you can fill out and leave us a note. Or alternatively, you can just email is at [podcast@measurelab.co.uk](mailto:podcast@measurelab.co.uk) to get in touch with us both directly.

[00:40:34] **Dara:** Our theme is from Confidential, you can find a link to their music in the show notes. So on behalf of Dan and I, thanks for listening, see you next time.