



Getting Learners to Act with Nancy Harhut

Leading Learning Podcast
Transcript for Episode 478

Celisa Steele: [00:00:03] If you want to grow the reach, revenue, and impact of your learning business, you're in the right place. I'm Celisa Steele.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:10] I'm Jeff Cobb, and this is the Leading Learning Podcast.

Celisa Steele: [00:00:17] When your marketing doesn't convert the way you expect, it can be frustrating and maybe a little confusing. You've put in the time to craft messages that are clear, compelling, and persuasive, and, still, prospective learners don't act. Part of the reason is that people don't make decisions the way we think they do. Much of the time, they're operating on autopilot, relying on subconscious shortcuts rather than carefully weighing all the information we put in front of them.

Jeff Cobb: [00:00:43] Our guest in this episode, number 478, is Nancy Harhut, author of *Using Behavioral Science in Marketing* and chief creative officer at HBT Marketing. Nancy specializes in applying behavioral science to help organizations prompt action and build stronger connections with their audiences.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:02] Nancy explains how behavioral science can help learning businesses better understand what truly drives attention, decision-making, and action—from the role of emotion to the power of specificity and simplicity in messaging.

Jeff Cobb: [00:01:15] And, in the spirit of keeping things to three—because, as Nancy points out, three is a very persuasive number—you'll hear practical takeaways in three areas: understanding what drives learner decisions, crafting messages that prompt action, and increasing engagement and follow-through once learners enroll.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:33] If you want to better understand why prospects sometimes act in confounding ways, how to prompt the actions you want, and how to keep learners engaged after they enroll, then this conversation with Nancy Harhut is for you.

Celisa Steele: [00:01:52] Tell us a little bit more about HBT Marketing, what it does, and a little bit more about your role there.

Nancy Harhut: [00:01:58] What we do is a little different than what a lot of marketing agencies do. We take marketing best practices, but we overlay behavioral science on top of them. What do I mean when I say behavioral science? It's very simply the study of how people behave or, more specifically, why do people do what they do. And how can a marketer get them to do

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more of what we want them to do? That's what we specialize in. We can do e-mail campaigns, direct mail campaigns, landing pages, social campaigns, but the net is we help our clients get more of the response they're looking for by tapping into these decision-making shortcuts that everyone, including clients, customers, and prospects, relies on.

Celisa Steele: [00:02:41] Right there in the name you have HBT (human behavior triggers), and that gets to that behavioral science aspect and the angle that you were talking about. Talk a bit about what you think people most often misunderstand about how humans make decisions and what influences the actions that we take.

Nancy Harhut: [00:03:06] The number one misconception about how people make decisions is we think that people make well-thought-out, well-considered decisions. And there's a reason for that. We think that *we* make well-thought-out, well-considered decisions, so we think our customers and our prospects do as well. But there is a lot of scientific evidence that suggests otherwise. Do we put our thinking caps on? Do we weigh the pros and cons? Sure. Sometimes. Sometimes you do that cost-benefit analysis. But a lot of times we're cruising through life on autopilot, and what happens is we're cruising along on autopilot and relying on these hardwired decision-making shortcuts that humans have developed over the ages as a way to conserve mental energy. And so, when we as marketers craft our messages, we devote so much time and energy to making sure that they're perfect and they say exactly what they need to say, and we think that our audience is going to spend as much time absorbing the message as we do creating it.

Nancy Harhut: [00:04:06] The sad reality is that's not what happens. People skim, and they scan. Different things attract their attention. A lot of times they completely overlook things. They're half paying attention, half onto something else, and they're not making decisions the way we think they are. In fact, very often they're making decisions emotionally, and then they're justifying their decisions with all of those rational reasons that we pack into our marketing messages. That's probably a big misconception or a big mistake that marketers run into, which is we think that people are making these well-thought-out, well-considered decisions, and they're often not.

Celisa Steele: [00:04:43] We're going to get into more specifics as we continue to talk. A lot of our listeners' learning businesses rely very heavily on e-mail when they're trying to get registrations for courses, get folks to a conference, or get them to pursue a certificate or any of their other offerings. I would love to hear what you see as some of the common mistakes in e-mail marketing and then, even more importantly, what behavioral science suggests that we should do instead or do differently in our e-mail marketing.

Nancy Harhut: [00:05:18] I'm going to build on what I was just saying, which is this emotional-rational thing. One of the big mistakes is we think that people are rational, so we pack our e-mails with all these rational reasons. What we should be doing is leading with something that's emotional, and then we can follow up with the rational reasons. There's research that shows that up to 95 percent of purchase decision-making takes place in the subconscious mind. There's also research that shows that we need to tap into the emotional parts of our brains in order to

make a decision. There was a researcher named Antonio Damasio, and he conducted research among humans who had sustained injury to the part of their brain that controls emotion. What he found was they were virtually incapable of making a decision. Even a decision as simple as “What would you like for lunch today, Celisa?” They couldn’t decide. Back and forth and back and forth and round and round, they couldn’t decide. Damasio proved that we need to access the emotional parts of our brains. So what we should be doing in e-mail marketing is leading with emotion and then backing it up with the rational reasons.

Nancy Harhut: [00:06:18] As I tell you that, I want to quickly add a caveat, which is to say we don’t want to put too many reasons in. We don’t want to jam too much in. One would think that if you’re listing all the benefits of taking a course or going to a conference, the more the better, right? That kind of makes sense. The more benefits I will take away, the more likely I am to say, “Oh, yes, this is what I want to do.” And yet that’s not true. There was research from UCLA and Georgetown that showed that three bullet points—whether in your e-mail, your landing page, or even on product packaging—are better than four or five. When you have one or two, it’s not enough; it doesn’t really carry the momentum. Three is the magic number. In fact, three bullet points are judged to be 10.4 percent more persuasive than four bullet points. Again, it’s a little counterintuitive. We think, “Well, the more, the better, and let’s go with five or six or ten.” And really three is what we want. What we want to do as e-mail marketers is to lead with emotion. We want to be clear and concise. Keep it to the three bullets. Don’t try to say everything. Don’t try to be everything to everyone. Have an e-mail campaign if you have a lot to say, if you have a lot to share, but don’t try to put it all into one.

Nancy Harhut: [00:07:39] And then we want to be clear because a lot of times what we do in e-mail marketing is talk around what we really want to say. We talk about our solutions, but we don’t really define what they are. We talk about outcomes, but we’re not specific about what they are. And research has shown that the more specific we can be, the more persuasive we are. Concrete language is way better, way more effective than abstract or vague language. There was one study that was done with an e-commerce site, and, for a period of 90 days, they instructed their salespeople, their marketing people to use more concrete language. Say they were selling pants. Instead of saying “pants,” they would say “blue jeans.” Just a little bit more specific, a little bit more concrete. One creates that mental picture in a different way than the other does. Blue jeans is a more concrete mental picture than pants. For a period of 90 days they used the more concrete language, and spend went up 30 percent. So we want the emotion, we want to be concise, and we want to be clear, concrete. We want to create those mental pictures so that people can see what they will get if they sign up, if they say yes to the offer.

Celisa Steele: [00:08:55] You said lead with emotion. Can you offer an example or two of how we might go about evoking emotion in an e-mail?

Nancy Harhut: [00:09:03] You’re in a professional setting, so people think, “Oh, well, people are going to make decisions based on the good of the business,” and it’s all very practical and very rational and very cut and dry. And yet, at the end of the day, we’re all people. What might prompt me to take a class or to sign up for a course? It might be the idea that my boss or the board is going to be very pleased with me. It might be the idea that I’m going to feel really

smart, empowered, and confident in my job. It could be the idea that, if I don't take this course, I'm going to feel like I'm lagging behind. I'm losing out. And none of us likes to feel that way. In fact, the pain of loss can actually be twice as powerful as the pleasure of gain.

Nancy Harhut: [00:09:52] So the temptation sometimes is to say all these wonderful things that will happen to you if you just sign up for our course—and, again, there's nothing wrong with benefits; we need benefits—but sometimes a little well-placed loss aversion is going to go further. The things that you'll lose out on if you don't sign up for the course or the pain you can avoid if you do sign up for the course. You won't find yourself lagging behind. You won't find yourself with that blank stare on your face when you're in this next department meeting, and you have no idea what this latest technology is all about. It's tapping into some of these very human emotions that you might think, for business-to-consumer, sure, but business-to-business, not so much. But we really do want to tap into them for business-to-business. It's how you're going to feel if you don't take the course, how you're going to feel if you do take the course, how you think the boss might feel about you if you take the course—those are the emotions you want to go after.

Celisa Steele: [00:10:52] I would love to get your thoughts on how AI is changing how people think about attention, trust, persuasion. Are there major changes, or is it still the same fundamentals, but now AI is adding more to the mix?

Nancy Harhut: [00:11:10] That's a very good and nuanced question. Things are definitely changing with AI. They're changing so rapidly. But, by the same token, people are people, and we, as a species (humans), have developed certain hardwired decision-making shortcuts that have been with us literally over the ages, and they served their purpose for our ancient ancestors by helping them stay alive, and they're so embedded in us now that we default to them without thinking. So the behavioral science is still very, very effective. But how is AI entering into the picture and changing things? You mentioned attention, trust, persuasion. Trust has become key right now. If you're a brand, you absolutely need to be trusted. And, with the advent of AI, trust starts to erode. It's really interesting—there have been behavioral science studies that show that, if a human gets something wrong, gives you the wrong answer, gives you the wrong information, you can be a little bit more forgiving. But, when the AI does it, people get angry because we hold artificial intelligence to a higher standard.

Nancy Harhut: [00:12:20] We have to be very careful, as marketers, that the information that we're putting out there is, in fact, correct, that we're not making mistakes. And yet we know that AI hallucinates. AI tries to please. AI will grab the most likely answer, but it might not be the correct answer. So we have to worry about those things. We also know (behavioral scientists have studied this) that now, because AI is so prevalent, people aren't searching as deeply. The first answer that comes up with that AI box that summarizes everything, we're like, "Okay, good, I'm done. I've got my answer." What does that mean? It means that we have to really capture somebody's attention. We have to make sure they pay attention to our message. And what comes in handy here is storytelling because you have a story that only you can tell. AI can't create it for you. It's yours and yours alone. It's not like one of your competitors. It's not like someone else's.

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Nancy Harhut: [00:13:13] Storytelling also has a lot of emotion, for that matter too. It helps with that emotional connection. But it also helps you stand out. It helps you capture that attention, helps you build the trust because you're speaking honestly and authentically, and you're sharing details that no one else would have. Those are things that help you grab attention. There's something called the Von Restorff effect, which behavioral scientists describe as this idea that, when you stand out from everything around you, people notice you, and they have a greater likelihood to remember you. AI is the great equalizer. Everyone's going to be doing the same thing. We're all going to sound the same. We're all saying the same things, taking the same approach. This is when a marketer wants to think about, "How can I do things differently? If everyone is zigging, let's zag. What can I do that's going to make me sound different, look different, seem different? Because that's what's going to own the space in my target's mind, and that's what's going to make them think of me versus the competition." Those are just a few of the ways that AI is factoring in. We still know that storytelling works. We still know that the Von Restorff effect is effective. We still know that people value trust. We just have to deploy those things against this changing background of AI entering the mix.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:33] That idea of AI delivering the same answer to everyone—there's a certain blandness to AI-generated content or ideas. That idea of going deeper and figuring out how you can zag if others are zigging, that really resonates with me.

Celisa Steele: [00:14:51] A lot of our listeners offer certifications, education, all sorts of professional development opportunities, and these are things that the people they serve will say that they value, but they still won't necessarily do them. They'll still postpone them or not sign up for that course or that conference. Talk about what behavioral science might help us understand about why adults might delay acting, even on things that they say they themselves value and matter to them.

Nancy Harhut: [00:15:27] That's a great question. What it comes down to is very often people will say one thing and do another. You're like, "Why did they lie to me?" But they didn't really lie. They believed what they were saying at the time, but then something else happened. A couple of things happened. One is this idea of present focus bias. Behavioral scientists have found that humans love instant gratification. We want what we want, and we want it now. And, if the payoff is a little bit further down the road, if it's more distant, we have a tendency to devalue it. Imagine you've got \$100 in your hands. You'd probably like to go out to dinner and a show versus save that money for a rainy day, put it in your retirement account. It's the same thing with education. It's like, "Yes, I think this is a great idea. We should have professional development. We should have these courses. We should have these Webinars or seminars or conferences. And, yes, I want to go, but not today. I'm going to do it later." Because the payoff is later. "I have to go. I have to learn this, and, eventually, it's going to help me in my career." And because it's a more distant payoff, we're less likely to act on it right away. We want the immediate gratification.

Nancy Harhut: [00:16:41] Another thing that behavioral scientists talk about is something called the intention-action gap. And there, again, it's like, "Yes, I intend to take this. Yes, I want to. Yes, I think this is a great idea." But we just don't quite get around to doing it. We think we're

going to. We assume that we will. It makes sense at the time. And yet other things come up. Things distract us. Things get in the way. The important takeaway here is it's not that people are lying when they say they value this, that it's important. They're not lying. They're not really good at predicting their future behavior. There are some behavioral science studies that show a complete stranger can better predict what you will do in the future than you yourself can. So it's tough. That's what we're working against. What marketers need to do is to overcome that idea of present focus bias. We need to build a bridge between who you are right now—saying, “Yes, I work in this field, and I like this field, and I want to continue to succeed in this field, and so I want to keep learning and growing.”—and the person who is actually going to benefit from it. It's like, “You're saying this right now, and, if you really believe that you want to do well in this field, and staying in this field requires continuing education, then you need to take this step so that one month, one year, two years down the road, you'll have what you need.”

Nancy Harhut: [00:18:07] There are ways to create that bridge. One is by getting you to think of yourself today but in the future—so using words like “imagine.” “Imagine having this new certification.” “Imagine having taken this class and learning these three points.” Because, if you ask someone to imagine something, they can create that mental picture. And, if they can create the mental picture, they're much more likely to act on it. Because, when you think about it, when people make a decision, it happens twice. It happens once in their brains, once in their heads; they decide to do it. And then they physically do it. Build that bridge by saying, “Imagine yourself...” or “Can you see yourself...?” or “Picture yourself....” That can be very, very helpful. The other thing we can do, again understanding that people prefer instant gratification, we can pull some little element out where we do get instant gratification. If we're asking someone to sign up for a course and the course is going to take ten weeks, or we're asking them to sign up for a conference and the conference isn't for three months, that's not instant gratification. But maybe you can sign up in a minute—that's instant gratification. Or maybe “Sign up, and we'll immediately send you the cheat sheet or the curriculum.” Anything that we can pull forward that has instant gratification, even if it's just a small element of the larger course, conference, what have you, that can work in our favor in terms of overcoming present focus bias.

Celisa Steele: [00:19:45] Let's say we've overcome that present focus bias. We've gotten someone to sign up for that course or to register for that conference. Do some of the same behavioral principles still apply once we get folks at the conference or in the classroom? I'm thinking about things that can sometimes be hurdles even after you get their registration—things like making sure that they show up and show up for all the sessions, that they complete the work, that they are engaging in the discussions or whatever coursework. Talk about how or whether we might be able to leverage some of those behavioral science techniques even after the sale, beyond the initial marketing.

Nancy Harhut: [00:20:25] One thing that comes to mind right away is something called social proof—the idea that when we're uncertain, we have a tendency to do what other people do, particularly if those people are like us. You can use this both for acquisition and once we have somebody enrolled. For acquisition, it would be like, “A lot of people in this industry have signed up for this,” or “We're 90 percent full.” It's like, “Oh, people like me are signing up for

this course or for this conference. Maybe I should too.” But then, once somebody’s enrolled, we can continue to use social proof. We can talk about the fact that most people complete their assignments in the first week, or 79 percent of people participate at least once in a discussion group. So we start to use that idea of social proof because people don’t always know what to do, and so we look to others and assume that, if they’re doing it, it must be the thing to do. If all of these people are participating, I should participate. If all of these people are turning their assignments in on time, I should too. If all of these people sign up for the advanced version of the course, maybe I should too.

Nancy Harhut: [00:21:28] Then there’s something known as commitment and consistency—this idea that once someone takes the first step, makes that first commitment, they’re much more likely to remain consistent with it when future opportunities arise. If we get that first yes—and somehow make it public (that’s even better)—we’re much more likely to get that second, that third, that fourth yes, and we can continue to increase our asks. Maybe what we do is get someone to say, “Yes, I’m interested in this course. Send me a little bit more information.” They haven’t even committed to taking it yet. They’re just saying, “Yes, I’m interested.” That’s a really small ask. And, if they’re answering somehow in public, so much the better. Maybe they’re doing it on LinkedIn, for example, or in a physical setting with a show of hands. It doesn’t always have to be public. But the key is that first small yes—“Yes, I’m interested”—then you send the information, and the person is much more likely to look at the information because they requested it, so you don’t have to think about it again. It’s like, “Oh, yes, right. I already vetted that course/organization/conference.” It’s much more likely that they’re just going to keep moving along. They take a look at it, and then it’s like, “Well, I asked for the information. I guess I should sign up. Why would I have asked for it if I didn’t think I wanted to sign up?”

Nancy Harhut: [00:22:46] So you start to do that. Now you’re in the class, and it’s the same thing. It’s like, “Well, you’ve made this investment of time and money to take this class, so make sure you stay current with it. Make sure you get the most out of it that you can.” There are ways to tap into that idea of commitment and consistency. You made that first commitment, just keep doing it. Labeling is another great tactic. What behavioral scientists have found is when you label somebody as part of a group, they start to behave like the other members in that group, even if they hadn’t previously considered themselves to be a member of that group. Researchers in Chicago interviewed people about an upcoming election, and, after talking to them for a while, they put them into one group or another, and they did it completely arbitrarily. It had nothing to do with the interview questions. They just eeny, meeny, miny, moed. But they went to one group and said, “You guys are the more politically active.”

Nancy Harhut: [00:23:37] And, on election day, 15 percent more of those people showed up to vote, simply because they were told they were more politically active. What would a politically active person do on election day? They would show up to vote. If you start to address some people and say, “You’re among our best students. You’re someone who’s committed to furthering your career. You’re someone who’s serious about education.” If you start to label people that way, they start to behave that way. Even if they think, “I never really thought of myself as being particularly serious about education,” when you say, “Hey, you’re one of our

better learners,” or “You’re someone who’s serious about getting the most out of this class,” you start to rise to the occasion and behave like the other members in that group—that group of people who are serious about education, that group of people who are among the most active students. Those are a couple of ways that we can use behavioral science tactics, not just to get somebody interested initially and enrolled initially, but to get them to follow through and to be an active participant on the journey.

Celisa Steele: [00:24:42] That labeling example is very interesting to me because I’m thinking about mindset and how we know that that’s very important in adult learning. That idea of do you have the growth mindset or a more fixed mindset? And how you can encourage people to adopt the growth mindset by saying things like, “You are a committed learner,” or “You have the ability to learn this if you apply yourself.”

Celisa Steele: [00:25:07] There are things that are very effective in learning, like reflection and practice, making sure that people don’t just listen to an idea but actually put it to work and begin to apply it. Are there any additional thoughts about how behavioral science can help us better encourage those activities that we know are so important to adult learning but rely on that adult learner to take the time to elaborate, to practice, to reflect? What would you say to help us with that aspect?

Nancy Harhut: [00:25:41] I do a lot of speaking and training, and one of the things that I’ve learned through behavioral science, which I apply in my own work, is you try to do maybe 20 minutes of content and then take some kind of a break. It doesn’t have to be a stand-up-and-stretch break. It doesn’t have to be a stop-go-get-a-coffee break, but a switch. If I’ve been talking for 15 minutes, let’s pause and do an assignment, for example. Actually, doing an assignment—and you alluded to this—is a great way to help encode the information in someone’s brain because, when you’re a passive listener, you’re absorbing some of it. If you have a tendency to write, you’re absorbing even more of it. And writing by hand is better than tapping on the keyboard; there are scientific studies that show that to be true. But, if you then are asked, “How would you apply this at your law firm/accounting firm/place of business/whatever?,” that forces people to actively use the information that they’ve just heard or that they’ve just taken notes on, and that makes it more likely to stick in their memories, more likely to be able to be called up when they need it. That’s something that I practice. That’s something that I think would be worthwhile.

Nancy Harhut: [00:26:48] The other couple of interesting things that come to mind are behavioral scientists have found that words that sound alike or that begin with the same sound are encoded in the same part of the brain, and they’re easier to retrieve. That makes them more memorable and more credible, more believable. Whenever we can use alliteration—a series of words that begin with the same sound or the same letter—or whenever we can use rhyme, it’s not just a fun little marketing trick or linguistic trick; it’s actually a tool to help people better remember information. Obviously, as we’re teaching, as we’re developing course material, everything can’t rhyme or be alliterative. But, when you have a key framework or key points that you really want people to remember, it’s helpful to tap into alliteration; it’s helpful to tap

into rhyme because it makes it more likely that people are going to encode that information. They're going to remember it. They're going to be able to retrieve it easily.

Nancy Harhut: [00:27:52] The interesting thing is, when the brain can more easily retrieve information, it feels right. And, when something feels right, it's not a big leap for us to assume that it is right. It makes information more truthful, more accurate, more credible. Obviously, if something is truthful, if it's accurate, we have a tendency to believe it. If we don't believe it, if we don't think that something is credible or accurate, we're not going to believe it, and we're not going to retain it. We're not going to use it. So there are some definite advantages in addition to memory for using things like alliteration, for using things like rhyme. And, again, it can't be for everything. But, for certain key points that you want to deliver, certain frameworks, certain approaches, it can be very, very helpful.

Celisa Steele: [00:28:41] If we have listeners who are thinking, "Okay, wow. This all makes so much sense, but how do I begin to apply this?" are there some practical or low-risk, not-too-heavy-on-the-investment-front ways that a learning business could start applying some of this behavioral science that you've been citing and mentioning as we talk?

Nancy Harhut: [00:29:03] I come from a test-and-learn background, and you mentioned that a lot of your listeners rely on e-mail to get people to enroll, so carve out a little pilot program, and have your regular e-mails that you usually send, but then do a version that uses social proof (tap into the fact that a lot of people are doing this) or loss aversion (what you're going to miss out on if you don't sign up) or one of these behavioral science tactics. Do a test, and see. It's not going to take you that much time or effort to develop a second version of the e-mail. A lot of the content could be the same, but how you get into it. Maybe you take your existing one and infuse emotion into the beginning of it, and you test the existing against the emotionally infused one. And then you look to see, "What does the engagement look like? Are we getting more clicks, more inquiries, more sign-ups?" It's a pretty simple way to begin to work your way into adopting some of these behavioral science tactics.

Nancy Harhut: [00:30:06] It doesn't require throwing out everything you're currently doing. It doesn't require a new addition to your martech stack. Nothing like that. It's creating a version of your marketing message that embraces behavioral science and then taking a look and seeing, "Am I getting the traction that I hope I will, that I expect that I should, from these tactics?" If the first one doesn't work, try a second one because not everything works for everyone. What we're talking about are tactics that generally are very effective. But what you want to do is to test your way in and find out what's the best way to reach your target with your target's mindset and with your message. You do a little bit of experimentation, and you begin to start to build that foundation for what's going to work for your marketing messages and your situation.

Celisa Steele: [00:30:55] As you were talking about testing some different options, you were talking about clicks, opens, and conversions even. We always talk about learning businesses needing to focus on three key areas: reach, revenue, and impact. Getting folks to enroll in that course is very clearly tied to the revenue part of it. That's going to help the learning business achieve those revenue targets. But another big part of what they're after is impact and making

sure that, once they get people to that course or that conference, those people are learning, and it is helping them improve what they're doing on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis, whatever it is. If a learning business is trying to think about measuring how behavioral science can help them achieve their goals, is there a way to look at metrics/measures that might be beyond those clicks, enrollment rates, and things like that?

Nancy Harhut: [00:31:55] Based on what you said, what comes to mind is looking at customer satisfaction scores, referrals, recommendations. Are people talking about it on the social? Are they sharing about it? Would they recommend the class or the conference next time around? Would they suggest that a colleague attend? How would they rank it? Those are all softer measures, but very important measures. There's an interesting behavioral science tactic that comes into play, and this was something that I learned from Dan Ariely, who's a world-renowned behavioral economist but also a professor. He taught at Duke, for example. He would teach a class, and then, afterwards, as the class was concluding, students were supposed to do evaluations. And, in order to get a better evaluation, he would say to them, "Put together a list of ten things that I can improve next semester." Not one thing, not three things. Ten things.

Nancy Harhut: [00:32:53] And what happens is you come out of the gate, and you're fired up. You're like, "Oh, you should tell more jokes. You should give us more time for our assignments." But, after you get through the first two or three, you start to run out of steam. Ten is a lot. Ten ways to improve the course? And so what happens is you start to think, "It must have been a pretty good course. I can't think of ten ways for him to improve." And, as a result, you score the class better. You rate it higher. You rate it better. I thought that was just brilliant. And it makes sense. He said you can do the same thing with your spouse. Three things to change about my spouse: boom, boom, boom. I can rattle that off. Ten things to change about my spouse? I guess I'm pretty happily married. I wouldn't really change much. So it's an interesting tactic just getting people to reflect on what they've learned, what they've gained from the class.

Nancy Harhut: [00:33:46] Sometimes when I speak at the very end of a training session or presentation, I'll go around the room and ask people, "What's the one thing you want to try tomorrow?" I'm not asking them for ten, but I'm asking the whole room. Everyone's got one thing that they want to try tomorrow. And when you listen to a room of 10, 20, or 100—I've had way bigger rooms than that, but you can't ask 1,000 people—but, when you're starting to go around the room, and everyone's got something that they're excited about, it's making them reflect on what they just learned and the value of it. There are definitely ways that understanding human behavior can help when it comes to some of these softer but very important metrics of how people reacted to the class, the course, or the conference, and did it have the impact that you were looking for.

Celisa Steele: [00:34:31] You are obviously very well-versed in a lot of the research and these concepts. I want to ask you a question, which we ask of everyone who comes on the Leading Learning Podcast, which is about your own personal continuing learning. How do you approach that? Do you have habits, practices, sources that you use to continue to grow professionally and personally?

Nancy Harhut: [00:34:54] Yes, I do. I love what I do. Whenever there's a new book out in the category, I'm interested in it. I'm listening to people more than I'm talking on podcasts. I go to conferences. I go to conferences to present, but I stick around, and I go to all these other sessions and soak up all the information that's available to me. I also do training sessions. I work with people. And it's a cliché, but I learn as much as I teach because I know what I know, but different ways to apply it, different ways people are thinking about it, different challenges that people are wrestling with—all of that starts to come back to me, and it makes me a more informed practitioner. So keeping a finger on the pulse of the industry, reading, the podcasts, the conferences, just sharing information is a two-way street. Sharing it and taking information back is a complement to that.

Celisa Steele: [00:35:50] We've covered a fair amount of ground in our time together. If you were to point listeners to one to three points that you hope they walk away from this conversation with, what would you say? What would those points be?

Nancy Harhut: [00:36:05] Three points. Point number one: People don't think the way you think they think. People don't always make these well-thought-out, well-considered decisions. Point number two: Very often they operate on autopilot. They're cruising through life on autopilot. They see a situation and default to these hard-wired, automatic, instinctive, reflexive responses that have been developed over the ages and are embedded in us. And then the third and very important thing is that these automatic responses can be prompted or triggered. If you have a good grasp of behavioral science, if you understand how people make decisions, you can nudge them or prompt them to make the decisions you want them to make. No magic wand. You can't make people do exactly what you want them to do all the time. But you increase the likelihood that people will pay attention to your message, understand it, remember it, and act on it if you tap into behavioral science.

Jeff Cobb: [00:37:08] That wraps up our conversation with Nancy Harhut, author of *Using Behavioral Science in Marketing* and chief creative officer at HBT Marketing. Stay with us a moment longer for our recap.

Celisa Steele: [00:37:18] You'll find show notes and a transcript for this episode at leadinglearning.com/episode478, along with links to the HBT Marketing Web site, Nancy's book, and Nancy's LinkedIn profile. And Nancy invites you to connect on LinkedIn, where she regularly posts and shares about topics we discussed in our conversation, and she welcomes any follow-up questions you might have.

Jeff Cobb: [00:37:40] If you found this episode valuable, we'd be grateful if you'd share it. That helps more people find the show and benefit from the conversation, and it supports the work we do.

Celisa Steele: [00:37:49] In our conversation, Nancy highlighted the importance of leading with emotion, being clear and specific in messaging, and keeping things concise. Remember three well-chosen points can often be more persuasive than a longer list.

Jeff Cobb: [00:38:02] Plenty to think about and put into action as you seek to attract, engage, and support learners.

Celisa Steele: [00:38:08] Thanks again for listening—see you next time on the Leading Learning Podcast.

[music for this episode by Moarn]