

Interview with Christina Jones: Transcript

Michelle (M). Please introduce yourself and your role and what your leadership focus has been for the past year or a few years?

Christina (C): I'm Christina Jones. I'm the Vice President of Operations at RiceRocks. We make immersive learning solutions and empower decision-making tools for defense and aerospace clients. In mid 2020, I did a shift in my leadership focus when I was promoted from the team lead of learning design and product to the Vice-President operations. So my leadership focus has changed from a functional daily team lead to a strategic leadership role. With that, there has been some additional things. Racerocks is an indigenous owned and lead business and we're dedicated to being the people for the first organization, which has changed some of our internal mandates on how we do leadership. So does have been my focus.

M: What role do you think leadership plays in managing change in your specific context? For sure.

C: I think leadership is integral and managing change and like any contexts. And that isn't just people in a leadership role. I think communication and being honest and having open collaboration. If those behaviors are modeled, it can be change, can be championed by anybody at any level of the organization. Being able to clearly articulate the vision and the why behind why change is happening. Understanding the goals that are happening, accepting, and welcoming, communication and discourse on that. And then being prepared to set a plan and stick to it. After you've explained why all the changes going on, I think that can be championed by anybody at any level.

M: And just the idea that I think leaders and change can happen at any level I think is really important for people to think about.

You don't have to how big the leadership role to help a process or something. Yeah. And I think especially if you create as a business or as any sort of work environment. If you create an atmosphere of collaboration where you welcome people's opinions in and criticisms. And you are willing to, to walk through them and talk through them and not being dismissive of other thoughts. I think that's really important., I don't think you can claim to be leading if you're not willing to listen to the people you're leading.

M: What are the unique challenges you face when trying to manage change in your context? Do you think being sort of immersive, sort of on that leading edge of technology implementation.

Yeah, there's a couple of unique challenges that Race rocks faces. One of probably the most frustrating that we face is because we are creating digital learning environments and tools for clients that are not ourselves. We don't often, we are not often participants in the integration and the feedback cycle. So we will make a product, will be hired to create a curriculum package for rank qualification and military, or hired to make a virtual learning environment and will

work collaboratively with subject matter experts and stakeholders. But once the products developed, involvement ceases, at least in most cases, not in all cases, but in most cases it's like here we're done and they're like, great, It's exactly what we want. But we've only developed it with the stakeholders that were provided. We don't often have great access to our end user. Especially when we're dealing with large companies or the military. Because they have to wait for that rank qualification to come in for them to actually run it. So being part of the pilot may or may not be part of the problem, the development. So that means we have to attempt to foresee where change will be an issue and then bake that into what we're developing. So we can foresee people might have difficulty ingesting this feature or have a difficulty managing this transfer of information from over here, learning this thing to recalling what they were doing. And we have to build an extra pieces to do that. Potential work that may or may not be needed. So that's pre-emptively designing for change management that may or may not occur, right? Yeah. So a lot of extra steps? Yes. Well, and I think do from an evaluation perspective or you get do you feel like you'd get enough back to really know like how to build it into the next. I mean, sometimes, sometimes not. And that's where the team advocates for a thankfully, we've grown so it's like significantly we've had a lot deeper integration with some of our large clients. And they've seen them value of that integration, of keeping us around for piloting. So we can do evaluation, so we can iterate, so we can make sure that the learners needs are really met. It's an improving process, but it's still not to the point that we would like it to be. Okay. Thank you. And, and so I think one of the challenges I think all education leaders are going to come up against is, so roof there are big technology issues out there.

M: So what do you think is one sort of overarching issue that all educational leaders might need to think about. And how, how can you address it or how are you addressing in your context?

C: So the one that came to mind first isn't just a technology SEO, it's like an issue in all facets in that some bias in education development. And not all learners learn like your stakeholders or your SMEs. And not even like those who are designing the instruction. And they may not have access the same access that you think they will have, and they may not have the same support means that the profile of your user states in the beginning. And this applies technology as well because not every system can support streaming for k and not every system, not every internet connection can support like broadband upload and download speeds. So when you paint a single brush towards applying technology to learning, you're going to miss people and it's going to create. Your learning will have inherent biases because it will not included those specific learners and your development.

M: It thinks it's interesting because I think that is the one issue and maybe that I've talked to you, Kristi from health care and I've talked to Sandra from K to 12. And they all talked about like, lack of equitable access. So equity and diversity and meeting that training or needing to recognize that, yes, technology's ubiquitous but not, but it actually introduces inequity. So it's really interesting to hear you all sort of bring that up as a big issue.

So yeah, we really like noticed, I mean, we notice a lot of it through our indigenous work that we've been doing. So like the quality things come up there, but we really noticed it when it

came to technological application. About two years ago, we made a ranked 12th grade, the beginning of it. We built a rank qualification for the Navy. And it was the beginning of COVID and everybody was going remote. And the navy, while they have a lot of hi, technological adaptation, it's usually piece neon. It's almost always done on base. It's rarely have they dealt with because of security issues, putting things out on the internet for use. And we all of a sudden had to take what we were building with the full intent of how it was put together originally to be run on site, to be run remotely. And realizing, Oh, yeah, they, there are people all over Canada taking this course. The entire plan of how we plan to do this, based on being on base with broadband Internet now is invalid. All of these cool interactive pieces that we're going to be putting in. How do we get those two people? Do are they, are they necessary and having to do that analysis on internet access for every potential learner country was like, like I was really a wake-up call of how much we baked in our own, like access bias when we had done our original dominant plan.

M: Can I ask how did you get it out to people?

C: I think mostly we reduced like the interactivity of it. It was a junior rank qualification. It did not require deep immersion for most of the things and where we did need it, we pad offline versions that were put onto USB sticks and mailed everywhere. Super Band-Aid solution done in a time of need. Because it was also not a thing that they wanted repeating. It was not it was not going to be the standard of how they continue deliver.

M: Interesting. Yeah, it's definitely something we struggle with at TRU. We have many students that might be in the north or we also have incarcerated students that we serve. And so when you're designing, knowing that someone will not have access to the Internet at all. It really, and you're trying to create something that's interactive. Like sometimes you just can't, like you just have to go back to basics. And so it might not be the ideal course that you want. But considering access is a huge piece.

C: It's a fun, Like it's a fun kind of challenge to be like, how do you high-tech and low-tech, like how do you give that experience that they're expecting when there's those limitations? How do you, how do you bridge those gaps? So you aren't like lowering the expectation of the, especially with my particular students, the students that raise blacks normally serves. They're expecting like an interactive high-tech experience because that's kind of been what they've been promised. And then so for turning around and being like, here's your PowerPoints, like they're going to be not happy and it's not going to not going to work out super well. So how do we deal with it? In that place? It was a neat, kind of cool challenge to try and work around. Yeah. Okay, interesting. And so for your immersive, so are people doing sort of a role-play, kind of well done? Hey, yeah, So we've done a few products, different immersive products. We have a fast boat simulator which is on a most Jim platform would be r. And that's to teach how to drive these like fast Richard inflatable, rigid whole inflatable boats. Because it's so tied to the how it feels to drive the boat. Not about here are the steps that you need to follow to jogged boat. It's about like how do you manage how you sit there? You stand there so you don't hurt yourself. So that was, that's one product. We also have a replenishment at C simulator. So in the Navy would have been big, big boats and then they have refueling vessels that refuel the

other boats while they're both going 15 Knots in the ocean and they send over the thing to do it. And what they had was a console that had a training system and it had a simulation system in it. But it was at creating false training outcomes because the students would use the simulator and they'd be looking down at the machine. And that's just the machine. The machine in simulation mode. So it's not actually moving the, the hoses. And then when they didn't real life, they forgot to look up and look out the window. And they forgot to look up and see if the hoses were hitting the ocean or if they were dropping off Jack and people, equipment was getting damaged and people were getting hurt. So we built a visualization of what should be happening outside when this stuff is happening. So they learned to look and actually get the visual input. So that was kind of a neat product. Then we've also done other VR and AR simulations, like an electrical one for Boeing for their mask packing the oxygen masks because it's a really complicated process to pack.

M: Well, it's really nice to hear a very kind of practical things that you're building for immersive applications. Because I think one of the things in education is that people want to just add VR because it's kind of cool. But it's like the amount of, I'm guessing development it takes to build that simulation to that one very specific thing where it's really necessary, right?

C: Often, you don't need to pick up a VR headset. And unless you need to feel it in 3D -- you need the depth perception or you need to be able to physically do things. Yeah, we run across that a lot where people are like We want to do it in VR. You ask, you want to teach this five-step lesson in there? Like it's a five buttons they need to press. Why does that need to be in VR? They want it because it's cool. I get it. If it is cool. Yeah. You don't need to. What is that old adage? It's like just because you have a hammer doesn't mean that every problem is a nail. It's most useful when the task they're trying to take care to teach is too dangerous or too expensive or too difficult to do in situation. That's when you need those immersive environments. We've done a lot of other, like less high-tech 3D training. I was actually just looking at a whole video series that's up on the, the Navy's Vimeo channel. It's just a bunch of videos explaining ship maneuvers because it's a really complicated, like it's basically trigonometry and how to drive the boat so you get where you need to be. But it's really hard for students to visualize that what they were using previously was like many, like bath folks like the lender using the bathtub and like a big thing on the ground to be like if you do this and then you do the math, turns like this. So this really helps them be able to visualize the impact of the decisions they were making. But it was able to be done like in a video series. It didn't need to be immersive.