

Katy Oliveira (00:00):

Welcome back to the show. Today we're diving into a topic that can make or break your team success with new tools and technology, strategic enablement. We're joined by a special guest, CITAs Learnings director of strategic enablement, Stephanie Smithing, who plays a critical role in supporting our customers from onboarding to long-term success. We'll hear about her background, her approach to enabling teams, and the difference between simply training people and truly enabling them to succeed. We'll also explore the common mistakes teams make when rolling out new software, practical tips for helping you strategically enable your team, what kind of support leaders should expect from software vendors and plenty of real world insights to help you turn software adoption into real impact. Whether you are a leader rolling out new technology or someone passionate about helping teams thrive, this episode is for you. Before we dive in, take a moment to subscribe to the show to stay up to date on the latest and data informed approaches to student impact. Well, Stephanie, I'm so excited that you're here today. Welcome to Next Practices. Thanks for coming on the show.

Stephanie Smith Euting (01:14):

Yeah, thank you. I'm excited to be here and have this conversation.

Katy Oliveira (01:20):

So I have given a little intro before our conversation, but I want to give you a chance to share a bit about who you are, your background and your current role supporting customers at C, the Toss learning.

Stephanie Smith Euting (01:32):

Yeah, absolutely. So I have been in, gosh, higher education working with data this ed tech space, just shy of 20 years. I've worked with educational technologies. I've also worked at a handful of institutions as well. And throughout that journey have just always really been kind of a data geek and pride myself of that. I've also worked with many different types of institutions and helped kind of define what success looks like in all ways, shapes and form with data to inform that, but also being able to make plans and drive towards the data people will want to be able to capture and utilize in their strategies. So I've been with CITAs Learning for four years now. I served in the director of customer development role almost for the last four years before moving into this role as the director of strategic enablement. So I'm really excited to be able to take my knowledge and my experience of what I know from working with customers, the customer journeys, what's worked, what's not worked, and really apply it to strategic enablement and again, help people not just be successful, but also thrive with their data and with their tools.

Katy Oliveira (03:03):

Yeah, I'm excited to see how you grow with this role. I think is a really great opportunity for our customers to get the most out of their investment in CITAs learning. I know just for our audience, the term strategic enablement training, professional development, I'll get thrown around, but I want to really define those terms specifically for this conversation and I know you have a point of view on that. So when we define strategic enablement and how is it different than training or point and click training that many folks might be used to?

Stephanie Smith Euting (03:37):

Yeah, absolutely. So I'm going to start with the easy one, right? Training is teaching someone how to use the tool. So point and click functional training. How do we find this data point? How do we see this information about a student? Where do we go to send an email that is training? That's all critical, right? You have to know how to use your software tools that like step one in being successful. So think of training as more functional, Quicken Point, being educated on what to do and where to go to within the technology you're using. Then there's strategic enablement and that's taking it one step further and anchoring your knowledge in use cases, anchoring your knowledge in strategies that maybe say your strategic priorities at your institution, being able to think about how to use the data and how to use the tools in a way that allows for just ongoing success, if you will. And part of that, to put something tangible to it is thinking about how to keep your staff, your teams engaged. I always say there's adoption of a tool and then there's usage of a tool. So leadership will say, yes, we're going to use this tool moving forward for X, Y, Z reasons, and then it's up to the users then to use it to be successful to move the needle. And enablement helps guide that as well.

Katy Oliveira (05:27):

Yeah, it's really important. I think it's often missed opportunity at institutions. Anybody who's watched the shows know I worked in higher ed for 15 years and I use a lot of different technologies and in my experience, most of the time you have a train the trainer model, you learn functional point and click training, and then that's kind of where it stops and then you're left to your own devices.

Stephanie Smith Euting (05:52):

Or after those training sessions you see everyone's really excited and they go out and use the tools for a little bit. And then sometimes we see folks revert back to their old habits or workflows or just what they're used to. And there's ways to, I guess overcome that. Yeah.

Katy Oliveira (06:14):

Where do you think most people go wrong when they are preparing their teams to use software? And I actually maybe reframe that question's kind of setting us up for failure in that we were thinking about it only at the front end of the experience and maybe that's a place where we go wrong. I might have answered my own question, but I want to hear what you have to say too.

Stephanie Smith Euting (06:33):

Yeah, so thinking from the beginning of the process is making sure you have the right people in the room, the right teams combined, the right leaders and users working together to understand the why. We hear this all the time, the why is to help support students, but really the why and really defining what that why is specifically for your institution and making sure that your people have quick wins established so that they feel confident in their really not just the software, not just the software, but in their actions and in their abilities to really support students. And then not having a plan for ongoing learning, whether that's learning your own data, data changes over time, learning different strategies, learning about things changing in higher education, having opportunities, ongoing learning opportunities, and then having the ability to practice and do the work before they do the work. And thinking that in a long-term setting as well, what are those long-term goals? Where are you trying to achieve there? Coming up with that step-by-step strategy ahead of time at the forefront really allows you to be successful.

(08:08):

Instead of just thinking in the near term of, alright, we got to get folks trained on it, okay, go. No, you need to have a plan and a strategy in place. And I know that sounds can sound like a big lift, right? Change management in general can be a really big lift, but what I really love about strategic enablement is supporting those strategies and having us ditas learning help you do that because we really want to be in your partner in this and once we can really help guide you through that process, we can work together to be successful.

Katy Oliveira (08:51):

And I think one thing too is folks sometimes want to do everything all at once. They see the potential of what the solutions may offer and it can be daunting to figure out where to get started. And I think taking a crawl, walk, run approach can be really helpful. Have you seen something similar?

Stephanie Smith Euting (09:11):

Yeah, absolutely. So yeah, everything all at once. So it's master of all things. So with providing quick wins, there's quick wins in each of those categories. So you have making sure your teams just feel comfortable with their tools and help with the efficiency of their workflows. So I'm thinking of advising here. We know that advisors have a lot of work to do and they, as much as we would love to be proactive, don't always get that opportunity. A student comes into your office, they need help right away, you're pulling up their information and you're seeing what they need. So being able to help support your teams with those quick wins of, okay, I have to do this right now, here's everything I need. That's a quick win. They're feeling great, they're feeling comfortable with the information they have at hand.

(10:14):

I see the next level of that as utilizing some of the data. So as then as folks become more comfortable with using the tools, creating efficiencies in their process for themselves, take it one step further with that proactive nature of, alright, let's use some of the prediction scores, predictive analytics to say, what kinds of conversations do I need to have with these students? Are they engaging in the LMS? Are they enrolling within a time period that we see students persist to the next term more frequently? Utilizing those types of insights to help guide those conversations with students. And then also utilizing data points to be able to identify the students for some of the proactive outreach or looking at how they interact with various courses if you're helping plan that student's academic journey. So there's start with the easy steps of efficiency, tool utilization, and then layer in data points, but layer in the level of sophistication behind the data points and how to apply it.

Katy Oliveira (11:32):

And then you can build from there, give yourself a trajectory or strategy that you can work towards as people become more and more familiar with the tools and they become more integrated into their workflows. I thought that what you said is people are gungho and then they revert back to their old ways because it's like any other habit behavior, it takes time and to some extent, repetition to get to it. It can be easy to slip back into old habits.

Stephanie Smith Euting (12:00):

And that's why the continuing education piece I mentioned earlier also is really important because you are trying to set this, maybe you're trying to set this new culture across campus, or you want to approach your student support in a different way. And it's only natural that people need reminders of

what that looks like. But also when you have that ongoing learning, that's where innovation comes from and that's where creative ideas are born. So it's just because you are working either with the same tools or dataset, but in a different way, doesn't mean that you cannot find different outcomes or different goals to work towards. And really that's why workshops are so important. I genuinely do believe that. And that's something that I'm really excited for here in strategic enablement at CITAs Learning because it's a place where either if you have a workshop on campus for your people to come together, maybe have conversations they wouldn't have otherwise. Look at data points insights, see how different departments roles collaborate with one another, but also our workshops that we hold annually where CITAs learning partner institutions come together and collaborate, share ideas, talk about what's happening within higher education and continue that ongoing learning piece. Like yes, CITAs Learning is the anchor in that, right? Either utilizing those tools or utilizing the tools in both examples. But it also keeps the data fresh, I would say in your mind.

Katy Oliveira (13:52):

Yeah, I was going to have you talk a little bit more about that. You mentioned earlier the importance of partnership with your vendor and task learning has a variety of ways that we partner with folks, but I think that I've seen different customers and institutions have internal processes for supporting ongoing professional development and strategic enablement. And then I also know that partnering with us with CITAs Learning or with your vendor if it's with a different software solution, can be really powerful as well. And that there are different quality of that engagement depending on who you're working with. So what kinds of services and support should leaders really expect or look for when working with their vendors?

Stephanie Smith Euting (14:47):

So I think first and foremost, the human aspect of it too, especially in this day and age of technology, as in my role as director of customer development before moving into this role, something that I really think is special and unique is, and I say it all the time, is we have a deep bench here at CITAs Learning. We have a lot of really great professionals who have that higher education experience that can pull on their own experience and apply it really to any scenario, whether it's strategy, conversation or just bringing your teams together. We're just talking about meeting with an advisor and getting their feedback and talking about what happened that week for whatever reason. So being able to have someone that you can lean on for support through strategic services guidance and just having that level of industry experience, I think is really important. And having that line came in there to help support you.

(16:03):

Also having a strong community of practice and customer, our partner institution collaboration, I think is also important because then you are able to connect with other voices, other institutions to share your real lives lived experiences. And being able to have those opportunities, quite honestly on a frequent basis really helps again, with that knowledge sharing innovation kind of concept of as we continue to learn from one another and share our experiences, we just helps drive us the next level. And then I would also say, this is kind of twofold, where it's like technology that keeps up with the times, but also to help you keep up with the times. So thinking about how the evolution of ai, we're all talking about that. Great. How do we utilize that with student success tools? Well, we're here to support you in figuring out how we're going to utilize that are, we're going to train your staff on that.

(17:19):

What's the plan to make sure we're going to use any AI insights within any type of technology tools to really help your institution reach its goals. So just staying along that cutting edge collaboration and look for a vendor or partner who is going to help put that in place and saying vendor, that feels weird to me, to be honest, because I feel the institutions that I've worked with here, they really have been partners, they really have been partners. And I dunno, I just had to say that because I think that goes to the level of, I guess, commitment that we have towards our partners here.

Katy Oliveira (18:06):

And I think that's kind of sums it up. You want to look for someone who's going to be a partner and that you are, strategic enablement is not a one and done thing. It's an ongoing thing. Correct. And so making sure that you have the support and pieces in place to be able to do that and opportunities to engage with a broader community of practice, I think is also extremely important. And not just to hear about the latest best practices in research, but to hear really true applied strategy and how folks are solving these problems and thinking about them and being able to exchange and walk away with actions you can take, I think is really important.

Stephanie Smith Euting (18:50):

Yeah, absolutely. And it is, right? What actions can you take away and go apply tomorrow? That is really, that's the key of it all.

Katy Oliveira (19:00):

Yeah. Well, we had a really great conversation about strategic enablement. I always end each episode giving the floor to our guests to ask if there's anything else you would like to cover off on or anything I should have asked you. Anything that folks should need to know. Parting words that we didn't get to cover in our conversation today.

Stephanie Smith Euting (19:22):

Anything, any parting words. With strategic enablement, it really is not one size fits all, right? You think about training, training, everybody who's utilizing the tool, no matter what your institution is like, is going to click the same way to do the same, take the same type of action with strategic enablement. It allows us to really hone in on institutional priorities, the uniqueness of your institution, how make a plan for your types of students, your types of teams. And it's not a one size fits all approach. And I think that's really important to share, especially as we're thinking about strategic enablement as this ongoing opportunity to allow your institutions, your people, your processes to be successful and thrive.

Katy Oliveira (20:20):

Yeah, that's such an important point. I'm so glad you brought it up because yeah, the way you use a tool, the steps to use it appropriately or effectively might be the same, but the way you apply it is going to depend on the project or the job at hand.

Stephanie Smith Euting (20:35):

Absolutely. Absolutely.

Katy Oliveira (20:37):

Yeah. Well, Stephanie, thank you so much for coming on next Practices. I really appreciate it.

Stephanie Smith Euting (20:42):

Yeah, thanks for having me, Katie.