

## **CPI *Unrestrained* Transcription**

Episode 28: Amy Acherman

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Terry: Hello, and welcome to *Unrestrained*, the CPI podcast series. This is your host, Terry Vittone. And today, my guest is CPI's Director of Research and Development, Amy Acherman. Hello and welcome, Amy.

Amy: Hello. Thank you, Terry.

Terry: You're welcome. Let me tell you a little bit about our guest. As Director of Research and Development at CPI, Amy Acherman provides leadership oversight as well as hands-on effort to advance the creation of CPI training programs. A positive, creative professional with a passion to help develop others, she makes it her mission to implement creative solutions and strategies that meet the evolving needs of our customers.

Previous to CPI, Amy was a learning and organizational development leader and consultant for a global workforce solutions company with expertise in learning program design, change management, facilitation, and process improvement. She has a double master's degree from Alverno College in Organizational Development and Instructional Design, and a B.A. in Behavioral Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Amy was recently named one of *Training* magazine's 2016 Emerging Training Leaders. And when not creating new programs, Amy travels with her husband and daughter, enjoying hiking, boating, and games.

Today's interview with Amy will focus on elearning and blended learning. So then, Amy, let's begin. Could you start by helping our listeners understand elearning by talking about its history and evolution?

Amy: Sure. Well, first, I'd like to just define elearning because I know this is a term that's used a lot but people can often be confused. So, really, elearning is any learning conducted through electronic media. Often we think of the Internet or computer-based training. And it has evolved with the advancement of technologies.

So as our technology keeps changing (we have more iPhones, social media, tools that we can use), the way that we do elearning actually keeps evolving. So if you think about when

this term first came out, it was during the dot-com time frame in the early 2000s, probably when you heard a lot about e-commerce and e-business.

And it was first used in 1999 at a CBT Systems seminar. And the term really helped define how computers and media are being used for learning, even though it really did exist well before 1999. When you think back, first time that elearning might have been used as in word processing training when admins and secretaries would go to learn WordPerfect or Lotus 1-2-3, they'd get some kind of training on a computer-based system.

And usually, you'd get a stack of floppy disks or somebody would administer this onto the computer, and then you'd work with the computer to get some form of assessment, and you would have learned the program. It evolved from there to CD-ROMs instead of floppy disks, and then learning management systems where you could literally go and assign courses to a mass number of people. They just log in online into the learning management system and start to take courses.

Now, you'll see more social learning. So people are going to places like YouTube to learn about something. My husband, for example, needed to fix a part of his engine in his truck. Something was going wrong. What did he do? He went to YouTube, watched a video of how to repair something, and immediately he's fixing it.

Another way learning is changing now is actually through social media. We use Yammer, and I know our Certified Instructors have the Yammer community. We're learning from each other through Twitter and Yammer and all the social media now that it's phenomenal how fast you can pick up on a topic and spin from there. So it's exciting.

Terry: So as elearning has evolved, the learner has changed as well. What are the primary characteristics, would you say, of the modern learner?

Amy: Sure. So Bersin by Deloitte really did a great infographic. I love this infographic, and they did a research study called "Meet the Modern Learner." Here are some facts that people probably don't know that I'd like to share, but a modern learner looks at their phone or is online 27 times a day. They're definitely more untethered. They're not in one place. They work in several locations. They are impatient.

The attention span for videos right now is less than four minutes. We unlock our smartphones an average of nine times every hour. Everything that we work in now really needs to be more on-demand. There's a need to get answers now outside of traditional learning. We need to learn about something and be able to problem solve in response.

So it's expected of the modern learner; you're going to go out and seek that information on your own; you're empowered. And because of that need for adapting and that rapid change in business, it means that instead of waiting for a traditional learning opportunity,

you as a learner expect to get what you need in the moment that you need it. And that's a huge expectation in a lot of businesses.

Terry: Do you ever think that the technology leads people's ability to assimilate and learn from it?

Amy: Oh, I definitely think so. What we have right now, the number-one source for learning information, and I'm sure you've heard this, somebody doesn't know what something is or what to do, what do they do? They go to the Internet, and they Google it.

Terry: Oh, of course, surely.

Amy: Exactly, and so Google has become the number-one place for learning information. It doesn't mean necessarily that they're getting the absolute correct knowledge, or even maybe understand policies, procedures, things in an organization. And that's where we have to fill the gaps in the learning and development field because Google is so accessible, and that's where people are getting their source information. It may not always align or be correct.

So this is something that we have to adapt to really quickly, and make sure that we're closing that gap. I think businesses right now are falling behind because we rely heavily on, well, we have a traditional method of teaching you something, and we know people just can't wait. Their jobs are demanding more.

The other thing that's changing too is the collaboration that is happening with the modern learner. So learners want to know just as much from their peers and managers as they do from the experts. So they're going out and seeking, from their colleagues, information, and we see this all the time at CPI.

We have Instructors asking other Instructors, "How did you solve this problem? What's going on in your organization? How did you meet this need?" That's important though to keep those social channels open in terms of learning, because there is some independent learning, but there's also those social aspects that add to the learning experience.

Terry: I see. And so what are some of the primary benefits of elearning? Rather than, I think one of the terms that followed elearning was c-learning for classroom learning. I'm sure that came into being—that terminology—sometime after elearning probably when academics began to study the effectiveness of the two.

Amy: Sure.

Terry: So what are some of the benefits of elearning?

Amy: Well, I think some of the quick hitters—and these are just some things that a lot of people seem to know. We have seen that if you need to get a lot of information, the same information to a large number of people quickly, elearning is the quickest way to do that, because you don't have to wait to gather everyone into a room and set up a classroom for that.

But learning matters to everyone right now at any point in their career, and we do have four generations working in the workplace right now. So what you find is even across these four generations right now, the learner skews to be autonomous, interactive, and they're non-linear of logic. Meaning they don't learn something like the history of it, then they get into what are the basics of it and the advanced topics. They literally jump in where they need to be. So again—

Terry: Can you give me a hard example of a curriculum that might—

Amy: Meet that need?

Terry: Yes, right, where you wouldn't learn in a linear fashion where you would say, "Well, I don't need to know the historical basis, and then the theory, and then the practice in that order."

Amy: Well, I think it comes back to what problem are you trying to solve. For example, if I was needing to get some numbers from my boss and they said to me, "Go in the Excel Spreadsheet, and I need you to produce a chart or a table or graph for me." Or maybe I am asked to do something like provide some numbers. I'm not going to learn about the basics of Excel. I'm not going to learn advanced functions of Excel, I'm really just going to learn how do I create a chart or graph. And I'm probably going to go right to that step-by-step. How do I do it? How do I accomplish this goal?

And then if I have an interest in learning more about Excel, because maybe I need to learn how to use pivot tables or how to make an infographic out of that, I might go and get further education on that or I might study more.

I don't really need to go back to basics if I'm working on it every day or maybe I know enough and I'm comfortable. But the thing is I have to address that need immediately, and I might not have had formal training. I'm just going to go out and get that information.

Terry: So elearning offers that accessibility and efficiency, different from a classroom learning situation where you would maybe be waiting to get to the pivot table section, but you have to wait for this curriculum and the rest of the class to progress, whereas with the elearning, you can go directly to the application that you need.

Amy: Exactly, exactly. And that's really the adaptability that a lot of people are needing right now. And what's happening especially with the younger generations is if they have interest

in a topic, and you'll see this in schools, teachers are actually using that to their advantage. So if they're exploring a science topic or a math topic, they're solving a particular math problem. Maybe now they want to learn more about geometry or algebraic equations; they can go and spin off, and do a little bit more.

They have great online programs. My daughter has even used them to just practice math problems. And kids go out, and they do them as games, and they get little awards or badges for these achievements. It's really self-driven, and that's where a lot of learning is now coming from. It's the motivation as myself.

Terry: And not only efficiency and accessibility, but portability as well.

Amy: Yes, portability is really important. And when you look at how do we know that this is productive, I often hear people say, "Oh, I don't think that online learning would be as effective as classroom learning." And when online learning is poorly done, I would say that could be true. Some online learning in the past really was just an eBook where you're reading a lot of text, and you click next, and you read some more text, and you click next. I'm sure you've experienced that.

Terry: Sure, sure.

Amy: Yeah, and it's not really effective for learning, but when done right with simulations, scenarios, stories, and you try to make it as close to real-life situations as possible, it's actually showing that there is a better performance from the person who does an online learning or blended learning than those who do the traditional classroom in comparative studies.

I'd often cite the US Department of Education study. In 2010, they evaluated evidence-based practices of online learning. And they looked at thousands of studies between 1996 and 2008, and these were experimental and quasi-experimental studies. And they looked where there was a large enough sample where they could actually have evidence that these comparative studies, you know, between these online and traditional classrooms had controls in place, that they were learning the same topics, the same evaluations.

What they found in their meta-analysis of these thousands of studies is that those who did the online or blended actually performed better on average than those getting the same materials in the face-to-face.

Another study I like to refer to that recently was released was from Relias Institute, and they partnered with the May Institute on this. So they had two groups of healthcare professionals. One group took blended learning and another did the traditional classroom. They had 40 hours of training between the two groups, and the ones that did a blended, which was online and some classroom versus those in classroom, those in the blended actually did more training.

They had, again, probably from the online materials, they went a little deeper, maybe they went a little further in what they were learning. And on average, they retained 30% more knowledge from the course, and that's what the assessment showed. So those things to me actually show that even if you are on the fence of online learning, it's just as effective as classroom training. They're both valuable.

Terry: Mm-hmm, I see. So can we bring this back home now a little bit and talk about how CPI's elearning strategies, how our customers might take advantage of the benefits associated with elearning like efficiency, portability, time shifting, those sorts of things?

Amy: Sure. So some of the things that we're looking at (at CPI) on our elearning strategy is that obviously, we've seen that learners' needs have changed, and organizational needs have changed. Obviously, it's the same constraints. We need to get more people through training. We have less time to take staff off the floor and less time to actually do the training.

We see that there is a need for learners to have augmented their knowledge prior to getting into the classroom. And so we're actually looking to design more elearning options that allow for that. So a great thing that we're doing right now is one of our programs that we're looking at is our original program that's called Hybrid. We're now having a new *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® program called Flex.

And this *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® Flex is kind of our branding of any of our flexible learning options. It does stand for Flexible Learning Experience. And what we're trying to do there is provide all of the knowledge, concepts, and some practice in a safe environment (obviously doing this online) for learners to do and learn *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training before they come to a classroom portion.

So then the Certified Instructors are really spending their time in that classroom (instead of teaching the terms, definitions, and the concepts) practicing those skills and practicing the actual disengagements—sorry. I'm totally off topic there.

Terry: That's okay. That's alright.

Amy: Let's get back on track. So what did I say? So with *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® Flex, the Certified Instructor is really spending their time in the classroom on the application, so they can practice some of those things maybe they don't get to when they're teaching the term definitions. So we can practice our paraverbals more. We can practice our nonverbal communication and the verbal intervention skills.

We have more activities that are provided so you can actually engage the class in more discussion and more practice. And then as the Certified Instructor, you're also able to

better assess how are they using these skills. You're spending more time on that assessment, less time on passing on knowledge.

Terry: I see. So let me ask you: Say I'm a school administrator and I approach a Training Coordinator. I say, "Hey, I've heard about this Flex." How do I determine if it's right for me as opposed to your more traditional *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training?

Amy: A lot of that is going to depend upon a few things. So I always say, again, you want to look at where your learners are at right now. So if your learners are already feeling comfortable with using technology and they're comfortable with online learning, this would be a great opportunity to introduce this. You also want to look at the size of your organization, too.

If you have a smaller organization, it might not be worth that investment to have a computer set up in a room for people to take training. And it might be more cost-effective really just to have a classroom with the 20 people or 30 people you need to meet with. In other cases, it might be that you can't get that group of people together, or they're in remote locations, or you have a large population that you need to get certified in a particular amount of time.

You really want to look at that online option because it really will be more cost-effective for you. Things that don't get put into training costs often are travel, time off the floor, things like even you have to feed them when they're in those training classes and sometimes hotel accommodations. There's renting out space. There's a lot of things that come into play.

And that's where the cost savings can come with that online learning, because even though you still are having to pay a person for that time in the computer, they're doing it at a self-paced rate. Usually, people in their practice can get through our blended learning course, the online portion in about 2 to 3 hours on average. And that's fairly quick for just the general knowledge, and then you can spend more time in that classroom.

Terry: So how flexible is Flex then for our client?

Amy: It's actually very flexible. So just like with our classroom training, again, we have broken it down so that all the key concepts that they need to learn will be in that online portion, in that 2 to 3 hours. So if you need to spend more time on your physical skills or more time on the verbal interventions, you can build in that time. Because again, you're not really going through and repeating: here's the definition of this word, or here's how we use kinesics. They already come with that knowledge.

Terry: Right. So in other words, if I, say I worked with special educators who taught K-5 rather than a large school district that had middle schools and high schools, my concerns would be different so far as the physicals versus the verbals, and Flex will accommodate those needs then.

Amy: Exactly. You can then customize. Everyone has got the core concepts, but in the classroom with the K-5, I might be focusing more on these activities. For those in middle school and high school, I can focus on these interventions and these activities. And that's something that we're working on for all of our programs, even a change for our refresher program. We're working on having the flexibility in the classroom portion. And then we want to follow up with what's called micro learnings.

Terry: That leads to my next question, but this sounds great. That means that if I'm an administrator and I call a Training Coordinator, they are going to be able to assess my situation on a basis of my distinctive needs, and then offer me a solution and a proposal that builds Flex for my specific purposes.

Amy: Correct.

Terry: Wow, that's tremendous. So my next topic was if you could talk about the concepts of just-in-time learning and micro learning. I'm sure some of those terms are new to some of our listeners, and certainly before this interview they were new to me.

Amy: Yeah, micro learning is something that in the training world we're talking a lot about. Again, it's not something new, but the term "micro learning" is new. It's really just how you chunk or break down a large amount of information that you need to have a base knowledge of something, and you just focus on one small chunk or one small component of learning.

So if I was going to teach you, let's say, French cooking: Instead of teaching you, again, all the techniques of French cooking, I might just focus, our one topic today is going to be on sauces. And maybe it's just on the Béarnaise sauce, and we're going to just learn about that, and you're going to do it really, really well. Now, if you learn how to cook a good Béarnaise sauce, you're probably not going to be a world-class famous French chef. But what I can guarantee you is that that'll be interleaved or interwoven into more components that you learn, and you'll be able to apply those and compile those together into your full knowledge of learning.

So micro learnings, where they really are effective in organizations is either pre-event or post-training event. And we're positioning the micro learnings with our refresher as a post-learning event. So we've got all of the knowledge, the key concepts. So one of the things we know people never get enough time in is setting limits. So one of our micro learnings we're going to do is just on setting limits.

And these will probably be about 5 minutes long, might be just a quick video, might be something where they get to go onto a small online learning, or maybe they get a case study and they work on it in a meeting. But the Certified Instructors will be able to pick



and choose through different topics. And those topics then they can push out through our CPI App right to their participants, and staff can then get a boost in their training.

We heard a lot from our surveying that most Certified Instructors are seeing, doing refreshers every two years or maybe seeing these people once every 18 months. And it's just not enough to really be effective in training the *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> program. So these micro learnings, we kind of are going to recommend them on a schedule: Here's something you want to send one week after training. Then what are you going to send out a month later to remind them and refresh them on "Okay, here's another key concept."? Let's have you revisit the Decision-Making Matrix, which is a new tool that's in our training. How are you going to use this?

Terry: So to speak to this flexibility, I just want to understand it. Say I'm an administrator and I've purchased a module on setting limits. Now, I might notice that my staff is slacking a little bit on setting effective limits and they need a refresher. That means that maybe on a Monday morning I can send out a memo that says, "Hey, by the end of the week, make sure you watch this setting effective limits again," so they can then at that time customize their own internal training based on need with a micro learning module.

Amy: Exactly, and these micro learnings, the first one we're going to introduce with a refresher program. Once you have the refresher, you get those micro learnings for free with the program. It's part of the program. So that's pretty cool.

Terry: I think I heard you say free?

Amy: Free, yes. I use the word "free" loosely there, but it does come. It's not an additional cost to get those micro learnings with the refresher program.

Terry: Oh no, I get you. It's just not an add-on surprise for the customer. That is included with the package.

Amy: It's part of the package. And we want to encourage the use of it. Eventually, we can start building some more of these smaller component learnings that you can purchase. They really are going to resonate and hit home for some of your certain needs, and we're looking to build that library and have it be available for people to say, "We really struggle with this in our organization. How can I have a series of things that will meet that need?" That's what this is starting to build, that bank of resources for Certified Instructors.

Terry: That's great. So that could be an on-demand repository of different aspects of CPI training.

Amy: Correct, that's what we're eventually going to work toward.

Terry: It sounds like a tremendous innovation in the way the training is going to be accomplished. In our pre-interview, Amy, you said something interesting. You said electronic learning

should not sacrifice human interaction but rather supplement it, and I'm wondering how do we—both here at CPI and I guess in the society at large—add human interaction to what could be perceived as a more solitary activity between a person and a machine?

Amy: Sure. So the thing about electronic learning is that it does provide some of that safety net for learners. So I know in a classroom from ones I have facilitated, there are those people who just don't participate. They are not interested in making mistakes in front of a class. I've been in that situation where I don't want to be in front of my boss appearing as if I don't have the knowledge, right? And that interaction with the computer, they could make a scenario. They can do a scenario. They can fail. They can get feedback from the machine that's safe, right?

But at some point, they're going to be doing this on the job, and there's still that need for that human interaction to be there to give the feedback, to be there to coach, to be there to motivate the person to use those skills. And you can't really get away from that. As much as we want to as even trainers or coaches provide all of that motivation, that coaching, that on-the-job usage or even simulate it, it still has to be tied back to real-world practices.

Terry: And I think that's where it's very separate from this phenomenon known as cocooning that some people do, because you take this electronic learning and the ultimate goal is to bring it out into the world and to interact with human beings rather than to isolate and just to get to absorb content on your own. So there is, I think, a difference there that maybe an initiate like me to elearning hasn't seen, until maybe it's been presented by an SME [subject matter expert] like yourself.

Amy: Yeah. Well, things we're trying to do in elearning, I've mentioned that eBook earlier, right, that boring click-next kind of learning. It really is up to the instructional designers, the people that create these training programs, to really bring in that human element—bring that emotion, bring that story, bring that motivation into the training. That's why you're seeing this trend that there will be more scenario-based training. You will see examples of things that mimic the real world so that people can make choices, and get answers back, and have that computer simulation react back to them.

And it's growing and being used more. Gamification, that's the term that's used in learning. Maybe you've heard of it, maybe not. Gamification is how do we make the learning more like a game. So in video games, you have a little character and the character goes on an adventure and does different things and gets rewarded, or sometimes there's demerits and things that happen to the character. And in learning, to give people some of that experience, we try to mimic some of that because people tend to want to enjoy it. So when you're enjoying something and you're learning from it, you participate more.

And then the other part of it is when they're doing those types of activities and they're actually learning something, and it simulates the real workplace or real work situation,

they're recalling that. It's easier to recall in your memory. It's building that long-term memory, and that's the key. We really want to get more opportunities to get something in someone's long-term memory through all these techniques that we're using in the micro learning, in the just-in-time learning, in this gamification, all these things that we're using.

Terry: Some of the expertise you're bringing in from your behavioral science studies?

Amy: Yeah, a lot of people confuse the—and this is something that I've noticed, is we have subject matter experts who have years and years of knowledge, and you talk about the vastness of what 30–40 years are collaboratively, when you get several experts who have hundreds of years of knowledge, 120 years of knowledge. I want to pass on [that knowledge] these new people that are coming in my organization. They need to know this. And really, what can they know in their first week, in their first month, in their first three months or year?

So as a learning professional, I'm always looking at, well, how do I break this down for them and get them the things that they need to know immediately to be successful. And that's the challenge, because we can't just shove it in like a machine and plug somebody into a computer and say, "Hey, all this knowledge is now in your head." What we really have to do is break it down for them.

Terry: So how do you determine an appropriate pace for a curriculum?

Amy: A lot of it is based on, again, this idea that there's only so much that you can have in your—there's a cognitive load theory. I think I've mentioned this in an article with CPI, but the idea is that you only retain about 20% of the information that's provided to you in any given situation, and that's all you can retain. Eighty percent of it is lost because you don't make the pathway or connection to it, or you're not using it frequently enough to retain it. And it's through that muscle memory of—what do you call it? So basically, you've heard the term, "If you don't use it, you lose it."

Terry: Yes.

Amy: Yes, and it's part of that memory retention that if I'm not using this skill, I will lose it. So if you try to give me 20 years of skills, and I'm not using any of it but this one or two, the only ones I'm going to remember are these two skills. So what you have to do to get that knowledge is build off of the skills that they already know, and try to use the knowledge that they already have and keep building on that. And once they feel good at something or strong in something, then you build more out of it.

Terry: And there's the whole angle about making the interactive process entertaining, is that you want to duplicate the experience because you're being entertained, and that must drive retention way up because of that repeated exposure.

Amy: Yeah. Adults, we find, really are more experiential learners. Meaning that in order for them to feel like they really grasp something, they have to do something. And whether you get them on their feet doing an activity, or they're doing it through the computer, making choices, making responses. When children are growing, they get the knowledge from the teacher, and they practice through memorization, and they're writing out multiplication tables and reciting these things, and a lot of that is building those neuropathways.

When the neuropathway is already built and I'm already an expert in something, it's hard for me to rebuild a new one. I'm going to always go down the strongest pathway. And so what's happening is with adults, they already have some knowledge and experience that they're relating everything to, so if they can relate it to an emotion and experience, something that they've felt before, something they have had to react to before. And they do a lot more self-reflection and look back at "Did I handle that well or not? And how am I going to now change or carry that forward?"

And the things organizations are looking for right now are outcomes, right? They want to know how effective is this, how do I know that this is really working? And the only way you can really get there is first identify ahead of time before your trainings what are the things we're trying to change. Is there a number of incidents that we have? Are there worker comp claims? What are our customer satisfaction rates? Do we have an issue with a lot of restraints? What are the things we're trying to achieve through a program?

Once you've measured where you're at today, and you do put in this training, you have to then go back and say, "Okay, do I have in place the right rewards for people to follow the new behavior I've just taught them? Do I have in place people who will coach them and encourage them to use their new techniques?" And then also are you measuring again to see its effectiveness? And where things are still falling down, are you refreshing on those things?

Terry: How are those considerations brought into the development of Flex?

Amy: So with Flex, really, it goes back to—our program that we're offering is looking to have people get a first experience online, and along with that first exposure to *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training, getting some scenarios, getting some terms and concepts. And then we have a lot of self-reflection activity within there.

Terry: So if I'm an initiate, brand new to *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training, my first exposure is going to be a module, an elearning module?

Amy: An elearning module online, yeah.

Terry: I see.

Amy: And when you take that elearning module, it's an optional piece but it's something we built to go with it. It's like a Learner's Guide that you can print off or you can use it online, however you want to use it. You could write it in your notebook. But the idea behind it is we're going to ask you some questions after you see a scenario or to reflect back on your workplace. And you're writing that down and already you're making connections to your own experiences, your own job, and your own organization. And those really are things that you'll bring into the classroom to discuss later on.

So again, for the Certified Instructor, what you're really counting on during that time is that people are going through all the modules to really reflect on their own practices and things they're doing. There's even a few little self-evaluations in there. How am I using my tone in my job? How well do I feel that I allow space between me and the people I care for? Those are things that people need to spend some time really thinking about, not just going through the motions but actually thinking about "How am I in practice?" And then when they're in the classroom, they're hearing from their peers. So there goes that social aspect. They're hearing from the Certified Instructor, and they're practicing it.

Terry: That's great. I like that change because when I went to the classroom and I learned about tone, volume, and cadence, we learned that in one fell swoop; here are the three aspects. But there wasn't time for self-consideration about how you might modulate your own tone to be a more effective communicator or to be a facilitator, a more peaceful sort of facilitator, or you know, a more effective coworker, a more agreeable coworker, all sorts of things.

Amy: Sure. And we talk about in the program the concept of the Integrated Experience and how we can escalate things just by our own behaviors and tones. And so what we're really trying to get to, to get to those number changes (decreased worker's comp, for instance) we talked about earlier, some behavior changes that have to take place to affect those numbers. You can't change behavior if people aren't aware of their own behavior.

And there's still got to be a willingness to change, of course, but I think that awareness that we bring to adults is really what this program offers. And again, we do some of that in the classroom. It's not absent, but we get to spend more time and more practice in Flex than you might when you're trying to also teach tone, volume, and cadence for the first time. So that's really how that works.

Terry: Is there more that you want to talk about Flex, more things that you have to say about it?

Amy: I think Flex is really just the starting point for some of the programs. We're going to have variations of Flex programs. So as we look at renewals, we are looking at using Flex as a renewal for Certified Instructors.

Terry: Oh, I see.

Amy: Yeah, we are also looking at, again, how can we bring some of our advanced programs to the Certified Instructor online so that they can get those additional topics to use with *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*® training right away? So that will be part of our Flex brand as well. How do we make a flexible learning option for you to get the materials you need online and integrate it right now into your program?

Terry: So some exciting evolution coming for our customers with Flex for sure.

Amy: Absolutely, we're excited about it.

Terry: Alright. And I want to congratulate you on your recent award.

Amy: Well, thank you.

Terry: And could you tell—yes, you're welcome. Tell our listeners a little bit about that.

Amy: Sure. I was selected by *Training* magazine, and I was named a 2016 Emerging Training Leader. I received the award along with 24 other individuals, so only 25 of us received this award, which I am really honored to receive.

*Training* magazine is a 51-year-old professional development magazine aimed at training professionals, human resources, and business management professionals in all industries, really focused on training and development. So when they instituted this Emerging Leader program they really wanted to recognize those individuals who have exceptional leadership skills, business savvy, and training instincts. And they judge it by their top hall-of-famers along with the editor of the magazine. So being nominated, not just recognized by own peers here at CPI, to receive this award, but recognized by the top peers in my profession, that was really just an honor for me to receive this award.

Training is my passion, and it's a privilege to lead and innovate and develop CPI's programs now and in the future.

Terry: Congratulations.

Amy: Yes, thanks.

Terry: I have a last question.

Amy: Sure.

Terry: As an SME, as this world of technology and interactivity is exploding around us, in a futuristic scenario, what do you see as a virtual reality training scenario that would seem unreal now? I mean do you have visions of these kinds of things?

Amy: Yeah, actually, I do. My team actually came up with this great idea. So a lot of times, we're working with a lot of our clientele who we don't know what they're experiencing. When I think of those in the autism spectrum, we try to understand what their world is like, but do we really understand what their world is like? And one of the ways that we could help understand better is to maybe make a simulation of what it's like to be autistic.

So maybe we do some simulation where your ability to communicate is limited. You maybe have to use symbols or touch instead of words. How do we up the ante more? Maybe you're overwhelmed by sights and sounds that are distracting as you're trying to do work or do something, and can we help make that environment real for people?

Another great concept one of my team members came up with is how can we do some *Nonviolent Crisis Intervention*<sup>®</sup> training where a person comes into a situation and you have to interact with that situation? So maybe you walk into a room, and there's a hospital patient, and they're really upset and they're yelling at you and screaming at you. Now what do you do? And you've got tools that you can quickly grab in the computerized world.

Maybe we have up on the wall, here are some tips on verbal interventions. Here's your ways to set limits, and you can touch those things in that world and then use those tools to quickly interact and watch that person either escalate in behavior or de-escalate, and be able to apply your techniques.

Terry: Excellent. So it's a bit like *Grand Theft Auto*, but instead of criminality, you want to get to Therapeutic Rapport.

Amy: You want to get to Therapeutic Rapport, and we've even designed some things where the person, you see a little meter. They're responding positively to you or negatively to you based on how you're responding to this crisis. So we're experimenting with some of this stuff already. A lot of it is complicated because there are so many variables that come into these things.

And this is where when we use examples in videos, when we use simulations like this, we're never going to hit every possible scenario that could exist in the world, or every possible way someone might react. But what we're doing is trying to give people a taste of it or something that they can build off of. It sticks with you. And it's, again, back to that memory, right? You're creating an emotion, a memory, a story.

And when they're in a moment with a real person, maybe they don't react as if they're in that simulation. They go, "Wow, this changed, now what do I need to do?" They're starting to think back to what they learned and apply it, but you're able to apply it quickly because you've got, again, something to connect to.

Terry: And they could more effectively improvise because they've internalized.

Amy: Exactly, yeah.

Terry: Excellent.

Amy: Yeah. And a lot of the feedback we have had on our customer beta or pilot of [our elearning program] Flex is that they love the video scenarios we've put in there, and people are really relating to these characters because they've seen it. They've experienced it, and instead of observing it as if you're a fly on the wall watching two people interact, you're really interacting with this character in this training.

Terry: What if I want a demo of that?

Amy: Well, we actually will be able to provide those demos. In fact, I know our Training Coordinators are being asked this right now.

Terry: Excellent.

Amy: The nice thing is that the way that our learning management system is set-up, we can give people a demo of the course, and that can be helpful for a deciding factor on whether or not this is the right product for you.

Terry: You heard it here on *Unrestrained*. Amy, do you have any last thoughts?

Amy: I just think that this is an exciting time for those who are doing training or work in the training world, because you have so many different options and so many things, resources, that you can use to actually help build training in your organizations. And a lot of times, we're limited by money, we're limited by time. And now, there are ways to actually work through some of those issues and having things that are flexible, having things that can get right to your people, right in their hands.

If we can even help you get it on a mobile device, we're going to do that so that the things that you know are going to be effective, the things that you want to get in front of people will give you more opportunities to get that training to the people as they need it. And that really is what I think is great. We're evolving even further into getting to use this technology.

Terry: And what an appropriate final thought. Well, for *Unrestrained*, this is Terry Vittone. I want to thank my guest today, CPI's Director of Research and Development, Amy Acherman. Thank you, Amy.

Amy: You're welcome.

Terry: And thank you for listening.