

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You're listening to Work in Progress. I'm Ramona Schindelheim, Editor-in-Chief of WorkingNation. Work in Progress explores the rapidly changing workplace through conversations with innovators, educators, and decision-makers, people with solutions to today's workforce challenges. Joining me on today's podcast is Deborah Quazzo, the co-founder of the ASU+GSV Summit now in its 12th year. Deborah, thank you so much for joining us.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

Thank you, Ramona, for having me.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

How is this year different? What is the focus? You always are focused on the intersection of learning and work, but what are some of the things that are coming to the surface today?

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

Coming off of this last year of the pandemic and COVID and sort of the tailwinds that... despite the tragedy of the health events, the tailwinds that saw such dramatic change for providers of digital education and skills, it is a really different conversation. Which what we've seen is a sector that is effectively the adoption curve. It's really the adoption curve got compressed by a couple of years and education technology. It's a broad category. I know, Ramona, you guys, you focus on the work side, but we look at Pre-K to gray. It's such a critically important category, and it's important to the delivery of learning and skills at scale is important to not only the future of individuals, each individual, but the future of cities, of countries, and frankly, the world. For us, we've been operating the category for 25 years and it's been one that's been really under capitalized.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

I think one of the most exciting things on the positive side of the silver lining in the bad year is just the incredible adoption of digital learning, digital education, digital skilling in the workforce and higher education and K-12 et cetera. I mean, this whole concept of going back to school or back to learn, there's no... hopefully there's no going back, it's going forward. So for us, I think it's really about what can this mean for the transformation at scale of working adults who desperately need it, who probably even more desperately need it coming out of COVID. We've also heard about all the folks who are leaving jobs they now view as dead in jobs and wanting to up-skill and re-skill so they could access new parts of the economy.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

So I think we're trying to push the conversation that way. I know you are, you're talking about green jobs, you're talking about other areas that are going to be really, really important for the future economy and where the jobs are migrating. I think we can finally really look where the puck is going and, and chase it. I think what we're trying to do is while it's hard not to talk about what we've just been through, and kind of what some of the negatives have been, cause there certainly have been plenty. I think what we're trying to do is keep a focus on staying on the balls of our feet. How do we take advantage of this? How do we transform things and how do we use the crisis to transform workforce learning, to transform re-skilling, up-skilling, higher education, K-12 education and we're seeing really exciting things around there.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

The one last thing that we've sort of added to the mix this year, we've always had, or for the last few years anyway, had a focus on early childhood education. You know, we've added it's adjacency, which is the care economy. And of course the issues of the impact on women of what's happened here with women dropping out of the workforce, the burden falling disproportionately on women to take care of not only children, but elder parents and relatives. So we have some incredible content around what's going on in the care economy and how important having a fundamental infrastructure to provide care at both ends of the life spectrum is for the productivity of our economy and particularly the participation of women fully in the economy. That's new for us and you'll see some very good conversations have happened and will happen on that topic at ASU GSV.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You've always been about, as you say, pre-K the gray, I think the gray part of this really needs a lot of attention these days because of the long-term unemployed here in the United States, which is six months or longer, the majority are people 45 and over. One of the things that I'm always asking people is how do we make sure those folks get the access they need to the digital skills that they need, the online learning. Have you guys given much thought about that 45 plus.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

We obviously come at it from both the convening that we do and that we're also a venture fund investor and we've looked at a number of businesses that are actually now serving 45. 45 is a little young.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

People keep saying to me that now that you're over 40, that you fall into this category though.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

As a 60 year old, I'm sensitive to 45 being very young, but I think it's in a hundred year life you and I've talked about a lot. In a hundred year life we've got to start paying attention to how do we rescale, upskill? I have no intention of stopping work anytime soon. Maybe I'm too old to have to upscale and rescale, but we do think this is a really important area. It's a really important opportunity and we've seen some companies like this company GetSetUp that will be at the summit that has created a really great offering for older adults who use it both for learning basic technology skills, and getting themselves more facile to participate. Also, frankly, I think one of the important things we're seeing, we've been talking about us a lot last couple of days is embedding social aspects into learning because the more community we can get around learning, whether it's an older adult community, whether it's a tech community, whether it's a green community. The more engaged the learners can be and the more sort of social aspects they have.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

I think that the impact of the learning is just so much higher than we're actually about to back a group of founders who are very much focused around building a social learning platform within the enterprise for technical skills. It's a really important area. I don't think there's been enough innovation there yet. I know that there is a lot of attention and there's going to be government dollars going into skilling and re-skilling of all ages, all the people sort of who have been out of the economy to date. What we see is platforms that are doing multi-generational delivery of learning. I think it just depends on kind of where

you sit in terms of your mastery and what areas you're trying to get better at. It's an area whenever we hear somebody looking to kind of build something unique, we're all over it because we think it's so important.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You also brought up women and their role as caregivers. And that again is one of those issues that really came to the forefront. Not that women hadn't done it before and men too, to be fair because caregivers are men as well, but women seem to have hit the disproportionate amount because of the pandemic. So finding these online education tools and programs for them, where they can still take care of their loved ones and also up-skill themselves, if they have to or learn what they have to do to get a job seems extremely important to me.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

Yeah. I think it is extremely important and I think frankly, the COVID spikes you saw in companies like Coursera, which is a company we are invested in these saw incredible COVID spikes. As people were coming online, you've gone home, coming online to learn a whole variety of skills, whether it's a Google certificate or whether it's a university Johns Hopkins CS credential, and you can look across the space and see companies like Skillshare that saw a huge increase at the company, teaching creative skills to working adults really across the board. I think you saw migration of folks at home to learning solutions that would help them kind of move the ball forward as they thought about their own jobs, maybe changing their jobs, maybe getting into a better job, aspirational. So I think you're right. It'll be interesting to see there's a ripple effect coming out of this as women begin to be in a place where they can go back into the workforce, whether there's a positive impact at the time that was spent in online learning environments during COVID.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

As a now long time attendee and participant at the summit, I think at this makes the fourth year that I'll be there. I know that equity, justice, and equal opportunity has always been at the forefront. Making sure that people have opportunity and they also know about it. I always am talking about making sure that people know about these opportunities, not just somebody funding something. How do we get that out there, but are you seeing anything new? Is this a bigger theme this year programs that you might want to call out for that.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

Obviously coming out of the year we've had here in the US but certainly globally as well. So I think one of the things we've done in the program is widened our aperture around equity to include groups like the PI community. We have a really fantastic interview with Jeremy Lin, with two of our young GSP associates. He is really an inspiring individual on all levels. I think what has happened is just that the attention to equity and that all people have equal access to the future, which is kind of our mantra, now permeates everything. We have actually just named an amazing woman, Tiffany Taylor who was a senior executive Teach For America to our first ever GSP head of people and impact. We actually twinned those two because we felt like you can't have impact without the right people and people drive impact.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

So for us as an individual organization, that was an important move for us. So you'll see threaded throughout the content we've got a fantastic panel with the former head of diversity inclusion at

longtime head of BlackRock's DEI initiatives. He's a brilliant man and he's moderating a fantastic panel around creating diversity with intention. He has a very nuanced and sophisticated view of things we need to think about. Coming out of a place that really was probably one of the first large financial institutions to put a stake in the ground years ago. You'll see threaded through we have lots of conversations around how to teach issues of equity and candor about race and things like that. It really threads through again, threads through the whole pre-K to gray content that we have. So you'll absolutely see that, what I feel like is we're evolving to a smarter and smarter place and all these things and I focus on equity has to saturate everything. I think the intentionality, how we approach it, candor, et cetera. We have some really good conversations in the agenda.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

One of the other focuses that surfaced and again, not talking backwards, let's talk forward, but the idea that a four year degree is not necessarily the most necessary piece of credential that you need to have a job. And there has been a lot more focus on some of these you've mentioned Coursera and Google and Microsoft to Amazon Web Services, among many, many others who provide some kind of signal to employers that this person is proficient. This person has skills. So when you talk about higher ed, or when you talk about these, are you talking a lot about credentials this time around?

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

When we talk about higher ed, we spell it HIRE, right...ed. We have a GH track and Ari track, and I think they're twinning increasingly, but whether we have Paul Leblanc doing a talk with my partner, Julia Steagall it's, the signaling is critically important. Whether it's that you do a two year community college, BA, or AA, and then you attach it to a Google certificate from Coursera to which we're going to increasingly look like a pipeline. Our personal resumes are going to increasingly look like maybe Lego blocks is the better analogies that we're going to keep putting pieces together and adding pieces onto it. The four-year piece may or may not be hugely relevant. I mean, we all know that they go stale pretty quickly really. We're also seeing the dis-aggregation. You've got Scott Galloway's, company got Section4 will be there, kind of dis-aggregating the approach to business school and giving a really high quality education from great professors, but not for an accredited certificate.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

It's going to be interesting to see if brands like Scott's become effectively, quasi degrees that employers will accept. I think that's a big trend. We're seeing all kinds of organizations, whether it's a corporation, whether it's an individual faculty member, universities are really stretching out beyond their own degree platform. There's company called Area Dietist out of India. They will be there. Fortunately, they have a large US presence because you can't fly out of India into the US at this point for all the obvious health reasons, but they have a fantastic team that actually continue to hire. They just hired one of the former founders of Trilogy as well, but they're primarily partnering with universities to actually deliver credentials that are not university degrees. So, and as their bread and butter. They built a three billion plus business on that. They do it very cost-effectively, with very high quality with an Indian backend.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

So I think the proliferation of options is just exciting. Also, the pricing pressure. I mean, people pushing down price is going to be increasingly exciting as well. I think there're all kinds of pressure on prices coming down for educational options for working adults or for adults period. Non-working adults. You'll see a whole lot of folks in that category Simply Learns, another India based company with a big

operation here in the US and their focus is again on non-degree credentialing. It has been a B2C model moving into the B2B model. So I don't know if we're here to desegregation of all, of the degree finally, but it certainly feels like the options are becoming overwhelmingly good in a place where you can really put some radical credentials together. In fact, I'm talking to the founder of Udemy, who's got Maven, which is another sort of dis-aggregation working with expert teachers, cohort based learning, outside of a degree, the pace of innovation around that whole topic of non-degree learning in non-degree credentialing is pretty exciting.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

Tech is always a big thing with the summit and I noticed this time around, we are also here talking about med tech and health tech. Tell me a little bit about some of what you're seeing. I know those are two areas that are very big in potential growth for jobs. What are you seeing? What are you, who are you talking to at this conference down?

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

We have, I think, three panels on sort of the med ed tech and they're coming at things from different angles. So one is coming from the question of the pandemic, did very interesting things to nursing education. There had been very tight restrictions about how much it could be online, how much had to be physical. That was very much loosened. A lot of the digital delivery in healthcare learning is very sophisticated. It's AR VR, it's simulation, it's very, very effective learning.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

So there's been some very good opening up of scaled opportunities to drive larger numbers of healthcare workers, whether that's a CNA, an RN down to more non-technical healthcare workers up through doctors for that matter. So what you'll see, I think it's a category that's generally lagged in terms of innovation. There's a panel actually that discusses why ascend learning helped us put together a panel, just questioning why, when you look at all the other sectors of ed tech and in med ed tech is so important, why haven't we seen more scaled successes there you are seeing Coursera go into the healthcare space with they're very focused on healthy.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

You're seeing Guild education go? That's a very big priority for Guild going forward to help clients like Walmart, train more pharmacists and pharmacy assistants and things like that. It's a really, as we all know, critically important category for the future, we'll have a very substantive conversation there. It's also a place where some of the most interesting technologies happening. We're actually having a company called Level X, Sam Glassenberg is the CEO there. He's become part of a bigger, fascinating AI based company, but he's got some remarkable technology that allows, yes, you just had me do it in my dining room the other day, where he let me do a knee replacement surgery on my phone. He's able to help teach nurses, doctors, sort of the things they should and shouldn't do related to knee replacement surgery in a very real looking virtual setting.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

He's actually got some fascinating work that he's actually doing around equity and how some medical practice actually there's a case study he's going to do around dermatology, and how there are some inherent bias in the way dermatology is addressed. Sort of some racial distinctions and how technology can actually help create more equity in the delivery of healthcare. We have a nice set of conversations

going on there. I'd like it to get bigger. It will get bigger mainly by the big companies like Coursera, like edX, like 2U really having very serious focuses on the healthcare space and it's important and it's a great conversation.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

What do you want people to walk away? The people who have are attending the conference and also people who may read about it in articles or on podcasts, hear about it on podcasts. What do you want people to walk away from this summit?

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

We really are here. It is truly the Dawn of digital learning. We call it B.C. To A.D. before Corona after disease. Although we'll be living in some quasi, whatever state for a while, but we all address those safety issues. We want people to understand that there has been a transformational change in the acceptance of digital learning and scaling solutions that have the opportunity to really make a difference in the lives of millions of people in ways that just had not happened here before, and the attraction of capital into the space is going to drive more and more innovation.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

We believe that innovation is going to help people close skills gaps. It's going to help everything from working in Dell is closing skills gaps and or acquiring aspirational skills to students in the K-12 system facing these gaping holes of learning loss, and how do we address that in as fast, a way as humanly possible at scale and with personalization. So what we really hope is that people walk away feeling like the world really did change, and that learning has really become a centrally important cultural and economic sector and learning and scaling is just a critical economic sector for the world. And that's, I think what we hope people walk away with.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

You put together a good lineup of speakers so I think you're going to accomplish your mission. Deborah. Thank you so much for joining me on the work in progress podcast. I really appreciate it.

Deborah Quazzo, ASU+GSV Summit co-founder:

All right Ramona. Thank you so much.

Ramona Schindelheim, WorkingNation editor-in-chief:

I've been speaking with Deborah Quazzo co-founder of the ASU GSV summit. I'm Ramona Schindelheim editor and chief of working nation. Thank you so much for listening.