



Brandon Hall Group
**EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

Executive Interview

with **Andy Atkins**,
VP, Executive & Team Performance
Center of Expertise Leader
BTS

Unlocking the Value of High-Performing Teams
for Enterprise Impact

About BTS

BTS is a global professional services firm that partners with clients to enable strategy execution. BTS provides the skills, tools and knowledge so people understand how their daily work impacts business results. BTS is an expert in behavior change, cares deeply about delivering results and inspires people to do the best work of their lives. It’s strategy made personal. For more information, visit bts.com.

Recognition

A Brandon Hall Group Gold Preferred Provider, BTS won 44 Brandon Hall Group HCM Excellence Awards in 2022.

EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS



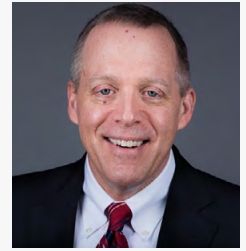
- Learning and Development**
12 Gold Awards | 3 Silver Awards | 5 Bronze Awards
- Leadership Development**
7 Gold Awards | 6 Silver Awards | 3 Bronze Awards
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**
1 Gold Award | 1 Silver Award

- Sales Performance**
3 Silver Awards
- Talent Management**
1 Gold Award | 1 Silver Awards | 1 Bronze Award

The Brandon Hall Group Preferred Provider Program is specifically designed as a single source of truth that can validate your technology selection decisions.

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About Andy Atkins



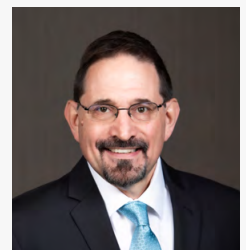
Andy Atkins is the Executive and Team Performance Practice Leader, overseeing C-Suite and Executive services with BTS. Andy works with senior leaders and their teams to engage, influence, align and inspire their organizations. Through advisory relationships and facilitation, Andy helps leaders and teams develop insights and acquire skills to create alignment for business performance. He brings a particular focus on how to increase trust and engagement through strategic communications and effective individual and group interactions. Prior to joining Bates, a BTS Company, Andy was the Chief Innovation Officer with Interaction Associates, where he led the firm’s development of products and next-generation services. He has held senior leadership positions in Human Resources and Leadership and Organizational Development with Bank of America, Genuity, Fidelity Investments and Arthur D. Little. Andy earned his MBA at Columbia University, where he was a Goldman Sachs Fellowship recipient.



About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is Brandon Hall Group’s Chief Operating Officer and Principal HCM Analyst. She is responsible for business operations, including client and member advisory services, marketing design, annual awards programs, conferences and the company’s project management functions. She also leads Advancing Women in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion initiatives, research and events. Rachel worked in the HCM research industry for 20+ years and held several key management and executive positions within the Talent and Learning Research, and Performance Improvement industries.

About Claude Werder



Claude Werder is Senior Vice President and Principal HCM Analyst at Brandon Hall Group. He leads the Talent Management research and advisory practice, specializing in leadership development, performance development, learning, career development, employee engagement, succession management, talent retention, and diversity, equity and inclusion. He also produces Brandon Hall Group’s HCM Excellence Conference.

Q RACHEL

What makes teams so important in today's workplace?

A ANDY

There's a lot of complexity happening in the need for teams because of the shifts in the way we're operating; whether it's the hybrid workplace, working globally, or working remotely. The ability for folks to effectively coordinate activity in teams and bring diverse perspectives together to solve complex problems is probably more important now than it's ever been. You have an opportunity for multifaceted problem-solving when you bring together diverse capabilities. Given the VUCA world we live in, the ability for organizations to be more agile and adaptive, and to pivot to meet those complex situations is very much a function of how well their teams can operate and bring those diverse perspectives together.

Q CLAUDE

Teams are really important. Our research shows that in 77% of organizations, at least half of all work is achieved by teams — and that's only going to increase in the next couple of years. However, fewer than half of organizations say they're prepared to leverage teams effectively to meet the future demands of their business. The other thing our research found is that only

11% of organizations believe that their team members understand their roles, trust each other and leverage governance and technology to collaborate effectively to reach business goals. There's a big gap between the importance of teams and taking advantage of what strong teams have to offer.

Q RACHEL

What makes teams uniquely able to address increasing complexity?

A ANDY

Let's take the specific case of teams that have very different types of members on them, as opposed to a team with a lot of the same kinds of folks on it. When you're looking at diversity of capability, experience and backgrounds that are being brought together, that provides the opportunity to create a multifaceted approach. You've got multiple perspectives and broader information and by bringing that rich mix together, you have the opportunity for increased creativity and innovation to address the kinds of problems increasingly facing teams. That happens, however, only if the team has the skills and the capabilities. Otherwise, you're not a team; you might think of it as a gaggle of geese that are coordinated in an ineffective way. If you have a deficit in the skills and capabilities that teams need to be truly effective, you're not going to get that lift.

Q

RACHEL

What do you think about high-performing teams?

Q

RACHEL

What makes a team high-performing?

A

ANDY

The thing about high-performing teams in the research that we've done, is that they set free the genius of their members to create the extraordinary together. In a time like we're in now, where there's economic uncertainty and a lot of complexity, there's a real premium on teams being effective. What we have found is that when a team is aligned with that definition — when you're setting free that genius in the members so that they can create the extraordinary together — when a team is set up to do that, it has a major impact on whether they're perceived as effective. We found in our research that if a team even reaches an average level of effectiveness in the key skills and capabilities, there's an 83% chance that the team is going to be seen as effective. If they can get to the 75th percentile — the top quarter percentile — there's a 96% chance the team will be seen as effective. These skills make a big difference in the impact the team can have in addressing the kinds of challenges that we're facing.

Q

CLAUDE

Developing high-performing teams takes a lot of different types of skills. Only recently are organizations realizing the level of work they need to get to an average level of team performance that's going to drive business results. What our framework calls for, first of all, is setting team goals and expectations. Then, align the team's work with organizational business goals, which sounds easy but often is not the case. In fact, I talked to a company a couple of weeks ago that put a team together; they thought it was going well, but the team had veered off from the organization's business goals. A lot of their work created more conflict in the organization than it did to benefit it.

We found in our DE&I research that a lot of it is focused on gender, racial and age differences, but not so much in terms of experiences, points of view and ways of thinking. Those more nuanced types of diversity help teams excel. Another part of it is recognizing team members for meaningful contributions, whether they're major or just small contributions, so that they feel part of the team and have a sense of belonging. Also, many teams go out of their way to avoid conflict, when constructive conflict can create extraordinary results.

Q RACHEL

You talked about the internal side of teams; what about the external side?

A ANDY

One of the hallmarks of a high-performing team is that they solve for the enterprise's good as opposed to solving for the good of an individual part of the team or just the team itself. If they have those constructive conflict situations rather than trying to "cut the baby in half" and go for an either/or solution, they find solutions that serve the organization's enterprise perspective and raise the dialogue to a strategic level. There also needs to be the ability to collaborate, not just internally in the team but between the team and other teams, so they're aware of who their stakeholders are. How the team operates within the system of the organization becomes a key factor in whether that team is effective.

Q CLAUDE

Positive disharmony can't come without that psychological safety because people aren't going to be willing to argue with each other if they don't feel safe or think they're going to be harmed by disagreeing.

A ANDY

There's the opportunity for a virtuous circle. If you have psychological safety, it can provide you with a basis for constructive conflict because you know that people's intentions are good. Conversely, if you can have constructive conflict, it can reinforce the trust that you have with each other because it becomes very clear that when we're engaging, this is not a personal conflict, it's a business conflict — I can trust your good intentions, you're not attacking me, we're exchanging ideas and we're looking for the best solution for the enterprise.

Q RACHEL

What's the role of team leaders in the effectiveness of the team?

A ANDY

One of the roles of the team leader is to set the parameters to establish norms and expectations about how the team is going to work together. That may involve operating principles, reinforcing cultural norms about what's acceptable and not acceptable, and investing and developing the skills and capabilities of the team members so that teaming behaviors become something that they can call on very easily.

(continued)

The other aspect is: What's the highest calling they can have in the team? There's self-interest here for a team leader to think about. In research that we've done in looking at effective leaders of things such as innovation and growth, we found that the most effective leaders of innovation are able to bring diverse perspectives together in a team environment. To bring diversity, the different points of view, the tension, the constructive conflict, you have to bring that up and hold that tension to allow the effective mix to happen. It's a matter of being able to turn the heat up a little bit and let that bubble up to get good ideas. To do that, you've got to recognize that you need to be taking care of and paying attention to how the team is operating. You've got that guardian role with the team to create psychological safety and a safe space for them to do that. You've got to think about what your role is as a leader because you're the one who enables the conflict, not the one who solves the problem.

We found that the most effective leaders of innovation weren't necessarily the best innovators themselves but were very effective at being able to **create that psychological safety and hold constructive conflict in a team to get the best ideas to come forward.**

A lot of that is skill-building and a lot of it is just great leadership practice.

Q CLAUDE

We've found that kind of team leadership that's so critical is not in a lot of organizations. Focusing on team leadership development specifically is important. I was blown away by our latest survey, where 97% of organizations believed that team leadership training is the most important type of training that can be done. Organizations are seeing that with the increase in teams, there's the critical nature of team leadership, and they're not necessarily getting that kind of leadership or teaching that kind of leadership. It's hard to get 97% of people to agree on what day it is, let alone that a certain type of training is needed. That shows where we are. Organizations are beginning to understand what it's going to take to move their organizations forward.

Q RACHEL

You mentioned "teaming" before; what is that?

A ANDY

"Teaming" is taking the lessons about how high-performing teams operate and looking for transferability of those capabilities and skills into less-formal team environments.

(continued)

That may be a matter of ad hoc teams or situations where a couple of people come together and they need to do a coordinated, concerted and collaborative activity. The skills around how you can create high levels of psychological safety, how you can have capabilities in engaging in constructive conflict and being able to bring those different ideas together, in thinking about the big picture and the strategy when you're trying to think about how you're going to create value and how you're going to collaborate — those are incredibly relevant regardless of whether you are in a formal team structure where it shows up on the organization chart, or you're in a group of people who are brought together on an ad hoc basis. Having those team skills and being able to apply them is what teaming is about. In some ways, it's a breakthrough orientation for folks in dealing with a kind of complexity that we started talking about at the beginning of our conversation. If you can bring that suite of skills together in whatever place it's needed, you're going to be able to create more agile workplaces, tap into diverse skills and you'll be able to adapt and do the kinds of pivots that are required in business.

**Here are some ways to
listen to the interview
on Brandon Hall Group's
Excellence at Work Podcast:**



**Brandon Hall Group
EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 28 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

Professional Certifications

Self-paced certification programs. Virtual group sessions for companies. In-person conferences and summits.

Membership

Individual and Enterprise Membership Options: Includes research assets, advisory support, a client success plan and more.

Advisory Offerings

Custom Research Projects, including surveys, focus group interviews and Organization Needs Assessment for Transformation, Technology Selection and Strategy.

Excellence Awards

Two annual programs recognize the best organizations that have successfully deployed programs to achieve measurable results.



ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

recognizes world-class HCM programs that transform their organization and achieve breakthrough results. This designation is the next step beyond the HCM Excellence Awards, which focus on a single program, and looks at the department as a whole.



SMARTCHOICE® PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM

uniquely places HCM service and technology companies at the top of organizations' consideration list of vendors. It adds an unmatched level of credibility based on BHG's twenty-eight-plus years of experience in evaluating and selecting the best solution providers for leading organizations around the world.