



Brandon Hall Group
**EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

Executive Interview

with **Kelly McCrory-Lynch**,
Learning Strategist, IBM Consulting

with **Dr. Thomas Lewis**,
Director, Learning Solutions, ETU

Personalized Learning at Scale,
Delivering a Measurable ROI



About IBM Consulting

[IBM Consulting](#) is a new partner for the new rules of modern business. We embrace an open way of working by bringing a diverse set of voices and technologies together. We collaborate closely, ideate freely and swiftly apply breakthrough innovations that drive exponential impact to change how business gets done. We believe open ecosystems, open technologies, open innovation and open cultures are the key to creating opportunities and the way forward for modern business and our world. We want to work together, create together, grow together and rethink what's possible together.



Recognition

A Brandon Hall Group Preferred Solution Provider, IBM won 10 Brandon Hall Group Excellence Awards in 2022.

EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS



Learning and Development	3	Gold Awards
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	1	Gold Award
Sales Performance	1	Gold Award 1 Silver Award
Talent Acquisition	1	Gold Award

EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY AWARDS



Sales Enablement	1	Silver Award 2 Bronze Awards
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About ETU

ETU helps the world's leading companies upskill employees digitally at scale. ETU's solution provides immersive simulation-based learning that delivers breakthrough improvements in the application of skills. Unlike other vendors, ETU's solution uses a proven Learning Simulation Platform (LSP) to co-create and deliver immersive training with the skills data you need. The platform combined with expert services allows you to:

- Design and build transformative digital Learning & Development programs
- Deliver immersive, job-relevant learning experiences at scale
- Objectively measure the impact of L&D initiatives (on learners and the business)



Recognition

A Brandon Hall Group Gold Preferred Provider, ETU won a Gold Brandon Hall Group HCM Excellence Award in 2022.

EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS



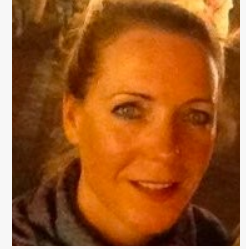
Learning and Development

1 Gold Award

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

[Learn More](#)

About Kelly McCrory-Lynch



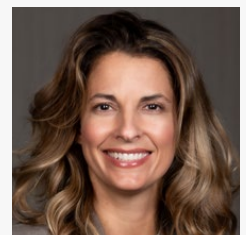
Kelly McCrory-Lynch leads learning design for global consulting at IBM Consulting. She is responsible for the learning effectiveness of the newly reimagined Consulting Academy program, and collaborates with business and learning stakeholders globally to implement innovative and personalized learning experiences that have business impact. With more than 20 years of experience in business consulting and learning development, Kelly focuses on delivering learning solutions that advance the organization's goals and the learners' needs. Before joining IBM, Kelly's initial career as a teacher specializing in early years education formed her passion for learner-centered training which has become the cornerstone of the programs she designs and leads. She is now back at Queens University Belfast, completing the final year of her Doctorate in Education, where she is researching the area of learner engagement within an online learning platform.



About Thomas Lewis

Thomas Lewis leads the design and implementation of ETU simulations. Whether built by ETU or in assisting client authors, Thomas strives to ensure that ETU solutions are immersive and engaging while adhering to robust architecture that will lead to powerful data insights. Thomas has over 15 years of experience in designing and delivering learning and training products for corporate clients and national cultural and education stakeholders. He holds a Ph.D. in multimedia education from Dublin Institute of Technology (now Technological University Dublin) where he was a fully-funded, inaugural GradCAM scholar.

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.

Q RACHEL

Kelly, can you talk about the Consulting program at IBM and why personalization is so important?

A KELLY

In the years before COVID, we had been expanding the definition of our core consulting skills, modifying our delivery approach from pure face-to-face to blended learning. Mostly, this was a face-to-face program and was expensive to run with a lot of expenses going to travel and venue costs. But most significantly, it was impossible for us to scale. Like everyone else, COVID forced us to shift very quickly. Once we were virtualizing our curriculum, we realized this was a good time to introduce greater full-scale transformation concerning how we approach the entire structure and delivery of the program.

We wanted to dramatically increase Senior Consultant participation from approximately 5,000 learners annually to 20 times that number. We did that in a way that's focused on learner engagement and enhanced the ability to apply the skills for business impact. We made the content more just-in-time and just-enough-for-me, and shifted from what we want learners to know to what we want them to do differently and drive mastery of the content, as opposed to just completion.

The skills we cover require a personal touch and an opportunity to practice. The best way to do that at scale was by using adaptive learning simulations. This became the initial feature of our program, which we call Track One and is open to all Senior Consultant learners. We partnered with ETU to help us with this huge transformation. Overall, our Consulting program is like a funnel with four tracks. We're using the ETU platform and adaptive learning to achieve scale at the entry part of our program. As you move further into the program and get to Track Four, it becomes less about scalability and more about face-to-face high-touch mastery.

Q RACHEL

Thomas, can you explain what is meant by simulation in this context and provide more insights into how this enables personalization, as well as how ETU collaborated with IBM Consulting?

A THOMAS

At ETU, we develop first-person-perspective simulations with branching narratives that are rooted in robust data architecture. Rather than a traditional learning modality — where we're measuring completions and scores — this allows us to get granular with the data and track learners as they progress through the simulations we build.

(continued)

In the case of these IBM simulations, we basically created an entire season of television in about nine months and chopped it into one-minute segments. We worked with Kelly and her team, looked at the content across Track One and divided it into a theme that we call The Swim Lane. These are themed buckets where we could create a diagnostic simulation at the front end, then add developmental simulations to allow learners to progress and apply those skills to get that just-in-time, just-enough-for-me training.

The front end puts learners in realistic scenarios where the skills they must apply show up. It's not about getting things right or wrong, it's having them negotiate the gray areas. With the branching scenarios, the decisions that they make take the story in different directions. Based on how they perform, we then turn downstream content on and off using the ETU data architecture. This means we can map the core skills a consultant needs based on their brand or role level within the wider training. We can identify skills trends, whether it's an individual or across geographies, and provide those learners with downstream content or give them the remediation that they need.

Q **RACHEL**

Kelly, what impact have you seen from the use of simulations and personalization on the learning program?

A **KELLY**

We're not fully rolled out, but we've been receiving extremely positive feedback from the learners regarding the simulations. We're also in the early stages of calculating seat-time savings. So far, it's about 25 percent, which is significant.

Q **RACHEL**

What are you hoping to see as the program becomes fully rolled out?

A **KELLY**

Once we have a sufficient deployment period, we'll start to benchmark return-on-learning data points such as employee retention, rate of promotion, employee engagement, learning hours and, most importantly, the impact of training on the application within the business and for our clients. There will also be a targeted identification of skill and capability gaps. For our Learning organization, this will be useful to enable us to develop and deploy targeted learning interventions where they are most needed while being efficient with our time and resources.

RACHEL

Where do you see the personalization and skill measurement applied to Track One going next?

RACHEL

What were some of the key challenges and lessons learned?

KELLY

Early 2023 will see us complete the rollout of our Track One program and the sunsetting of the previous program. We've started working on the architecture for adaptive personalization for Track Two, which is our live virtual classroom element. High learner performance in Track One will inform what they need to do — or not do — at the Track Two level. As we look to deploy the final stage of the program, the specialized face-to-face masterclass element, learners at this stage will be able to use their personalized journey to guide their focus and make their selections regarding where they are going to spend their time.

THOMAS

The beauty of the ETU simulations is that there's such a thick data story that comes out of every learner's personalized journey. As we feed into additional tracks, IBM can then use that data to earmark potential high-achievers or those for remediation.

KELLY

There are four big considerations. The first is, what is the skill or behavior gap you want to address with learning? You need to know what really "good" looks like in an area, as this is the information that will form your learning narrative or simulation story. Who are the subject matter experts you have to involve and work with throughout the process? This will need to be a mix of subject matter experts and business subject matter experts. I have a list of 100 people from the business who are all very senior and dedicated their time. Thomas has gotten to know a lot of them as well. They've been in on the design sessions and reviewed the scripts.

You also need to think about the medium for your content delivery. We made a design decision early on to go with full video, which is not necessarily what you need for your program. We needed our content to feel as real and personable as possible. The business impact also warranted our investment. Finally, what data are you going to collect from this and what are you going to be able to do with it?

THOMAS

A That list of 100 names reflects that it's a global program with cultural nuances. We need to thread the needle and make sure we're telling stories that are learning assets and will be beneficial to these learners. We need to show how skills are universal but also need to be specific enough so they're going to land with IBMers regardless of where they're seated. Having that blend with a lot of eyes on it is something we've kept front of mind. We needed to make sure these simulations are immersive and feel authentic. We've succeeded in that.

**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 30 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.

**SOME WAYS
WE CAN HELP**



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.