



Brandon Hall Group  
**EXCELLENCE  
AT WORK**

# Executive Interview

with **Katie Ballantyne**,  
VP of Global Learning Strategy & Innovation,  
Cornerstone

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The Importance of Enabling Talent Mobility  
for Organizations and Their People

## About Cornerstone

Cornerstone powers the future-ready workforce with a next-generation talent experience platform designed to unite technology, data and content and inspire a work environment of growth, agility and success for all. With an AI-powered, skills-forward, experimental platform, built on an open architecture designed for neutrality and scale, we help organizations modernize their learning and development experience, deliver the most relevant content from anywhere, accelerate talent and career mobility, and establish skills as the universal language of growth and success across their business. Cornerstone serves over 7,000 customers and 100 million users and is available in 180 countries and 50 languages.

## Recognition

A Brandon Hall Group Platinum Preferred Provider, Cornerstone won three Gold Brandon Hall Group Excellence in Technology Awards in 2022.

### EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY AWARDS



Learning and Development	2 Gold Awards
Sales Enablement	1 Gold 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 Katie Ballantyne

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**Katie Ballantyne** is the VP of Global Learning Strategy & Innovation at Cornerstone. She and her team are passionate about helping people leaders bring powerful talent strategies to life through Cornerstone’s products so that their organization can meet the future, ready. Prior to joining Cornerstone in 2014, Katie held senior HR leadership positions in the luxury destination hospitality space, achieving industry-leading employee engagement across all organization levels and resulting in a proven increase to the guest experience. Katie’s background in the Learning and Talent Management industry spans almost 20 years, specifically focusing on engaging and investing in a company’s talent as a powerful driver of strategic organizational outcomes. Originally hailing from Australia, Katie now resides in Central Oregon with her husband and daughters where they spend as much time as possible embracing the outdoor activities each season offers.



## About Rachel Cooke

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**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**

How has talent mobility changed?

now. When can give people mobility, it benefits us as a business and keeps talent engaged, so it's a virtuous cycle in many ways.

A

**KATIE**

Talent mobility is the ability for someone to have more than one job in their time working with your company. It's the ability to not just stay in the role that they were hired for, but to do other things within your business. That can come from two angles. It can come from the business angle with the classic tap on the shoulder of "hey, we know you've got these wonderful talents, these wonderful skills. We could really use those to help us with this new initiative or this new venture that we're going on." But then there's the other aspect now, which is talent mobility as something that an individual has enough agency over to be able to pursue. That's a really big difference right now because in the past, talent mobility was more company-driven.

Now, there's a fundamental shift. Companies need to give people more tools so that they can look at what talent mobility would mean to them, and they can have more agency over where their careers could take them. People are seeing the incredible benefit this has. We all know that engagement isn't just for benevolence. We focus on the engagement of our people because it's a core strategy that helps us perform. It helps us save money, it keeps us knowledgeable and staying aggressive in how we approach the market. It's a powerful tool that people are using

Q

**RACHEL**

Why should organizations prioritize talent mobility?

A

**KATIE**

Cornerstone's research recently found that 73 percent of employees are looking for talent mobility options to be publicly available. When people can see what is available, they're more likely to want to stay with the company. Conversely to that, when people don't see mobility as an option within a business, they're three times more likely to be looking for another job. We're still having a war for talent as we've got the lowest unemployment rate in 53 years. Just because we're seeing some isolated pockets of layoff doesn't mean that we're seeing a long-term trend here — we're still competing to find those people for jobs that didn't exist 20 years ago.

Businesses are seeing the need for talent mobility strategies to help them find the talent that they're going to need for long-term viability of their business, while also seeing it as a strategy they can use to invest back in their people. It increases engagement and a sense of belonging, and as a result, decreases attrition from the business.

**RACHEL**

What should organizations do for managers and what should they do for employees?

**KATIE**

Our study showed that 80 percent of employees want to start a talent mobility journey by having a digital destination to go to. It's a big deal to go to your boss and say, "I'm looking at a different job within the company." Imagine if something doesn't transpire, that person could have impacted their relationship with their manager. People are looking for a place to go where they can see the opportunities that are available.

Careers aren't just linear anymore. It's not just a career path or a career ladder. Careers are omnidirectional at this point and we've got jobs that didn't exist 20 years ago. Podcast producer didn't exist then, but it's a job now that requires skills. If someone has the right skills that would make them perfect for that, they want to know. This leans into the democratization of learning that we're seeing right now. What we can do with a lot of our systems is create a personalized skill and learning journey based on where you are today and where you want to be. Here's the learning you should take and here's a great

mentor for you. Here's a project that you can use to try on your new skills. Maybe you could even work in a gig to make sure that you like a job before you make a commitment to change.

Those are the types of tools that employees are expecting and enjoy when they have them as part of their employee value proposition. When you flip that to the manager's perspective, these tools are helping managers become what the employees need them to be. We know that the role of the leader has shifted fundamentally over the past 15 years and then seismically over the past three years. Employees used to look to their leader for career guidance. But the managers probably only have their lived experience or what may be a friend or colleague has done. They don't have infinite knowledge of every single skill that's out there and what you can do to get from A to B. You also see companies complementing technology with coaching training. They can serve that employee and help be a wonderful coach and mentor to them in their career progression. It's an interesting phenomenon and it gives a lot more people access to growth than I've ever seen.

**RACHEL**

Why should managers think differently about losing top talent?

# A

**KATIE**

If you have a talent-hoarding problem at your business, that's not a manager problem — that's a culture problem. When you're thinking about deploying a highly effective, high-impact talent mobile strategy, you've got to be thinking about what roadblocks to change within your business.

For example, I once had a person within my team who got promoted to another division within a company I worked at and then I lost my backfill. I was never able to backfill that person. How does that encourage me as a leader to give up talent if I'm going to lose my backfill? Other managers might be inhibited to share talent and may demonstrate hoarding behaviors for things you're recruiting for. If the pipeline is a challenge, make sure you've got more mobility internally and people ready to step in.

Another challenge can even be how much work it takes you to onboard somebody again. If you don't have scalable systems within your business that help someone ramp up and get up to speed, that work is falling on the leader. They don't need any more work because we're asking more and more of middle management. If somebody leaves a role, where does that work go? Does your business actively practice business realignment and reprioritization? If your team capacity has just been decreased by 10 percent due to the transition of an FTE, does that leader have the permission and the right to recalibrate work on their team or shift a priority down the line?

Companies need to think about a culture that will make managers more open to sharing their talent if they're able to be mobile within their careers personally. It's incumbent on us as talent leaders to orchestrate the culture in a way to make sure talent hoarding isn't happening, because when people see talent hoarding in place, it's correlated to not showing that there are opportunities available, which then obviously has a very negative effect on your business.

# Q

**RACHEL**

How can organizations balance the growth desires of their people with the growth needs of the business?

# A

**KATIE**

It's predicated on the business strategy. For example, if you're having huge challenges with labor supply and you are in an industry that's projected to have even more challenges moving forward, you're going to have to move into very creative labor modeling. Maybe you're going to be embracing sunset careers or looking at some non-traditional workforce participants. You would approach your talent mobility strategy in a very different way to make sure that you were being a lot more open and embracing of people who want to participate.

*(continued)*

If there's not a huge volume of turnover within your business and people have long role tenure, you might want to throttle the way that you're talking about talent mobility. Instead, you might want to emphasize some of the other factors that helped with talent mobility over the long term. Millennials and Gen-Z want to curate experiences. This does not have to mean switching jobs, it can mean doing gigs, projects and different types of work while still in your role. Then you can avoid that challenge of someone job-hopping too fast where they don't gain that fundamental level of proficiency within a position.

A talent mobility strategy is going to be predicated on what you need. What is your labor supply looking like? What are the challenges you anticipate? How are you going to utilize aspects of a talent mobility system to help you achieve those goals?

**Q** **RACHEL** How can organizations get a better pulse on the skills their people currently have and what they'll need to develop to grow and meet business demands?

**A** **KATIE** When it comes to skills, you must lean into tech. I don't know how we're going to do skills effectively without tech. Skills technology is key, with the first piece being making it routine for people to talk about updating their skills. It's a baseline of what you've got. Also, it's telling you what people are interested in so you can respond as an L&D team.

Then the other piece of this is that when you have an open position, being able to lean into the skill tech helps. For example, what are the course skills that a data scientist needs? How do I map that to who's within the business? How do I build a talent pool now that I can go and target to develop, so that I can reallocate within the business to a high-growth, high-need area? The tech is amazing with what it can do and with how it can help us get to very granular pieces of information that are more actionable.

**Q** **RACHEL** What is the cost of not having talent mobility? How do you get started if you don't have one?

A

KATIE

Showing people that there are opportunities within the company makes them likelier to want to stay. If you do nothing else, show your people internally that there are positions available and that you care about them being in your business. When we don't demonstrate that there are opportunities open, it gives people a feeling like we always think that there's someone better out there than them — and that's not a nice way to come to work every day. That's not going to make you feel valued.

The first step is just showing people that there are opportunities to level up and find a way for people to register interest. Also, have your talent teams look internally before seeking externally. That's not a huge change. You can then extend your talent mobility strategy from not just recruiting from within but also how you are letting people own their own dynamic development and their omnidirectional career growth. There's so much more that you can do to enable that culture — even be able to crowdsource your gigs and projects, and your mentors and mentees.

It takes a huge amount of work off us as L&D leaders. It's a huge win but it also helps us get more meaningful development to more people. Just open those opportunities, or if you're more advanced and more mature in your strategy, constantly challenge yourself on what else you can do. How can you open this up more? How can you continue to democratize agency over development?

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



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# 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.

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

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