



Brandon Hall Group  
**EXCELLENCE  
AT WORK**

# Executive Interview

with **Stephanie Peskett**,  
Senior VP and Partner  
BTS

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What's Trending in the World of Talent,  
Learning and Leadership



## About BTS

BTS is a global professional services firm that partners with clients to enable strategy execution. We provide the skills, tools and knowledge so people understand how their daily work impacts business results. We are experts in behavior change, care deeply about delivering results and inspire people to do the best work of their lives. It's strategy made personal. For more information, visit [bts.com](https://bts.com).



## Recognition

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#### Learning and Development

13 Gold Awards | 4 Silver Awards | 6 Bronze Awards

#### Leadership Development

8 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

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## About Stephanie Peskett



**Stephanie Peskett** is a Senior Vice President and Partner at BTS. She partners with Chief Learning and Talent Officers to develop and execute strategies across Australia, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Southern Europe and Latin America. For nearly 20 years, she has been a key influencer in the areas of Coaching, Culture, OD, Talent and Leadership Development in a variety of industries and global organizations. Stephanie primarily works with CEO, C-Suite and Senior Executive teams, helping them to maximize organizational performance while creating a culture they take pride in. Stephanie is responsible for major leadership, change and culture initiatives in many of the world's largest organizations. Her business acumen and understanding of workplace productivity offer a unique perspective in the leadership and learning industry.

Stephanie is an AHRI Fellow, Chairperson of the Talent and Leadership Club in Sydney, and Board Member for the University of Sydney, Work and Organizational Studies. She is a member of ICF and has coached for 1,000+ hours over the past 20 years.



## 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**

What's different now in the industry for CLOs and talent leaders?

A

**STEPHANIE**

A lot has shifted in terms of the mindset around how organizations see investment in people and the strategic importance of people. If you go back to the last financial crisis or any of the disruptions, recessions, economic downturns, etc., the very first things that get cut are the Learning and Talent budgets. It becomes all about delivering to a different set of business metrics, which are just as important.

In 2020, when you would've expected a substantial downturn, we saw a marginal step back. The Learning industry in 2019 was valued at around \$370 billion. In 2020, it was \$357 billion. That's not a significant drop. Since then, it's continued to grow. In 2021, it was higher than 2019 levels, and 2023 is predicted to be higher again. We are seeing growth rates in investment up around 4-5%, whereas pre-pandemic it was 1-3%.

The challenge for CLOs and CTOs is there's a new scarcity, not the budget as much as it is the time and the capacity of leaders to absorb, take on and

prioritize their learning in a complex and frantic world. The pace is still relentless.

Q

**RACHEL**

What brought on this new era?

A

**STEPHANIE**

The scarcity of time is an ongoing perpetual challenge, as the complexity of roles continues to increase. But most certainly, COVID has been the great disruptor. People have shifted how they work, where they work and how they intend to be developed. Not only are we running to keep up with market changes, customer expectations, and so on, but we're also closing gaps that have emerged because of a time like this. We are seeing things like in-person work creating different sets of expectations.

Q

**RACHEL**

How should practitioners respond?

### STEPHANIE

**A** I would say with some urgency. In every country we go to, there's a sense of unease because practitioners want to see change, but everyone seems to recognize the door is closing. We are seeing people go back to older habits, and we haven't quite nailed all the good change we'd like to see come out of a moment like this.

It's very important to use our networks and our colleagues to help us to be bold about some of those resets. That underpins some of the recent work we've been doing, such as producing a white paper and trying to capture what our clients are telling us that they want to reset and do differently. This is a year where we have the benefit of the disruption moment to accelerate us forward.

### RACHEL

**Q** What should be priorities for practitioners?

### STEPHANIE

**A** We've examined what our practitioners are doing with their partners, and we've found there are three core areas. The first is about core leadership, both in capability and some areas around succession. The second area we're seeing

is doing more with less regarding talent. The third area is about disrupting old methods and ways of looking at learning, getting rid of the learning curriculum as we knew it and rethinking how to adapt to a new way of continuous learning in today's ever-changing environment.

We're helping leaders and teams and stakeholders get aligned. That is half the job. When there are alignment and agreement about what it looks like to do the work, there are expectations as to who owns what for the broader set of stakeholders. Sometimes it's the board, sometimes it's the executive team and then, of course, the employees themselves. When you can get to a degree of alignment, all the things like technology and so on become massive enablers of the broader talent system.

### RACHEL

**Q** How can talent leaders deliver on those priorities?

### STEPHANIE

**A** Our experts, in working with clients, took a real practitioner inquiry approach rather than a research approach. We found that there are eight core areas that are not new. People are looking to disrupt and say, "I know if I get that thing right, it will change the game for us as an organization."

*(continued)*

These were things like you'd expect — frontline leader, mid-level leader capability, getting the change readiness in the center of the organization, aligning and embedding, genuinely embedding leadership frameworks differently and looking at your high-potential audiences. Those were a few key areas that we identified. I obviously couldn't go through them all now, but for each of them, we were able to call out what was not working. We asked our practitioners, what are our clients telling us? They're saying this is really not working here and actually causing them to be caught in paradigms that existed 10, 15, 20 years ago when some of these models were designed. What is it that we can do to help them be disruptors and do things very differently? That was the principal approach we took to that inquiry — it wasn't completely new ideas, but more about calling out the way things are.

and the organization itself having a very poorly designed process. We also saw governance was extremely unclear, especially with C-Suite and CEO appointments. There's often been an approach where, if we give it to a global search firm, then we are done. That's our succession plan. That's one step that you might choose to take as an organization, but it most certainly doesn't assure success.

The other week I was talking with a client in Japan; they're a fantastic organization and a global business with a brilliant CEO. This person has done an exceptional job and they just love him. We said, "What's the plan here?" They said, "Don't let him retire, don't let him die. Let's just keep this guy. ..." You're ignoring the problem, especially if you love the incumbent. They don't want to think about another paradigm or another world where that person doesn't get to do the job forever.

Hiring is often done looking back. You're not thinking about the future strategy of the business, and you're certainly not mapping and aligning to that. The big thing that shows up today is organizations often don't get to witness the person in the role. Instead, they are going through a series of assessments and interviews to validate if the person is great, but they've never seen them present at a town hall, for example, especially if they're an external candidate. We've never seen them deliver a board paper. We've never seen them prepare and align the team to the values of the organization and role-model or hold them to account for role-modeling.



**RACHEL**

What are some of the common trends that are not working?



**STEPHANIE**

Looking at your C-Suite and senior executive succession, we saw some common challenges — things like boards and leaders

Q

**RACHEL**

What major opportunities are you seeing for CLOs?

We're seeing clients like a global bank in Spain where 200,000 people were touched within a very short period through leader-led, digital and in-person — a mix of things to help them to drive something in their strategy that was so essential to success. They knew they needed to get lots of people rowing in the same direction fast. CLOs who are doing that kind of work are getting some breakthrough results.

A

**STEPHANIE**

CLOs have a great space to operate in right now because everyone agrees it's a huge priority. Spending's going up — not in all organizations, but as an industry as a whole.

We see two major trends. We've seen strategies that are very digital and personalization reaching many people. However, strategies that are entirely digital tend not to have the adoption that we all desire. We're also seeing a return to in-person, which is great, but we must be budget-sensitive. There's a truth somewhere in between, so we're seeing people much more invested in dynamic pathways of learning that help to unlock both of those truths — it's a very human experience, but also a very digital, gamified and compelling experience.

The second area is the persistent campaign-based approaches. Some of the most disruptive CLOs out there are doing things where they're getting smart about the organization's investment. They're looking at capabilities that will drive the broader strategy or culture change, and they are joining the dots across budgets in the organization.

Q

**RACHEL**

What advice would you give a CLO or a CTO for 2023?

A

**STEPHANIE**

Focus on practitioner-led insights — what are our clients asking for? Help by sharing that with other clients. Respect confidentiality but also try to join the dots. With the rate of change right now in our industry, particularly in talent and learning and leadership, we can't rely exclusively on a research-based approach to determine the future strategy for our functions.

*(continued)*

We firmly believe we must take advantage of the community of CLOs and CTOs to connect practitioners, help us all through storytelling, and share what's working well, what's something to avoid and what we are trying to do, because this is the moment where we have to fail fast and try to avoid that. That way we can keep with the pace of change in our field and maximize the opportunity in a year like this where the reset has occurred. We know we're not going back to business as usual.

I would encourage CLOs and CTOs to challenge their consultants to connect to networks, connect to the best work and connect to colleagues in equivalent businesses or other equivalent roles in different businesses, so we can learn forward and fast together.

**Here are some ways to  
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**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.

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

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



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