Executive Interview

with **Lynn Collins**,
Head of North America Assessment,
BTS

Learn How to Navigate Organizational Success with BTS

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.

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EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS

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7 Gold Awards	**7** Silver Awards	**8** Bronze Awards

Sales Performance		
4 Gold Awards	**1** Silver Award	**1** Bronze Award

Leadership Development		
6 Gold Awards	**4** Silver Awards	**1** Bronze Award

Talent Management
2 Silver Awards

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	
1 Gold Award	**1** Silver Award

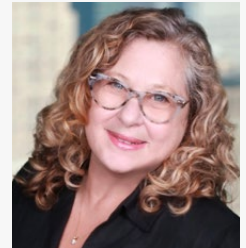### EXCELLENCE IN TECHNOLOGY AWARDS

Talent Management	**1** Gold Award

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

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About Lynn Collins

As head of the Center of Expertise and Chief Scientist at BTS, **Lynn Collins** is responsible for the overall strategy, direction and expansion of the NAM assessment practice. Prior to joining BTS, Lynn was a partner at SH&A/Fenestra, a leading provider of global talent management and technology solutions acquired by BTS in 2014.

For over 30 years, Lynn has helped organizations address a variety of organizational issues in talent management. Lynn brings extensive experience that supports the talent lifecycle with individual and group assessment for accelerating readiness, succession, high-potential, leader development and talent acquisition. She brings scientific and practitioner excellence to her work that includes assessment centers with simulation at the core, individual multi-method assessment, future-ready success profiles, 360s and high-fidelity assessments.
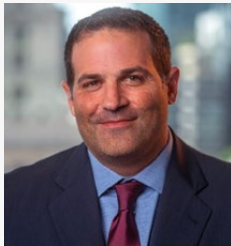
About Brad Chambers

Brad Chambers has nearly 20 years of experience developing valid, legally defensible selection systems for some of the world's leading organizations (e.g., McDonald's, Bank of America, 3M, Caterpillar, Ecolab, Kellogg, Target, Union Pacific Railroad and Internal Revenue Service) and providing related consulting services in areas such as skills assessment, job analysis, employee survey research, leadership assessment and development, and competency modeling. His experience includes conducting advanced statistical analyses and working closely with client organizations undergoing OFCCP audits and reviews, and other legal matters.

Prior to joining BTS, Brad served as Chief Operating Officer for Polaris Assessment Systems, Inc., a boutique talent assessment firm that was acquired by BTS in early 2019.

Brad holds a B.S. in Psychology from Wright State University, where he graduated summa cum laude. In addition, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from Michigan State University in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. He has published his work in multiple research journals and has presented numerous research studies at regional and national conferences.

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 is the utility of an assessment?

A LYNN

Assessment itself has no utility. It has no inherent value unless you act upon it. Many times we'll talk about the parallel between going to a doctor and getting a diagnosis, and you have a choice at that point. You do something about it, or you don't. The real value of an assessment is actually to drive actionable insights around our strengths, around our development needs and then to use them.

We're seeing an increase in the use of assessments. There's been an interesting trend toward wanting assessments even at the individual level. In the past, assessments were something that people feared, and in the present, they are something that leaders are asking for. They're asking for the insights; they're asking for the help. They're asking to be better for their own success.

Q RACHEL

Why should organizations use assessments?

A LYNN

We're seeing assessments being used across the talent lifecycle. So if you think about the employee lifecycle, starting early on from talent acquisition, how do we evaluate our new hires through high-potential identification? How do we recognize those individuals who are most promising? How do we see those diamonds in the rough, that talent we might not otherwise recognize? How do we identify successors? Who should be the future leadership of our organization and what are their strengths and weaknesses? And who's ready? When it comes to promotion readiness decisions, when are they going to be made? What is the right time for that readiness? And that's at the individual level.

The other thing we're seeing with assessments is there are a lot of organizational uses. Think about using assessments for talent management, understanding the strengths and development needs of our organization, of particular, cohort groups, of critical talent, understanding team performance and how they are working together, understanding program evaluation, and having people make changes. What is the impact of our program on the skills and development needs we are working on? There's also training needs analysis. Many times we'll go in, we'll do assessments and understand those gaps and then actually determine the type of experiences and training needed to close gaps.

Q RACHEL

What are the considerations when planning an assessment strategy?

A LYNN

When it comes to things like unlocking frontline leader capabilities, we have to understand what those capabilities are, such as high-potential selection and development, and creating change-ready mid-level leaders. There's also messy middle and messy leadership, scaling talent acquisition because there's a war for talent, and proactive succession planning. Those are the most critical moves that folks in Talent are thinking about.

Q RACHEL

Why is behavior observation so important?

A LYNN

What people can do is dependent on behavioral observation and simulation — actually observing participants' capabilities in a future with a more demanding role. The exciting part about behavioral observation is we're actually sampling behavior. We're directly measuring a person's ability, and someone can showcase their capabilities. Direct sampling provides a better prediction of how a person will perform in a given role. In simulations, we're witnessing capabilities and action.

Q RACHEL

What is the advantage of using assessments that are contextualized to the organization and the role, versus generic off-the-shelf assessments?

A BRAD

A client of mine years ago was a heavy manufacturing company, and we created a simulation where they would bring job candidates into their facility. We created a simulation; a work sample where we had candidates see what it felt like to contort their bodies around these different pieces of equipment to screw on a nut onto a bolt or something like that. That was an effort to allow candidates to evaluate and ask, is this a job that I really want? But we were also evaluating them to see if they can actually do this. They were 100% in the real environment. We, of course, created controls around it so they were safe.

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But oftentimes we don't necessarily have that luxury if we're trying to bring in a new leader into an organization or we're trying to evaluate someone for a leadership position. We can't necessarily put them into that leadership role because there are other people involved there. What we need to do then is create that simulated role or world where we present them with challenges that would mimic what they would face, and see how they handle those challenges.

For a role where we're hiring thousands of people, we may create more of a completely automated simulation where they're interacting with a computer and responding to questions. If we're only hiring a couple of people for a senior leadership position, we may make it more of an assessor-led type of simulation where they're interacting with a live human assessor who's trained in behavioral observation to evaluate that individual.

decisions. The conversation has shifted entirely in the right direction. In 2019, I said we've got to be careful here. I'm glad to see that, as an industry, we are focused more on the responsible use of AI. AI is here, it is not going away. It can be used to create some components of assessments.

Can it be used to help people fake their way through assessments? Yes, it can. You might question, would a person who's looking for development feedback try to game the system? Who knows? The reality is AI is here, and as an industry, we need to start thinking about not how we avoid it or how we prevent people from using it, but how we account for that. How do we account for the fact that people will be using this and they have very easy access to it?

LYNN

We did a workshop at the Leading Edge Consortium around the importance of behavioral observation and how behavioral observation is a great way to use AI, because it's not an unknown. AI can help us identify and make sense of actual observed behavior.

RACHEL

What's the appropriate use of AI in assessments?

BRAD

We're not using AI to make decisions; we're using AI to inform decisions. Some of this has been influenced by a number of recent laws, etc., that have gone into effect about when you can or cannot use AI for employment-related

BRAD

You need to use human judgment. A coworker of ours at BTS characterizes AI as a well-read intern.

(continued)

AI is great for giving you an initial read on something or maybe a first draft on something or generating ideas; those sorts of things. But the human is still a really important element of this because we are the ones who can actually think. I like to think of assessment as we're trying to paint a picture of somebody, and humans are the ones who can take all the data points and paint that picture in a way that looks like a real person.

LYNN

In behavioral observation and simulation, AI can help us with the observation, but the insight needs to come from that performance coach.

RACHEL

Where do organizations go wrong with their use of assessments and what can they do to help prevent those costly mistakes?

BRAD

As Lynn said earlier, an assessment in and of itself is kind of useless. It's, what we do with the data that comes out of assessment that matters. What insights do we draw? This applies whether we're using that assessment for talent acquisition purposes, hiring or whether we're using this assessment for development purposes. If we don't use the data or if we discount the data, or if we ignore all sorts of other data that we might have — in other words, we're just letting the assessment drive a decision — we've got to think about how we're using the data and doing so in a meaningful way where we're integrating it with other information we know, and we're using that to make informed decisions. We've got to use the data in a way that's useful. That also has implications for the strategy and what assessments we're even using.

What insights do we ultimately want to be able to draw at the end of the day, and what tool then is going to be able to help us generate those insights in the best way? Tying things together, it's being mindful about the approach we're taking around why we're using assessments, and what assessments we are using. How are we using the data, how are we using that to then inform decisions? It's that sort of thing.

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

iTunes   Spotify   YouTube

Brandon Hall Group
EXCELLENCE AT WORK

About Brandon Hall Group™

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