



Brandon Hall Group™

**EXCELLENCE
AT WORK**

Executive Interview

with **Drew Remiker**,
Senior Director of Strategic Services
NovoEd

Strategies to Connect Your Remote Organization

About NovoEd



Founded at Stanford's Social Algorithms Lab in 2012, NovoEd is a capability-building platform that uses social and collaborative learning to drive performance readiness at scale. Through cohort-based experiences, NovoEd taps into collective wisdom, placing each learner at the center of perspective, application, and expertise. Large enterprises such as 3M, GE, and Nestlé partner with NovoEd to accelerate their critical initiatives, reconnect teams, and achieve rapid alignment through learning that is felt, experienced, and swiftly transformed into impact. Visit novoed.com to learn more.

Recognition



NovoEd won 39 Brandon Hall Group™ Excellence Awards® in 2023, including 10 HCM awards, 17 Tech awards and 12 EdTech awards. NovoEd is a Platinum Brandon Hall Group™ Smartchoice® Preferred Provider for 2024-25 and a Gold Sponsor of the 2025 Human Capital Management Excellence Conference, Jan. 28-30, 2025, at the West Palm Beach Hilton.

EXCELLENCE IN HCM AWARDS

Learning and Development

3 Gold Awards 1 Silver Award 2 Bronze Awards

Leadership Development

4 Gold Awards

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Learning and Development

4 Gold Awards 2 Silver Awards

Talent Management

3 Gold Awards 3 Silver Awards

Future of Work

2 Gold Awards 1 Silver Award

Talent Acquisition

1 Silver Award

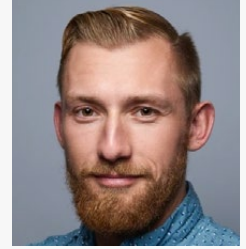
Sales Enablement

1 Bronze Award

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About Drew Remiker



Drew Remiker is the Sr. Director of Strategic Services at NovoEd, where he leads a team of consultants and partners supporting enterprise organizations on their strategic initiatives. He has spent nearly 15 years teaching, designing curriculum, and developing training programs for students and teachers in K-12 education, higher education and corporate clients. He designed NovoEd's flagship free educational offering "Foundations of Learning Experience Design (LXD)," which has now had over 41,000 registrants from all across the world. His San Francisco Bay Area roots have informed his passion for creating accessible, engaging educational experiences as a former special educator as well as inclusive experiences for corporate environments.



About Rachel Cooke

Rachel Cooke is the Chief Operating Officer and Principal Analyst at Brandon Hall Group™, a leading research and advisory firm in Human Capital Management (HCM). With 20 years of experience in the HCM research industry, Rachel plays a pivotal role in driving the company's business operations. As the COO, Rachel oversees client and member advisory services, design strategies, annual awards programs, conferences, and project management functions. Her expertise and leadership ensure seamless operations and exceptional client experiences. In addition to her operational responsibilities, Rachel spearheads Brandon Hall Group's Advancing Women in the Workplace and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. She leads research efforts and organizes events focused on promoting gender equality, fostering inclusive workplace cultures, and empowering underrepresented groups in the workforce.

RACHEL

Q Some organizations are migrating back into the office environment, and there are a lot of mixed emotions. But you're still fully remote. Is that accurate?

DREW

A One of the things that enabled us was we actually had a policy called Work From Home Wednesdays. Originally it was entirely in-person. Then we dabbled for a couple of years with, let's try remote on Wednesdays and see how we operate. It gave us the crawl before you walk, before you run. We would communicate on Slack and we would schedule meetings like this.

We saw some advantages to being able to open up our recruiting efforts globally and country-wide. Bay Area employees have a reputation of just being too expensive, just to say it bluntly. Being able to look elsewhere in other geographies where people might be more suited or excited about your mission rather than perhaps another Bay Area startup when you're competing against the Googles and the other organizations around here, is an advantage.

The reason we've stayed remote in part is because now we have employees based all over the country, in New York, Cleveland, and even engineering teams offshore — Colombia, India, Mexico. As that's become the norm, it really doesn't make sense for us to have a hybrid or even in-person environment because that's just not where people are anymore.

RACHEL

Q What are the strategies that you have developed or you've identified?

DREW

A I want to connect these eight strategies and align them to four of our core values at NovoEdge. We actually have six, but for the purpose of this presentation, I'm going to talk about how these align to four of our values, and the four being trust, diversity, team and innovation. Those are kinds of the themes that we'll be talking about.

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To start, the basis of the highest quality and highly productive teams is always trust. One of the first strategies is we do icebreakers before every meeting as a way to level set. By just leveling the playing field and getting everyone in this “we’re just playing a game for a second” mindset, it takes the pressure off of everyone feeling like they have to be extremely professional and not make a mistake. It’s inviting everyone to share, which can be hard in a remote context when you’re not sure if you have the authority to speak up.

My favorite simple game is the rating game. Imagine you have a Zoom meeting and you ask people to rate from 1 to 10 some random thing, like pickles. You have everyone show their fingers, then ask the highest and lowest rated to justify. John, you’re a 1. Why? Never been a fan. And then the 10 has to justify. In an instant, you see a variety of perspectives. Then you ask someone else to nominate the next random thing. We try to take the first three minutes in a 30-minute meeting to engage in a playful energy like that.

RACHEL

Do you also require everybody to show up on their webcam or is that optional?

DREW

We have a strong encouragement of it. And it’s somewhat department-specific. Everyone who’s customer-facing — sales, marketing, customer success — those people are more willing to get on camera. But even in a rating game, you could say, type into the chat, even if you’re not coming off camera. It’s strongly encouraged, not required in our organization.

As part of the strategy of creating safe spaces, we’ve also encouraged water cooler talk, the in-between talk. We recently downloaded an app called the Donut app that prompts water-cooler conversation on Slack on a somewhat irregular basis. What’s one thing you noticed today outside that caught your attention?

We also have a number of informal interest-based channels that are gardening, pets, food. That’s another way that people engage with each other in a remote way, creating safe spaces. You can play games, but you also can just have time for chatter in the work messaging tool that is purely for the purpose of connection.

RACHEL

Q You've talked about trust and diversity. Is there anything else that you focus on as a strategy to promote diversity or embrace diversity?

DREW

A Because we had an initiative to make sure that everyone got to experience NovoEd in a cohort model and experience the technology, there was benefit to that. But also making it a known point of focus from senior leadership — if we are going to be this globally diverse organization, we're going to have to learn a few practices and tips and be somewhat cognizant that this is the environment we're in, which requires an additional level of sensitivity, but also education.

We're not clueless that there are things you could say that could be deemed offensive, or ways you could dominate in a Zoom call that would preclude other people who might just want to chat from participating. It was helpful to name those things and continually practice them. Those are the keys for diversity.

I want to talk about team and that being a crucial component. Obviously through organizational design, there are teams in departments. But there should be effort in creating the most productive, enjoyable, connected team both intra-department and inter-department.

One of the things we found valuable was doing a team-based charter. Whereas the organization has its own vision, mission and values, we said, let's take a microscopic view on how our team impacts this. What is our role at this company? If we could define our own motto, our own vision — who are we? We are the world's best designers creating world-class experiences that will win Brandon Hall Group™ awards. That's who we are as a group.

And then writing out statements — how does it look to work with us? How does it feel? What should people be saying when they work with us? What are these other values maybe that are not named in our core company values? We talk about how we're extremely reliable, personable, we build relationships. Saying we have our own micro identity can be a very powerful exercise that I would encourage even small teams of three, four or five to do for themselves.

Another strategy we recently established at the beginning of this year was what we describe as the weekly vibe check. What's your vibe? How's it going?

One of my challenges as a manager is I want to take care of my people and make sure they're not overworked, overburdened or bored. If you work with consultants or professional services, there's this idea of resource allocation and everyone indicating what they predict is their forecast over the next few weeks in terms of the things they're working on. But that's a very quantitative approach.

(continued)

One of those projects could be incredibly stressful with a really demanding client, whereas one of them is like, it's going to take me 10 hours, but I'm going to have my headphones on and it's something I can do in my sleep. There's this emotional component I wasn't able to see just by looking at this data chart.

So, I asked my team on a Monday to give themselves a score of 1 to 5, with 5 being this is going to be the greatest work week of my life, I'm so invested in my projects, all the way to one, like my dog has to get surgery and there are all these clients frustrating me. We put it on our team channel and say, this is how I'm feeling this week. Generally, things are going OK — 3s, 4s, 5s — everyone's feeling good. It was amazing the first time someone put out a 1. All of a sudden the teammates jumped in — how can we help? What do we need to do? I'm having a 4, I have a 5 week. And then we were able to actually distribute the work and make it so the person who had a 1 is more like a 2 or 3. The person who had a 5 is more like a 4. We're trying to, as a team, stay sane and have each other's back.

That's something we started this year that at first we were like, is this even helpful? And then it becomes obviously helpful when someone says I need help. That's been a cool mechanism.

RACHEL

Are they doing the rating of their work? Is this done through an app or through a tech tool?

DREW

We put it in the spreadsheet because we can then look back on the year and find any trends and calculate the team average. But then it's literally just a Slack post on a Monday — do a weekly vibe check everyone. This is what's going on. You don't even need fancy tools to implement this.

RACHEL

Do you want to recap the strategies that you've identified, just to leave our audience with the key things that they should consider?

DREW

A Again, one is making that time for games. Icebreakers, if you will, but even simply in the form of, we're not going to talk about work for 3 minutes and that's okay. To celebrate diversity, I think about having a specific task force to do that and perhaps run programs and initiatives.

It depends obviously on the company culture. Some organizations might be struggling with age gaps or perhaps different familiarities in working in hybrid versus in-person. You have to identify the problem, but then actually run a program to try to address it. For teams, having a team-based charter defining your mission vision that connects to the broader organization and doing a weekly checkpoint will be valuable for checking in.

There are a couple more that are brief that we don't necessarily have to get into today. But the idea is that there are just small tactical things you can do to take advantage of your Slack tool or your messaging system and have ways to ensure everyone has an opportunity to connect, whether or not they decide they want to go all in on connecting with their colleagues.

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



Brandon Hall Group
EXCELLENCE
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About Brandon Hall Group™

With more than 10,000 clients globally and more than 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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Recognizes the best HCM programs that transform their organization and achieves breakthrough results. This designation is a step above the HCM Excellence Awards® which focuses on one program within a company. Enterprise Excellence is a hybrid of award winners who are also members.

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