



**Brandon Hall Group**<sup>TM</sup>

**How TraineryHCM  
Is Weaving AI into the Fabric  
of Learning Technology**

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2026

**Executive Interview**



**Trainery**  
**HCM** **1**<sup>TM</sup>

## About Mahesh Kumar

**Mahesh Kumar** is the Founder and Managing Director of TraineryHCM and Managing Director of JER HR Group LLC. Before entering the human capital management space, Kumar spent more than 20 years in global financial services at JP Morgan, Deutsche Bank and Goldman Sachs, working across Asia, Europe and the United States on change management, strategic planning and organizational development projects. That career gave him deep experience in large-scale technology delivery, enterprise project management and go-to-market strategy. He transitioned into entrepreneurship when a consulting engagement led him to acquire a consulting firm and subsequent client demand for content solutions prompted the acquisition of Training Network, from which TraineryHCM was born.



## About TraineryHCM

**Trainery HCM 1™** **TraineryHCM** is a cloud-based human capital management (HCM) SaaS technology company headquartered in New York City. The company traces its roots to Training Network, founded in 1980, which was acquired by JER HR Group in 2018 and subsequently evolved into its current form. TraineryHCM offers an integrated suite of eight product solutions spanning learning management (TraineryLMS), training management (TraineryTMS), coaching (TRAKCoaching), video-on-demand learning (Streamery), performance management (ReviewCloud), compensation management (CompBldr) and core HR operations (TraineryCORE). The platform serves more than 300 clients and 50,000 users across the United States, with clients spanning financial services, healthcare, manufacturing, retail and other sectors.

## About David Wentworth

Today's conversation is moderated by **David Wentworth**, Managing Director of Learning and Talent at Brandon Hall Group™. He brings nearly two decades of experience conducting research, interviews and data analysis in the learning and talent space. David originally joined Brandon Hall Group™ in 2012 as a Principal Analyst, establishing himself as one of the industry's foremost authorities on learning and development before departing to serve as VP and Talent Platform Evangelist at Schoox. Prior to Brandon Hall Group™, he served as a senior analyst at the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp). In his current role, David works with technology providers and enterprise organizations to understand learning and talent challenges and what it takes to overcome them. He is a podcast host, a regular speaker at industry events and has authored numerous articles across HCM and learning publications.



**Q David**

How did you end up building TraineryHCM?

**A Mahesh**

My background is quite different. I started almost 25 years ago on Wall Street. I have a master's in computer science and an MBA from NYU and I spent more than 20 years across JP Morgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Deutsche Bank and UBS. That gave me the opportunity to work in three continents, which provided a global perspective on products, solutions and go-to-market strategy.

After 20-plus years I was looking to do something entrepreneurial. I got an opportunity to do a consulting engagement, which turned into acquiring that consulting company. One thing led to another and a search for a content provider led to us acquiring a company called Training Network, from which TraineryHCM was born. I call myself an accidental SaaS founder. That was never the original intent, but it evolved because of client demand and where we were

heading. Now I love it. This is a great time to be in this business, especially with everything AI is bringing.

**Q David**

During your years in financial services, were you storing away the kinds of challenges you are now trying to solve?

**A Mahesh**

Some of them were industry-specific and do not apply here, but some absolutely do. Scalability is one area I always thought about: how does software serve an enterprise with 300,000 employees without breaking down? People management was another. Wall Street taught me how to manage complex projects and processes and how to push for delivery. The third is go-to-market strategy. Watching how large financial firms market products taught me a great deal about how to scale an organization and an offering. Some of those lessons were not directly applicable to a startup, but understanding how to scale, in product,

organization and market, is valuable wherever you go.

**Q** **David**

The scalability challenge has evolved considerably since you first thought about it. What does scalability mean to you today and how are you addressing it?

**A** **Mahesh**

Scalability is not about how many users your system is handling. It is about handling complex functionality, features and requirements without friction. As you scale, friction should go down, not up.

I see three pillars. The first is organizational: a scalable system handles multi-entity, multi-location, role-based structures in a way that makes them operate effectively, not just store them. The second is operational: you need to replace manual coordination with governed workflow automation. That is how you scale processes without creating chaos. The third is user experience. Regard-

less of how large the organization is, any individual in the system at any given moment should have an experience that is optimal for them. If your system requires training to use, it will struggle to scale.

The benchmark I apply is: can a normal user come in without prior knowledge and operate the system effectively? If the answer is yes, that is scalability. Headcount is just one attribute. The real issue is complexity and how you mitigate it.

**Q** **David**

One of the ways you address this is through a modular architecture. Can you explain how those pieces fit together?

**A** **Mahesh**

We grew organically. We started small, clients kept asking us to do more and we kept building. Early on we were creating somewhat stand-alone solutions, then realized that was not optimal. From a technology standpoint, e-learning and classroom

learning are different, but from a learning and development manager's perspective, a course is a course and a program is a program. We had to build that complexity into the architecture.

Over time we became too complex, so we decoupled and re-architected. The goal was always the same: how do we make this workable for an average user who just wants to come in, do their job and move on? We have re-architected more than once. We are constantly learning from our mistakes and from the market.

Then AI arrived from left field and forced another re-architecture. For established players with large client bases, AI often ends up as a bolt-on because changing the underlying architecture is very difficult. We had the opportunity to weave AI into the product so it is part of the platform, not an add-on. That has been an expensive expedition, but it has made the product more capable and user-friendly. I do not know what the next two years will bring, but this is an exciting challenge and opportunity.

**Q David**

What is TraineryHCM's philosophy on AI, as distinct from simply saying the platform is AI-powered?

**A Mahesh**

AI is both an opportunity and a challenge for us. The opportunity is that we can move faster than established players who are constrained by large, legacy client bases. The challenge is that AI evolves rapidly and deploying it well is resource-intensive, so we have to be strategic about where we invest.

About a year ago we made a deliberate decision: we would not talk about AI for AI's sake. We would only pursue it where we could demonstrate a clear, specific benefit to clients. Our strategy is to look outward, not inward and ask, how will this help our clients? For every module we examined, we asked: What is the guardrail? Can a client turn it on or off? We have financial institutions and regulated businesses as clients who do not want AI in certain processes. So we built control

mechanisms at the client level, the function level and the module level, so clients can enable, disable, track and audit AI features.

A practical example is job description management. Clients often migrate from folders on a Windows file share to our system. Traditionally that was a painful manual process. AI has automated much of it, dramatically improving the client experience. We identified that kind of clear, measurable value in each module and built from there. We are in the third inning of a very long game and the game keeps extending.

### **Q** David

Where do you think AI is headed within the learning and talent space specifically?

### **A** Mahesh

Within six months to a year, AI will be a table stake for any provider. The real question becomes: are you solving the business problem? Are you actually helping your clients?

That does not change. Clients will eventually take AI for granted and evaluate you on outcomes, not on whether you have it.

The area that still needs resolution is governance and liability. Who is responsible when AI produces a problematic result? Where does the disclaimer sit? The legal framework has not fully caught up. You are already seeing early signals, such as class action claims related to algorithmic decision-making in HR systems. Policies around what software does and what users agree to when they subscribe, will need to become much more explicit. The large vendors will wrestle with this first and establish precedents and the rest of the market will follow.

### **Q** David

AI is only as good as the data it learns from and what we have done in the past is not always a reliable model for what we should do in the future. How do you think about that risk?

**A Mahesh**

You are right. The idea that the machine will produce the right answer because it was trained on our historical behavior assumes our historical behavior was correct and it clearly was not in every case. That is an important caution. Add AI complexity on top of existing bias or error and you compound the problem. The liability question: does it sit with the software provider, or with the organization that adopted it? That has to be resolved. Generic disclaimers saying the AI might be wrong will not be sufficient as adoption deepens. In narrow enterprise applications like learning and talent management, there is a reasonable expectation that the system is producing defensible, relevant outputs. Users will demand that level of confidence and rightly so.

**Q David**

Looking back, what are some of the hard-earned lessons from building this company?

**A Mahesh**

A few stand out. First, we had long-standing relationships with content producers and developers, but we were slow to digitize those relationships into a tangible solution for clients. We were still operating in an older model and we missed a window we could have capitalized on. By the time we recognized it, we had lost some ground we could have held.

Second, product innovation moved more slowly than it should have for a period, partly because of resource constraints, but also because we sometimes built what one client was asking for rather than what we believed was strategically right. Market analysis would have helped us say no more confidently and build for the broader opportunity. It is genuinely difficult to say no to a client, especially an important one, but allowing a single client to drive your roadmap is a trap. Every feature has to have broad applicability if it is going to move the whole organization forward.

## Q David

What skills will matter most in the near future and how are you thinking about it?

## A Mahesh

The bar for technological competency is rising in every industry. Automation has always been part of the economic story, but with AI layered on top, an average employee who does not develop AI fluency will find it harder to compete. Most jobs now have a technology skills requirement embedded in them, even roles that would not have been classified as technical a few years ago.

Our CTO framed it well. He called Feb. 6, 2023, the dividing line between BC and AC: before cloud and after cloud. Employees hired in the BC era had to transform how they work to stay relevant in an AC environment. We are in a similar moment with AI. Productivity expectations will rise significantly. Fewer people will be hired for a given scope of work because each person can do more.

The counterweight is the human skills that technology cannot replicate. What makes you uniquely you in your role? As AI handles more of the routine, those distinctly human capabilities become more important, not less. The question your podcast colleagues at Brandon Hall Group™ have been asking for some time is the right one: How do you hold onto those human skills as reliance on AI tools deepens over time? We do not fully know the answer yet. The schools banning phones are running an interesting real-world experiment and I think we will learn a great deal from it.



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





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