bts

Strategy made personal

Cloud-first, growing and leading

Over the past decade, a leading cloud software company partnered with BTS to develop leaders at every level, from the front lines to the C-suite. This development has spanned a wide array of initiatives building skills such as financial acumen, SaaS fundamentals, leadership, and more. Today, the organization maintains more than 30 percent growth year over year and has the highest engagement of all cloud companies.

At the beginning of its partnership with BTS, the organization had just become the first billion-dollar cloud company, with $1.2 billion in revenue and 3,000 employees. At the time, the company hired 30-40 percent new employees annually, all from traditional software companies. This presented a challenge. The company's new employees consistently tried to apply a traditional software mindset to the new company, but it was not effective in the new SaaS environment. As a result, the leadership team struggled to onboard and adapt its people to the cloud business. The organization attempted to create its own management program, which, because it was not tailored to the cloud environment, failed to help leaders develop the necessary skills. To continue successfully scaling the business, the organization selected BTS as its broader people partner.

An evolving partnership...

Executive development – *transitioning traditional software leaders to lead in a cloud-based model*

Initially, BTS and the organization co-created an executive development program for the company's top 200 leaders. The program focused on the essential business skills and leadership mindsets required to lead in SaaS. This included a business simulation focused on a three- to five-year forward-looking strategy for the business, a Multipliers leadership development simulation, and coaching on targeted feedback and behaviors. Following the continued success of the executive program, BTS designed a similar development program for the organization's frontline leaders. To this day, these same programs are still running, but are updated every year to reflect the company's current priorities and strategy.

Several years after the organization's initial partnership with the BTS, it became clear that its executive succession plan was not working. The company was hiring very experienced senior leaders from other companies, who should have been a great fit, but quickly "burned out." To identify why these senior executives were not successful, the organization leveraged BTS' assessment capabilities to create a Great Profile, a behavior model outlining the competencies and qualities necessary to be a great executive at the company. Creating this Profile helped the company improve its hiring process to ensure it consistently brought in the right people. The success of this initial project led BTS to create a series of Profiles for all leaders in the organization, from mid-level to the frontline. These Profiles became the organization's new leadership expectations, which are still in place to this day.

Cascading leadership development – *talent development programs for leaders at all levels*

Building off of the first two executive development programs, BTS was brought in to work with the Head of Research, Development and Products to design a similar version of the program for engineers. This iteration would help engineers understand the business model and the critical levers for driving financial success at the company. This collaboration resulted in a hybrid simulation that combined financial acumen and leadership development, which was initially targeted at directors and then ultimately adapted for individual contributors as well.

After the first few programs on how to run a great cloud company, BTS helped shift the organization's business units (BUs) to a mobile platform. At the time, mobile was just becoming the new, cutting-edge platform and the company needed to move quickly. However, just the opposite was happening – due to an array of issues internally, 18 months passed without a launch. Partnering with BTS, the organization aligned all necessary teams to the new mobile strategy, launching the company's mobile platform in just three months.

Bolstering the partnership over time, BTS also worked to develop leadership skills among the company's engineering managers. Over time the engineering manager role became increasingly difficult, as they were required to function both as a scrum master and people leader in an agile setting. To help remedy this need, BTS developed an engineering manager program to help leaders successfully embrace agile in a way that was truly unique to the reality of their roles.

The organization also saw a need to develop world-class product managers (PMs). The PM role has evolved over time, from an execution function to a true business leader – where PMs are expected to own every aspect of the development and go-to-market strategy for their product. As such, PMs must be able to access a wide range of skills, from critical thinking to teambuilding and alignment. Thus, BTS partnered with the organization to create a first-of-its-kind holistic PM journey, where PMs would develop leadership skills and form connections with the company's executives in a year-long program. As a result of the program, enrolled PMs have reported improvement in all leadership behaviors identified as necessary for success in their role.

More recently, BTS and the organization partnered to launch an acceleration program, a year-long virtual journey for 2,700 leaders. The program allows aspiring managers, particularly individual contributors who are interested in becoming managers, to test out what it feels like to be a manager before taking the role. From top executives to individual contributors, BTS continues to develop world-class talent development initiatives tailored to the software organization's evolving needs.

Growth – *acquisitions and sales enablement*

As the company continued to grow, it turned to BTS to help manage its acquisitions. The organization wanted to make the most from its acquisitions, which required better alignment and team development. BTS created a one-day experiential simulation solution that allowed leaders to test drive an acquisition and explore how their decisions could affect the business. The session's content is continuously updated, and now gives leaders additional opportunities to learn about diligence and deal strategies, practice integration planning, and gain perspective from past acquisitions. The goal is to have every leader leave the session with a better understanding of the M&A process, and know their role in making integrations of new acquisitions successful.

To help drive continued growth for the organization, BTS also partnered with the company on multiple sales enablement initiatives. In addition to BTS' acceleration modules, which act as fast, flexible, cost-effective sales training, BTS also designed an experiential learning journey to equip the organization's sales managers to better understand their customers and effectively sell their software services. This included a simulation in which participants run a customer company as CEO, which enabled the participants to walk a mile in their customers' shoes. In light of this new understanding, sales leaders would then go through a series of learning activities on how they would change their sales strategy and practices.

More recently, BTS created a self-paced, virtual business acumen simulation to introduce all levels of sales leaders within the organization to the levers they needed to pull when crafting a deal to drive key financial metrics. To accommodate and upskill new hires, BTS also developed a simulation to highlight the deal lifecycle, helping new hires learn and get feedback on how to sell better.

Conclusion

As the only partner who truly understands SaaS at the detailed level necessary for success, with the ability to apply this knowledge across business functions and leader levels, BTS has remained the organization's broader people partner for over a decade. To date, BTS continues to develop new and innovative programs to improve the organization including security awareness trainings; virtual learning journeys; business acumen simulations; assessments to determine how effectively teams are communicating across the organization; as well as self-paced learning initiatives, coaching support and more. The success of this partnership is evidenced by the organization's sustained growth of more than 30 percent year over year, as well as its record-level employee engagement – the highest among all cloud companies.

The results from a recent leadership development program

- 90% of participants would recommend the program

- 98% said participation in the program made them feel honored/valued as an employee

- "Best professional development week, maybe best week overall, of my 8+ year career [at the organization]. Reinvigorating and was the ultimate antidote to burnout. Grateful for the opportunity and would do it all again in a heartbeat."

The results from a recent executive development program

- 97% got **deeper clarity on their values**

- 86% felt more **connected to the company's purpose**

- 94% said their deeper connection to purpose gave them **greater energy** for the work they do

- 90% agree or strongly agree that the BTS program enabled to make significant progress in **addressing business challenges**

"I left the event with much gratitude for all who contributed to making the event happen - the faculty, talent dev staff, BTS, my peers and my company - and a reinvigorated focus on my own leadership development growth."

"I think it's one of the most important initiatives at the company. I really believe that this program will give us the competitive edge at recruiting, retaining, and nurturing the best talent in the world."

"This week [was] the most memorable and influential week in my life. As a leader, you lead the people to execute business and deliver the results, but I'm strongly convinced that you have to be fully respected as one human being by your people and customers..."