

The Growth Prescription, a podcast for healthcare sales professionals
Episode 1: Talent acquisition with Brad Chambers

Masami Cookson: Welcome to "Fearless Thinkers," the BTS podcast. My name is Masami Cookson, and our host is Rick Cheatham, head of marketing at BTS.

On today's show, we're doing something a little different. We're launching a new series, "The Growth Prescription: A Podcast for Healthcare Sales Professionals." These episodes will be hosted by Rene Groeneveld, along with special guest Alan Gentry.

Rene Groeneveld is a partner and the leader of the global Sales and Marketing Center of Expertise at BTS. Based in Switzerland, he specializes in international sales, marketing, leadership, strategy implementation, and change and transformation.

Alan Gentry is a senior director in BTS's Sales and Marketing Center of Expertise. Based out of our Chicago office, Alan has led development and change initiatives for several Fortune 500 pharmaceutical, medical device, industrial, and service companies. Prior to BTS, Alan spent 19 years at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals in a variety of roles from sales to sales leadership and leadership development.

Hey, Rick. Hey, Rene. How are you both doing?

Rick Cheatham: Doing very well. This couldn't be a better day for me because I don't have to work. I just get to let my good friend, Rene, do all the heavy lifting. How are you, Rene?

René: Isn't that your job, Rick?!

I'm excited, actually, and thanks for having us again. We felt like we have to do something for our healthcare clients and we have to do something meaningful and something specific. So, I'm all in and I'm excited to be here again.

Rick: Well, it sounds like a fantastic plan. Even though I'm not a healthcare professional, I'm gonna still tune in, because I think there's some great things to learn here. With that, Masami and I will get out of the way and let you and Alan run your show.

René: Well, welcome everyone, and welcome to our special podcast series, "The Growth Prescription: A Podcast

for Healthcare Sales Professionals." It's the first out of a series of podcasts we'll do on the pharmaceutical industry, on the life science industry, at a broader spectrum. And I have two wonderful colleagues with me, Alan and Brad, spread all over at the moment. I think, Alan, you're dialing in from Chicago?

Alan: Yes, I am.

René: Brad, you're at the University of Cincinnati, are you?

Brad: That's exactly right. BTS is the University of Cincinnati's innovation partner now, and so – working with various groups around the university to help them take themselves into the future.

René: Thanks for making it today, and it's good to see you both. We invited Brad, Alan and I, to come and join us today and speak a little bit about his passion. Brad is the head of our talent acquisition solutions at BTS on a global scale, and Alan runs our wonderful pharmaceutical vertical dealing with clients all over the world, again, on a global scale. So good to have you both here.

But the topic of course we are referring to today is all about hiring and selecting, that a lot of our clients tell us that they have problems in this space.

Alan: Healthcare companies commit a lot of resources to hiring the right people every day, whether that's the time that's involved with it or the effort behind hiring the right people. So, we're hearing from a lot of our clients that they're really struggling to find the right people that want to be engaged with their company for the long term. The hiring process can be time intensive as I mentioned earlier.

Plus, if you make a wrong decision and that person doesn't stay, it can become very costly for the organization. I know that in my prior life, we used to say that a bad hire or one that doesn't stay past their time to productivity could cost over \$250,000.

René:

It's about a long-term engagement where we're heading for, and of course also succession and planning the succession gaps, right? So, Brad, you are our global subject matter expert in this. So why is this topic so hot and what's going on out there?

You know, when you spend all that time and money and effort bringing somebody into the organization and you spend time recruiting them and onboarding them and training them and so forth, to have them leave very quickly or maybe after a few months or even a year, there's cost associated with that. There's also cost of bringing in the wrong person and them staying around. When you think about the impact that has on the rest of the team, on the organization, and on the brand, that's a significant cost as well. The whole hiring decision is critical. Organizations are struggling with this right now.

René:

Any idea on how you can improve your hiring decisions? And in the end, it's all about results, right? So, how your hiring decisions can have a better impact on the company's long-term results.

Brad:

It comes down to getting crystal clear on what it is that we're hiring for. What does right look like in that particular role that we're hiring for? And focusing our efforts on those capabilities and attributes that are most critical for success. Making sure that we're structuring our entire process then around those capabilities.

If we think about the hiring processes really enabling both parties, in other words, the candidate as well as the organization, to make that that ultimate employment decision. We've got two very important stakeholders there and we can use those assessments in the entire hiring process to teach those candidates about the organization and the roles, so that they're learning just as much as the organization is about the alignment between that person brings to the table, what it is that they are looking for, and how well does that align with the realities of the organization and the role.

René:

That's interesting. Can you tell us a little bit more about what our clients, what companies are trying to achieve with their hiring decisions?

Brad:

Getting the right people, and again, the right people means someone who's aligned with their purpose, their vision, the priorities of the organization, the values and the ways of working in the organization. I mean, ultimately that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to find people who align with those sorts of things. We're not just looking for someone who has the right skills, right? The technical skills to perform the job. Of course that's really important. But we're also looking for someone who's going to add value to the culture of the organization, right?

Every organization has a culture: a way of doing things. And not to say that we need to hire a bunch of robots that all look and act the same way but we need to bring people in who align with those goals and so forth at the organizations.

René:

So, it is about long-term focus and aligning right? Alan?

Alan:

Yeah, that sounds really interesting, Brad. I know that when I used to facilitate and teach people how to hire in my prior life, one of the things that we used to teach them to do was to do a review of what was their past history looking like in the sense of their performance? If they were in sales, how did they perform in sales? And then also looking at, not only how they performed in sales, but also what were their behavior examples? Do they have examples that align to the capabilities of the role?

But I think it's a little more than that today when we look at hiring the right people. So how do you identify the right person to hire?

Brad:

When we're working with an organization, for example, we can't simply assume we know what success looks like. These jobs differ from one organization to another. And again, when we think about the fact that it's not just what technical capabilities they bring to the table, but more of that cultural side of things and how do they work.

All of that is to say we first start by really digging in deep with the client and subject matter experts in the role on what does success look like here? And, you know, what are those technical skills but then what are some of those non-technical skills? And some of those, more of those behavioral

elements. And we get really crystal clear on the kinds of behaviors that we need to see people exhibiting. And then what we do is we create assessments to create the space or the platform to see those behaviors, right?

We create simulations, for example, or, you know, case study interviews, right? A chance for candidates to demonstrate their capabilities and behaviors. When you do that, it serves the dual purpose of the hiring process, which is it tells the organization something about the candidate, but it also tells the candidate something about the organization and the role, because they can sort of try on the job for size, so to speak.

René:

That's great. Can you give it a little bit of an example of where we might have done some of this work?

Brad:

Couple of different pharmaceutical organizations where we've helped them hire medical affairs directors, you know, where what we do is we have gone in and helped them define what success looks like in the role, and then we've created, in some cases, I mentioned case study interviews, which is a nice way to augment a traditional interview process, where we give candidates a short case study about a fictitious pharmaceutical organization that has fictitious therapeutic areas and fictitious assets.

And we present some challenges to them that they then have to create a strategy, for example, of kind of the next year's strategy for the medical function inside the pharmaceutical company. And they then present that strategy to a panel of actual client interviewers who are serving as the assessors. We've also gone as far as to create more of a half day assessment center, or a half day's virtual assessment where individuals, in addition to doing the kinds of things I just mentioned, they're also responding to challenges coming in through email and so forth. And they're engaging in multiple role plays, multiple interactions. And what our clients have seen with this is, again, it teaches those candidates about what's it like to perform this medical affairs director role in this organization.

I can tell you multiple times when a client told me, you know, "Wow, here's a candidate who on paper they look like the perfect match for us. They've got

years and years of experience doing this at another pharmaceutical company. What I was able to see from them though in the assessment is they would be a steamroller here, they would be a rhinoceros here, they would come in and just leave a path of destruction because of the way they do the work."

So again, it's not just about the technical capabilities, it's also about how they act as a human and how that aligns with our organization.

Alan:

There's countless studies, you can just go on Google and find, "What's the cost to replace somebody?" And estimates range from 30 to 500% of salary, and that's a really, really wide range, right? 30 to 500. And it's because of things like, you know, what you just mentioned, Alan. It's not just the actual costs associated with doing the interviewing and maybe working with the search firm to find candidates. It's also the lost productivity of having someone in the role who wasn't performing or the decreased morale of people around them, of having perhaps the wrong person in the role, the disruption to the business, the outplacement services, the weakened employer brand. There's all sorts of costs that are associated with a wrong hire or a bad hiring decision.

Again, we have to broaden our definition of a bad hiring decision to not just include the people who we wish would stay but left, but it also includes the people who we probably shouldn't have hired in the first place and they stick around.

René:

Well, thanks Brad. Thanks for sharing your very rich experience and I think there was a lot of insights you just shared. In order to summarize it a little bit, in a nutshell, what are the three tips you can give to us and the listeners?

Brad:

The three tips are, first, you know, you need to determine what it is that's needed now and in the future. That that's the foundation for any hiring decision. Regardless of how elaborate your assessment might be or your hiring process, you've gotta decide what it is that you're hiring for. Second, you need to evaluate your hiring process through the lens of both the organization and the candidate.

Related to that is the third point, which is make sure that your assessments and your, again, your process, they do serve that dual purpose of teaching and assessing, right? Look for ways to provide value to your candidates.

You're not the only one who is potentially interested in them, and they have options. And so, it's a matter of helping them see what life would be like in the organization and maybe even helping them, you know, learn something about themselves along the way.

René :

Thank you so much, Brad. That was really great insights and also really three powerful key learnings at the end. Thanks for summarizing that. And Alan and Brad, thanks for this great session. It was just the first out of a series of sessions we're gonna do on challenges in the life science industry, in the healthcare industry.

If you want to reach out to us, you wanna speak to Brad, Alan or me, just contact us on LinkedIn or go to [BTS.com](https://www.bts.com) and we're very happy to follow up any discussion. Thank you so much, and have a great day everyone.

Masami :

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