



Brandon Hall Group  
**EXCELLENCE  
AT WORK**

# Executive Interview

with **Kevin Akeroyd**,  
CEO  
PRO Unlimited

---

Platform-Driven Transformation:  
Contingent Workforce Management's Time to Shine

## About PRO Unlimited

Serving hundreds of the world's most recognizable brands, PRO Unlimited offers modern workforce management and a partner ecosystem supported by data, software, intelligence and services to meet an organization's flexible workforce needs. PRO's Integrated Workforce Management platform can adapt quickly to regional or industry economic shifts and provides the speed, scale, flexibility, transparency and expertise to serve as the holistic platform for the modern workforce. Headquartered in Burlingame, California, PRO has helped global brands and organizations achieve operational and financial success for more than 30 years. For more information, visit [www.prounlimited.com](http://www.prounlimited.com).

## Recognition

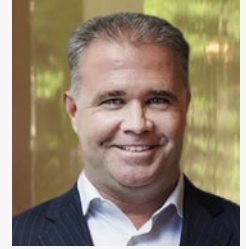
A Brandon Hall Group Silver Preferred Provider, PRO Unlimited won two BHG Excellence Awards in 2021.



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

[Learn More](#)

## About Kevin Akeroyd



**Kevin Akeroyd** serves as PRO Unlimited’s Chief Executive Officer and leads the vision and strategy for the company. He is recognized as one of the technology industry’s most tenured and trusted experts. Kevin has held executive leadership roles at some of the world’s most notable brands that are category leaders in Cloud Software, Services and Data. Prior to PRO, Kevin served as Global CEO at an industry-leading SaaS Marketing and Communications software provider, where he took the company public on the NYSE before selling it for \$2.8 billion.



## 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

How would you describe the contingent workforce and what is it made of?

### A KEVIN

Contingent is a broad term. I like to keep it simple and say there are full-time employees working for a specific company and there are many iterations of non-full-time employees who work for a company. Contingent is everyone who is not employed full-time. That could be an individual contributor, a freelancer or a contractor, or it could be through a staffing agency. If I work for an organization and am not a full-time employee, I'm a contingent worker.

### Q RACHEL

How do companies organize and manage their contingent workforce?

### A KEVIN

It's just become so complex and the pandemic didn't create this. Pre-pandemic, we were already in a world where more and more companies were shifting from full-time employees in brick-and-mortar office locations to non-full-time

employees who were remote and global. When more companies shifted to global, remote or non-full-time employees during the pandemic, corporate profits, stock prices and values soared. Companies have thrived in the last two years. It's been an accelerant to keep this on a more permanent basis. Most large employers, regardless of vertical industry or where they are located, will agree that this shift toward more contingent workers is here to stay for several reasons: improved nimbleness, flexibility, benefits, decreased costs, etc. The enterprise plan is to have more than half of their workforce become contingent, not full-time.

More importantly, you've got the digital natives, the second parents and the aging Baby Boomers who can't do full-time. The Great Resignation and The Great Reshuffle illuminated this. Those most specialized in the white-collar world don't want to have full-time employment; they want to build contingent resumes and contingent careers. You've got both the enterprise hiring company and the top skilled talent saying we want to live in a contingent world. It's become very strategic and therefore, companies are finding themselves having to play catch-up. Most companies that are very sophisticated from a technology, data analytics and infrastructure standpoint have been on the full-time employee side for decades. Now they find themselves behind on the move to a contingent workforce. People are looking at governance, skill sets, processes, technology and consolidation, and how to manage it in a much more sophisticated way — because they have to. The compliance, statutory, regulatory and risks have increased. Most Global 2000 companies are rapidly trying to catch up and trying to take what they thought they had 10 years to do and squeeze it into the next two years, given the strategic importance.

Q

**RACHEL**

What are the other competitive advantages of having a contingent workforce as an employer?

A

**KEVIN**

If you do not become proficient at attracting, developing, retaining and redeploying contingent talent, you will be at a severe disadvantage in your war for talent and overall ability to compete. It's a sellers' market and the talent has the power. There is a sheer necessity for it, then there is the strategic stuff such as flexibility, nimbleness, risk mitigation, etc. There are many benefits for the enterprise. Even if there weren't benefits, the talent would demand that we go this way.

Q

**RACHEL**

What is a contingent workforce platform and what does that look like?

Q

**RACHEL**

How are agile companies developing their contingent people?

A

**KEVIN**

There is an awesome company here where I live. It has seven-star restaurants in the lobby.

A

**KEVIN**

**First, you have a layer of tech-enabled services;** things such as the historical MSP.

You've got to have a different set of SOW and strategic sourcing services, which is different from diversity, inclusion, curation and employer experience for direct sourcing. You now have a suite of services, not just the old MSP. **Layer two is staff augmentation software** — that's the VMS marketplace. These are super important but the VMS, including ours, doesn't do diversity and inclusion, SOW or direct sourcing.

*(continued)*

Now there's a suite of software, not just the VMS. **Layer three is the data;** there's a multibillion-dollar industry selling data to corporations to illuminate what they should pay their FTEs. **The fourth layer is intelligence and analytics.** How do we make this intelligent rather than brute force, which is how we've done it over the last 30 years? **The fifth layer is the employer record,** which includes compliance, regulations, risks, benefits, etc. It's a complex layer because the typical Fortune 500 company outsources the employer of record and everything around it to whoever the provider is. **Then the sixth emergent one is the worker-experience layer.** How do I ensure they get real-time pay, the best contingent benefits and world-class payroll services? How do we give them data-driven recommendations on the next contingent job? How do we stay engaged and suggest redeployment?

You've got 20 to 25 needs for large enterprises. Historically, the enterprise had to contract with 19 to 20 different vendors to capture each one. Instead of driving business outcomes and winning the war for talent, I'm spending three years in the nightmare of integrating people, processes and systems among 20 different vendors. That's where the industry finds itself right now. For example, the sales line of business; now, there is one system of record from Salesforce or Microsoft. Even on the full-time employee side, we've gone from 20 different vendors to one platform or system of record for HCM. The contingent workforce is in the middle of that and this part of the industry must go from 20 solutions to one platform or system of record. How do we have one platform that can do data analytics, intelligence services and payroll, all from one integrated solution? How can it satisfy the end-

to-end workflow; how can it talk to the other data systems? Ideally, it's interoperable and it helps the whole business globally rather than just a piece of the company regionally. There are a hundred different definitions of the platform but that's how we define it when we use the term "contingent workforce management platform."

Q

RACHEL

What is the timeframe for getting to that point where it is more unified?

A

KEVIN

When I started in 2020, the client demands were more sophisticated than the vendor community could provide, whether it was services, data vendors, software vendors or payroll vendors. When you look at all the investment, mergers, acquisitions, private equity, venture and corporate money invested over the last two years, there has been a massive growth spurt by the vendor community, including PRO. And now, the vendor community is a little ahead of the customers and the platforms are starting to mature. A lot of things have been built and integrated. The Fortune 500, 1000 or Global 2000 enterprises are trying to get themselves up the maturity curve to use more of the enabling platforms and technology.

*(continued)*

It's been an interesting flip but that's where it is now. We're not only rolling out the platform for customers but we're also teaching them what it looks like, best practices and thought leadership. We're helping them architect a maturity model to utilize a powerful platform because even if you have the best platform in the world, if you don't know how to use it, the platform won't be good for anybody.

A lot of the innovation comes from the tech vendor community. We're talking to the same Fortune 1000 enterprises that have already done this with their CRM and ERP. This isn't new to their company, they just haven't done it here yet. There are so many lessons that can be learned from all the other places this has been done. There's no reason this can't get done in a much faster, more streamlined and accelerated timeline.

an extremely attractive full-time employee brand, that translates into contingent because more often than not, it won't. In the past, the contingent worker was a second-class citizen. Do they get invited to the happy hour? Typically, they don't. Do they have access to the same systems, content or security access? No, they don't. There's been this attitude that FTEs are the first-class citizens and contingent is the second-class citizen. It is critical to rectify that and inclusive to the point where they're both first-class citizens. The same company that has had a religion around employee experience for 15 years, but hasn't even started on their contingent worker experience must play catch-up and get there in a year because if we do not cater to the talented contingent workers, we're going to lose them. We're going to lose the war for talent. We've already enabled the tech, data and analytics on the full-time employee side but we're 10 to 15 years behind on the contingent side.

**Q** **RACHEL**

What are contingent employees' expectations regarding their development and what should employers be responsible for?

**Q** **RACHEL**

Are there any other challenges that our leaders should anticipate or be aware of?

**A** **KEVIN**

First and foremost, we need to realize that our full-time employee brands probably do not resonate enough with the contingent workforce. Don't assume that just because you're

**A** **KEVIN**

Going back to the platform, if I don't have executive sponsorship and the C-Suite is not driving it, change management will not happen. It must have proper executive-level support.

*(continued)*

Am I optimizing for location, volume, cost or skills? If I don't have analytics, frameworks, KPIs and goals, that's like setting off on a hiking trip with no map and no idea where I'm going. But most Fortune 500 companies don't even have that three- or four-year roadmap about where they want to get to. PRO and PRO's peers can provide all the enabling tools to a large enterprise but if they don't adopt and drive change in the skills, accountability, governance, etc., change management is not going to happen. There must be a commitment to reskilling inside the hiring organization because they don't have the skills to manage the contingent side. A lot gets outsourced to the MSP, but there is still a fair amount of reskilling that has to happen in the hiring enterprise, even though the MSP does a lot of the heavy lifting. Those are some things that are more important than the technology platform. If the enterprise doesn't nail those, the platform is not going to do them any good.

versus a permanent shift to go from 30% to 60%, who they go after is fundamentally different. If the goal is for a permanent contingent worker to be redeployed, but they hired an employee looking for a full-time job, they made a mistake bringing that person onto that six-month project. Direct sourcing is undoubtedly a big topic right now, sourcing contingent talent directly rather than through the professional services firm or the staffing agency. Enterprises need to put the same discipline and governance around strategic sourcing talent that they would for other expenditures, such as office supplies. Amazingly enough, some Fortune 500s are not doing that. From our lens, we would like to see organizations get more serious about that.

Q

**RACHEL**

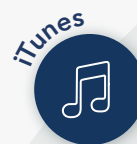
If the organization has a mindset of converting the contingent workforce into full-time and somebody is not looking for a full-time position, what's something the enterprise should think about?

A

**KEVIN**

If the goal is to use their contingent workforce as a pipeline to convert to full-time

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



**Brandon Hall Group**  
**EXCELLENCE**  
**AT WORK**



# About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 28 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.

## Professional Certifications

Self-paced certification programs. Virtual group sessions for companies. In-person conferences and summits.

## Membership

Individual and Enterprise Membership Options: Includes research assets, advisory support, a client success plan and more.

## Advisory Offerings

Custom Research Projects, including surveys, focus group interviews and Organization Needs Assessment for Transformation, Technology Selection and Strategy.

## Excellence Awards

Two annual programs recognize the best organizations that have successfully deployed programs to achieve measurable results.

SOME WAYS  
WE CAN HELP

### ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

recognizes world-class HCM programs that transform their organization and achieve breakthrough results. This designation is the next step beyond the HCM Excellence Awards, which focus on a single program, and looks at the department as a whole.

### SMARTCHOICE® PREFERRED PROVIDER PROGRAM

uniquely places HCM service and technology companies at the top of organizations' consideration list of vendors. It adds an unmatched level of credibility based on BHG's twenty-eight-plus years of experience in evaluating and selecting the best solution providers for leading organizations around the world.