

# Executive Interview

2021

Orange Grove Consulting specializes in helping organizations improve gender equity and inclusivity through a set of consulting tools and training programs.



**OrangeGrove**  
Consulting

Orange Grove Consulting's end goal is to uncover and remove the limiting aspects of talent potential and processes to create more innovative, productive and competitive workplaces. Its programs and consulting are tailored for the specific needs of its clients.



**JODI DETJEN**

*Managing Partner,  
Orange Grove Consulting  
MBA Program Director  
Suffolk University*



**RACHEL COOKE**

*COO and Podcast Host  
Brandon Hall Group*



## About Jodi Detjen

**Jodi Detjen** is an organizational consultant and educator. Her mission is to help realize gender equity in the workplace as soon as possible. In addition to being Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Orange Grove Consulting, Jodi is Clinical Professor of Management at Suffolk University. She has spent her career transforming the way people work and designs top-tier women's leadership. She has consulted and run workshops for clients such as Accenture, Microsoft Partners and Oracle. She is co-author of the book, *The Orange Line: A Woman's Guide to Integrating Career, Family, and Life*. Her upcoming book on building inclusive workplaces was published in January 2020. Jodi earned her bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech, her MA from Duke University and is pursuing her Doctorate at Temple University.

## 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 and Inclusion initiatives, research and events. Rachel worked in the HCM research industry for 15 years and held several key management and executive positions within the Talent and Learning Research, and Performance Improvement industries.



**Q RACHEL**

Can you share how things have been for you during COVID-19 and what you've found to be effective during this time?

**A JODI**

To be honest, I haven't had much spare time working on getting everything up and running for the universities. It has been an enormous amount of work, as things changed so much over the summer. From a business perspective, we do so much inclusion work that we have been swamped. The business is comprised of consulting, research and training. With the training component, moving online has been phenomenal. It's more accessible, cheaper and effective. Because there are so many online tools to conduct training, we have found that it's just as interactive, if not more interactive in some cases, because people are more open online. We haven't found any learning loss in the way we conduct things now, and because we have been teaching online for so long, there wasn't much of a transition. We haven't missed a beat; we do more of it. With that being said, there has been a change in the consulting aspect of the business. The facilitation now takes place more frequently online than in-person, but even so, I've found there is an ease around working online. Because people have been working this way for the past six to seven months, they seem to be more open and willing. People can now go from one meeting to the next without the transaction costs, which

allows them more time. I've also found there's a lot more focus and interest in the work we're doing from a tactical, facilitation perspective.

**Q RACHEL**

Your recent book on inclusion, *The Next Smart Step*, can you share a bit about it?

**A JODI**

Our book, *The Next Smart Step*, is currently available in an e-version, and because of COVID, the hardcover will come out in February.

**Our overall philosophy on inclusion is that it is a business strategy, like any other business strategy, such as creating a new product or one for entering a new market.**

Approaching inclusion in this way enables people to think more about it and access it. We often hear people say they don't know what to do, so by framing it in that way, people can evaluate what they've done in the past, what they know how to do and then think about inclusion in that way to create their operational strategy; that's the first piece.

*(continued)*

**The second piece is looking at inclusion as a competitive advantage.**

When assessing what is happening from a talent perspective, many companies are way ahead in terms of inclusion nationally and globally. Based on our work and other people's research, we've determined that it will take about three to five years to create inclusion because it is a cultural and process change. Companies that are still deciding have a three- to five-year window to catch up. The competitive gap will get continuously larger. Therefore, the more extended companies wait, the further behind they will be competitive. This is no longer a

**The third piece is how organizations think about inclusion.**

choice. It's not if, but when. Companies must think about their mindset on inclusion and diversity, the skill set needed to be inclusive, and finally, the environment and the processes that must change to achieve it.

**RACHEL**

**Q** You mentioned three essential components that you focus on in your book: the mindset, the skillset and the environment. Can you elaborate on those?

**JODI**

**A** The mindset component is where many companies fail. Organizations often look at inclusion and diversity as a checkbox. They send employees to diversity training and then check off the box. However, that doesn't work because it creates a mindset of compliance. A compliance mindset is around fear and protecting risk, essentially just ensuring an organization is "covered" in the event anyone sues. The mindset we discuss in the book creates an environment where all talent in the organization is being leveraged. Often, this is not the case and an example of this is if there is a lot of homogeneity at the top of an organization, which is true for most. If that is the case, it is clear that not all of the talent is being leveraged. So, how do organizations figure this out? The mindset says that organizations want to be inclusive because it makes business sense, but it's also important to be reflective and understand where the biases are that perhaps they aren't aware of. Oftentimes, it is an iterative process, which is why it can't be handled as a "one and done." It takes time to practice, get the pushback and learn. Once there is willingness, then there's the skill set.

The research Brandon Hall Group and Orange Grove Consulting conducted together showed that only 21% of senior leaders had the skills to be inclusive. We tell organizations to be inclusive, but they don't know how to be. How can we expect leaders to be inclusive if they don't have the skill sets necessary to do so?

*(continued)*

The book discusses skill sets as something that needs to be overtly managed across the organizational hierarchy, it can't just be everyone thinking about bias. It must be about the impact of bias, how it is thought about and how it shows up. There is a taxonomy where we talk about diversity, then inclusion, then voice and engagement, and then synergy. These four skillset levels enable leaders to be inclusive. An example of one of the skills is how to facilitate decision making to ensure that decisions aren't made on a pre-drawn conclusion without bringing in all the different voices. It's something that sounds so simple, and yet, it's not trained.

The third area is the environment or the processes. What often happens with diversity is that it becomes PC. People are afraid to say or do anything, which creates a psychologically unsafe environment. The very first thing an organization must do is determine how to create an environment where people can try new things and receive feedback, without it being the death of their career; it's experimentation. Then the organization must start peeling back the layers across their processes. The book discusses 12 different layers/processes. One example is an organization looking at hiring. In terms of hiring, the organization must think of where they are and where they want to be, from an inclusion perspective. For hiring particularly, one must look at where they are sourcing, how they are interviewing and onboarding, and how they are

**The very first thing an organization must do is determine how to create an environment where people can try new things and receive feedback, without it being the death of their career; it's experimentation.**

integrating. It's important to look across the process to determine what areas are already effective and what areas need further work. Promotions, performance evaluation, culture, and even how customers are handled, are all different areas that need to be examined for embedded bias and then one can determine what changes can be made so the process becomes more inclusive. Remember, it should always be in line with the overall strategy because inclusivity enables organizations to leverage all talent, which is the basis of innovation and competition.

## RACHEL

Q During a recent webinar, we received many questions from the audience about how to get started and what assessments are available to identify diversity gaps. Can you elaborate on the assessment you have?

## JODI

A In terms of assessment, we delve into 12 categories and evaluate each one of them. We follow a tripartite approach which starts with a survey assessment, typically from the C-Level. From this level, we typically have between a 60-70% response rate, so the data is quite rigorous.

*(continued)*

We also look at HR data, which tells us things like the velocity of promotion by race and gender. We also look at the hiring velocity, which includes who is being hired and how long they are staying. There are many ways to analyze the data and some companies have better data than others. The third area is qualitative interviews, which are used to get into the nuance.

All three pieces provide a holistic view of the organization. From there, we work with the organization to determine how to make the changes. It's not necessarily about changing everything but determining what the big pain points are. We start there with a piloted approach, make changes within the pilot and measure. The key component of our focus is the idea of constant measurement.

Everyone has key performance indicators, so we ask organizations to incorporate those in, so they have an ongoing measurement. This way, they don't have to re-assess every year because it is essentially built into their engagement surveys, HR systems and/or performance evaluation systems. It's an ongoing part of the way the company operates, and once it becomes engrained in operation, it doesn't have to be thought about anymore. Typically, when people make big changes, there's a disequilibrium that is painful, and people don't like it. We aim to make it a new habit because once something becomes a habit, it doesn't feel like a big change. One interesting thing about COVID is that it has provided the disequilibrium, and now people can reconvene and re-establish new norms with everything we've discussed, built-in. It's much easier this way because organizations don't have to create the chaos curve, it has been given as a gift from COVID to use as an advantage. We're trying to help people reframe their thinking that it is an opportunity.

**RACHEL**

Jodi, any final thoughts?

**JODI**

One final thought is that I've found that a lot of people get stuck on where to start. My recommendation is to just start. Don't worry about if it is right or wrong, there is no perfection. There is an opportunity in starting and then working from there. Learn as you go and make it something that's just inculcated throughout the organization.



**To Listen To The Interview  
On Brandon Hall Group's  
HCMxRadio**

**CLICK HERE**