

COFFEE ON THE GO WITH



**DANNY
KALMAN**

*The co-author of **Make Your People Before You Make Your Products** believes people management is more complicated than rocket science.*

No matter its business, to have a business an organization must make its people a priority. That's one of the main points of the book *Make Your People Before You Make Your Products: Using Talent Management to Achieve Competitive Advantage in Global Organizations* by Paul Turner and Danny Kalman. Kalman, formerly director of global talent at Panasonic, spoke with GO about why organizations need to be both exclusive and inclusive when it comes to talent, the evolution of Talent 4.0, and what it takes to recognize talent everywhere.

GO: How did you and Paul Turner come to title the book *Make Your People Before You Make Your Products*?

Kalman: Paul and I were sitting at a pub somewhere in West London. We'd gotten the publishing contract and I was telling this story about the founder of Panasonic, Konosuke Matsushita. In Japan, he's known as a leadership guru. He was visiting one of the company's many factories and asked the general manager, "What do you make in your factory?" Surprised, the general manager answered, "We make radios, Mr. Matsushita." The founder shook his head and said, "No, no, no. What do you make in your factory?" The general manager thought that maybe he hadn't heard him over the noise in the room. He responded again, "We make radios, Mr. Matsushita." The founder asked him a third time and was starting to get a little angry. "No, no, no! What do you make in your factory?" Of course, the general manager couldn't say radios again so he replied, "I'm not sure what we make in our factory." And the founder said, "You make people because without people, you have no product." So I told Paul that story and he immediately had a lightbulb moment. He said, "Well, Danny, that's the title of our book."

GO: A great line in the book is, "People management is more complicated than rocket science." Can you explain that?

Kalman: We all have unique characters, with individual talents and needs—especially in terms of what we're looking for in a job and the kind of support we require. So, when we're managing people, it's the furthest thing from a one-size-fits-all proposition. This presents a terribly complex challenge that many organizations face when considering how to bring out the best in their people. That's why managing people is so difficult.

GO: In the book you talk about organizations having to be both inclusive and exclusive in their approaches to talent. What do you mean by that?

Kalman: A lot of organizations have taken quite an exclusive approach to talent. Typically, they create a high-potential pool, consisting of maybe two to five percent of their workforce. That pool receives all of their focus and development investment. That's where the exclusivity comes into it. The danger, and what many organizations have found, is that what they've done is to somehow disenfranchise and demotivate the other 95 to 98 percent of their workforce. They're almost sending a message as if to say, "The people in this pool are the ones that are key to our organization." Of course, they're not overtly saying to others that they aren't important, but that's the inference.

In the book, we advocate for a more inclusive approach to talent—making everyone feeling valued, making people feel appreciated for their contributions, and recognizing that not everybody wants to be fast-tracked or become a future VP. It's recognizing that unique talents exist everywhere within an organization, at different levels and expressed in different ways.

GO: You framed this duality of exclusivity and inclusivity as "Talent 4.0." Can you describe its evolution from Talent 1.0?

Kalman: We wanted to show some kind of progression of the talent story over the years. Our starting point, Talent 1.0, was always looking at how future presidents and CEOs could be identified. The whole focus of succession planning was just on the very top. Then, the discussion broadened to looking at succession planning not just for the very top but for other key roles. That led into what we call Talent 2.0. Next, there was a greater recognition that we really ought to look at a broader range of roles or key levels within the company, so there was more of a focus on graduate intake and developing high potentials throughout the organization. This was paired with the realization that we better have tracks in addition to our leadership track. That's what we call Talent 3.0. This has now shifted to what we call Talent 4.0. It's an inclusive strategy, looking at all the different generations, cultures, and roles across the organization. At the same time, we're not saying that some kind of talent pool for those VP and managing director roles isn't still necessary. This is why we advocate for a talent approach that is both inclusive and exclusive, instead of the typical exclusive-only strategy.

GO: One other phrase from the book that resonates is "Good management is good talent management." Can you elaborate on that?

Kalman: Something I've often said at conferences is that people don't leave organizations, they leave their managers. No one has a greater impact on an employee than his or her direct-line boss. If we look back on when we've had long tenures with employers, the reason we stayed was because we had bosses who encouraged us, motivated us, gave us opportunities, and took a genuine, authentic interest in us. Leaders are the stewards of the talent that exists in the organization. They have to recognize that they have this incredibly important responsibility in the talent space.

GO: What do leaders need to do to become better talent stewards?

Kalman: In the book, we talk about the age of transparency. One of the Japanese words that we use quite a lot is "sunao," meaning uncluttered. I talk a lot about the sunao mind and being open-minded. One of the points we wanted to get across in the book and something I feel strongly about is that when you're looking at talent, you need a new lens—an unbiased way of seeing. You need to look at people as people, irrespective of age or gender or ethnicity or whatever. We tend to pigeonhole people into various boxes based on our own prejudices or our own experiences. When, instead, you look at the talent around you with a sunao mind, you recognize that talent is everywhere. You won't get distracted by the table-bangers who draw attention to themselves and you'll glimpse the wonderful, unassuming quiet talents, who get on with their jobs, head down, not shouting from the rooftops about how good they are. By keeping an open mind you'll appreciate the richness of your entire workforce, which I think is vital when it comes to talent issues.

Danny Kalman's book, [Make Your People Before You Make Your Products: Using Talent Management to Achieve Competitive Advantage in Global Organizations](#), co-authored with Paul Turner, is available through bookstores and major online booksellers. His second book, [Inclusive Talent Management: How Business Can Thrive in an Age of Diversity](#), will be published in July.

