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# Global talent management: introducing a strategic framework and multiple-actors model

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**Global Talent Management:**  
**Introducing a strategic framework and multiple-actors model**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** Despite the widely acknowledged relevance of global talent management (GTM) to business strategy, its activity and scope are not well understood. This paper proposes a conceptual framework for GTM and specifies the main components: strategy, practices, experiences, and systems. Complementing the framework, a multiple-actors model is introduced identifying actors participant in the talent system. Specification of the GTM system frames future research of components and outcomes, informs management practice, and is of particular relevance to management of global mobility by multiple actors.

**Design / Methodology / Approach:** This paper introduces a strategic framework for GTM and corresponding multiple-actors model extending the GTM, strategic human resource management (SHRM) and global mobility (GM) literatures. A systems-view of GTM is presented, founded on social exchange amongst actors. System components and actor roles are specified.

**Findings:** GTM is articulated as a coherent set of activities within an integrated system. Actors centrally involved in co-creation of the talent system are identified.

**Research limitations / implications:** Presenting an internal view, the framework excludes external influences such as talent markets. Empirical study is required. An approach is outlined.

**Practical implications:** The framework and model provide management with a strategic approach to GTM and a tool for management enquiry in their challenge to operationalise GTM.

**Originality / Value:** The framework deepens our understanding of GTM, extends the GM literature debate of managing expatriate talent to a wider system perspective, and sheds light on the intended-actual gap noted in SHRM literature. The multiple-actors model re-positions the employee at the centre of talent management.

**Keywords:** global talent management, human resources, multiple actors, system

**Paper Type:** Conceptual

## Introduction

Global talent management (GTM) is highly visible today in management practice and rapidly emerging in academic literature, yet with continued absence of clarity of the activity itself, beyond its recognised significance to business strategy and association with the often opaque but high-profile SHRM process of talent potential identification. While talent management (TM) has for some time been a central activity in many organisations in the workforce management (Stahl et al., 2012), more recently, academic literature has developed new theoretical and empirical insight (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) such that TM theory development is notably advancing (Vaiman & Collings, 2013). This paper advances theory through introduction of a strategic framework for talent management which systematises the talent system, its components and core actors, proposing a structured approach to future research and reducing ambiguity in the management activity of GTM in practice.

Emerging GTM literature spans a range of management topics and involves the identification and management of a differentiated workforce segment as “talent” intended to leverage strategic human capital resources to benefit future firm performance. Individuals identified as ‘A players’ or ‘high potential’ talent are those employees identified as having potential to contribute strongly to future business performance (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006). Talented employees are candidates for future senior management and expatriate roles, expected to drive competitive performance and growth. As “Talent” represents a segment of the firm’s human capital within the workforce, GTM bridges strategy, mobility, international business, strategic HRM, and organisational behaviour literature. Deeper understanding of GTM is particularly relevant to researchers and global mobility managers as expatriate talent is a specific and elite talent pool.

Strategic management literature has considered the significance of human capital at both the macro and micro levels. Specifically, human capital in aggregate is identified as a resource which potentially differentiates the organisation future performance. Differentiated skills and expertise have been considered at the individual level in the literature’s attention to specific talent segments, such as CEO and top management succession. Insufficient internal leadership succession pipelines and external competition for talent continue to press management and HR to deliver improved talent outcomes. However an integrated framework which operationalises talent strategy has not yet been proposed. Adopting systems theory (Boulding, 1956) and systems thinking (Von Bertalanffy, 1972) approaches are necessary to consider the holistic talent system, interpret its results effectiveness and influence outcomes. A high performance work system (HPWS) is argued to be a competitive advantage (Becker & Huselid, 1998) however the opportunity to integrate effective GTM into the organisation’s HPWS’s is limited by the lack of GTM definition.

As a component of strategic HRM, TM is intended to drive workforce performance and contribute to leadership succession, yet the process itself and corresponding Human Resource (HR) roles are unclear and outcomes measurement is problematic (Collings, 2014). Without clarity of roles or activity, TM may not achieve expected outcomes, a further example of the intended-actual gap (Nishii & Wright 2008) described in the SHRM literature.

A clearer understanding of process, practice and impact as called for in SHRM literature black box problem (Purcell et al, 2003) is also required for TM.

GTM must also be examined for its influence on the employment relationship and the employee-held views regarding reciprocal obligations with their organisation, their psychological contract (PC) (Herriot, Manning, & Kidd, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). Given that social exchange (Blau 1964) and reciprocity underlie the employment relationship, that perceived contracts are often unclear (Herriot et al., 1997) or implied (Rousseau, 1995), talent management may influence employee perceptions of exchange. Literature has only recently begun to consider the employee in GTM, a recognised oversight. It is imperative to reposition the employee as a central GTM stakeholder to address this limitation.

The purpose of this paper is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of GTM extending the GTM and GM literatures, shed light on the SHRM intended-actual gap and contribute insight to management practice, currently challenged in this strategic activity. The paper is presented in four sections. First, theoretical foundations influencing GTM are explored. Second, the strategic GTM framework and multiple-actors model are introduced. Framework components and talent system actors are specified. Third, the actor-specific roles are presented with a discussion of value creation and outcomes. Finally, implications for further research and practice are explored and the paper is concluded. This paper provides a structured model for further academic research and a practical frame which is both specific and adaptable to firms of a range of sizes and talent contexts to support management in operationalising TM.

## **Theoretical foundations influencing GTM**

### *Global talent management as a strategic, business-embedded activity*

A literature-spanning topic, talent management at its core is broadly concerned with an identified pool of high performing individuals with potential to contribute to business performance. Through TM organisations anticipate and meet their requirements for human capital (Cappelli, 2008b). Following nearly 15 years of practitioner rhetoric and management debate on the subject since the phrase “war for Talent” was originally coined by McKinsey and Company in 1999 (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones, & Welsh, 2001), definition of the activity continues to be without agreement (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013a; Vaiman & Collings, 2013) such that several approaches to talent management exist and in practice, HR practitioners often reduce the definition of TM to their own mandate such as recruitment or leadership development (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). TM approaches may be differentiated whereby select individuals are exclusively identified as talent or inclusive, such that the company’s talent practices apply to the broader workforce (Stahl et al., 2012), an undifferentiated and humanist approach (Lewis & Heckman, 2006).

Global talent management is the set of HRM activities undertaken in the context of international business to manage talent for differentiated roles (Scullion & Collings, 2011). Literature calls for more integration of GTM and GM literatures given the inherent relevance of management of staffing flows to multinational enterprise performance (Collings, 2013). Strategic talent management is the extension of the differentiated approach to additionally involve systematic identification of roles along with the identification and development of high potential individuals, supported by a differentiated HR architecture to engage, develop and retain talent (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). This paper presents a framework for the application of strategic talent management in the global context and argues GTM to be a business-led activity, embedded within wider firm systems, necessarily involving multiple business actors.

### *Global talent management – as a Strategic Human Resources Management activity*

Management attention to the topic has been significant over the past decade, with talent strategy highly visible in practitioner journals and persistently seen as an urgent management imperative, yet despite acknowledgement of its priority, management continues to struggle with talent strategy execution (Pfeffer, 2001, 2006). HR is clearly positioned as a partner in the management of talent; however the activity itself and the roles of business and HR are persistently unclear, resulting in continued lack of confidence in the process and importantly, its business outcomes.

As the TM literature bridges several bodies of literature, its relevance to the SHRM literature remains clear. The management of talent is at its core, focused on the attraction, engagement, development, deployment and retention of employees and their respective skills and knowledge, consistent with mandate of Human Resources. SHRM recognises the challenge of the “black box” (Boxall & Purcell, 2000; Lewis & Heckman, 2006) whereby the mechanisms which link HRM activity from strategy to performance outcomes require further development. SHRM’s primary focus on process rather than on participants (Wright & McMahan, 2011) has limited development of insight as to how process is applied in practice to create value and performance through SHRM. As one component of SHRM, GTM requires further conceptual clarity and empirical measurement (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) to inform understanding of process, practice and outcomes (Collings, 2014). As central actors (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010) and representatives of the employment relationship, the study of HR’s practice of TM may inform the black box mechanism for TM outcomes.

The SHRM literature has examined some aspects of TM including definition (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006), segmentation (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005b; Huselid, Beatty, & Becker, 2005) and identification (Dries & Pepermans, 2012). However the literature is generally focused on HR processes rather than practice. In practice, variation occurs in HRM implementation whereby actual practices vary from intended practices (Nishii & Wright 2008) risking reduced effectiveness. This argument can be extended to the specific case of a firm’s identified talent pool. The front-line manager role in developing human resources for competitive advantage has been identified in the literature as an “inherent problem” (Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994, p. 321) and research argues

the importance of front-line managers as agents of HRM (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). TM literature tends to focus on management's role however the activity itself involves multiple actors (Thunnissen et al., 2013a) such as the CEO, leaders, supervisors and HR talent and mobility managers. Specification of the TM system actors and components contributes insight to the SHRM black box and deepens our understanding of TM.

*Global talent management – as an intensification of the exchange relationship*

As employees are the subject of and directly influenced by TM, employees are a central participant or actor in TM. As TM stakeholders (Collings, 2014), employees may hold goals related to their participation in talent programs (Farndale, Pai, Sparrow, & Scullion, 2014) (Collings, 2014). Within the social exchange based (SET) (Blau, 1964) employment relationship, employee attitudes and psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995) are influenced by the principle of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). As employees participate in the relationship as part of a two-party exchange with their employer (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), perceptions of future obligation (Rousseau, 1989) develop such that value or benefit received today may create a future obligation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Considering that talent management is generally understood to represent a differentiated investment in select employees, GTM may influence expectations of future exchange. SHRM and OB literatures have not yet examined this in the context of GTM with the workforce segment known as talent until recently. A study in 2013 examined employee views of being identified as talent or not (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, & Sumelius, 2013) and found that perceptions of being viewed as talent by their company is associated with employee attitudes of commitment to increasing performance demands and lower turnover intent.

There is a need to more closely consider the participation of the employee as a key stakeholder and participant of GTM whose response in the talent system may have behavioural and attitudinal outcomes. As literature has advocated for consideration of employee voice and response to SHRM (Guest, 1999), considering the employee as central TM stakeholder is likewise an important avenue to access employee voice and understand the impact of TM on employee attitudes. Although social exchange is the foundation of the employment relationship, the exchange in the talent relationship is not a simple economic exchange (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013b). This paper re-positions the employee at the centre of GTM and draws both academic and management attention to the employee experience including impact on perceptions of exchange.

*Global talent management – as an operationalisation of human capital resources*

Human capital (HC), the value of human knowledge and skills (Becker, 1964), is seen as a competitive resource. As one component of HC, an organisation's talent pool warrants deliberate and active management. The resource based view (RBV) of the firm challenged the existing products-based management perspective introducing a complementary view (Wernerfelt, 1984), that resources relate to strategy now and in future (Lawler 2008) and argued the development of new resources (Wernerfelt, 1984) for advantage, shifting the view of the workforce from a cost to be managed (Pfeffer, 1994) to a source of competitive

advantage. Development of core competence (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990) in a dynamic environment where competency requirements fluctuate, supports new capability development (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). As business evolves with increasingly complex and global dimensions, effective GTM is expected to be a significant mechanism to access HC advantage.

Strategy and international management (IM) literatures have examined human capital at the firm level recognising the presence of resources as a competitive opportunity (Lawler 2008) and lack of sufficient resources as a business risk. Increasing attention to HC has included individual level analysis such as CEO succession (Graffin, Boivie, & Carpenter, 2013), diversity of top management team impact on performance (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2013) and the reduction of HC assets through turnover (Shaw, Park, & Kim, 2013). Strategy researchers have considered individual performance (Mollick, 2012) arguing that “variation among individuals matter far more in organizational performance than is generally assumed” (Mollick, 2012, p. 1001), however despite increasing focus, literature has yet to define how a firm constructs its global talent strategy or defines its “pivotal talent” (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005a, 2005b).

To leverage HC, talent systems must be informed by business strategy. Literature calls for research in GTM to “be more closely embedded in the strategic pathways of the firm” (Sparrow, Farndale, & Scullion, 2013, p. 1). Consistent with these limitations, one study notes management involvement as a critical success criteria (Stahl et al., 2012) while practitioner journals regularly note the management struggle (Pfeffer, 2001, 2006). Research then must examine who is involved in managing HC and specify their individual and collective roles.

#### *Global talent management – adopting a systems theory perspective*

Challenges exist in implementation of consistent HRM practices (Morris et al., 2009) across global firms which arguably perpetuate the intended-actual gap (Nishi and Wright 2008) and subsequently reduce talent system effectiveness. Continuing management challenges are expected as the global talent market evolves, workforces mature (Cappelli & Keller, 2014) and the need to address scarce talent in emerging market economies (Doh, Smith, Stumpf, & Tymon, 2014) increases. Challenging the fight for talent as perhaps an unhelpful mind-set (Pfeffer, 2001), research has considered other approaches, for example, whether a just-in-time approach to managing talent as a supply chain may be a solution to the persistent issues in practice (Cappelli, 2009), one example a systems perspective on GTM. Although GTM literature is rapidly developing (Vaiman & Collings, 2013) and core principles for TM effectiveness have been proposed (Stahl et al., 2012), literature has yet to examine TM from a wider systems perspective (Collings, 2014) which may explain how GTM creates value. Talent management is a resource-intensive activity which has yet to reliably achieve intended outcomes and sustainable value.

Adopting a systems theory approach is helpful to understanding GTM as nested within the wider systems of HRM and the firm. General systems theory (Boulding, 1956) and

systems thinking (Von Bertalanffy, 1972) reinforce the importance of understanding the system as a whole in order to interpret its functioning. A systems view also moves from beyond a process orientation to consider system-related requirements such as flexibility, changes in demand and context. A deep understanding of GTM requires definition of the internal talent system, from which to extend to external systems considerations such as the external market for talent. Research must investigate how the inter-relation of actors and their activities influence system effectiveness and outcomes. A systems view of GTM will inform the day to day activity of GTM which continues to challenge management teams and encourage future research focus on outcomes, at both individual and organisational levels.

### *Global talent management – as a path to value creation*

Global talent management has captured and maintained the priority attention of management and HR practitioners over the past decade (McKinsey 2014) yet CEO's still report talent management as a top challenge to business today and talent shortages as a tangible risk to the growth agenda tomorrow (PwC 2014), evidence that the 'war for talent' as originally described by McKinsey and Company consulting (Axelrod et al., 2001) is neither easily won, nor readily sustained. Despite this now long-standing business imperative, CEO's continue to question what they should be doing to manage talent (Cappelli, 2008a). Seen as central to the translation of human capital for strategic advantage, literature has yet to explain how the promise of value through talent is created and sustained. Recent literature theorises four ways in which value is generated through TM; value creation, capture, leverage, and protection or preservation (Sparrow & Makram 2015). Building on this work, this paper argues that each actor in the GTM multiple-actor model contribute to one or more forms of value. Measurement is however dependent upon a deeper understanding of system components and core actors involved. For example, research has identified global internal staffing models as a key knowledge transfer mechanism in support of subsidiary performance (Mäkelä, Björkman, & Ehrnrooth, 2010). The following section presents the strategic GTM framework along with the multiple-actors model which specifies the intra-firm actors involved in management of a firm's talent. Through the delineation of core actors, their influence on value creation can be explored.

### **Introducing the Global Talent Management strategic framework and Multiple-Actors model**

This section introduces a strategic GTM framework to present a holistic view of the talent system. The framework is both as a lens to frame the focus of further research as well as a tool for management enquiry and practice and sheds light on a persisting implementation issue in management practice. Arguing that GTM is fundamentally a business-owned activity, embedded within day to day operations, governed by top management and facilitated by human resources, the conceptual framework for GTM depicts the integrated relationship between the core actors necessary for effective GTM and outlines the role of each. Arguing the employee's centrality to value creation by HC, the framework presents a multiple actors



model operating within-firm in an employee-centric system. The framework's systems-based view provides a path to examine GTM as an extension of firm level strategy (macro), as a daily business activity (micro) and to consider individual (micro) and collective (macro) outcomes.

### *The Global Talent Management strategic framework*

Effective management of talent requires the involvement of multiple actors in a coherent and business-embedded activity which facilitates at its core an HRM process but more significantly, moves beyond process to practices which engender participation of the actors and their contribution to individual and organisational outcomes. Through their participation, a talent climate is established which influences understanding expectations of talented employees within the system. Although literature recognises there are multiple actors involved in TM (Thunnissen et al., 2013a) as in other components of HRM, research has tended to favour strategy or process over participants. Differing from the Differentiated HR Architecture framework by Minbaeva and Collings (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013) which extended from earlier work of Becker and Huselid to conceptualise the HR process (Becker & Huselid, 2006), this paper proposes a framework (Figure 1 below) for global talent management, as a systems view. Through this structured talent system, the actors co-create GTM to operationalise firm use of HC resources and influence the employment relationship to generate value.

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 Insert **Figure 1**

**(Global Talent Management Strategic Framework)**  
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### *The Multiple-Actors model*

The multiple-actors model (Figure 2 below) identifies four actors in the talent system corresponding to the GTM framework (Figure 1). Specifically, company leadership governs GTM as a business imperative, is responsible for definition of talent strategy and business requirements for talent which then lead to identification. Supervisors manage the identification, engagement, deployment, development and promotion of talent day to day in the business. The employee, the talent themselves, engage in a social exchange-based relationship, of particular significance when exchange occurs in the context of a generally high-investment talent program. Finally, HR and talent managers, facilitate GTM processes, associated communications, outcomes measurement, reporting and provide guidance and associated training to the business to support supervisor effectiveness.

An organisational talent climate is established through the talent system. Value is created and managed through the activity of the actors. The simple illustration below introduces the inter-relatedness of the four key actors in managing talent for the business.

Notably, the intra-firm system is necessarily employee-centric while all actors interact with all others.

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 Insert **Figure 2**

**(The Multiple-Actors Model: Employees at the heart of the talent system)**  
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### **The actors and framework as an interactive system**

Taking a systems view, the interaction of the collective set of core actors creates the activity of GTM. In this section, for each of the four core actors, the actor's role is explained with reference to the framework component which the actor most significantly influences, referring to Figures 1 and 2. A brief discussion of TM outcomes follows at the end of the section. Table 1 provides a high level summary.

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 Insert **Table 1**

**(Talent System Actors: Primary Scope of Influence and Key Activities)**  
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*The role of top management in GTM: Talent strategy and climate.*

As GTM is an activity aimed to strategically engage and deploy a differentiated firm resource, the active championing and engagement by top management of talent programmes is expected to be high. Literature however indicates that management teams continue to experience challenges in strategic management of talent (Pfeffer, 2001, 2006) yet both management and academic perspectives agree that management involvement is a necessary criteria for effectiveness in how a firm manages its talent (Stahl et al., 2012).

Closer examination of management's activity in defining and directing GTM to guide the firm's use of human capital is warranted to understand the impact of this actor on talented employee attitudes. The abundance of talent rhetoric in the press coupled with lack of empirical study risks positioning the activity as a trend characterised by ambiguity (Dailey & Browning, 2014) or new label for SHRM (Lewis & Heckman, 2006), hence critical examination of management discourse is required (Dailey & Browning, 2014) to explain management's GTM role. Leaders play a role in how value is generated, leveraged and protected in the talent system. Leadership plays a key role in linking strategy and performance through promoting effective psychological contracts (McDermott, Conway,

Rousseau, & Flood, 2013) and in the case of a differentiated investment in a specific segment such as is the case of “talent”, may influence discretionary employee behaviours such as high performance or commitment. The voice of leadership is central to organisational climate, and arguably to the resulting “talent climate” perceptible by employees in an organisation which practices TM.

*The role of the manager or supervisor in GTM: Talent Practices.*

Strategic business research has noted that “variation among middle managers has a particularly large impact on firm performance” (Mollick, 2012, p. 1001) and that front-line manager duties increasingly include former responsibilities of HR including TM (Cappelli, 2013) which further argues the potential contribution of supervisor in the talent system. Given the primary focus on HR process rather than practice and the tendency for organisations to mimic one another (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) there is a risk of isomorphism by companies of what has been popularised as ‘best practice’ TM in policy or practitioner terms, in the absence of sufficient academic insight. Simple mimicking is unlikely to deliver intended strategy as “what passes as best practice in HRM likely is not” (Iles, Chuai, & Preece, 2010) and even established global firms are challenged with replicating process across geographies (Morris et al., 2009).

The SHRM and TM literatures are limited by current knowledge of business implementation of SRHM policies regarding the talent pool and the tendency to ignore the role of multiple actors by focusing on top management’s role, overlooking the role of front-line manager in enacting these policies (Lopez-Cotarelo 2013) and the employee’s participative role (Björkman et al., 2013). Researchers call for further research in understanding the variation which occurs and the resulting intended-actual gap (Nishii & Wright 2008) and the front-line manager delivery of policy in practice (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007) to inform the gap. Given the argued value of the talent pool as a strategic resource and specific SHRM practices as inimitable advantage such as HPWP’s (Becker & Huselid, 1998), the supervisor role is expected to have a meaningful degree of influence on TM outcomes and is a pivotal role through which exchange of resources and discretionary performance recognition occur. As quality of leader behaviour and satisfaction with HR practices each contribute to job commitment (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007), the manager is a core TM actor.

*The role of HR in GTM: Talent Systems.*

Despite significant HR functional evolution from historical roots in personnel management, through efficiencies such as outsourcing, now extended well beyond payroll management and vacancy-driven recruitment, issues of measurement and outcomes continue to challenge perceptions of HR’s contribution of value within the firm. Business and HR views of the HR function effectiveness continue to differ with business calling for greater alignment to strategy and demonstration of credibility (CIPD 2013). Bridging the relationship between the business and its workforce, however, the HR function is arguably a crucial partner to the delivery of strategy through people. There is a global mobility role for

corporate HR within the wider realm of talent management (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010), but a more specific embedded role as actor in GTM is not clearly defined. HR actors in GTM such as Talent and Mobility managers, contribute to value leverage through the organisation's suite of HRM practices including attraction, development, deployment (including global mobility), retention and through their roles in advising management, enabling people-manager quality and effectiveness, and expert policy guidance.

HR's role in management of the firm's talent is significant and relevant and enables the interface between actors. HR's role in GTM is one of facilitation, engagement, measurement and reporting and thereby arguably relevant and directly impacting other actors. As guardian of the employee relationship for the organisation, HR is well-positioned to facilitate TM amongst the other core actors. First, to support top management's active focus on talent and capability requirements informed by strategy. Second, to support, coach and enable the day to day management of talent by supervisors in the line of business who may arguably understand the strategic imperative but require training, guidance, support and feedback in their enactment of the strategic imperative within their day to day accountability. Third, to facilitate employee communications and engagement in talent initiatives. Finally, in facilitating TM processes, HR's role also necessarily includes measurement of outcomes and reporting.

*The employee as central stakeholder in GTM: Talent Experiences.*

Finally, and arguably most significantly, the employee participation is at the heart of GTM, and indeed the employee response to talent identification, must also be considered. Employees are one of many stakeholders in the organisational activity of managing its human capital (Collings, 2014), arguably a stakeholder whom may experience direct, and relatively near-term consequence in the exchange-based relationship. Employee-held goals in TM may differ from organisational goals in managing its talent (Farndale et al., 2014) and consideration of both is warranted. As the central actor within the talent system, the mechanism by which an employee contributes value may seem obvious and to be primarily through in-role performance. However, employee contribution of discretionary behaviours such as organisational commitment, innovation and intention to turnover, vary widely and warrant closer examination in the talent system context.

This paper argues the employee response to GTM is critically integral to effective GTM but as yet is largely overlooked. This paper positions the employee centrally amongst multiple-actors. The talented employee directly influences short-term value through in-role performance and long-term value through their ongoing development and deployment in the talent system. The employee then is the fourth, but central, actor in the overall talent system which operates day to day in the business, translating the activity of GTM beyond a firm-level strategic imperative into an employee-level day to day operational activity. The employee is the actor upon which the full system is focused and yet ironically, is often overlooked. As researchers have argued, there is a need to return the employee to the focus of SHRM and human capital literature (Wright & McMahan, 2011). This framework and model argue the employee's centrality as both an actor and a stakeholder of GTM.

### *Outcomes of business-embedded GTM*

Defined as a business-embedded activity, with core actor participants, it is clear that talent management is more than a strategy, more than simply a deployed HR process and is a defined activity involving each of top management, supervisors, HR managers and employees themselves. As with any system, to understand system impact and effectiveness relative to stated goals, measurement of outcomes is necessary, however, as with other activities which are reported within the scope of SHRM, measurement challenges persist and HRM is often criticised for insufficient measurement. Some preliminary indicators of talent system effectiveness are employee engagement, retention, turnover, business capability supply relative to strategic demand, coverage of key succession roles and access to external talent markets. Measures which are outcome-oriented rather than input-oriented, can inform how and what value is created, captured, leveraged and preserved. Outcomes can be measured at both individual and organisational levels to measure overall GTM effectiveness or locate ineffective activity or problematic outcomes.

Recent literature calls for measurement of TM outcomes (Collings, 2014) to further develop the literature and suggests types of value (Sparrow & Makram 2015) which could be measured as evidence of system effectiveness. Recent TM outcomes studies have shown evidence of beneficial job attitude outcomes from TM such that talent identification is a motivator influencing commitment to competency development and alignment with company goals (Björkman et al., 2013). This integrated talent system highlights the interdependencies and interrelationships amongst core actors necessary for effective translation of a firm-level talent imperative into operational activity and underscores the importance of outcomes measurement.

## **Discussion**

### *Limitations*

This conceptual paper proposes a framework for the enactment of a specific segment of workforce management aligned to business strategy, the implementation of talent strategy, and therefore by definition omits reference to other components of business strategy which may be related. At its starting point, the framework assumes that the organisation-specific use of the GTM framework is informed from an organisation-specific business strategy and aligns to business specific strategic requirements. The framework also proposes that talent outcomes result from the enactment of an integrated system for talent management but does not in this paper propose detailed outcome measures.

Empirical examination of the framework would support further development. Empirical testing requires analysis of each talent system component, the activity and contribution of each actor, measurement of system outcomes, test alignment of components and overall performance. Identification and measurement of activities by actor is required to evolve the framework and locate where, how and by whom value is created.

### *Implications for research*

The conceptual framework addresses limitations in literature to advance our understanding of how the activity occurs, frames GTM as a system and defines its component parts. The model introduces a suitably employee-centric model, defining the role and significance of each actor within the system. The model supports future research to consider the GTM systematically and at an operational level, specifying components and activities for further empirical analysis. Each framework component represents a sub-topic for future research focus and outlines an integrated landscape for further research to examine how each component generates value in the overall talent system and influence of each actor on value generation and system outcomes.

### *Implications for practice*

The framework supports management implementation of talent management in the organisation. The framework can be used by management together with HR as a lens to plan, define, construct and manage a talent system specific to their business requirements and a diagnostic tool to influence the talent system effectiveness as necessary. The model supports management to define, distribute and allocate authority for talent management enhancing leader ownership of GTM. Talent system definition is expected to support leader communications quality and associated positive employee job attitudes including perceived organisational support and trust in organisation and to facilitate engagement in the social exchange-based employment relationship. Finally, the model contributes to the HR function's positioning and reputation as integrally relevant to value creation through human capital.

## **Conclusion**

Global talent management remains a highly visible activity of strategic relevance to management for expected contribution to company performance and growth. Literature and practice call for further theoretical and conceptual development and for implementation and management guidance respectively. This paper has introduced a strategic framework for global talent management and multiple-actors model, which together present an end-to-end view of GTM's intra-organisational position and a structured view on the talent system and its incumbent actors. The paper has opened a discussion of how value generation through GTM may be facilitated by the structure of the system and influenced by its actors.

Implementing talent management effectively necessarily requires consideration of the full breadth and range of activities within the talent system, collaboration amongst inter-dependent actors and awareness complementary roles and scope of influence as stakeholders. The framework provides a structured architecture for future research to apply a focused and systematic approach and provides management with a lens through which to consider and conduct talent management day to day as a business-embedded activity.

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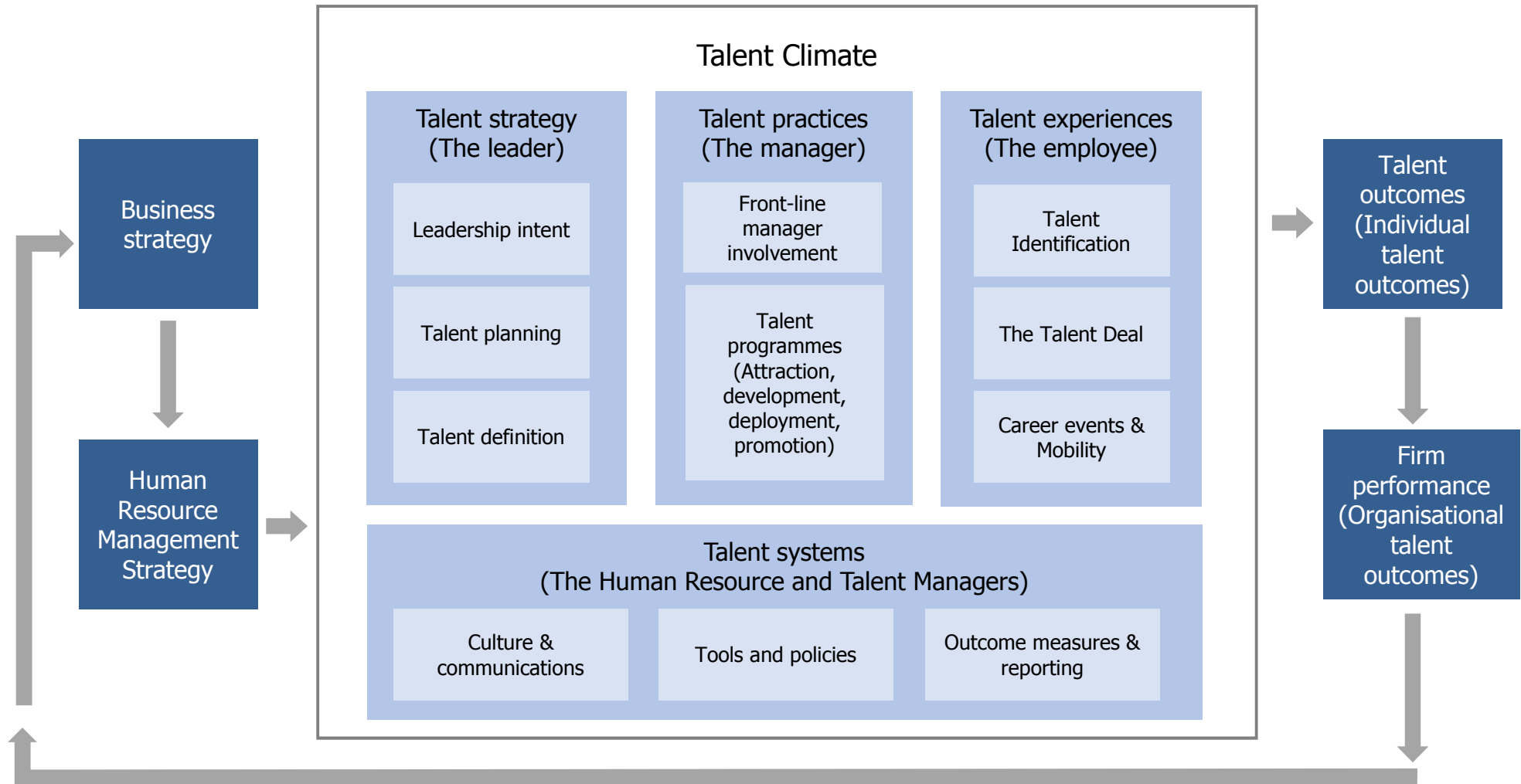
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**Figure 1**  
**Global Talent Management Strategic Framework**



**Figure 2**

**The Multiple-Actors Model: Employees at the heart of the talent system**



**Table 1****Actors of the Talent System: Primary Scope of Influence and Key Activities**

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Primary influence</b>	<b>Key activity in the Strategic Talent Management Framework</b>
<b>Leadership &amp; Top Management</b>	<b>Talent strategy</b>	Define and communicate the talent strategy, represent the firm's offer - "Talent Deal", communicate to establish a Talent Climate and champion the value of talent to the business.
<b>Supervisors &amp; Managers</b>	<b>Talent practices</b>	Manage talented employees day to day and deliver the "Talent Deal" including coaching, development feedback, facilitation of access to development roles and resources. Manage and support expatriate talent.
<b>Talent Pool of Employees (including expatriate &amp; other talent)</b>	<b>Talent experiences</b>	Perceive talent identification, develop expectations regarding exchange in the "Talent Deal", respond with attitudes and behaviour, make career investments and decisions, and contribute sustained high performance to business priorities.
<b>Human Resources &amp; Talent Managers</b>	<b>Talent systems</b>	Facilitate the interactivity of key stakeholders in talent management including: business top management, supervisors and the employee. Monitor talent policies and practices, provide coaching and guidance to the business on talent management, measure and report talent outcomes.