

Talent Management and the Law of Jante: An improbable coexistence?

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Abstract

Few organizations today do not realize that employees are their most important resource and they are aware of the importance of recruiting, selecting, developing, retaining, and motivating those employees who possess superior capabilities that will help the company compete successfully. Talent Management (TM), which emphasizes the need to invest heavily in employees with high performance potential, is thus rapidly gaining popularity in Denmark and the world at large. Implementing such an initiative is not, however, without risks and may even directly contradict the culture in which the company operates. The purpose of this paper is to explore TM primarily from a philosophical perspective to invite discussion of the applicability and relevance of TM within a Danish context. Following a brief literature review on TM and a presentation of the Danish context, we address specific issues related to the Danish culture that question whether TM can be successfully implemented in a culture that is—presumably—heavily influenced by the Law of Jante.

Introduction

The challenge of ensuring that: *the right person is in the right job at the right time* (Jackson & Schuler, 1990, p. 235) has not become any easier for Human Resource (HR) professionals in the face of the volatile and competitive markets in which so many organizations now find themselves. According to Lewis and Heckman (2006), Talent Management (TM) is a popular and growing field. A study by INSEAD (Stahl, et al., 2007) involving 312 senior executives and 263 HR professional confirms this trend, suggesting that formal TM programs are being used to ensure access to the human competencies critical to achieving the organizations' strategic objectives and

that one of the biggest challenges facing companies around the world is building and sustaining a strong talent pipeline.

Heightened interest and awareness of the need to find ways to attain and retain superior performers does not necessarily mean that there are no risks or disadvantages to implementing a program like TM. The aim of this paper is to invite discussion of the potential challenges inherent to TM, especially in a context that condones fair and equal treatment of all employees. The paper is structured as follows. First, a common understanding of talent and TM is outlined allowing for the following discussion of the concepts. In continuation, the relevance of the two concepts is presented, and the necessary considerations related to the implementation of TM are identified. Finally, the applicability of TM in the Danish context is discussed and some implications for implementation of TM are considered.

Talent and Talent Management

Various conceptualizations of TM exist, particularly in terms of how talent is defined. In a review of the literature on TM, Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 139) report: *a disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of talent management*. Prior to a discussion of the relationship between talent and TM and the Danish culture a short clarification of the two concepts is necessary. Therefore, the following sections present the two concepts, starting with a definition of talent and continuing on to a definition of TM.

Talent

While some contend that all employees possess talent and thereby contribute in their own way to the organization's effectiveness, the pervasive view today is that an organization's talent can be found in a relatively small elite group of employees who are consistently top performers on key performance indicators (Stahl et al., 2007; Cohn et al 2005). Thus, the perception of talent is moving towards an individualistic understanding of the concept. Additionally, the definitions of talent seem to be based on a perception of talent as a core competence or a source of competitive advantage to the firm (Stahl et al., 2007; Mutsuddi & Mutsuddi, 2008). According to Hamel and Prahalad (1990), who are inspired by the resourced based view (RBV) of the firm, an

organization's source of competitive advantage can be found in its core competences that provide potential access to a wide variety of markets, deliver a significant contribution to the customer and are difficult for competitors to imitate. The Danish Business Research Academy (DEA), which is currently conducting a project aimed at identifying best practices of TM in Danish firms, draws on the RBV in their own definition of talent. According to DEA (2009), the term talent describes a person who holds extraordinary competences of strategic importance because they provide competitive advantage for the organization and leave the organization in a critical situation if the competences are missing. Additionally, the competences are characterized by their unique nature, which make them difficult to imitate or copy by other organizations, and finally the competences cannot be developed within a short time period (DEA, 2009). This definition is thus consistent with Barney's (1991) identification of a source of sustainable competitive advantage as a valuable, rare, imitable, and non- substitutable resource. While DEA's definition of talent is detailed and focuses on the competences of the individual employee, it is still broad enough to encompass several forms of talent allowing for a movement away from the traditional view on talents as potential leaders. As Born and Heers (2009) note, talents can be found throughout the whole organization, leading to an awareness of talent related to leadership, project management, administration, expert knowledge, innovation, etc. In summary, there is a tendency to define talent as an individualistic construct, which provides a source of competitive advantage to firms managing the talents effectively. However, the management of valuable talent is considered one of the greatest challenges faced by top executives around the world (Bouvard et al., 2001).

Talent Management

According to Wright et al. (1994) TM is one of many possible HR practices, which they define as: *the organizational activities directed at managing the human capital and ensuring that the capital is employed toward the fulfilment of organizational goals* (p. 304). Identifying TM as a HR practice assumes that there is a strategic motive for its implementation and use in order to transform the talents into sustainable competitive advantages. This understanding of TM is in line with Ashton and Morton

(2005, p.28) who suggest that: *good TM is of strategic importance*. While these statements emphasize the strategic implications of TM, they do little to define the concept and practice. Lewis and Heckman (2006) describe this as the essence of the contemporary debate on TM, as definitions are often confused with outcomes, process and decision alternatives as well as objectives and activities. For instance, Ashton and Morton (2005) focus on TM activities such as identification, reward, and development of talent and who these activities target. This understanding of TM is similar to that of Stahl et al.'s (2007), who focus on the attraction, selection, development and retention of talent. To these activities, Born and Heers (2009) add “nurturance” of the talents. Larsen (2009) defines TM as the aimed or launched activities intended to develop the best framework conditions possible for identification, selection, retention and development of the persons who the organization characterizes as talent. Thus, while Larsen also highlights the activities associated with TM, he also emphasizes the objective of TM to the organization. Perhaps the most comprehensive definition found in the literature today is offered by Collings and Mellehi, 2009, p.304): *We define strategic talent management as activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization*. Rather than focus on specific activities, this definition attempts to illustrate the process by which TM helps the organization realize its strategic objectives in the form of concrete outcomes.

The need for Talent

Many factors indicate an increasing demand for talent and TM. In general, the changing circumstances and volatility in the environment that the organizations engage in direct focus on the organizational ability to adopt accordingly – to have talented people ready and able to leverage the organizational changes. In a comprehensive study on TM, INSEAD directs focus on the global talent demand-

supply gap, highlighting several factors that may increase the demand for talent. More precisely these drivers are:

- Business growth
- Business transformation
- Investment in new core businesses
- Globalization
- New forms of partnership
- Pressure to hire new skills at all levels

Source: Stahl et al., 2007, p. 6

Business growth increases the demand for employees capable of managing the expanding businesses. Even the global financial crisis and economic recession has not reduced the need for talent. According to Beechler and Woodward (2009, p. 280): *Finding the right talent, at the right time, in the right place, remains an ongoing challenge for organizations, particularly during the current global economic recession.* Hence, talent remains a critical agenda item. Additionally, the transformation from the industrial society to the knowledge-based society increases the pressure on organizations to transform accordingly, resulting in a need for talented employees who can act as change agents, leverage a transformation process and bring value to the company (Mutsuddi & Mutsuddi, 2008). Furthermore, the increasing investment in new core businesses (e.g. the internet) increases the demand for expert skills and capabilities applicable within the new business areas. Moreover, the increased globalization, which implies a globalized demand, commands a global supply and presence, which requires truly global employees willing to move instantly and globally. Accordingly, the competition for talent becomes global, thus intensifying the rivalry between the firms demanding the talents (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Moreover, new forms of partnerships (e.g. private and governmental health care) result in demands for employees capable of managing new forms of alliances and corporations. Finally, the speed at which all these changes occur requires organizations to be capable of forecasting and hiring the right amount of talent at all levels (Cappelli, 2009).

Besides the drivers for talent outlined above, the demographic trends in the global workforce will result in a shortage of employees as the elder generations leave the labour market and the younger generations enter the labour market (Chambers et al., 1998). The forecasted decline in the supply of talent (Hurley, 2008) reduces the amount of talent available and increases the competition, which McKinsey refers to as the war for talent (Michaels, 1999). Additionally, the new generations entering the organizations in the coming years have been characterized by having different preferences and motivators as well as a reduced loyalty towards their employer. Thus, the few talents in the new generations expect their performance to be appreciated and their potential to be developed and they will not hesitate to leave the organization in favour of another employer who will value them more (Tulgan, 2009).

As outlined above, several factors increasing the demand for talent can be identified. The increasing demand for talent further increase the need for effectively identifying, selecting, retaining and developing the talented employees, and in turn increases the need for successful TM. However, this need is not easily met.

Implementation

According to Collings and Mellehi (2009), the first step in the implementation of TM is for the company to identify pivotal positions within the organization that must be staffed by the talent to be identified. Thereafter, a talent pool must be created of potential candidates for these positions. The approach used to create this talent pool is likely to be determined to a large degree by the needs of the organization and the way the constructs of talent and TM are defined by leaders of the organization. For instance, if the company's goal is to motivate and retain high achievers, they will be more likely to constrain their talent pool to the internal labour market. However, if the goal is to ensure sufficient talent to meet future demands, the talent pool may be extended to the external labour market as well (Sparrow, 2007). Once the talents are identified, a developmental plan is generally created to include specific plans for how the individual can obtain the competences needed to (eventually) assume the pivotal position.

A decision to engage in TM does not solely concern an implementation of TM activities. Based on an understanding of the organization as an open system and according to Socio-Technical Systems (STS) theory a successful implementation of a strategic change encompass a reconsideration of all the different elements of the organizational system (Trist & Bamforth, 1951; Mumford et al., 2006). Stahl et al. (2007) rely on the principles of STS theory by emphasizing that the decision to implement TM implies a need for alignment with several factors in the organization's internal and external environment: *This need for alignment - internally across practices, as well as with the strategy, culture, and external environment of the firm - has profound implications for talent management* (p. 30). Thus, considering the context in which the TM activities are to be implemented is a vital and necessary task as a misfit or a disharmony between the context and the TM activities can complicate the implementation. The following sections focus on the need for alignment with the corporate strategy, other HR practices, and organizational as well as national culture.

Strategy

Following the RBV of the firm, HR should be designed to ensure integration with an organization's corporate strategy (Wright et al., 1994). This alignment between HR and the overall strategy is the essence of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and is the basis for Jackson and Schuler's (1990) system-level, strategic perspective to TM design and implementation. Reflecting on the need for alignment between strategy and TM, Lewis and Heckman (2006, p. 145) concludes that: *If TM is to be as strategic as its proponents hope it must shape organizational strategy, not simply respond quickly to the implications of strategy*, thus emphasizing the need for TM to contribute to the corporate strategy.

HR practices

Considering an organization's bundle of HR practices as a system, the STS theory implies that an implementation of TM into the system encompass a change in the HR system which requires a reconsideration of all the other elements of the system, including recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation and reward. More specifically, the company must determine how they will integrate TM

into their general staffing and training and development structures and then determine whether a separate compensation and reward system should be designed specifically for identified talents. The issue of compensation may be further complicated if the identified talent will be working in teams or project groups who are not included in the TM program. This can be a comprehensive task and a complete alignment within all the elements of the HR system can be a challenge. However, the adjustment is necessary, if HR professionals want to minimize the risk of a low return on their TM investment (Stahl et al., 2007). If the other elements of the HR system are not set up to complement the change in the system caused by the TM initiatives they might end up rejecting the TM activities causing the implementation to fail. Beechler and Woodward (2009) support this view and explain how a fit between organizational strategy, and additionally organizational culture, is critical in winning the global war for talent and sustaining organizational competitiveness.

Organizational culture

Corresponding to the thoughts behind the STS theory, Stahl (2009) explains how: *effective practices for attracting, developing and retaining talent ... will only be successful if they are in line with the company's business strategy, all elements of its HR system and embedded in the firm's value system* (p. 3). Mentioning the firms' value system Stahl refers to its organizational culture. Stahl illustrates the importance of an alignment between the organizational culture and the TM practices as he explains how several firms have experienced negative side effects when implementing TM – a consequence of an absence of alignment with the firms' organizational culture. These observations are in line with Mutsuddi and Mutsuddi (2008), who explain how a “talent nurturing” environment and organizational culture can create a competitive advantage to organizations practicing TM. Hence, HR professionals need to work together with top management to create an organizational culture that effectively leverages talent, if they want to realize the talent potential and utilize the source of sustainable competitive advantage comprised by the talents.

National culture

Following Stahl's (2009) emphasis on the need for an alignment between TM and organizational culture, he continues: *The culture of a particular society also plays an important role in determining the cultural fit of talent management practices* (p. 1). In relation to the cultural fit, Born and Heers (2009) confirms that national culture cannot be ignored. Their statement is based on an empirical observation from which the importance of national culture in relation to TM is inferred by applying Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

According to Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003), many of the activities or instruments used in HR and in TM are based on Anglo-Saxon and US thinking and research. However, these theoretical instruments do not apply successfully in all cultures. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) confirm the concern related to the origin of TM theories and practices: *Theories, models, and practices are basically culture-specific; they may apply across borders, but this should always be proven* (p. 276) and they refer to the notion of universal management ideas as a naive assumption. As TM is essentially a US derived construct coined by American researchers, it is natural to question its transferability to the Danish context and the probability for a successful implementation in Danish organizations. According to Hofstede the nationality of the author on organizational theory is revealed in his or her assumptions about organizations and what they are trying to achieve (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). These assumptions represent a national paradigm and in the Nordic countries Hofstede observed the national paradigm to be "equality"; while the national paradigm assigned to the US is "the market" (ibid, p. 278). Hence, the American paradigm relating to the market perceived as an *external* and *liberal* factor constitutes a potential conflict with the Danish paradigm of equality perceived as a *regulated* construct governing the relations between and *within* a group of people. For Danish companies implementing TM, therefore, an expected class of societal and organizational values and traditions is likely to occur.

In addition, the norms and values as well as the unquestioned assumptions constituting the culture (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003) in Denmark might comprise an obstacle to a positive return on the investment made by many Danish organisations in order to identify, select, retain and develop the talented employees.

Still, there is evidence that many Danish companies have elected to adopt TM (DEA, 2009), perhaps due to their concerns with “keeping up” with international competitors that are not constrained by the same cultural dimensions.

In the following section of the paper, attention is directed more specifically to attributes of the Danish national culture with the aim of identifying potential fits and misfits between the Danish context and the concept of TM.

Fit and misfit between TM and Denmark

According to a comprehensive study carried out by Hofstede in the 1980s and later confirmed by various researchers, the Danish culture is characterized by a) low power distance, b) high individualism, c) low uncertainty avoidance, and d) high femininity (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In the following sections each of these cultural dimensions are outlined and evaluated on their comparability to the concept of TM.

Power distance

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), Denmark is ranked 72 out of 74 countries on power distance, entitling the country one of the lowest power distances. Power distance is defined as *the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally* (ibid, p. 46). Thus, low power distance cultures believe that *all should have equal rights* (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 67) and *inequality among people should be minimized* (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 57). On the other hand, members of large power distance cultures believe that *inequalities among people are expected and desired* (ibid). A reasonable conclusion from this is that Danish employees might perceive TM as an undesirable promotion of a selected few, who are given exclusive rights and benefits. Because TM will increase inequality among employees in the organization, this may result in a misfit that may constitute a barrier in the implementation of TM in Danish organizations.

Individualism versus Collectivism

However, the Danish culture also encompasses a positive force contributing to a successful implementation of TM in Danish organizations. Denmark is ranked 10 out of 74 on Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) individualism index and scores high on the individualistic dimension. According to the authors, *Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onward are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetimes continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty* (ibid, 76). As children grow up, they learn to look after themselves and think mostly in terms of "I", which in turn translates to a culture that encourages the independent self (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). The effort put into identifying, selecting, retaining and developing the uniquely and individualistically defined talents fits the tendency of the Danish employees to think in terms of "I". Hence, the individualistic dimension characterizing the Danish employees can encompass a positive driver in the implementation process of the TM activities.

Uncertainty avoidance

The cultural dimension uncertainty avoidance is defined as: *The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations* (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 167) and can constitute both an obstacle and a positive driver in the implementation of TM activities in Danish organizations. Denmark scores 72 out of 74, thus having one of the lowest possible uncertainty avoidance scores. According to Hofstede and Hofstede people with a low uncertainty avoidance attribute results to the person's own ability. The tendency to view results as a consequence of individual behaviour corresponds to the individualistic dimension and constitutes a supplement to the potential fit between the Danish culture and the individualistic definition of talent. Additionally, employees with low uncertainty avoidance are motivated by achievement, as opposed to employees with strong uncertainty avoidance who are motivated by security. Hence, the Danish employees would be expected to be motivated by the targets and objectives set up in the TM programs. However, the employers in a low uncertainty avoidance culture may have trouble retaining the talents as employees with a low uncertainty avoidance change

employer more often than employees with a high uncertainty avoidance Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Thus, the cultural dimension, uncertainty avoidance, both contributes to a potential fit and a potential misfit between TM and the Danish context.

Masculinity versus Femininity

Finally, Denmark is ranked 71 out of 74 on Hofstede and Hofstede's (2005) masculinity index, and thus described as a very feminine culture: *A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and woman are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life* (p.120). Accordingly, there is a tendency for both woman and men in Denmark to be responsible, decisive, ambitious, caring, and gentle (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). These common characteristics between men and woman can constitute a positive driver in relation to the gender distribution in TM programs on the one hand, but may constitute a troublesome barrier in the implementation of TM activities in Danish organizations for the following reason: *In feminine countries assertive behavior and attempts at excelling are easily ridiculed. Excellence is not something one flaunts; it easily leads to jealousy* (ibid, p. 137).

Underlying these behaviours is what is referred to as the Law of Jante, which is a set of 10 commandments created by the Danish-born Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose in the 1930s. Written as an ironic philosophical piece to describe Danes' behaviour as it was experienced in a small fictitious town, the Law of Jante is now considered to have considerable impact on the behaviours and values of the Danish population (Særkjær, 2005). Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) interpreted the Law of Jante as follows:

You should not believe that

you are anything

you are just as much as us

you are wiser than us

you are better than us

you know more than we do

you are more than we are

or that you are good at anything

You should not laugh at us

You should not think

that anybody likes you

or that you can teach us anything.

Source: Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, p. 137

Thus, the Law of Jante, which is deeply imbedded in the Danish culture, ostensibly dictates that all are equal and that no one is more, wiser, better or smarter than anybody else - that no one is anything. The attitudes and behaviours “condoned” by the Law of Jante then would not correspond with a desire or a willingness to articulate, demonstrate and prove ones’ ability and competences, which are all prerequisites for the TM concept. Additionally, Særkjær (2005) suggests that these commandments are used by the community or the group to keep members of society in line. Model behaviour, according to the Law of Jante, would be highly indicative of the female dimension, and thus the diametrical opposite of how talent would be expected to behave.

Potential Risks

From the above, it can be concluded that the relationship between the Danish context and the concept of TM is characterized by a number of potential fits, but there are also some likely misfits as well. The potential misfits may constitute barriers to the implementation process of TM in Danish organizations. Still, there is a question as to how far these conclusions can be generalized, as the degree to which

companies in Denmark resemble this picture varies considerably, especially if they also conduct business internationally. Thus, there may be organizations in which the conditions support implementation of TM despite the national cultures. In this section, a brief overview of the different types of organizations present in Denmark is pretended to allow discussion of this issue.

Public versus Private

In Lollike (2005) Lyngvig, speaking from experience in the public sector, explains how Danes are raised to find security in the group or crowd and in behaving as others do. By not diversifying themselves, the Danes would always be able to return to the group again whenever they choose without worry of being rejected for being different. Further, the organizational and leadership culture is characterized by dialog, absence of visible conflicts and low power distance, and therefore it is often referred to as a consensus culture, Lyngvig explains. She argues that the Danish consensus culture does not provide the best conditions for developing talents, thus confirming the misfits between the concept and the Danish context identified above. She emphasizes that creation of an elite team within the public sector would not benefit the collective and therefore the consensus culture in the public sector should be maintained. Lyngvig's view on the public sector thus raises the question: *Is TM impossible to implement in the Danish public sector?*

Frederiksen (in Lollike, 2005) from the State Employer's Authority (Personalestyrelsen) argues that it is possible to work more consciously and systematically with talent development in the public sector. However, movement away from the equity culture that characterizes many governmental organizations is required if talent is to unfold. She maintains that true equality can only be achieved when employees who are significantly different in some way are actually treated differently. In other words, Frederiksen concludes by drawing attention to one of the largest challenges management has today, which is to develop a balanced organizational culture where there is room for individual opportunities for development of talents, without sacrificing cohesion, holistic orientation, and solidarity that is a part of our central values. To this end, Frederiksen considers a cultural change in the governmental organizations necessary and a prerequisite for

the implementation of TM in the public sector. Thus, it can be concluded, that different viewpoints on the implementation of TM in the public sector exist. An interesting question to be answered when discussing the degree of difficulty in relation to the implementation of TM in the public sector is: *Is TM needed to the same degree in the public sector as in the private sector?*

National versus International

Besides the division of public and private sector organizations, the organizations in Denmark can be divided in national and international organizations. It seems safe to assume that the international organizations are characterized by a higher number of foreign employees than the national organizations, and that the Danish employees in the international organizations have a more global mindset than the employees in the national organizations. These assumptions give rise to the question: *Can it be inferred that an implementation of TM is less problematic in international organizations than in national organizations?*

Discussion

Grundfos, which was founded in Denmark and maintains its main headquarters in Denmark, has publicly acknowledged and articulated the clash between TM and the Danish culture that is so heavily influenced by the Law of Jante in their “Goodbye Law of Jante” declaration (Rasmussen, 2009). Grundfos’ People & Strategy partner Marjanne Grønhøj explains how she considers herself as a change agent initiating and accomplishing a change that challenges the existing “we are all equal” culture (ibid, p. 16). Still, if the cultural dimensions are so deeply embedded as suggested by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), making such a fundamental shift in culture will be a major challenge. Nevertheless, these considerations stimulate reflection and give raise to the question: *Is it possible to abandon the Law of Jante to promote TM in Danish organization – and if it is possible are there any potential pitfalls?*

Beechler and Woodward (2009, p. 274) suggest that the belief that exists in many organizations that *winning the war for talent requires strategies focused on ‘stars’ is challenged by recent research that shows that this nearly single-minded focus on 10-20% of individuals in an organization often backfires and reduces, rather than*

enhances individual, team, and organizational performance. Their solution to these risks is to develop an approach to TM that does not exclusively focus on the selected few talents, but encompasses a broader focus. A relevant question could then be: Would such an approach produce far less conflict with the Danish culture and the Law of Jante than the traditional approach?

Expounding on a broader approach to TM, Beechler and Woodward (2009, p. 238) emphasize that *Businesses, practitioners and academics must move away from competitive, winner/loser mentality inherent in the language and tactical outlook of the global 'war for talent' towards a more cooperative, generative approach of creative 'talent solutions'*. Following this mandate, however, implies that new definitions and understandings of TM must be developed. Then, the question becomes: *To what extent can TM address the strategic objectives of the organization while still encouraging cooperation throughout the organization?*

According to Larsen (in Lollike, 2005), it will be important for Danish organizations to develop their most important competences in a way that does not result in an "A team" and a "B team" among its employees. Thus, organizations must find a balance approach to TM, but precisely how this can and should be accomplished is still unclear.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the applicability, transferability, and appropriateness of the popular concept of TM in Danish organizations. To that end, a brief review of the literature on TM has been presented, along with summaries of the literature on national culture that are relevant to addressing the suitability of TM in Danish organizations and the Danish society as a whole. A number of potential fits and misfits has been identified from these reviews, and in particular the Law of Jante, which is presumed to govern much of the Danes' behaviour and values, and which diametrically opposes the types of behaviours and values that embody the construct and practice of TM. Rather than attempt to develop a solution to the paradox arising with the co-existence of TM and the Danish culture, this paper has raised a handful of questions for the purpose of wider discussion. In order to address these questions,

research in companies that have experienced success—and failure—with TM is necessary to identify whether there are mediating factors that may allow companies to use TM successfully, or whether a Danish model of TM should be developed to accommodate the predominate characteristics of the national culture.

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