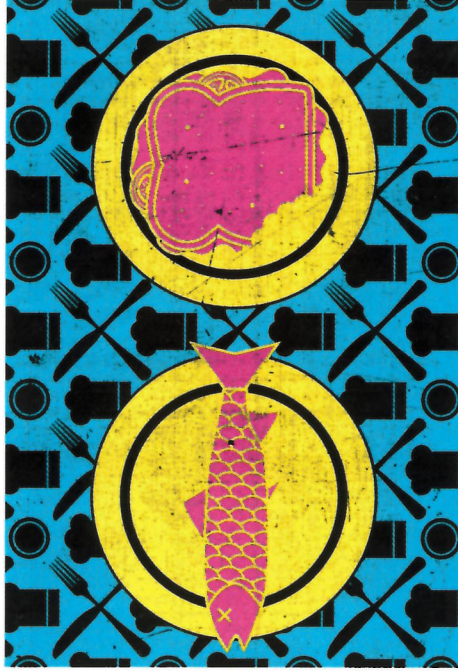


WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? TALENT MANAGEMENT

Talent management is like cooking a great meal, in that businesses generally approach it in one of two ways: buy or make. First. Buy: They go to the deli and buy the finest ingredients – smoked salmon, foie gras, truffles, fillet mignon, then put them in a pot and boil them until they taste like crap. Second. Make: Take basic ingredients – pulses, vegetables, off-cuts and leftovers and use their great chefs to create a tasty concoction, on the cheap (for daytime TV watchers, this is the *Ready, Steady, Cook* school of talent management). It is the latter approach that enables small and poorly resourced teams to overcome the rich and mighty in the sweltering heat of competition. But, in the end, spend does count. If companies can hang on to their talent, the talent will want to perform, though generally with no help from unappetising incentive structures. And yet, all around, one sees a horrible waste of talent in blue-chip companies. The problem is that talent management is too narrowly conceived. It needs to be seen as an end-to-end process, starting with how firms



present themselves to the world, through to what their alumni say about them after they've quit. Buying the best and/or fancy cookery are not enough.

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