

**Jacob Morgan 00:00**

You are now listening to the future of work podcast. My name is Jacob Morgan. And this is where I try to future proof your career and your organization. I do that by interviewing authors, business leaders and executives and organizations around the world to get their perspective on how the workplace is changing, and what you and your organization should be doing to adapt. Typically, I interview chief human resource officers, chief people or talent officers, chief technology, innovation and information officers, be occasional CEO, the occasional economist. And oftentimes I get some wonderful authors that have written best selling books on various topics that are related to the future of work as well. Now, over the past 10 days or so I've been doing quite a bit of traveling. I did three keynotes, recently, one for the National Association of workforce boards in DC, one for the folks over Gartner in London, and one for cross knowledge in Paris. It was my first time there beautiful city. But in all the keynotes that I did this theme of management and leadership kept coming up, people kept asking questions around what is the role of management? What is the role of leadership? How is all that going to change? And that's no secret that that is a huge theme and a huge topic for the future of work, which is why I think today's guest on the podcast is perfect. It's perfect timing. It's a huge theme, again around management and leadership. And he's probably the world's leading expert on this topic. His name is Professor Sidney Finkelstein. He's actually a speaker at the upcoming future of work forum that I'm helping host in Chicago, May 9, and 10th. If you're interested and want to learn more about that, you can visit F O W community.com. and request an invite to join the community. Or you can just email me I'm happy to send you more information. My email is Jacob at the future organization.com. We do two of these events every year. So if you get time, it's definitely worth checking out. So Sidney Finkelstein wrote a book called Super bosses, how exceptional leaders master the flow of talent. He's also the Steven Roth pres Professor of Management at Faculty Director at the tuck Center for Leadership at Dartmouth. He has spent many, many years studying management and leadership and what makes a super boss. And that's exactly what we talk about today. So some of the things that we actually look at and explore in this episode of the podcast, things like what is a super Boss, we've all had managers, some of them. We've loved some of them we've hated. So what separates a super boss from somebody that is just kind of mad, whatever. So that's one of the things that we look at, we look at how super bosses fit in with organizational structures. Sidney shares, who he identified is eight teen super bosses around the world, there are 18 people that you've identified. Of course, it's not a completely exhaustive list, but he gives 18 examples of who's super boss is. He also looks at how do we identify super bosses? How do we work for Super bosses if we want to. And we also look at things such as servant based leadership, how super bosses actually go about motivating employees. And I also asked him an interesting question, are all super bosses, old, you know, where are the young super bosses, the 20 to 30 year olds out there. So we talk about that as well. And we also touch on innovation and talent and HR and how that fits in with this concept of super bosses as well. It is a great conversation, Sydney's an awesome guy, a lot of personality. He's clearly very passionate about this subject, and that all comes through. So I think you'll, you'll definitely enjoy the conversation. If you want to get access to more of these podcasts, or videos or articles that I'm working on. I do a couple of these every week, you can visit the future organization.com. And if you want to subscribe to the newsletter, you can either do that on the site, you'll see a newsletter thing pop up, or if you're on your phone right now, you can simply text the word future to the number 44222. Again, that's the word future. And the number is 44222. And that will go ahead and get you added to the newsletter. If you get a couple of seconds, do me a favor, open up your iTunes App type in either Jacob Morgan or the future of work podcast and

take maybe 10 seconds and just rate the podcast. It's great for me, it's very motivating for me to keep doing these podcasts and then also helps other people find these podcasts. So it's very much appreciated. I've seen a lot of tremendous growth for the podcast and that's largely due to a lot of the people that have been helping share it and rate it. So if you got a couple of seconds again, I would really, really appreciate that. I think that's all I have. Of course, you know, my email, like I said, Jacob at the future organization.com. If you're interested in sponsoring any content, if you're interested in teaming up on some things, you can send me a note there. And as usual, I'm on Twitter at Jacob M. So that's enough about me. Let's get right into the conversation with Professor Sidney Finkelstein, as we talked about Super bosses, what makes some leaders truly exceptional, enjoy by 432.

**Professor Sidney Finkelstein 05:38**

This is a journey into your mind. You'll know when it comes to hope it never comes at reading. Welcome to the future podcast with your host, Jacob.

**Jacob Morgan 05:58**

Welcome, everyone to another episode of The Future of Work podcast. My guest today is Professor Sidney Finkelstein, who is the author of super bosses, how exceptional leaders master the flow of talent. He's also the Steven Roth Professor of Management at the end Faculty Director for the tuck Center for Leadership at Dartmouth. Sidney, thank you very much for joining me. Great to be with you, Jacob. So you have this really kick ass book that just came out. And I was very fortunate enough to be able to get to take a look at one of the advanced copies, which was phenomenal. It's I think out of all the leadership and business books that I've read, this is definitely one of the ones that I put up on my list. And today we're going to spend a lot of time talking about Super bosses and what makes some leaders truly exceptional. But why don't we start with some background info about you. So what's your career history? What do you currently do at Dartmouth? And where do you get this idea for the book?

07:00

Yeah, so I've been here at Dartmouth for 22 years, in beautiful New Hampshire. And I grew up in Canada, moved to move to New York and in LA, for a number of years for graduate school and some other work, and then ended up in in northern New England. And I'm on the faculty, as you, as you know, and do a lot of research on leaders on CEO level executives, as well as a lot of consulting and speaking in some executive coaching. And the idea for the book came up because one of the one of my hobbies is I'm a real foodie, I'm really into great restaurants, and I love to cook as well. And one of the things I noticed in the restaurant business is how common there was this pattern of sous chefs getting a get moving on to new restaurants, and becoming becoming senior chefs in their own right, and kind of a passing of the baton, if you will, learning from learning from somebody who they worked with for a number of years. And it turns out that it is you know, in the restaurant business, pretty common to see that, but I still thought it was cool. But how that happened. And I looked at one in particular when when chef and restaurants or in particular, who was Alice Waters analysis, as many people will know is the founder, the the chef and the impresario at chef honeys restaurant in Berkeley, California. And it's the restaurant that really brought farm to table organic foods, local sourcing, of high end, high quality ingredients brought that into the more of the mainstream of America. And today, you know, there's virtually no higher end restaurant that doesn't have this as kind of a core value or principle. And if you look at the number of people that worked for hours at chef pennies over time, and

then moved on to open up their own restaurants or their own bakeries, or what have you, and it's a gigantic number, and it was just such an interesting pattern that, you know, in a world of an age of big data that one person could have such a such a huge influence. I mean of a generation of talent. Oh, yeah,

**Jacob Morgan** 09:14

absolutely. So also really quick, Sydney, are you a little bit farther away from your microphone because you sound a little bit better earlier.

09:21

Well, I'm right next to the mic. Now.

**Jacob Morgan** 09:23

You Now you sound great. Even better. Wow. Now use wasn't possible. But now you do even sound better. So I actually live in Oakland, not too far away from shape and East and my wife and I were there for Valentine's Day, last year. And so it's a great restaurant. I totally understand everything you're saying. So you were eating there and then you kind of just got this idea for the book or did you kind of do some research after that? Or where did the kind of the inception for this further research and writing a whole 300 page book come from?

09:55

Well, you know, I saw that. I saw that pattern I described you know as Your pennies. And I was curious about whether there were other industries that have the same type of pattern. And so I looked at, I looked at the National Football League. And it turns out, when you look closely at American football, you discover that Bill Walsh was this incredible generator of talent from former head coach of the San Francisco 40, Niners. And actually if you look at the 32 teams in the NFL, and beginning of this past season, out of those 32, teams, 20 of their head coaches were part of the bill Walsh tree of talent, which means they either work directly for him, or they work for someone who worked directly for him, and kind of an incredible impact. And so I started poking around and looking at different industries. And I looked at advertising, I looked at comedy, fashion, hedge funds, music, industry, after industry. And turns out in every industry, I found the same pattern, which is that there was this one person that had this outsized influence in the development of talent. And that's what got me going. I said, Wow, this is a cool thing. Let's try to figure out what's going on.

**Jacob Morgan** 11:09

That's a fascinating, fascinating route that you took, how long did this take to, from idea to actually getting this book done?

11:18

Yeah, well took off took a long time. 10 years in total? Oh, my goodness. Yeah, if that's all I was doing during those 10 years, it would be rather unimpressive, I think, to take that long to write one book. But I was doing many, many other things. And I wasn't really sure that this would end up being what it's become. But the longer and the more time I spent on it, the more fascinated I became, and then you start telling people, you know, what are you up to? And I tell them, you know, I'm just studying these

people like Bill Walsh and Alice Waters, and Ralph Lauren, and Lauren Michaels. And George Lucas. Everybody wants to know, what are you finding out? That's fantastic. And so you know, over time, you really get into it?

**Jacob Morgan 11:58**

Yeah, well, hey, the book turned out great. So big congratulations to you on that. So why don't we start talking about some of the themes in your book? And the first question I have for you is, your book is about Super bosses. But what is a regular boss? And how do you make the distinction between a boss and the super boss?

12:17

So we know what a boss is, of course, everyone's everyone's had them and has them and, and probably many, not most people are bosses themselves. But what what makes what makes a super boss as opposed to a boss, my definition, that way you can really think about it as a super boss as a as a boss as a as a leader, that helps other people accomplish more than they ever thought possible. And as a result, those people end up finding their careers accelerating, turbocharged, if you will, to create where so they have many new opportunities in their own in their own careers. And that's different than your typical boss. And I think it's kind of obvious for, for a lot of people who may not have had a boss like that. This is this is, you know, a boss that really makes it their business directly or indirectly, to accelerate your own career. And in a way, it's the classic definition, what a leader is a leader is someone who creates other leaders, that's what super bosses do. And that's different than most bosses, some, you know, some might be down that path a little bit. But most bosses are much more narrowly focused on whatever they're, they're getting the job done wherever their performance needs to be. So bosses are a little bit broader than that.

**Jacob Morgan 13:34**

Got it got it. So it sounds like a boss would be kind of like you said that the stereotypical Manager command and control, fear based management, you know, kind of cracking the whip so to speak. And the super boss has a vested interest in making sure that his or her employees actually succeed and possibly become super bosses themselves. And they, you know, the term servant based leadership comes to mind when I think of super bosses. So that seems to be kind of a direction that you're going with with as far as what is the super boss?

14:08

You know, that it is partly true. I think that that there is this kind of servant based leadership that's part of this, but it's not the whole the whole thing, because the truth is that some super bosses are really tough characters. And they care, frankly, about themselves more than they care about anybody.

**Jacob Morgan 14:25**

I was gonna ask you about that later.

14:30

Sorry to jump ahead a little bit, but some of them are really tough, tough characters. But they they have a different motivation that makes them click, but many of them are. Many of them do think about legacy do think about being real nurturers for those for their proteges for their people.

**Jacob Morgan 14:50**

So if you had to think of some kind of key traits, you know, how do you spot a super boss? What do you look For I know, one of them is sort of your proteges and making sure that your proteges are successful. And if you have a great number of successful proteges, that's definitely a factor. What are some of the other things that you look for in identifying the super bus? So it's

15:14

a terrific question, Jacob, because many people want to know, how do you find one of these people? They sound great. I want to work for him. How do I how do I find her? And, and there's a few things you can do. Of course, the first thing is that they will have this track record developing other people. And that's something that even when you're when you're having a, you're in an interview with your prospective boss, you can actually ask about that in a very unthreatening way. Just by asking something like, well, over the years, you've had a lot of people working for you, and just curious where they are today and what they've been doing. And then you listen carefully. And is there a story about you know, this one went there this other person that accomplish that? Or is there is there an answer that says I have no idea where they are? or some such thing you want? The Super boss is the person that's going to be thinking about who's going to who's going to know who's gonna stay in touch, get to know, but a lot of the talent and the great talent that they that they had? So you can you can look for it? What else should you look for? Some of the markers, let's say of a super boss, super bosses really do get in the trenches with, with their team members with their employees, they are involved, they're not going to be sitting in the ivory tower, they're not going to be sitting in the corner office all by themselves, they very often like to co locate in fact, with their with their team, they with their employees, they they will appear unannounced, at your cubicle desk or at your office door or what have you to talk to you to work with you. You'll, you'll you'll they'll be very present. They're not the type of people that like to or let themselves get locked into endless meetings from you know, so many people get scripted for morning tonight with this meeting, and that one is one oh yeah, I know, we're not gonna get rid of meetings, that that would be quite a trick. But people that let themselves let their calendars get controlled by others. And by these meetings, generally are not super boss, because super bosses want to want to have this kind of organic opportunity interact with people to teach people to see what people are doing. So they could push them harder and better. And you can't do that if you if you let yourself get locked up with with a schedule or in the corner office. And each of these instances gives up some of that flexibility. That's that's one of the hallmarks of super bosses.

**Jacob Morgan 17:43**

Now you identified I think it was eight teen super bosses in your book, right? Who Who are some of these super bosses?

17:54

Well, you know, there are there are a lot of them. And I did look at 18 and these are the ones that are the among the most prominent of all super bosses. And they include Ralph Lauren in in fashion,

George Lucas in obviously film but you know, in case of George Lucas even more so in digital technologies that are used in film and special effects, really. Norman Brinker, who founded the Chili's restaurant chain and steak and ale and Brinker International, and many of his produce, even today are running many of the multi unit restaurant chains around the country PF Changs and lone stars and all the rest. Julian Robertson, from Tiger management and hedge funds, Tommy frist, who was the longtime CEO of Hospital Corporation of America. And, and so as so many of his former employees that are major players in that industry, Lorne Michaels from Saturday Night Live, I mean, the list goes on a lot of household names in there.

**Jacob Morgan 19:03**

Now, some of the guy you kind of touched on this earlier, some of the people I think you had Steve Jobs in there you had Laura. Oh my God, why am I blanking on his name? Ellison Larry. Yes. I was trying to you said Lorne Michaels. So I was like Lauren Ellison. No, that's not right. So yes, Larry Ellison Lorne Michaels, Steve Jobs. You know, some of these guys and you touched on this earlier are pretty, pretty brutal. And we've heard stories about how some of them are very hard to work for. They can be very tough. You know, people sometimes refer to them as I don't want to curse eight holes and jackasses. So how can we be super bosses? If maybe sometimes they don't always get this great reputation if they're so tough that they're so hard on you. How does that fit in with it?

19:56

Yeah, well, remember that a super boss. helps other people accomplish more than they ever thought possible. Well, there are a lot of ways to get there. And you could have, you know, your softer touch kind of traditional person many people might think of, but you can also get the really tough, challenging boss, the Larry Ellison's of the world. And what's interesting about them, and by the way, I call them glorious bastards. And both words I think are accurate. You know, what's special about them, what makes them tick is they understand that, well take a step back, they want to when they're off above leaning, that's certainly true for Larry Ellison from Oracle. And they understand that to win, you need the world's best talent, the world's best teams, they have that insight. That's not necessarily the case for everybody out there who wants to win. There are there are people that will go about simply exploiting other people don't care about anyone else want to surround themselves with Yes, men and yes, women, glorious bastards are not like that. They care so much about winning, that they just want to make sure that they've got really great. And if they're not, and but they have that potential, they want to help them get there because that helps them accomplish their own goals at the same time, and so they'll they'll push you there, though, they'll challenge you, they'll challenge you to be sure. And it's not always an easy thing to work for, for some of these glorious bastards. But if you can handle it, the upside is gigantic. You think about you bring up Larry Ellison look at some of the people that that worked for him over the years, Craig Conway and Marc Benioff, the CEO of salesforce.com. Today, I mean, a lot of Big time, big time players that cut their teeth working for Ellison that learn how to run a business working for Ellison and went on a great success.

**Jacob Morgan 21:41**

Yeah, yeah, no, I mean, you make a great point. And you actually touched on this just briefly, but you didn't cover all three categories. So you had, I think, three categories of super buses, right. You had

iconoclasts, you had the glorious bastards, and you have a third category? Can you talk about what those three categories are? And what's different about each one?

22:01

Yeah, absolutely. So the difference between among these three categories is a motivation and ambition of the super boss. What Why is a supervisor doing what supervisors do? What makes them tick to do that? And in looking at all these different super bosses that we studied and talk to and learned about, they tended to fall into these three categories of motivations. And the first is the one I just mentioned about glorious bastards. Why did they do what they do? Because they want to win, and therefore they need the best people. The second category are people I called nurturers, they nurture other people. Why do they do what they do? Because they feel it valuable. They gain personal enjoyment and value out of nurturing out of helping other people. They're the ones that are maybe closest to what many people think about as as mentors, but they're not just your run of the mill mentors. They're, they're almost like super mentors, if you will, because they do much more than your typical mentor. And, you know, people in that category are Norman Norman Brinker from in Chili's and Brinker, Brinker, international restaurant business and Tommy first in the hospital, hospitals business. And then the third category is are as you say, I kind of class, these are the creative types, these are people that end up if you work for them work with them, you end up getting much better almost in a very in a very organic fashion just by interacting on a day to day regular basis. And so some of the real creatives are Ralph Lauren, of course, in fashion and Lorne Michaels may be one of the maybe the most unusual of all of the super bosses, is, is Miles Davis, the jazz genius. And people people would be attracted to work with Miles Davis because of his because of that genius. And he would love to have younger, less experienced people around them that had a spark, because that helped push him that helped him get better. And so that type of kind of organic interaction with iconoclast makes everybody improve and extends their expansive creative process. So those are the three, the three types of glorious pastures that nurtures the economy class, every each of these categories, different terms of what kind of makes a super boss tick. But the remarkable thing is when you go and look at what they do, it's really very similar. And that is really that was really one of the one of the interesting surprises of doing this research.

**Jacob Morgan** 24:27

Were there any, I guess, executives at Oregon organizations that you looked at that are maybe well known that you wouldn't consider a super bus?

24:39

Well, I don't want to say that there's only one path to success in an organization. I like the super bus path. I think it makes a lot of sense. But not not everyone is going to be a who's who's successful is necessarily super boss. And I didn't go out to study and this is actually important. I didn't try to figure out what I'd explained success. I didn't, I wasn't interested in that as much as I was interested in, in the Super bosses that are successful, but at the same time do this other thing, which is help other people get get better. So probably there's, there's lots of people out there that are hard drivers and perform well do well, but are not necessarily not necessarily super bosses. So I can kind of tell you a bunch of them, because I didn't really talk much about them, or was all that focused on them. But I suspect that there, there are some, I think it's the hard way to do what I should say, you know, just working and

grinding, grinding it out, is a harder way to make it than it is in my in my view, than than it is by by surrounding yourself with great people that help you get better. It serves, it sure seems like a better path and a more enjoyable path. But not everybody takes it.

**Jacob Morgan 25:57**

And I'm also assuming you didn't go out and speak with every single executive in the world. that would that would keep you busy. But I'm thinking of people like CEO of Microsoft, CEO of Cisco CEO of Pepsi, like, I'm just wondering if there and I'm sure there are plenty of executives out there that, like you said, are successful, but maybe don't fit into that super boss category. So I think that's a great distinction that you make. So I'm glad you made that one. Now, out of the three categories that you looked at, were you finding that there are more super bosses that fall into one or the other is one of them, like a rare breed, and the other ones are more common?

26:42

I don't think so. I don't think I don't think there any of them are rare, I would say maybe more will fall into the nurture category than the other two. But it's not like, say, out of the 18. It's not like there were only one or two in any category. It's more like, you know, four, or five, or six, or seven, and each one of these categories. So and then that makes sense to me. Because there's different ways to go about this. And again, the glorious bastard, the the really hard, hard nosed CEO, or executive or any, any boss, any manager. They they have a different way to do it. But I think every everyone who's worked is seen some tough people, not all of them are super bosses. But the ones that that are tough, and that at the same time give you that great opportunity those people are like, are like gold. That is why I say you know, you shouldn't be judging your boss on the basis of whether or not she or he is tougher, not tough. That's not what it's about. It's whether they help you get better. And if it's if it's about being tough, it's got to be a fit for what you are comfortable with and what you can handle. But there are different ways to get there. So no, I think all three are present all over the place. And lots of organizations,

**Jacob Morgan 28:01**

I think it's also important to, you know, sometimes I feel like employees tend to look at managers, as friends, you know, sometimes they want managers or executives to kind of be more. But I think the reality is, like you said, you know, the people that are tough, they're not there to be your friend, they're not there to kind of be your parent, they're there simply to help you succeed. And if that means that they're going to be hard on you, or tough on you, you shouldn't look at it as Oh, this mod, this boss is tough on me, he's hard on me, you should look at it as is he making me more successful? Is he helping me become more successful? That's probably the right question that should we should be asking, right?

28:44

Yes, absolutely. And it's not about being friends, of course, that can happen that that's fine. The actual relationship that may be more common between some of these super bosses and their protegees. And they do get close, they do form a bond. Because they know, you know, if you're working for somebody like that, you you know how important she is or he is your career and what they're what they're doing for you. And so it's closer to I don't know, whether I would say you know, mother daughter or father son

or some such thing, but there was a real kind of, I don't know, emotional bond that sometimes forms between the boss and the subordinate. And the the team, the team member. That was, you know, striking. You know, I interviewed hundreds of people for this research and in more than more than a few of these interviews with proteges, you know, former employees of a super boss they, they would talk about this type of connection. And super bosses, I think recognize that and they they benefit from that you think about, you know, all the people work for Lorne Michaels at SNL, and I talk to a whole bunch of them, you know, they're famous people. So you see him on TV also. And then their their respect and loyalty and feeling towards Lorne Michaels for what he, what he created for them what what the opportunity gave them is, is really palpable. It's really, it's really important. And this is also really interesting, Jacob, even for some of the glorious bastards, you know, they treat you really rough and tough and you, you make it through and then you move on to do something else. And even in some of these situations, like, I mean, it was one was really remarkable. Larry Ellison, one of Larry Ellison's proteges. And I don't know that I quoted him by name, because he didn't want to have his name quoted. But he he, in my interview with him, he said, you know, we had a falling out, I left we had a falling out, it was in the newspapers was a big mess. And I haven't talked to Larry, and you know, I don't know what it was 10 years or 15 years. But he said to me, I sometimes wish I can just go back over to his house and have a beer and talk and just show some pictures of our kids and just kind of hang out again with him. And this is for someone who felt like he was probably mistreated by his super boss, just in terms of the harsh relationship that that formed. But they still have that bond. That's really remarkable.

#### **Jacob Morgan 31:19**

Yeah, that is actually quite interesting. And you mentioned Lorne Michaels, he's notoriously known for not being I don't wanna say easy, but he's a tough, he's a tough guy. I mean, he really runs his ship tight. And it's, I think you make a great point that people still have an enormous amount of respect and admiration for the opportunities that he's created for so many people. But at the same time, he is by no means I don't think anybody would say he's easy, or he's, you know, soft or pushover when it comes to being a boss. So that's, it's interesting. You know, we keep hearing a lot about different organizational structures, things like holacracy flat companies, where people think that maybe hierarchy will dissolve a little bit. How does this concept of a super boss fit in with a corporate structure that maybe is not as hierarchical? So can you still have a super boss in a in a flatter type of organization? Or does the concept of super boss depend on somebody being below you? Have you having subordinates of you telling other people what to do?

#### **32:36**

Yeah, yeah, it's a good, good question. I suppose if you have a company, or any organization where everyone has exactly the same level, then by definition, you have no boss. So how could you have a super boss? So I say that, but then I think, well, you're always working with other people. And so some of the super boss behaviors or actions about about being innovative, and being a teacher and other things like this are still very relevant. But then I also think about some of the super bosses who purposely tried to break down hierarchy in their organizations. That's a good point to see. And, you know, the number of super bosses that set up their office smack in the middle of everyone else, Julian Robertson in the hedge fund business, Bob Noyce was the founder of Intel, hated bureaucracy and hierarchy, J shy from Shaya day, big name and advertising was one of the first people to set up the

Open Office with, with no one being in an office, everybody had their own little space, but it wasn't enclosed to it to enhance, enhance in interaction. So it turns out super bosses hate these kinds of artificial barriers that fall between people because they love that I mean, they love to mess it to it to kind of rough it up and mess it up and kind of get involved with other people they love to give and take. They love people that can that can push back and challenge and have a different point of view that they they don't just love this, they demand that people have other ideas or new ideas, something to contribute, not just kind of doing whatever you're told, you won't survive working for a super boss. If you get an assignment, you just do exactly, you're told and you're done. Of course, you got to do what the what the assignment is, but they're looking for people that are going to think about it differently and do something differently. And that sometimes requires a lot of day to day interaction between the boss or the super boss and subordinate. So they really do break down hierarchy and bureaucracy. And once you hear that, you got to say, Wow, that sounds that sounds pretty exciting. I don't want to have to go through two or three stages and levels and talk to all these assistants to book a book 30 minutes with my boss three weeks from now, I don't want to have to do that I want to be able to to have greater accessibility and that's what they're trying to do.

**Jacob Morgan** 34:54

You actually make a great point about some super bosses that try to break down hierarchy as well. Because I know a lot of executives, Chief talent Chief Human Resource Officers that are in the process of doing exactly that, breaking things down and in, I realized I forgot to mention for people that are listening, that you're going to be speaking at our upcoming future of work forum in Chicago, May 9, and 10th, where we're going to talk, I'm sure much more about this. I can't believe I forgot to mention that. So we're very excited to have you there to talk more about this. And definitely, I think some of these themes will come up with some of these chief talent and in Human Resource Officers. Now another question I have for you is around company size. In other words, do you have to be in a large organization to be a super boss? Can you be a freelance super boss, maybe you're self employed, and you have a couple of contractors that work for you? Or maybe you have a small company with three or five employees? How does that fit in with the concept of super boss?

35:55

Yeah, you know, I think entrepreneurs are there already are gravitating towards this idea of being a super boss. Even if you've got, you know, a tiny startup, I think, I think it just peels very closely to what a lot of entrepreneurs are not even thinking necessarily of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. But that's even a better a better fit. I had had a great conversation with Reed Hoffman, the founder of one of the founders of LinkedIn. And he, he said, this idea is exactly the way the Silicon Valley world thinks about things about things. And so I think, I think in a bigger company, you can do it. But you've got some constraints. I think the smaller the company that I even say, the easier it is. And then you even asked, you know, what, if you're a freelancer, you know, in the gig economy, and you work with different people, well, here's the thing, to be a super boss requires you to adopt a mindset that says, I'm going to be innovative in how I go about thinking about people and talent and daily interaction with those people. That's something that any one of us could do. I mean, I'm a, when I'm not doing my, you know, executive coaching and consulting and, and speaking, I am a teacher, and I teach MBA students, and so they're not my employees. But I have found that the super boss playbook, super boss mindset absolutely informs how I interact with students and even what I do in the classroom. So it's a way of

thinking. And, and it requires a little bit different way of thinking. But it's actually it's actually a lot of fun. Because it gives you license to always be innovative, to always be looking, looking for creative ideas, and to be expecting and demanding that everybody around you thinks the same way. Well, you know, that's got to be music to the ears of every entrepreneur listening to this. So it's definitely not limited to large companies.

**Jacob Morgan 37:49**

Yeah, I'm sure a lot of entrepreneurs listening to this are saying, oh, so So I'm glad that, that you find that as well. Now, there's also been a lot of debate around this concept of management versus leadership, manager versus leader, or leaders born or leaders made. I'm curious to hear where you fall into that, that kind of mix. Do you distinguish management and leadership and managers and leaders is distinct roles and distinct people?

**38:25**

There are different tasks involved. I think that's I think that's true. But as far as distinct people, I think a good boss should to be successful, has got to have a little bit of a managerial skills and a little bit of the leadership capability. I think they both go, I think they go hand in hand. And this is quite relevant actually, for you know, for this the conversation about Super bosses, you know, it'd be a manager means you think about efficiency, think about getting the job done. Of course, you got to do that if you can't, you know, can't get your job done, you can't be efficient, can't hit the numbers, then you don't have a job. So you got to be able to do that. The leadership part is one of the greatest ways in which you can actually be more efficient, be more capable, by again, motivating people by hiring really good people, by creating an environment where you get the most out of out of your out of your team. And so this I mean, this ties in closely to super bosses because it highlights that anyone in an organization can become a super boss. This is not just about the Ralph Lauren's and Lorne Michaels are the world that are the superstar larger than life characters. You could be a supervisor of you know, a couple of people, you could be a middle manager, you could be a sales manager, you could be running an office. A regional plan doesn't matter really. As long as you have people around you, you can still be a super boss. And I know this for a fact because as I've started to talk about some of these ideas around super bosses, so many people stop me and tell me you know, let me tell you about my super boss. I have a super boss right now. And these are people that are not talking About the CEO of their company, they're talking about some job, you know, whatever it is they're doing in some office in some, you know, in some part of a of a larger or any company for that matter. So, manage management skills, leadership skills are different. But I think a good boss is certainly a super bosses got to be able to do both of

**Jacob Morgan 40:20**

them. I like that you mentioned that super bosses don't have to be executives, that could be anybody. Because I think that's, that's important for people to know that anybody that they work with, you know, when they look around the office, anybody they're sitting next to them could potentially be a super boss. And I think that is a very important thing to point out. Now, if you had to say, our super boss is born, or a super boss is made, what would you say? Because I'm even thinking you let's say you work for somebody like Lorne Michaels or Larry Ellison. If you don't know if you agree with this, if you're you know, you born your grow up, if you don't have that kind of that attitude, and if you don't have those values instilled in you. Can somebody like a Lorne Michaels or Larry Ellison, make you into a super

boss? Or do you have to have some kind of unlocked potential within you that somebody like a Lorne Michaels or Larry Ellison needs to unlock?

41:23

Yeah, it's interesting, I thought I thought about that a lot in in talking to all these people in my interviews and the research that I did, and I came to the conclusion that the super boss playbook, if you will, the stuff that they do is completely learnable or teachable, that, that you absolutely can, I think you have to be willing, you have to be willing to make the commitment. And it's that mindset thing that we talked about as well. But anyone can anyone can do it. And I think, I think whether you're working for you know, Larry Ellison, or Lorne Michaels, or working for you know, Mary Smith down the down the hallway, and we all have that potential. And that's because you look at what it is that super bosses do that helps them develop these great people that helps them be so successful. And you're looking at things that that are really concrete, you're looking at things around, how to think about hiring talent, how to look at identifying talent a little bit differently, you're talking about motivation, you're talking about inspiration, you're talking about coaching or teaching, you're talking about teamwork, you're talking about building networks, these are these are completely teachable, or learnable skills that that you can get. And I'm not going to say it doesn't hurt, you know, some people are born with certain skills or certain capabilities more than others, that goes without saying we are who we are when we start off, but just because somebody is more creative, or something more natural leader, or whatever it is, more than more than we are doesn't mean we can't get better from wherever we are. And so I think every one of us can become more like more super boss like, or even a super boss, if we really wanted to.

**Jacob Morgan** 43:12

It sounds like we need to make some T shirts that have SB on it with the little Superman thing, and start and start handing super boss T shirts. I think that'd be great. What about age and super bosses? So are all all super bosses, older people? Can you have millennial super bosses? Or how does how does age play into this at all.

43:41

So to find super bosses from from my point of view, which is to say, to try to document whether they exist, who they are and what they and what they do it I focused specifically on people that have been around for a while. And that is simply because I wanted to see the the track, see if they had a track record of building great and developing great talent. So, so So let's put that out there. But does that mean that you have to be doing something you know, being in business or being a manager or leader for for 20 years or 30 years? No, absolutely not the super boss techniques and playbook and ideas that that I describe in in my book are things you can start picking up from from day one. And and in fact, you can do it as I said this earlier. So as an entrepreneur, it's easier so again, it's easier for me to see this because I'm trying to document this. That's a different purpose than somebody wants to be a super boss. You don't need to document that you need to do it and and so you could this could take years and years of experience. No you will get better the more you do it. But it's not like you have to be doing This for 20 or 30 years to figure out how to do it, I think you can do it from day one, if you really want it to. Well, that's

**Jacob Morgan** 45:05

definitely a good thing. Ignore my little Yorkie barking in the background. Now, I wanted to jump quickly to this idea of innovation in talent, and HR, because that definitely plays into this idea of super bosses. I also think we're a very, we're at a very exciting time now, when we think about work in the future of work, with HR functions evolving with new ways to think about talent. So how does that play into super bosses? And what sort of innovations do you think are coming our way? As far as talent and HR?

45:42

Great, great question. You know, I think about innovation, excuse me in organizations in a lot of different ways. And just just think about, where we've seen the most innovation when it comes to any organization, any any business, supply chain management, supply chains, totally revolutionized through digital technology, and other means, marketing and sales and manufacturing, pretty much every function in organization has gone through gigantic innovations, and are just, you can barely recognize them compared to what was around 10 or 20 years ago, maybe even five years ago in some cases. And now compare that to HR compare that to how we think about talent. We do see innovation there. There are a lot of there's a lot of apps and software that are being created by entrepreneurs that I think are impressive, but I don't think those things by themselves are going to change the equation when it comes to talent. And the reason I say that is when you talk to senior executives in company, after company as I as I do, and you ask them, you know, what are your pain points? What are what are you struggling with? The answer you're gonna get is exactly the same answer you would have gotten 10 years ago, and 25 years ago, and that is talent, we were trying to figure out how to get the best talent, we're trying to figure out how to get more out of them, how to develop them, how to think about managing talent, it's the same, it's the same issue, which is to say, we haven't solved it, we haven't gotten nearly as far in kind of cracking the code on talent, as we have in terms of supply chain, and marketing, and sales and all this. And so I think it's time for some for some new ideas, and maybe even some counterintuitive ideas. And it's very true that super bosses do things differently than your say your quote, typical manager, your typical leader, they're they're willing to be they are more innovative themselves. They focus on on close interaction with people that work with them at the same time as they're delegating big jobs to them. They're strong willed people, but they make room for other big talents. They believe in collaborating and competing at the same time. I mean, they do all these things that historically are traditionally a lot of people think are opposites, they do at the same time. And I think it's a different model, a different way to think about leadership to think about talent. And I think I think we're at a tipping point when it comes to when it comes to managing and thinking about talent organizations, we haven't solved it. I don't know that you ever solve it completely. But I don't think we've made as much progress as we need to. But I think the world of HR is starting to come around to that, you know, we have something called the Chief Human Resource Officer title that's becoming quite common CHRO, that probably too many letters for a good acronym. It's not quite as good as CFO, but it's not bad. But what it does is it elevates the senior HR person to the level of the senior finance person. I think that's exactly. That's exactly right, we're starting to see greater attention to to the entire talent function. And I think, I think it's time now to have a major injection of some really new thinking. And I think super bosses, who by the way, I've been hiding in plain sight. I mean, these are people that we all know, we know, Ralph Lauren, we know Lorne Michaels. We know George Lucas, we know Larry Ellison, they've been there. But we've never looked at people like that, to try to gain insight insights into into kind of the magic that these people do in terms of developing talent being ultra

successful. Well, I have actually spent 10 years trying to figure that out. And I think we've got some new things to say.

**Jacob Morgan** 49:21

And it's funny that you mentioned roles, because I think we're also seeing chief people, officers chief talent officers. at Airbnb, they have a chief employee experience officer, I'm starting to see these kinds of these new I don't want to say, I guess you could call them functions, new functions or roles being developed around this kind of people aspect, that it's actually very, very exciting to see that we're thinking differently about people and talent and evolving this function. So when you say innovations in this space, are you talking about stuff like getting rid of annual employee reviews, flexible work? real time feedback are these the types of innovations that you think we need to see more of.

50:06

I like I like all of those ideas. And I've actually written quite a bit about the dangers of these annual performance reviews, and the power of much more immediate feedback. But I'm going beyond that. And here, I'm going specifically to the ways in which super bosses develop talent. And they're doing things that and they've been doing some cases for decades, with tremendous success. And they're doing it in a little bit different way, or maybe a lot different way than most companies. And I'll give me a really big apple, the subtitle of my book is IT services, how exceptional leaders master the flow of talent. And that's the key point. What that means is that we should be in organizations thinking about not just the intake of talent, and how to get great people, which, of course, we're doing a lot to try to get better that and not just the development of that talent. And I think there's plenty more we can do there. But also the Believe it or not the outflow, where are they going to go next. And the problem that I see in so many organizations is this is dominance of this idea of talent retention, I get why you want great talent to stay with you, that's kind of a no brainer, we understand that. But guess what the best talent might have a different point of view, they might not want to stay working for you forever. In fact, the best people hardly ever want to stay working for you, they want to run their own show, and they have the right to do that we can lock them up. And that's that way of thinking is a gigantic innovation, because you think about a company, a big company, you know, that could have you know, 100,000 employees, and they spend all their time, a lot of time hiring people maybe a little bit less time or a lot less time developing people. But what about thinking about how to manage the flow of that talent through their career progression, and maybe even understanding that maybe there aren't, they only want to be with us for five years, let's let's create a situation where they absolutely get everything they possibly can out of those five years, we of course, get way better. And then we continue to interact with them in some way, after they leave the nest and go either to a different part of the company, or even an entirely different company. That's what super bosses do. That's a radical idea. It's a it's a way of thinking about talent that very few organizations outside of Silicon Valley, I'm gonna say, our thinking about today. But I think I think it's absolutely essential, we're going to need to do it. Because I don't know too many people entering the workforce today. They're saying, I can't wait to last 25 years to get my gold ring. It's not gonna happen.

**Jacob Morgan** 52:35

I, I don't know anybody that says they want to last 25 years either. And I mean, those are great points. And I know you mentioned specifically Silicon Valley, you know, that. When you were talking, I was

thinking actually, I know a couple of companies that are doing that. And then, of course, there in Silicon Valley, LinkedIn came to mind, Cisco came to mind and a few others, Airbnb came to mind. And those are all Silicon Valley Bay Area companies. So I think that there is something to that idea that Silicon Valley is kind of, you know, helping pioneer some concepts or, or some themes around this, because I definitely see, see some of that happening here, which is great. Now, how does somebody actually become a super boss, and maybe we can frame this in two different ways. So let's say I'm fairly new to the workplace, I don't have that much experience. But I would like to rise to become a super boss, and maybe somebody that already is a manager or an executive, but they want to kind of take that next step. So what advice would you give those two different types of people?

53:41

So early on in a career, the best way to become a super boss is to work for a super boss, because you're gonna get a front row seat and how to do it. And so the question then becomes, how do you find these people? We touched on that a little bit earlier, but I think we could add a couple other things. And that is, especially if you're working in a in a larger company, there are digital job boards, of course, you can look online, and you see where the jobs are available internally. For people that want to transfer change. It's standard practice, well start paying a little bit of attention to that. And in particular, start to pay attention to say one office where there There never seems to be an opening for very long. I mean, a job opens up and it closes really really quickly. And it's tough to get in versus another team or another another area or region where there's a revolving door and there's always seems like they always need one or two people. It's not that they're growing more than the other one. They just can't seem to keep keep the staff there. Well, I mean, why is that going on? And I'm going to tell you why I think it is going on I think it's because in the in the team or the unit where the boss where it's hard to get in. That's that boss has become a talent magnet. That boss has become someone that attracts talent, because she or he is someone that helps other people get better, they're probably super bosses like, if not actually super bosses and this other department or area where you know, there's always a job opening, where you have a different type of boss there and doesn't take long for people to realize I don't want to be in that world. So you could look at that yourself. And any company that has almost any company that has any size to it will be posting these jobs. And, and you could find that out, you could also, of course, internally, just pay attention. I mean, put the, you know, understand what a supervisor does, and then put that lens on that says, you know, let's, let's be on the lookout for who is acting that way, who is behaving that way, who's got people that are, that are moving on great opportunities that are going on the fast track, and, and look for opportunities to try to work for people like that. So you could be you don't have to be passive about this. You can be strategic in trying to find that that super boss so early in your career? That's that's one of the absolute best things that you can you can do.

**Jacob Morgan** 55:58

Are there any? So really quick, before we jump into the next point? Are there any questions that you think people can ask their managers or executives to help determine if they're a super boss? Or is it just kind of behavior that you have to observe?

56:13

Yeah, well, I think there's a little bit of a little bit of both, but I think there are questions you could I think there are questions you could, you could ask your boss, and this is kind of in it maybe sound a little bit,

a little bit odd. But it's in a sense, it's, especially when you're interviewing for a job when it's a more natural, when it's a more natural time to be to be asking questions. And you're expected to ask questions, you should be interviewing your own boss, it's not their interviewing or your potential boss. It's not that they're just interviewing, interviewing you. So what are some of the questions you could you could ask? Ask about vision, ask about what what type of vision the your prospective boss or your boss has for that team. And this is important, because vision is not just the word for CEOs are very, very senior executives. It's something that every team, every leader of every team needs to be able to inspire and energize and motivate people with a vision of what they're trying to accomplish. So what is it? I mean, I want I want to know what it is, I want to understand, I want to understand how that, how that how that happens. I want to know about delegation, you know, how do you delegate? How often do you delegate? How big are you? Are you delegating jobs? How much time do you spend coaching people? How much and this gets back to this question earlier of how are people spending their day? Are they locked up in meetings all day long? Or do they have this kind of more freelance free time to interact with different people on the team? And and you can't be spending much time coaching people one on one, if you're in one meeting, if you're in one meeting after after another? You could ask about and pay attention to the extent to which your boss or your prospective boss stays in touch with former employees, former team members that have moved on. There really is, as I said earlier, this bond that forms among super boss and protege and among the protegees themselves. And so if there's really no sense of affection or connection, well, that's not definitive. But that's another one of these signs that says, maybe maybe this boss doesn't think about it the same way as you'd like her or him to think about

#### **Jacob Morgan 58:31**

it. Great that I think that's super helpful. And then the second part of that question is, what do you do if you are a manager or an executive? And you want to elevate to being that super Boss, what can you do?

#### **58:43**

Well, a bunch of things. So number one, you could you could take a page out of the the super boss playbook and just do it super bosses do try it out. For example, one of the things super bosses do is they don't wait for the job description to be formalized. Before they started looking for talent. They're always looking for talent, their talent spotter, so maybe you'd be you'd be willing to take a chance on someone you meet. You find someone that looks great, and you don't necessarily have a job for that person or a job description for that person. Have you ever thought about creating a job for that person? It sounds a little bit crazy. And you know, there, there'll be people in the world of HR that will be aghast at that idea. But that's what super bosses will do. Of course, you can't do it. If you're hiring 1000 People that goes without saying, but you can do it selectively looking for that great looking for that great talent. What else could you do? Mentioned vision before, something you want to look for? Well, let's let's see it if you're if you want to be a super boss or more of a super boss, ask yourself this question. Are you really inspiring the people on your team to accomplish more than they ever thought they could do? Are you instilling a sense of confidence to that team? I know you're working hard. I know we're living in a 24/7 world. That's not unusual, but are you adding this other dimension of inspiration and confidence building? And if you're not why why are you not? Are you not doing that? And I think another thing that a that a prospective super boss could do. Somebody wants to enhance their supervisors qualities, I think is is to work really closely with the best of your talent by doing this giving them this these big

responsibilities, this delegation idea again, but also rolling up your sleeves and working hand in hand with them periodically. It's again, one of these, you know, one of these counterintuitive things that super bosses do. Many people look at and think about delegation as you're either a big delegator or you're a micromanager and you're one or the other. And I think that's wrong. I think you can actually you should actually think about them as two different things big delegator, little delegator. Big micromanager, not really much of a micromanager. As soon as you do that, you say, wow, you know what? I could be a big delegator. And I could be if not a micromanager, which I'm not going to recommend, but not a hands off. delegator either, but a hands on delegator that periodically, appears, shows up interacts drills down deep. And in order to be effective in any job, you have to have deep content knowledge, why wouldn't you want to teach, share and enhance the learning of the people around you, they're going to produce a better quality product for you in the end by by doing that anyway. So those are some of the things you can do to become more like a super boss.

**Jacob Morgan** 1:01:28

That's perfect. Now, before we wrap up and talk about where people can get your, your book, and where people can connect with you, actually. Do you have any last parting words of wisdom or any themes that you would like to touch on from the book that you don't think we covered?

1:01:49

You know, we covered a lot of ground, Jacob, but there's one thing I'd add, it's around this, this, this idea of millennials in the workforce, and all this stuff, we hear about that? And employee engagement and they they're they really go closely together, there's two facts, one, millennials are different and entering the workforce in gigantic numbers, and they have different goals. And fact number two, employee engagement scores in the Gallup polls and everything else are abysmal. It's something like, you know, 25% of employees in these surveys typically say they're, they're heavily engaged and feel a sense of engagement in the workforce. Well, the super bosses have come up with what I think to be pretty impressive solution to that problem. And I think it's one that millennials are going to really gravitate towards, because super bosses make work engaging by making it important by giving you as an individual contributor, an opportunity to have a big impact to involve you right from day one. And that's what people want. Certainly millennials and millennials want that. But everybody wants that. They want to feel like they're contributing that they're making, that they're having an impact. And the super boss approach to being a leader does that through all the different ways that we've been, we've been talking about that, and that I elaborate on, of course, in the book as well. They create these opportunities for people, they, they roll up their sleeves with people, they give you this opportunity to make things happen. They they expect you to come up with new ideas. And that's a playbook for every every millennial, and it also improves or enhances engagement on the job. I think that's an important part of the story that we should, we should make sure we highlight as well.

**Jacob Morgan** 1:03:31

Absolutely. That's and that's a huge theme. Every every time I speak with an executive, the conversation of millennials always comes up the conversation of engagement always comes up health and well, well being wellness. All those things are huge, huge factors. When we think about the future of work. Maybe one last question for you is, what do you see the future of this? I mean, is your hope

that we will create more super bosses within our organizations. And this will lead to more engagement and more desirable places to work.

1:04:04

Imagine, imagine a world where people love going to work. Stop right there is enough, right? But imagine that and imagine a world where individual bosses make it their business to help other people accomplish more that care about legacy. And and imagine a world where individual contributors are so totally engaged and energized, and see the opportunity to get better. I mean, it's a it's a fantastic world. And I think that if more of us would adopt more of what the super bosses have been doing on time, and that I've really dissected and laid bare in the research and in the supervisors book, I think if more people did that, we we'd be we'd be a lot. Not only would organizations be more successful, would we all be more successful in our jobs by work would become more meaningful and more powerful and that's that's really what I'm driving at. It would be Great to have more super bosses. But it would be great even if we didn't call him just super bossy, but we would engage with and adopt more of what super. But what makes Super bosses special because the side effect of all that is, is engaged engagement, interest impact and importance. And I think that would be a great thing for a lot, a lot of people. That's what I'm hoping I'm hoping will come out of this book. And a lot of my own work as follow up is absolutely is absolutely helping organizations get there.

**Jacob Morgan** 1:05:32

It's a very noble cause. I couldn't agree more. And I definitely hope that we see more that as well. So where can people go to actually get your book? Where can they connect with you? I know you're on Twitter as well. So where can people find all this good stuff?

1:05:45

Sure. Well, of course the books available at at your favorite bookseller, obviously at Amazon, and Barnes and Noble and everywhere else. You can see lots more about the about Super bosses on my website, which is cleverly called [www dot super bosses.com](http://www.superbosses.com). And I have some some downloads there. I have some bunch of articles that I've written that elaborate on Super bosses, plenty the booksellers are there, there's a lot of there's a lot of stuff there that's there for the taking. And, and I'm delighted to engage with, with listeners afterwards, through Twitter. My Twitter handle is at Sid Finkelstein. And that's it as an S Y D, and Finkelstein as F as in Frank i n k e I Ste i n suit, Finkelstein Twitter handle. And so those are the ways you can you can find me, and I'd love to hear what people think once they've had a chance to go through the book or read some of the book. And I especially love to hear about people that that that read the book and say, Wow, I have a super boss now or I'm going to become a super boss. And I'd love to hear those stories as well.

**Jacob Morgan** 1:06:58

Yeah, I bet I'd love to hear those stories as well. Well, Sydney, thank you very much for taking time out of your day to come speak with me today.

1:07:04

My pleasure, Jake, have really enjoyed it. Yeah, likewise,

**Jacob Morgan** 1:07:07

and thanks, everybody, for tuning into this week's episode of the podcast. My guest has been Professor Sidney Finkelstein, the author of the new best selling book super bosses, how exceptional leaders master the flow of talent. He's also the Steven Roth Professor of Management and Faculty Director for the tuck Center for Leadership at Dartmouth. And we've been talking about Super bosses. What makes some leaders truly exceptional. I will see you next week. Thanks for tuning into the future of work podcast. If you want to learn more you can visit my website the future organization.com For check out the fo W community that's fo w community.com I'll see you in the future.