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Context to the conversation

Roopa speaks about the criticality of peers, not just in driving your agenda in the organization but also as people who often hold the keys to your career momentum.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Another theme Roopa which I encounter a lot in my work is I call this the glass ceiling that nobody talks about and you alluded to this the last time we met. think we spoke about women leadership and we spoke about the maternity transition. I think we also spoke about the next transition where sometimes one step short of the big job, the CEO role. You mentioned very often there's a drop off. I notice another kind of a glass ceiling applies to men and women where I find people get to a CXO role you know, chief of a function role quickly, but struggle often to make the leap to the big job. And I think that what I've also found is the muscles you need to collaborate with your peers is slightly different from muscles you need to lead a team of people. And I think you talk about the Crisil experience as well, where you had to lead some of your peers and it was an interesting passage of play. So talk to us a little bit about just this transition. What does it take to get it right? What are the nuances here and how you've experienced them?

Roopa Kudva EP2 (RK): So specifically with relation to peer equations or peer relationships, most underrated and yet the most vital. And I experienced this firsthand because I grew up with a bunch of people in CRISIL. We started when the firm was set up. There was this whole pioneering spirit. We all grew together. Everyone got promoted at the same time. And we all thought of ourselves as friends. And we were, and most of them remains friends to this day. But, you know, I realized that when I was being considered for the job of the chief rating officer, heading the ratings business, my CEO told me later that he had gone and spoken to every one of my peers about what they thought about me. And each one of them told them how they were better than me and they were right because I was not the best at any single thing in the company. Many of them were better analysts than me. Some of them had better market relationships than I had and each one of them pointed out to their strengths. Now, because I had not thought too much about my peer relationships once I got the role of Chief Rating Officer, I had to make an enormous investment in building that trust and putting myself in a position where I was able to lead that team of people who once we all thought of ourselves as peers. So peers are important not just because collaborating with them helps you get your own work done, but they can also play a very important role in determining your career trajectory. I've seen that as a member of the board when we are making CEO decisions, we will talk to peers of the individual concern. So the peer relationships become very important. Now, how do you really go about building these peer relationships in a timely manner? I think it is several things. Firstly, dependability. Make sure you keep up your commitments. Closing the loop becomes very

important. Giving peers credit where credit is due, how many of us do that? That becomes very important. What also becomes very important is when there's friction between peers, it's very easy to kick the ball up and ask for intervention because it's uncomfortable to resolve differences between peers. But it is so important not to escalate unless it becomes absolutely essential, but to work it out with your peers. Because at the end of the day, when choices are being made for who will be picked for the top jobs, what boards and CEOs look for is people who can take everyone along while keeping the organization interest ahead of everything else. So I think there are ways to be much smarter about this than I personally was.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In my work, I notice that many people who have grown through the ranks of the Indian competitive system, also known as the hunger games, often get stuck in this place where they struggle to collaborate effectively with people who are as good or possibly better than themselves. Very often, they race through the ranks in the first few years of their career but as they approach the CEO role, the curve starts flattening out!

And it is not easy to manage that transition. Stephen MR Covey (SC), speaks about the notion of transitioning from a Command and Control paradigm to a Trust and Inspire paradigm.

SC: *“managed things lead people versus managing people as if they were things, and no one would go out to do that, but what happens is we have gotten so good at management, people start to feel like we manage them that way. Command and control are more of a mechanistic mindset, a machinist, tinkering, trust and inspire, I view myself I am a gardener. I am trying to create conditions for the seeds to grow, for the people to grow but the life and the power is in the seed, the life and the power is in the people, I am a gardener, not a mechanic, it is an organic system. Command and control will focus on motivation, carrot and stick. And there is nothing inherently wrong with that, it is just limited. So do rewards work, sure, they motivate people to want to get more rewards, more carrots, more sticks, we have got to constantly feed at more external stimuli. Trust and inspire, the focus are on inspiration, it is intrinsic, it is internal, it is inside of people whereas motivation is external, it is outside of them, inspiration is in turn inside of them. So, I light the fire within. And when that fire gets lit inside of somebody, that can burn on for months if not years without the need for constant new external stimuli. And so, I am really tapping into that to inspire means to breathe life into. So, I breathe life into relationships, in the teams, in the cultures whereas command and control often suck the life out of people and teams and cultures. Command and control, it is kind of compliance based. Trust and inspire is focused on commitment. It includes compliance but so much more because you are really tapping into what is inside of people. Command and control will achieve association, it is a good thing but trust and inspire, you can really achieve a sense of belonging and inclusion, it does not go to a different level. Command and control are good to coordinate but trust and inspire enables you to truly collaborate among partners and interconnected teams versus mere coordination among groups or silos, you know, different in kind.”*

DJ: Given the velocity of change in the world around us, all of us have to move to this paradigm of leadership in various aspects of our life. Even in something like parenting. One of my other guests, Prof Raj Raghunathan of UT Austin, speaks about parenting and refers to the movie Sound of Music where he says that the Maria approach often beats the Captain Von Trapp approach!

End of transcription

Nugget from Stephen MR Covey that is referenced: [Decoding “Trust and Inspire”](#).

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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