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Context to the conversation

Roopa speaks about how leaders need to balance their gut and the data that is available to them and know when to make a decision and when not to.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other thing that stayed with me was you say deciding when to make a decision is a decision. The other context in which it came up was one of my favorite conversations of the podcast has been with a gentleman called Vinay Sitapati who's written a book about Narasimha Rao. And one of the he says is one of the beauties of Decision making is knowing when not to make a decision.

Roopa Kudva EP2 (RK): Absolutely. If I remember right, he said not making a decision is also a decision.

DJ: Exactly. when I read this, it sort of reminded me of that. But tell me from your lived experience and from your vantage point, Roopa, talk to us about your perspective on deciding when to make a decision as a decision.

RK: I think that particularly in today's day and age where we are flooded with information, right? There's always the temptation to look for more information, more data, to see whether the course of action that we are taking is the right one. Now, if you act too early or if you act with too little information, the risk is that you're missing out something really critical and really important. On the other hand, if you wait too long to take a decision, the opportunity may pass. You may have lost the opportunity entirely. So how do you decide that, okay, this is it, we have enough information, let's go forward, being fully aware of the risks? I think a lot of that comes with experience. A lot of it sometimes, you need to take a call because deadlines are set artificially, you have to respond to a proposal or you have to respond to a deal timeline, for example. So sometimes you have to make that decision. But very often, I think it is the call that you have to make that, we have had discussion, this is enough. And also in this whole data and rational world, I think the power of intuition, the power of gut is being underappreciated and ultimately good decisions are a combination of good data and good instincts. And you have to be able to combine the two. in an environment where analysis and data has become much simpler than it was, people are becoming more hesitant to trust their gut. which was the problem was the reverse when I started working 40 years ago, nobody looked at data, which is also problematic. You can't just go by gut and instinct.

DJ: We had fewer data pipes.

RK: And you had fewer data and so you had to maybe perforce rely more on instinct, but people also used it as a, people used to take pride in the fact that I know it, have got, I understand, I go by my instincts, they've always worked for me, et cetera. That's not good either. But I feel that the pendulum has sprung too much to the other extent with the result that people hesitate to take the call, but that is leadership, right? It is about deciding to take the call and moving ahead recognizing that these are risks and then you will make mistakes You have to be comfortable with the fact you will make mistakes. What you learn from those mistakes become important. What attitudes you adopt when other people makes make mistakes become important you have to deal with the consequences of decisions making going wrong but I think it's also important to remember that no amount of information you have guarantees that you will make a correct decision anyway.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Like I mention in my conversation with Roopa, I asked Vinay Sitapati (VS) to comment on Narasimha Rao's perceived slowness. Was it inaction or strategic patience.

VS: *"NR has made a lot of fun off because the typical view of the NR was he was a scholar but he doesn't act and that's just a straight untruth as I show in the book yes he was a scholar but at heart he was a man of action, what he also was, he was acutely aware of his political vulnerabilities so when he didn't act it was not because he didn't want to act and not because not acting was important but because he just lack the political ability sometimes it was that not acting is important, not making a decision is important but very often he just lack the political ability that he could have made the decision he could have made the decision to privatise Air India which today we are trying to do but at that time he would have lost his job so he didn't make a decision on that matter so the stereo type of NR which comes from that idea, analysis until paralysis that was be that joke and the joke was NR knew that how to be silent in 10 languages and I think that misses something at the core of NR that he was the man of action but he was also acutely aware that as the book points out he lack power so his genius was where to act under which political cover and when he lack political cover he would withdraw and it's a fine art because most politicians you would argue only care about survival NR cared about survival but he also cared about other things."*

DJ: I also love what Adam Grant says. He talks about a Bell curve of timing. One end is procrastination - being too late by taking too much time for the decision. The other end is procrastination - being too early and not sleeping over the nuances and letting emergence play out a little bit. That is not ideal either. Decision making is a fine art indeed.

End of transcription

Nugget from Vinay Sitapati that is referenced: [Making/Not making key decisions.](#)

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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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