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Context to the conversation

Viral speaks about the fork in the road when he and his father shut down the Alloys business in early 2000s. He mentions that if he hadn't come down this path of counselling children, he would have loved to be the headmaster of a Boarding School.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): If I could, we will take you back to that moment. In this podcast, we are curious about three themes. One is leadership, the other is transitions, and third is careers and journeys. Going back to that transition, when you shut down the unit and 2004, you said you started this. Yes. Let's say 2003, 2002, as you were thinking of pathways, what were some of the pathways you briefly considered but did not pursue before you? Because it's a with, with hindsight, it looks like an obvious choice, but at that time it's a non-trivial shift of direction.

Viral Doshi (VD): You know, honestly, manufacturing in those years was quite challenging. You always wonder whether government was supporting you or they were against you, because I counted one point of time when we were doing manufacturing, we had close to 16 inspectors we used to count to be.

(DJ): 16?

(VD): 16 inspectors from income tax inspector, excise inspector, water inspector, power inspector, and it's just becoming too much. That's why at the end of the day, I said, I don't want to be in manufacturing at all. If I would do something, I would do something in the service industry. So I don't think I've been even considered doing something else. But if I had to relive my life today, if I had to go back, I would love to be a headmaster of a boarding school in India.

I would say working with children, nurturing them, that would be my passion, which I would love to fulfil. If I could relive my life and do something and do an education, I would have done that if I hadn't gotten into manufacturing. But at that point of time, when it did happen, in 1990, when we closed down, we were so bogged down with all clearances for your company to be sort of closed down that one never thought of anything else but something which you were already doing as a hobby. And then everybody, why don't you take it as a profession? So we never thought about doing something else altogether, which was working so well. I was doing it as a hobby, so why not doing it as a profession

(DJ): And maybe just staying with that alternate pathway? And you've laid out a very specific pathway. Headmaster of a boarding school. What is it about that that appeal to you or appeals to you?

(VD): One of my favorite movies is Goodbye, Mr. Chips. So one of the. It's a classic about a British headmaster and British boarding school and how we nurtured children year after year over like 60 years. And that was always my role model, that one day I would like to nurture children. I got it indirectly. I didn't get it by being in a school.

I got it by maturing children in my profession. And today I have seen my second generation children coming from those children I helped to. They have got married, they have children. Now they're coming back to me. That's a tremendous sense of satisfaction. I've helped generation after generation and what happens in my business if one family comes, all allied families come.

If somebody comes from ICICI, all the other colleagues come from ICICI. So that gives you a tremendous sense of satisfaction and a joy. So when a lot of my friends, when the finance world, they were kings in the finance world, I said, that's not something which I'm passionate about. Let me stick to what my passion is.

My passion is children. My passion is mentoring them. And there was nobody doing it. Think of it when you were in school or college, who was mentoring you? You either had some professor or you had some uncle aunt who would come and tell you, do this, do that, or your father will tell you. So I think I wanted to professionalize it.

So I think the whole business of counseling in this country was more of a mom and pop shop. So I feel I have a little bit of a role in institutionalize it like a legal profession, institutionalize counseling also where people can look forward to coming into the counseling business. A lot of children, friends now, children who have come back or just people from outside come and tell me, can I get into counseling?

You're most welcome. It's enough space for everybody, and I'll be happy to mentor you also, because I think I can only 100, 200, 1000, 3000 whole of India is here for you to counsel. So. Yeah. So I think going back, I think this whole thing about if I had been a headmaster was Goodbye, Mr. Chips, I would say so if you ever have a chance. It's the 1934 movie. Very inspiring. If you want to be working with children, I would say.

(DJ): Say I'd love to. I mean, talking about teachers and students. There's a movie called Dead Poets Society, which of.

(VD): Course one of my favorite, absolutely brilliant.

(DJ): The other movie which impacted me in terms of the journey I'm on, is the same actor, Robin Williams in a movie called Good Will hunting.

(VD): Oh, sir, if you look at this, a poster outside of Good Will Hunting. Oh. Is it? Yes. Okay. Got the DVD lying out here. So whenever somebody comes to me, I said, you want to study maths son? Watch three movies? Watch good will hunting. Watch a beautiful mind. And watch The man who

Knew Infinity. Who shall watch and they come back to me after Doshi I watch all the three movies. I would love to do mathematics in college.

(DJ): You're right. So good. Will hunting. The Robin Williams character stayed with me because in a way, and his sort of counterpart is a math professor who is obsessed about his career. Absolutely. While he sorts of found his calling and gone on a different path.

(VD): So, so brilliant movie.

(DJ): So anyway.

(VD): When you go out, you watch the poster. I see that actually. It's Goodwill hunting poster.

(DJ): Okay, I was in I am a second year. I think it came out in 1999 or 2000, 1999, I think I'm 1998, and it stayed with me in a way. At that time, I didn't realize. But many years later I go back to that being one of the.

(VD): Dead Poets Society is very similar to go to. Goodbye, Mr. Chips. We have a great mentor. You know who can?

(DJ): He's a teacher. I think he's an English teacher.

(VD): English teacher in a boarding school. In prep school in Massachusetts.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of quick contextual points here!

First is that just like how Viral found that the student counselling market was non-existent when he started, I also felt that the Leader Counseling Marketing was relatively non-existent back in 2016. Just like businesses think about Where to Play and How to Win, I felt we all think about Where to go and How to grow? While there were many coaches offering a "How to grow" solution, very few if at all were helping leaders with the directional guidance. Almost parallel to the questions students are asking after 12th. Only that this time the stakes are higher, choices are more nebulous and there is sensitivity given the status of the leaders.

Secondly, It is fascinating how movies sometimes inspire us by giving us role models to look up to. On a broader note, I find that reflecting on our role models often gives us a sense of what matters to us and what gives us joy.

I speak about this in my book that came out in Nov 2024. The three role models that inspire me are

- **David Attenborough**
 - o Long game
 - o Staying relevant
 - o Committing to one field for decades
- **Robin Williams** character in Goodwill Hunting
 - o Helping others find their potential
 - o On his own path than running the rat race

Podcast Transcript [110.02 Viral Doshi - The path not taken – Boarding School Headmaster](#)
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- Prioritized what matters – he speaks about how he skips a 1975 Boston Red Sox game because he had to go see about a girl
- **Alexander Babu** - Stand-up comedian in Tamil Nadu
 - Engineering to his calling
 - Solo artist and the authenticity in his voice
 - Skill stacking – Humour and Music

In a lot of ways, these three individuals have informed my directional choices, intensity with which I do what I do and the mind-set with which I lead my life!

Even this conversation with Viral Doshi would not have happened if I had not asked my mentors who my role models could be.

Who are your role models? What does that tell you about the kind of life you want to lead and the person you want to become?

End of transcription

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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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