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Context to the conversation

Viral speaks about how he has stayed relevant by staying in touch with the trends in the world of education and by engaging with parents and students across cultures. He also speaks about how he has conducted research and presented his findings through books, talks and presentations to many relevant forums over the years. He also shares how he weaves in a personal touch in the way he engages with children and parents.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other question that comes to mind Viral is staying relevant, right? 22 years. You've seen many shifts, right? In a way that was around the.com boom was happening. Then there have been many other booms. Now we are seeing the AI. Sort of playbook evolving. How have you thought of thought of staying relevant and staying competitive? As if I may say, has the spaces moved from a mom and pop to an industrialized space? How have you sort of kept your edge? What's been your approach?

Viral Doshi (VD): I think I've divided into two parts. One relevance is how do you stay relevant in this business? Attending conferences, meeting with admission directors when they come out here. Visiting colleges, visiting schools all across the world, all across the country.

That keeps you abreast on what's happening. That side. The other side, I would say, is of this course meeting a wide range of people all over the country, all over the world. I think A) being relevant because of having offices now in Dubai, London, Singapore, New York, you relevant to the world market around you. Number two, writing articles. Do lot of research for that.

At the end of the day, giving seminars virtually twice a month. I give seminars all across the country to schools, to colleges, to YPO, YEO, Why you all this? You are doing research for that. And also, I would say even being one step ahead of what's happening in the market, I remember when I was when we do college application, we write essays and when students would have come to me, they were quite lost, flummoxed.

How do you write a good essay and what would they do? They would pick up a book from Amazon called 50 Successful Harvard Essays, 50 Successful Yale essays, and they try and emulate that. Now, the American child, the way he writes, the way he thinks very different from our child. So about five years ago, we made anthology of the best essays of students have gone to Ivy League schools, and

we nicknamed it 101 essays for Indian Roots, Ivy admits. 101 essays got Indian students into Ivy League and Stanford, and we classify them into eight chapters in different, different types of essays. And that became a bestseller because there was no resource base in India for essays and people when they started reading these essays. Oh my God, I can't believe we can write essays like that.

So yes, being relevant is understanding what the market requires. So if I divide both these parts, just put these parts have helped me to stay relevant. And today a lot of people tell me you don't use AI in your business. As I said, I am relevant, but I'm also a dinosaur because I believe in working in the old fashioned way and I'm happy with it, you know?

Well, you haven't seen one day when you come, I have a habit of writing notes. So when a student comes and meets me, I write everything in handwriting and I give them a 10 page, 12-page note which they carry with them, and I keep it them for the next four years or eight years to come. And then I have a well, I've been known that when I write something in red at the top, it's a very auspicious thing and that you're going to get admission this school.

So typically people ohh, please try to red pen and tell us where we can get in, you know. So yeah, so I think I have not embraced technology as perhaps one should have, but I don't see the necessity of doing that in my business. Where's the Rolex model. Yes. If I was looking at volumes, technology is very important.

For me, child is important. And typically today anybody comes back to me after 15 years. I can remember which college you went to. What he had done for his college application so much so on a lighter note whenever my students get married and they invite me, what I carry with me is a framed copy of the Common App essay to US colleges and they're so shocked.

Ohh Mr Doshi you kept it with you. I've kept all my student's details with me. So that's when people. How do you remember these things? I said because you deal with limited people, you remember each child specially and that's what makes them so, you know, wonder. Oh my God, how can you do this? So yes, I have not perhaps embraced technology.

That's one lacuna. Perhaps everybody tells me, but I don't see necessary. But yes, today a lot of people, when they come to you for project ideas, they go to ChatGPT and it's very evident. They go on to ChatGPT. But I think just being the way you are, it's worked well for me. It will work well for me in the future also.

(DJ): I think the whole discussion now is moving to the direction of staying human in the age of AI. And I think what you just said about carrying that essay that the person wrote 15 years back and framing it, I think these are such.

(VD): Human touches.

(DJ): And the handwritten note, I think that's where.

(VD): Yeah something which stands you out. I would imagine asking me what makes me relevant. People remember me for that, you know, they carry the folder when they come back to Mr Doshi these are your notes. You told me. Exactly. I'll go and become a chartered accountant. I have become a chartered accountant. You told me I got a rank. I have got a rank also. That's what makes

you happy, isn't it? When somebody comes and tells you that because of you, I am. What I am today It's very gratifying. And. And for me, even, you know, when somebody comes from a family, the child is happy and he recommends the second child to come. I know I've done a good job. You know, that for me is happiness. That for me is excellence in the work that I do. Not getting any awards, anything of that sort. But that's what I would do.

(DJ): It's beautiful actually, even before just a couple of hours before this conversation, I was chatting with my colleague Akash and showing him a handwritten note I had written to somebody and it was somebody, a friend's 25th anniversary, and I wrote a handwritten note just congratulating the couple, and they said, just the fact that you took the time to take a write a handwritten note. It means so much in a world where people are just using AI to generate stuff. So maybe it's so thoughtful.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the way Viral has adapted to the evolving environment over the years by sharply focusing on the ecosystem that is relevant for children that are graduating from the 12th and by frequently publishing his pieces of work in various forms and forums.

It is also wonderful to see how the human touch sometimes makes a difference in the way people see you and relate to you!

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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