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Context to the nugget

Vijay discusses how less is more when you are interviewing a person. He discusses the role of brevity and the need for active listening to ensure that you are picking up the cues. He talks about some thoughts around how to navigate such a conversation. He uses the metaphor of Billiards where you are not just thinking about the initial contact of the cue ball with the red ball but are thinking two steps ahead of where all the cue ball might go.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Give us an insight into the art of asking good questions. When you do interviews how do you frame questions?

Vijay Amritraj (VA): When I started doing television work for Star Sports and commenting on Sports that I knew really well, it was still a challenge because I had not done television before in this so called commenting or presenting format but that was a challenge but the positive aspect of this was the fact that I was dealing with the sport that I knew very well of course I went out to do other sports thereafter, I did Golf for many years, I did Badminton, I did one of the anchors for London Olympics and so on and so forth. So, it taught me more and more as I did more television work because obviously there is a lot more aspects to it than just commentating on match or asking questions because you have got a producer near you, you have got commercials to deal with, you have got segments to finish in a particular time frame and all of that so there are a lot of other challenges that you work with especially with the live broadcast because you are working with the aspects of time whereas in a show that you are trying to create with the content than you have the ability to edit, which in our sport we never had the only thing we had was the second surf so, I think when I look at it that way it gave me a good insight is to what I really need to learn and I would be too able to draw the audience in as well. I think from the stand point of being an interviewer and talking to a guest on the show, when I was doing television for tennis I tried to mould myself a little bit a more on the Dan Maskell's style of commentary, who you worth well before your time, but there was a great Dan Maskell who like a wall to crawl to news in the U.S., who were very special when they did commentary and they came from the aspects of less is more when you are an interviewer when you are a host of a show the entire show is about the guest, it's not about the host or it's not about the person asking the questions and for me whenever I had a guest on the show it was never going to be a Q and A and it was never going to be a Monolog it was always meant to be a dialogue. So, the important this is to be listen to the guest and be able to take questions lay and go from there as to what the Lay man is want to hear the audience is want to hear. Guess you have a string of questions in your head that you want to get to but at the end of the day it still needs to be a

dialogue so it makes the conversation more interesting like the Larry King would have done it on CNM for many many years and that's what made him so popular because he was an everyday man, wearing his braces and sitting there with someone across the table be a John Lennon or be it a President or a Prime minister and just have a chat with him and that's what it was meant to be similarly with the great Barbour Altos who used to do shows for ABC and those kinds of things made it a lot more interesting as oppose to saying let me get a quick back let me see what the guy is gonna say and or papering him with the Q & As continuously.

DJ: How you would frame the questions to get to the next level of insight than just the superficial stuff that comes out in a lot of conversations.

VA: It's almost like a Tennis match, when you end up getting into a rally you hit a particular shot so you expect that shot is packed in a particular spot and then you are able to deal with the next shot in billions when the guy hits the red ball with his que ball his able to position that que ball for the next shot and prepare so his position well that this is what he wants and similarly in Q and A it's not very different unless you have beaten that particular segment into the ground and you are not going to listen the answer you want so leave it alone.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The biggest takeaway for me here was the notion of less is more that Vijay alludes to. As I reflect on this in the context of my experiences as a search consultant in my previous company where we would interview senior leaders, the one thing we would observe was that the interviewers that spoke the least often got the most insights out of a conversation. One of my colleagues would even take it to an extreme level and use the pause to great effect where he would not say anything and he would fill the room with silence and let the other person break the silence and use that to precipitate all kinds of insights. Thank you for listening. For more, you could follow the Twitter handle Play to Potential.

End of nugget transcription

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Vijay Amritraj - Nuggets

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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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Podcast Transcript [01.05 Vijay Amritraj - Framing Good Questions](#)

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