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Context to the nugget

Technology is all pervasive in our lives today. But how has the world of academia been impacted by this? Hear Kartik elaborate on the increase in opportunity afforded by the tsunami of technology.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): We live in a world where there's a tsunami of stimuli hitting us. It's gotten harder and harder for us to focus and go deeper and deeper into problems. How has technology impacted productivity in the world of academia?

Kartik Hosanagar (KH): I think, in terms of how technology has impacted, there is an element that I'm sure everyone sees in their own profession, which is that the need to store a lot of knowledge isn't quite there the way it was. I think, academia is generally a knowledge-intensive industry, so the best academics are big storehouses of knowledge, but, I think, increasingly, for our work, you can assume that you can very quickly find the right, prior work on any topic, and you can very quickly acquire the knowledge you need to. I think, that's one interesting change.

Depth often comes in two ways: one is that the depth comes in terms of maybe not your domain knowledge or rather I would say it doesn't come through your domain knowledge as much as it comes through maybe methodological training. So, for example, for an academic, somebody uses statistics, somebody uses say machine learning, and so on. They can quickly connect the dots and if they are looking at a new problem, new area, they can pick up on some of the domain knowledge quickly and be able to connect the dots. That's one way in which it plays out. The other way, which is sort of the converse of what I said, is, you could have great domain knowledge but if you can connect that domain knowledge to other domains, then sort of connect the dots, you can carry it over to these new, other domains, because in the new domains, you can pick up the knowledge. So, the single biggest way in which it affects academia, at least in my case, is that you can switch areas at various points in your career faster than you could otherwise. If you are an academic who has a 30- or 40-year career in academia, you might work on three-four different topics, each topic for seven-eight years. I would say that your ability to switch and try new topics has increased. So, for me, I have switched three times in just the past 13 years as a professor.

DJ: Interesting. And I guess, there are a lot of people stating that value is going to be created more and more at the intersection of disciplines, so I guess, in a way, that's an opportunity for you to marry insights from multiple perspectives.

KH: Absolutely! I think what I said is relevant not just for academia, it's relevant anywhere. As long as there is a level of knowledge intensity, this observation is applicable there.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key takeaway for me here was that there is just so much opportunity for us to connect the dots across disciplines and add value. There is enough literature, which says that for the future one needs to think of one's profile more like the symbol pi [π] than the T where you have expertise in two disciplines and you have two legs and then you have a generalization which is applying those two principles in different environments rather than the old world where you were specialized in one discipline and you would apply it in different places. Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

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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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