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Context to the nugget

Unlike the analogue world, employees and customers in the digital world are at the centre and the organization and processes are built around them. This makes the hiring of employees a very significant task. How does a leader go about hiring someone and what are their markers for potential? Don't miss the insightful anecdote about The Knowledge test that the London cab drivers have to take and how that is relevant to this nugget.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let's go back to one of the themes from the leadership standpoint, which is hiring, talent acquisition. Give us a sense of how that space is shifting, given digital. How are companies innovating using digital to hire leaders at the top, both in terms of what they're looking for, the digital quotient or a digital mindset, and the technologies that are aiding better decision-making from a talent-acquisition standpoint?

Abhijit Bhaduri (AB): Again, one of the polarities is that in the analogue world, while all the companies said that people are our most important assets or customers are king, neither of them was actually true. In the real world, people didn't care either about employees or about customers. In the digital world, actually it's just the reverse. You have to put the employee or the customer at the centre and then build the rest of the organizational processes around it. This actually is a very different mindset. So, the way in which the process of talent acquisition works is that you hire people not for competencies, but you hire people actually for their ability to learn stuff. So, competency is the old analogue model, where you have a world which we know, which we understand. There is the defined path, the roads are already created. You just need to have people who know how to navigate those roads very well. So, it is really like being a bus driver, a school-bus driver. You have a particular route it may be very crowded, very complicated, but it's a predictable set. Now, in this digital world, you are really looking for the cabbie who will be able to pick up weak directions. For example, when they train cabbies in London, they actually put them through a couple of years of training. You should be able to give them a very random street, landmark, or something to that effect and say, 'Oh, there is a pub which is known for the fries that they do and there is a laundry which is right next to it, which has got a funny name I think it's the name of a movie and that's the place where I want to go'. The person should be able to actually take you there.

DJ: It's almost like a different set of skills. It's not just how well you drive the car but how well you navigate...

AB: And build a conversation with the client, being able to engage the people. It's a very different set of requirements. In the digital world, there is no precedence. So, what happens is, the world is going

to be made up of people who know how to create roads rather than drive on roads which are already created.

DJ: To your point, how do you test for learnability?

AB: Most people who are curious have, at some point of time, picked up stuff which they've tried to learn on their own. I just was speaking half-an-hour back to a person who is teaching a class in this particular organization. They're actually teaching someone how to run a particular software. I said 'That's very impressive. How did you learn it?' He says, 'I have never attended any class. I used to listen to all these people talking about it in the online forums, and then I would go and try out the different things. And as I experimented, I discovered that I could actually figure out many different options. So, people would post screenshots. I would look at them and sort of try.' I have met so many people who've picked up you can't reach expertise level, but you can pretty much get way past average, which means you are pretty much at the other end of the bell curve so I think it is possible for people to do that. However, one must also then say, while it is possible to sort of, let's say, go from 0 to 85 by learning on your own, then there is another aspect which actually takes over beyond that, when you want to really take it to the real realm of expertise. Then, you are looking at feedback, deliberate practice, and all that stuff that makes people move, crawl up from 85 to a 100. Then, that's a very, very, very slow glide.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Claudio Fernandez Araoz, an ex-colleague of mine from EgonZehnder, in his insightful HBR article, 21st century talent spotting, talks about markers for long term potential. He talks about how we should look for how much energy people derive from 4 things - Curiosity (learning new things and growing through feedback), Engagement (connecting with people); Insight (making sense of data and complex patterns) and Grit. In a world with increasing number of unknown unknowns these markers might be a much more accurate predictor of executive success than just relying on competencies. The key insight here is that indicators of future potential is likely to come from where people derive the energy and less from what they do well today and these two might be uncorrelated sometimes. Thank you for listening. For more please visit playtopotential.com

End of nugget transcription

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Abhijit Bhaduri - 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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