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## Context to the nugget

In order to be relevant in this digital age, leaders need to adapt to a digital mindset. What does this mindset look like? Abhijit discusses the digital mindset in this nugget and gives anecdotes of how extremely competent leaders of the analogue era are struggling to adapt to this. He also shares two important core values which can help in acquiring skills to navigate this digital world. Look out for his views on the future being an '&' world rather than an 'Or' world.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I want to move to building a digital mindset. I think it's a non-trivial shift for leaders who've spent a lot of time in the analogue world and some who've spent half that time and grown with the emergence of digital. First, how do you stay productive and how do you take in information given the deluge, given the tsunami? Second, managing time in a digitally distracting world. And then, just staying current, given the number of moving pieces, how do you really stay on top of these things? This digital mindset is almost like a multi-disciplinary shift, which feels like a big order. So, from a habit-changing perspective, what have you seen some of the leaders do, both in terms of how they've approached it strategically but also even in terms of tactics that have worked well for them to really shift the needle from the analogue mindset to the digital mindset?

Abhijit Bhaduri (AB): I was talking to a leader, yesterday, who has just sold his company to a healthcare start-up. This is the sixth start-up he has sold, and his clients range from the Microsoft's of the world to Cisco and now this healthcare start-up. I was asking him what his interests are, and this person is actually an engineer from IIT Kharagpur and has deep interest in classical music and archaeology, and he's spent time going for excavations and all kinds of things, picks up stuff on his own. So, I was asking him what he reads, and he says, 'I read about 60 articles a week and then I try and sort of plough through about four or five books at a time and then finish off different books at different times'. So, I said, 'What are you reading now?' It's pretty amazing. This person is reading stuff which is ancient history, he's looking at a book on machine learning, he's looking at a book on photography, and there was another one, I think, he mentioned about music. This, in many ways, encapsulates the kind of mindset that we are talking about for somebody who is very comfortable with the polarity.

If there was only one symbol which describes the digital world I would use the ampersand. So, when I started my company, Abhijit Bhaduri and Associates, I used the ampersand, because in my opinion, the world is going to move to an 'and' world. It's no longer you are either a science person or a liberal arts person; you are actually going to have to be both. Yes, you will have to understand analytics perhaps, but you will also have to be able to tell the story of the insight that you got using analytics. Or, if you don't have every skill possible, which is more likely to be the case, you will be

able to work very well with people across divisions and that means not only people inside your organization, but, in a seamless manner, to be able to also work with communities, talent communities outside. All of that is actually the mindset which is going to be extremely important.

I think the new leadership paradigm is going to be driven by two core values: one is actually having the humility to ask a question and say I really don't know, tell me about it. And you could ask that for anyone, regardless of the person inside the organization, junior, senior, peer, anyone. So, humility is one. Number two, having the courage to be able to fail as you are learning. Because if you look at what prevented people from taking to social media and by that I mean leaders of large companies for a very long time, it was because they believed this is some child's play, this is something meant for teenagers and it's not made for serious people like us, we are not supposed to be doing all this. And suddenly you realize that the new language of communication has evolved and those people who did not sign on to it, who kind of thought that it's one of those frivolous things for somebody who has a lot of time on their hand I have heard so many people say that: this is for people who have all the time in the world to do...

**DJ: It comes from the either-or paradigm, right?**

**AB:** It's the either-or. That I don't need to do this. So, one of those leaders, in a very large tech company, the person actually turns back and says, 'What I mean is, I have a day job, so now when do I get on to something like social media and do all this stuff?' And I am saying that well, the company has an internal social network, so forget going outside, what do you do? So, he says now that is for all those youngsters, the 25-year-olds who we have in abundance it's a tech company; the average age is 25-26 so, he says that this is for those kinds of guys and they are talking about all kinds of rubbish there. And this is the mindset which comes from the analogue world that youngsters are frivolous characters who have all the time to do stuff. 'I am beyond all this, I am the busy guy, I am the big guy, therefore I am supposed to do all the things that really matter, so I have to worry about profitability,' without realizing it is that youngster whose work is going to drive profitability. How do you engage that guy?

Actually, one of the biggest chasms I see in leadership learning and mindset is the fact that most people do not realize how large this new medium is, which they have ignored. I don't know, at the risk of sound really negative, I think it's too late to learn because it just is a very different mindset. For example, if you look at Facebook and look at the emergence of video. People consume something to the effect of 100 million hours of video every day on Facebook, contrasted with something like Netflix; people are consuming 160 million hours of video every day on Netflix. This is pretty amazing! It sounds like a massive number, until you think about the fact that on YouTube, people are consuming a billion and that's spelt with a 'b' and not an 'm' billion hours of video every day. So, if this is the language, if this is the medium where people have moved already, I mean, if there's a billion hours being consumed on YouTube, it's a very large proportion of people, going by the fact that not everybody is consuming the video 24 hours a day. You can do the math and figure out. If people are consuming 20 minutes of video every day or one hour of video every day, how many people is it? This is the point. How many leaders know how to communicate and engage the audience using this new medium? And very few companies are actually teaching it.

Again, if you look at all the digital companies, or digital-born companies I should say, especially the leaders the Amazons, the Googles and this and that of the world are actually encouraging all their leaders. Those are some of the few companies which are encouraging their leaders to abandon print and everything else and move to video, with the idea of engaging them. This method actually reflects the mindset change and for many people, this is very, very hard. In the social media, the first thing that it teaches you is, you have to earn your spurs. You could be any CEO; it doesn't guarantee

that people are going to listen you, unless you have something to value add to people. One of the people who I was interacting with, a CEO, and he said, 'I've started my Twitter account near a couple of days back and I've told all my team members to follow me, but beyond that nobody is joining. What do I need to do to get a billion followers?' So, I was saying what you have been posting? So, he said, 'I post the fact that I am out for a game of golf'. Why should somebody care about it? Why should a million people care about the fact that you are playing golf today? It's not a massive event in the lifetime of humanity.

**DJ: It's also an equalizer or a leveller...**

AB: Of course, it is. When you say things like that you are living with an inflated self-image. You have to realize that you are not that interesting that a million people are going to spend time listening to your statements.

**DJ: And even that's learning: how do you come across as credible and value-additive...**

AB: This is about humility. I have seen people like last year, saw a major shift in Facebook usage by CEOs of companies, people of the likes of Indra Nooyi have come on board. They're actually really trying to learn and they are grounded enough to tell people that I don't really know this; I am trying to learn this. And people then go out of the way to actually teach them, and say you should do this, read up this, I am sending you this. But the moment you kind of say that I know it all, and then people say OK, go right ahead and show me the chops. I think that's the place where we begin to lose the audience.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The point about moving from an OR paradigm to an AND one is quite powerful, specifically in the Digital context. A lot of the digital activity is often seen as the realm of the new generation. But I have seen effective leaders really embrace digital as a key enabler in their role and not as something that is an overhead which comes in the way of achieving real business outcomes. Someone like an Anand Mahindra is a great case in point where despite all the pressures of running the business, it is fascinating to see him make the time to engage in the Social Media and share excitement around what is happening in his company. Thank you for listening. For more please visit [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com)

## 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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