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Context to the nugget

According to Abhijit, the CDO is the mapmaker of the new digital world of the organization. He is the one who takes up the real opportunity in looking at the digital landscape in a holistic sense for the entire organization and not just using it as an easy marketing or feedback tool. Hear more about this popular position that is seeing many hiring ads!

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I want to talk about CDO, Chief Digital Officer. That's a term that comes up quite often. Clearly, it's a role that a lot of companies are hiring. How do you think about that? What mistakes do you see people making, as they think about this role, CDO? Is it one person that should play the role or is it a mindset or is it a combination of the two?

Abhijit Bhaduri (AB): I think what having a particular person in charge does is that it puts a little bit more of attention and resources that the company needs to invest in. So let's say, when an organization creates a Chief Learning Officer [CLO], it's a misnomer to think that chief learning officer is the person who becomes the one person who understands at all. Absolutely not! But, what it does is, can the person build the ability or the excitement and belief in the organization that all of us can be our own CLOs? So, you can create your own methods of learning, you can experiment, you can create content, do all that. That I think is the role of the CLO, to be able to facilitate. So, in the same breath, when you are talking about having a CDO, the CDO's role is to actually create the culture in which the nuances of the digital world are understood, create awareness of the board, let's say on things like cyber security, there is very little until you understand what that could possibly mean and the kind of impact of that on the brand, on the talent, and various things, it's very hard for you to craft the strategy around that. And a lot of times, the board may have people who are not necessarily that familiar with the shifts in the digital space. That's the kind of education so, in many ways the CDO, at least in the initial stages, is going to be educating people about really the impact and possibilities and scope of the shift and talking about how to navigate that. So, the CDO today is really the mapmaker of this new world.

DJ: What would success look like for a digital officer coming into the company? What are the kind of things the person would demonstrate in a 12 to 18 month, or maybe longer, timeframe, from an outcome standpoint?

AB: So, I think, the first thing is, I'll go back to my term that it's an 'and' world, so you will have the analogue and the digital co-exist. We talk about a two-speed world, that there is the traditional business as usual and there is the new world out there which is emerging. So, most organizations will go through the transition, where you create the new world and maybe in the first year, your revenue

coming out of the new world, the digital world, is only going to be single digits. There is going to be a point of time when as this grows, it is going to replace the old model, and that's the kind of transition, except for the fact that in the case of the digital shift, the time to make that happen is incredibly crunched. One way to sort of look at it is if you think about, sort of the growth of the e-books, Kindle and all of that. Go back five years, seven years, and you will sort of see that there was a point of time people said this was a fad. Who will ever not want to read a paperback? And there is a tactile feel to it which is true.

DJ: Even when digital cameras came in, right? People said, I want to feel the photograph...

AB: Exactly! I want to feel the photograph and what happened to that? So, it's a habit which is being formed. Obviously, habit-forming takes time, adoption takes time, but in the digital world, it's so easy to form the habit. Also, think about it, about five years back, if I had said, 'Will you put up your photograph on a website which millions of strangers will look at?' most people would have said, 'Absolutely not! I love my privacy'. And look at what people are doing today! We are sending our photographs all over the space on WhatsApp and a million other devices and a million other platforms. Think about the fact that we are leaving behind digital footprints which we are not even aware of. The other day I was chatting with one of the senior leaders who said 'I am extremely particular about my digital footprints and therefore, for me, privacy is of supreme importance'. So, I asked him, 'Did you ever have a profile on Orkut?' which was the older social networking site and he said, 'Yes, I did'. And I said, 'So what happened to that profile?' He said, 'Gosh! Good that you reminded me, because I haven't used it in four years. I think I have forgotten the password'. And this is the whole point! There is a truckload of photographs you have got there, connections, data points, this and that, conversations, all of which remain. So, we forget. The one time you wanted to get a deal and you sign up and put your email address there, you create a password, which you repeat somewhere else, then you repeat it on a more important site all this is exactly where the world is going to. So, it's a new world which we will have to get used to and we will have to learn new grammar. I don't think we have a choice.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Lot of leaders do a good job of getting hold of the low hanging fruit around digital - Marketing spend, Customer Channels, Sales and so on. But the real opportunity is in looking at Digital in a holistic way right from the Board all the way to the various functions ranging across HR, Legal, Finance and so on. This is clearly one of those roles where the impact can be a big function of the stature and the calibre of the person coming into the role and whether the person has a seat on the table or not. 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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