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Context to the nugget

Viren shares his insights around how he joined OGQ after ISB. When I graduated from IIMA, a lot of us including me, didn't have a clear framework to make a considered choice in terms of direction. Viren talks about the role of serendipity in how he ended up joining OGQ. He actually talks about how he almost ended up joining a corporate role before he joined OGQ. He also talks about how he has "taken the plunge" at crucial junctures in his life.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How did OGQ come about, post ISB? Give us an insight into how you took stock of the various forks ahead of you and how was OGQ born?

Viren Rasquinha (VR): Life just throws a few things in your path and you don't plan for it. I never planned for OGQ and I never knew about OGQ throughout my ISB career. So, I finished ISB in 2009. OGQ was actually incorporated in 2001. Nothing was done at all. There were no funds, no athletes, nothing. Neeraj Bhardwaj, who was on the board of directors of OGQ, also happens to be on the board of ISB. He was one of the founding members of ISB. So, he had just given me a call and told me that we have this organization called OGQ, and I had no clue and I actually put the phone down on him. At that time, in 2008–9, was the economic slump, post-Lehman chaos, and the Satyam scandal, and the dean of ISB was on the chair of Satyam. No one was getting jobs and everyone was tense. How do you pay off your education loans? I was not interested in talking to a not-for-profit and that sort of thing. So, that's when I first heard about OGQ.

I got a campus placement, a pretty decent package, and I was happy about that. ISB got over in April 2009. I was supposed to start in June 2009, in Delhi, conventional corporate world. I would have been sitting on Excel sheets throughout. And when I came back, the first day, I happened to meet Geet and Prakash, and they told me there is this nice organization called OGQ and they had co-founded it and they were looking for a CEO. I told them that I had an offer, so right now I am not really looking out. But it actually interested me because one, Geet and Prakash were asking me. In the sporting world, it's two legends asking you, people of the highest achievement, calibre, credibility. I studied a little bit about OGQ. The board was extremely credible. I thought the idea was good, the platform was good.

But what really made the choice for me was, for me, there was a dream as a player to win an Olympic medal, which I could not win even when I played the Athens 2004 Olympics. And I remember at that time being very frustrated, because there were so many mistakes in the Indian system, the way we prepared for major competitions. And I had always promised myself that one day, if I got the opportunity, maybe I would do things differently and I would do things better. So, it

sort of all came together at the right time. That's how it happened. At that time, OGQ had one athlete, Gagan Narang, and there was actually 10 lakhs in the bank. Again, people thought that I was mad. So, history repeated itself. When I was in tenth standard, they thought I was mad. When I quit hockey, again, people thought I was mad. And when I was taking a not-for-profit after I had a huge education loan, again they thought I was mad. So, now, I am getting, sort of, used to it. As I said, I have always followed my heart, followed what I thought was best, and I have been lucky enough that my parents have never interfered and they have always trusted me.

DJ: If you were to reflect on some of these transitions you've been through, what are the two–three themes that come up that you want to share with the broader universe of people going through their careers, in terms of how they should think about what next?

VR: I think, it's a great question. Obviously, people are generally very confused in lives about what to do, what to do next, and when to do. To be honest, I was confused as well. I was scared, because the decision to make the transition from hockey to studies was very tough for me, because I thought I am going to go to school where IIT'ians are going to be coming and all that and can I match up to them. Will I be able to take the load of the course? But when I actually went into ISB, you realize that everyone has been in the corporate world for five years and everyone is scared and everyone is thinking can I manage. But when you just jump into the pool, you somehow learn to swim, even if it's against the tide. And that environment, it forces you to learn and forces you to fend for yourself. I realized that everyone had the fear. No one had touched a book for five years. So, that was one thing. You need to overcome that fear of change, and sometimes just take the plunge.

Number two is, if you've seen, I've always done what I loved and what I wanted to do and not what someone else wanted me to do. Third is, back yourself and then give it everything. That can't be compromised on. Sometimes you will fail. And I always say that I have failed many more times than I've won. But that's OK that will happen. You've just got to keep plugging away.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of the book - Designing your life by Bill Burnett and Dave Evans of Stanford where they talk about using Design thinking during transitions. They specifically talk about the Action Bias where they say that if you are 50:50 about something, you are better off doing it than not doing it. Herminia Ibarra talks about this in her book Working Identity as well. She talks about crafting a portfolio of experiments. I guess the key takeaway is that too many people try to solve transitions at an intellectual level. But unfortunately, unless we try out a few things and get feedback from it, we run the risk of what could be called "grass is greener on the other side" syndrome!

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End of nugget transcription

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Viren Rasquinha - 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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