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## Context to the nugget

We all benefit from mentors at different points in our careers. Pramath talks about his approach to configuring his personal Board of Directors. He describes how he has leveraged his Board of Directors at various points in his career.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** How have you thought about your board of advisors? People talk about the personal board of directors that sort of guide them. How have you thought about that? Who would you put on the list? If you can provide an insight on how that's evolved over time?

**Dr Pramath Sinha (PS):** It's a good question. This is a very good example of the answer to your earlier question on how you build resilience towards a new model for leadership. I am somewhat more of a heart guy than a mind guy. So, if you look at my board of advisors, my PhD advisor, who I did my PhD with nearly 30 years ago, is somebody I still stay in touch with. She is now at University of California, Berkeley. So, every time I go to California, I actually spend time with her and hang out with her. Now, again, she is not directly related to what I do but where I was headed to was that ultimately people who inspire you, regardless of whether they are related to what you do, are on my board of advisors. Because just a meeting with them, just time spent with them, pushes you on to think whatever you are dealing with better or do something that you were struggling with better and so on. So, I think, she is one example of somebody I have on my board of advisors.

Rajat Gupta who was the managing director of McKinsey and I spent a lot of time with him building ISB. Of course, Rajat got into quite a bit of trouble, but as a person, he's been amazingly inspiring, particularly with all the troubles he went through with his case and then being in jail and out of it. So, I really admire Rajat. I've always admired him for his ability to think big and yet retain a certain humility and a certain commitment to making other people successful. So, I stay very close to him, and he is one of, clearly, my heroes in spite of everything that has happened to him and for him.

One of my investors, Sanjeev Agarwal of Helion, is somebody that I really look up to. Sanjeev is a good example of somebody who was an entrepreneur, scaled up a business, became an investor. I have to say that despite being an investor, his selflessness and his almost detachment — which then, I think, helps him give you very sound advice, even though he could be seen as in conflict — has been quite remarkable for me and I find that very inspiring.

So, three very different people, but I could immediately think of these three people who really have been great guide posts over time. One thing I know is, I don't let go of these people when I find them. It doesn't matter if what they are or are not relevant to what I am doing. Like I said in the

beginning, it's really much more about are they inspiring you or not, and it doesn't matter whether they have the subject matter expertise.

**DJ: And do you have some sort of a discipline around how you sort of stay in touch with them or is it more gut driven?**

PS: I am not a guy who is very good about staying in touch with people. Especially the way I think about it, my relationships are lifelong and it doesn't matter if I am physically or virtually in frequent touch. But yes, I do make an effort to reach out. I do make an effort to be intimate with them when I am with them and I think that always keeps it going, because then people don't feel like you are being artificial or you are just showing up to schmooze or network. Equally, there are times when I just called up these people because I needed help and you hesitate thinking, oh, I didn't stay in touch but I'm now calling them because I need help. But, I think, if you do it the right way and you do it not in a sense of entitlement but with a genuine need, then if these people were inspirational in the first place, they will rise up to inspire you even more.

Another of these folks is a McKinsey director Tsun-Yan Hsieh who is now in Singapore, retired, but used to be in the Toronto office of McKinsey. We've had a long relationship and I remember many times even in my career, calling him, 'Listen, and just give me something to do with you'. And every time I did that, he would, and that would change my life. So, I think, people like that just are there for you and you kind of know that. So, even if you don't see them frequently enough, there's a bond that is very special that you want to preserve and not give up on.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It was interesting to hear Pramath to talk about how you ask for help from the mentors and the personal board of directors. Sometimes that "how" piece is often overlooked. The notion of doing it with authenticity without a misplaced sense of entitlement is key I have seen in my limited observation of people who have successfully developed and built a personal board of advisors over time.

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## End of nugget transcription

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## Dr. Pramath Sinha - Nuggets

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- 14.02 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Consulting (McKinsey) as a career option
- 14.03 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Transitioning out of consulting (including views on entrepreneurship)
- 14.04 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Authentic leadership
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- 14.07 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Educating ourselves (and link with leadership of the future)
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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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