

The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small note at the bottom left reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Leaders during transitions often feel like trapeze artists as they go from one to another. It is the role of the hiring manager and the leader making the transition to think through the transition explicitly and thoughtfully. Vedika shares her perspectives in the context of some of her transitions at a leadership level.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let's talk about some of the transitions you've been through. The first one was ICICI Securities to JP Morgan and then JP Morgan to Credit Suisse and both were transitions at leadership levels. The first three to six months are often make-or-break phases. Any reflections on those two transitions, wearing the hat of what you went through at that time but also wearing the hat of having the benefit of hindsight? What are the things that people often miss out while doing a transition at a senior level?

Vedika Bhandarkar (VB): When I moved from ISEC to JP Morgan, I wasn't senior. It was back in 1998. I had just finished my nine years, I hadn't even finished nine years of working. So, that was a relatively easier one. I was moving from a joint venture to JP Morgan and what took me by surprise was, while I knew JP Morgan through the joint venture for five years, moving away from a joint venture to a 100%-owned, it's such a huge difference. Suddenly, you're treated differently. There's much more access in terms of knowledge, networks, information. So, that was very pleasant and it wasn't a tough transition. The transition was much more in terms of, as I said, going and getting that first piece of business, making sure we had a viable business.

Having said that, in the 12 years which I spent in JP Morgan, from 1998 to 2010, there were a couple of big transitions and those were around acquisitions or mergers which JP Morgan did. I think, the biggest one was in 2001, when JP Morgan got bought by Chase. Chase had just bought Jardine Fleming before that, and all these three organizations had presence in India. So, Chase Manhattan did, Jardine Fleming did, and JP Morgan did. We were all getting together after the merger, the economy was tanking, so there were way too many people, and I was expecting my second kid. Shamika was born in January of 2001. So, that was probably one of the biggest transitions I went through within JP Morgan, because it was clear that we were too big in terms of team. We had to shrink, and honestly when I was going away on my maternity leave, I didn't know whether I was coming back to a job. It's a totally different thing what happened afterwards, but that was a pretty tough transition.

I think, the transition from JP Morgan to Credit Suisse, which happened much later when I was much more senior, was also an interesting one. There are things which I think I did well and there are

things which I could have done better. So, what did I do well? I didn't have to prove anything when I moved, so I didn't inflict a lot of pressure on myself. We did set ourselves a goal as a team in Credit Suisse, but there wasn't that constant pressure that I need to prove something. So, that made life much easier. Obviously, you have to go and build your [internal] network all over again, which can be exhausting, especially if you've spent so many years in the previous organization where everybody knows you. So, you have to start all over again and it can be exhausting. And every organization works differently. It takes you time to figure that out and it can be sometimes painful, the whole journey and process of discovery.

I think, and here's where I made my mistakes. Because Credit Suisse was itself the result of a couple of mergers, the investment bank was more American, because that was First Boston, and I had worked in JP Morgan, another American institution. The private bank was very Swiss. So, the two cultures were very different. I think, on hindsight, I did not invest enough time and effort in figuring out the differences and in building networks in both the parts. It is necessary to do that because every organization has a different rhythm and to anybody who makes a transition at a senior level, I would say, you really need to try and figure out what the differences are and invest the time. The first year is your honeymoon period. Every new organization will give you time. Use that time wisely, much more internally than externally.

DJ: Are there one or two things that stand out in terms of what one could do in decoding a culture?

VB: Again, I would say, ask for help. In most places if you've just joined, and certainly the people who have hired you, it's in their interest also to make sure or to help you succeed. So, take their help. Don't try to do everything yourself. I think, it comes back to the same thing. When you transition at a senior level, you think you have a point to prove, so the path you will follow is, OK, let me do it myself. I need to make a point. But you don't need to do it yourself. The people who have hired you, they are as invested in your success as you are. So, I would say take the help. We're scared of taking help because we think it makes you look weak. Actually, it doesn't; it just makes you smarter.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The point around decoding the culture of an organization is specifically relevant when you join organizations where the informal culture is quite strong. In one of the companies I work with, where the entrepreneur hired a CEO for the first time to run the day to day business, he gave the first 3-6 months to really soak in, build relationships and figure out the business. Only then did he get into a discussion about roles, goals, targets and so on. This also has an implication on how the hirer sets up the new leader coming in. The rest of the organization should also know that the first few months are time for acclimatization. Quite often the hiring leader has the discussion with the incoming leader but doesn't share it with the wider organization and that is a recipe for disaster too and makes the life for the incoming leader very awkward. If this is a topic of interest, you might want to listen to my earlier chat with Ravi Venkatesan where he spoke about how he transitioned from Cummins in the US to Cummins in India and from Heading Cummins in India to Heading Microsoft in India. The other nugget that might be interesting is Capt. Raghu Raman talking about his transition from the army to the government and to the private sector.

Thank you for listening. For more please visit playtopotential.com. If you want to listen offline either during a car ride or a plane ride, you could find the podcast on iTunes, Stitcher or one of the other Podcast apps.

End of nugget transcription

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Settling into a new context: Figuring out “where to go” is only a part of the challenge for leaders in transition. How you land effectively in a new context is as critical. Hair line cracks often become full blown fractures if not attended to carefully. Leaders talk about some key lessons Individuals could bear in mind as they transition across contexts (Army to Business world, US to India, MNC to Family Business, and Consulting to Industry/Investing etc.) You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Vedika Bhandarkar - Nuggets

- 15.00 Vedika Bhandarkar - The Full Conversation
- 15.01 Vedika Bhandarkar - Water.org - Introduction and how you can contribute
- 15.02 Vedika Bhandarkar - Early childhood wiring
- 15.03 Vedika Bhandarkar - Investment Banking as a career and key transitions
- 15.04 Vedika Bhandarkar - Women and careers
- 15.05 Vedika Bhandarkar - Effective Leadership transitions across companies
- 15.06 Vedika Bhandarkar - Executive to NED transition
- 15.07 Vedika Bhandarkar - Women and Board roles
- 15.08 Vedika Bhandarkar - Transitioning to the Social Impact world
- 15.09 Vedika Bhandarkar - In Summary - Playing to Potential

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.