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Context to the nugget

Vinita talks about how she got into a career in FMCG and reflects on what elements of it have been rewarding for her. She also talks about the key questions people should ask themselves before embarking on a career in a Products company.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What's your advice on how people should think about a career in consumer goods world, in your experience what sorts of people are flourished and what sort of people haven't? And what questions should students ask themselves before they sort of March forward in that direction?

Vinita Bali (VB): In a sense as I think about it it's almost like saying I didn't choose the consumer goods world, the FMCG world chose me, primarily because the first job I got was in an FMCG company and kind of moved from there I think again I go back to a point of you have to intrinsically like what you do, especially if you initially starting off in marketing and so on and so forth you have to be able to relate to the product because you have to be able to relate to the consumers and so on and so forth and I don't think it is so much about the consumer world as it is about the orientation that you bring to what you do. So whether I am selling a computer or a chocolate it is important for me to understand who my customers are? What my channels are? Who my consumers are? How does my products fit into their lives? Not how their life fits into my product typically we tend to see the world from the lens of the company that we are operating in and I think the biggest challenge is to see the world from the lens of the world and that's why I said it's not, how your life fits into my product but how my product fits into your life so I think the interesting part about marketing is this whole, it's not deterministic, there's nothing which says, if I do this every consumer will do that so what is interesting to me about marketing is the different psychology of consumers the sociology of the ecosystem in which business happens one of the characteristics as I keep saying of the FMCG businesses that we rely a lot on velocity, we are talking about low unit price products which a lot of people have to buy a lot of times for the business to be successful, so in a sense you are up for choice all the time and I think that's what is interesting, you're dealing with large numbers of consumers, you are dealing with things that they use every day, it's not a product that you use unlike Pharmaceuticals, I will think about a drug when I am not well, these are happy products, chocolates, soft drinks, biscuits and these are little joys, these are not serious things they don't change your life but these are simple joys and what is interesting is when you start looking at the value chains of each of these organizations and the number of job or the employment that they create is another very fascinating aspect and I realize this as I grew in experience and I guess grew in the roles that you really have an ability to impact the livelihoods, I am not arrogant enough to say the lies but you have the opportunity to impact the livelihood of so many people in that value chain the little kiosks that is

sitting on the road, selling biscuits or soft drinks and these products are like having cash if you are sitting on the roads with the carat of Coke you know by the end of the day you are going to be able to convert your product into cash so it is the much larger ecosystem and then you realize how much more value you can add to that ecosystem by the way you deal with that ecosystem, how do you take in India how do you deal with your contract manufacturers, how do you deal with contract labour, or how authentic are you as a company in dealing with all of those are you cutting corners or not there are so many opportunities for creating employments, Jobs, and when you look at business in that context and when you look at how much influence business has on impacting livelihoods and when you really think deeply about that that's the entire ecosystem you are managing.

DJ: And from a lens of somebody trying to make a directional choice any words of advice on what question should I ask myself, so I am just wondering if there are one or two defining trades that stand out that people reflect upon for them to say, this might be interesting for me.

VB: The lens I would use that does this opportunity gives me the chance to work with really smart people? I think the cultures of organizations is very important, one piece of advice I would give is that, if you increased your own self-awareness of who you are and what you like doing, there are some people who flourished in a competitive adrenal flowing environment there are others who are more measured and you have to actually do a little bit of homework to say, first of all do I like the products that this company sales, whether these are consumed products, white goods, services, anything, can I relate to this, if I cannot relate to alcohol why would I go and work in... if I cannot relate to some Tractor, why would I go and work in a company that are selling Tractors, so there is something which says can you relate to the product, what is the culture of this company? Do I have the opportunity to work with really smart people? I think those are considerations, we don't spend enough time looking at some of the softer aspects of culture and so on and so forth and I do believe and I am going to be very explicit about, it is not about money, if you are good at what you do opportunities will chase you and money will definitely come so don't start with where am I getting the most salary, start with where will I become the most wonderful manager, the most wonderful person, where will I get the maximum opportunities, because if you are good, there are opportunities, there will be more opportunities that you can imagine and the money comes.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I remember when I was graduating from IIMA, Reebok had come to campus to recruit and they were looking for "passion for sport" as a key ingredient in the people they interviewed. At that stage, we found it interesting that they gave it greater priority over capability in marketing. One of my friends who was a national level badminton player eventually got selected and went on to have a fulfilling career with them. Passion is clearly the fuel that helps you stick to a course over the long term. Sometimes we are so obsessed about our skills and deploying our skills that we forget what we are passionate about. The point Vinita makes about building self-awareness and whether you can relate to the product or the service is a critical aspect that people often don't think enough about, when they are making a career decision.

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End of nugget transcription

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Vinita Bali - Nuggets

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- 16.01 Vinita Bali - About Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)
- 16.02 Vinita Bali - Early childhood wiring
- 16.03 Vinita Bali - Navigating the sea of career options
- 16.04 Vinita Bali - Consumer Goods (FMCG) as a career option
- 16.05 Vinita Bali - Transitioning roles in a large MNC
- 16.06 Vinita Bali - Navigating the first 3-6 months
- 16.07 Vinita Bali - Functional Leadership to General Management
- 16.08 Vinita Bali - Transitioning back to India in a leadership role
- 16.09 Vinita Bali - Being an effective Board member
- 16.10 Vinita Bali - In Summary - Playing to Potential
- 16.11 Vinita Bali - Coping with Covid-19

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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