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Context to the nugget

The first few months in a new organization can be a nervous passage of play for the incoming leader and for the hiring manager. If not handled carefully, the organizational antibodies could eject the new entrant. Vinita shares her insights on how the incoming leader and the hiring leader could navigate this phase effectively.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Sticking to the theme of transitions, if you had to write the playbook and talk about the missed opportunities, when leaders transition at senior role in large corporations like Cadburys or Coke are there one or two things that you would really highlight both from a leader that's transitioning from and from a hiring leaders perspective just the stuff that they should focus on for the first 90 to 180 days?

Vinita Bali (VB): I think in many ways the success of a new hire is more dependent on what the hiring leader does to create the context and the environment for the new person coming into the organization and I believe that when we spend so much of time interviewing talent and getting people in it again surprises me, why company don't spend the same amount of rigour and robustness in terms of saying what would be the best way to absorb or to embed or enmeshed these people into the organization, so I think there's almost a greater responsibility on the hiring leader to ensure that the ground is fertile for the new person that you have hired to deliver his or her best and I think some of the things that are very helpful are just very simple things like the detail in which the induction is done making it easier for the new person to actually socialized within the new organization and these are all not just formal things but also informal ways in which you do that usually it is also acceptance by the peer group and what the hiring leader can do in terms of making the receptivity greater within the peer group so I think the hiring leaders have the greater responsibility as the person who has joined the organization, I think if you spend the first few days curious, listening, not jumping to conclusions we tend to get very judgmental very quickly I think if you spent the first few days as tourist in a place which is really about as a tourist you are exploring, you are curious, you want to read about this that and the other so if you spent those few days more like a tourist more from the point of view of understanding and not judging more from a curiosity orientation rather than I have the answers and more from the point of you of really knowing that you are the new kid on the block your hiring manager may have hired you but none of the others owe you anything I think if you find that level of acceptance and I learnt it when I went to new countries, what did I know about consumers in Nigeria? What did I know about consumers in South Africa? And you have to very quickly go and figure out what that module of collaboration or cooperation is going to be and I think if there is that attention paid including to some of the softer things this is not a task oriented framework.

DJ: Talking about the hiring leaders one of the points you mentioned was ensuring that there's a greater acceptance with the peers tactically speaking any one or two things hiring leaders could do to ensure that because that's often the point where the resistance comes in sometimes visible or invisible manner, so any tactical things you have seen people do to increase their acceptance?

VB: One of the easiest things to do is, to do things informally just do a lunch or dinner outside the office where people first get to know each other as people before they get to know each other at positions within hierarchy and somehow in India we also very hierarchical so I would do an informal dinner with the spouse or girlfriend or whoever or nobody as the case might be because I think if you first understand the person and you first accept the person then accepting the role also becomes easier I think other things which are more like the whole process of sort of socialization, not necessarily presentations to be made but a walk through, giving enough one on one time with the new person and the existing people not just in the office but go and have a cup of tea together or whatever doing some informal fireside chats if the new person had to get to know you and you get to know the new person also informally that helps I would call a bunch of 10 or 20 people and say, here's our new head of supply chain, ask him or her any questions and so on. So I think the softer things and again it is very cultural.

DJ: And it's interesting it's almost like, work aside and let the web of relationship get formed and once sort of that's firmly in place it grows over time and that sometimes gets build more effectively outside the work context.

VB: And one thing I have also found is if you create relationships which are based on respect then even when I don't agree with you I still respect your point of view and one of my key learnings is that we don't spend enough time on relationships on professional relationships that created out of mutual respect and therefore people feel that they are in those positions and they have to defend those positions and that is where you end up not having a dialogue but a discussion or even an argument where the end point is, who is going to win, nor are we going to come up with the better decision for the company, so this is not about the finance guys winning over the marketing guys it is about how the marketing and finance people are collaborating and engaged in a dialogue to come up with the best possible solution on pricing or revenue, management or whatever the topic might be.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of the project that Google ran to figure out what separated the great teams from the average teams. They looked at multiple variables ranging from pedigree, hours worked, time spent outside the office and so on to get to the bottom of what explained high performance and teams. Finally it came down to what they termed as Psychological Safety. Do people feel safe taking risks in the team? And a big piece of this was about whether people knew each other as complete human beings outside the realm of work. The point Vinita makes about the criticality of forming a web or trust based relationships is a critical one. Given the power equation in an organization, it is possibly all the more important for the hiring leader to make that space available and create the forums for the incoming leader to build that platform of personal relationships on the basis of which he or she could move forward in an organization.

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End of nugget transcription

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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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