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Context to the nugget

Moving from a functional leadership role to a general management role is a big shift and Vinita argues that it is possibly the biggest transition that a leader often makes. She talks about how people should think about success in a General Management role and start having an adaptive leadership style.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Picking on another transition point which is when you move from a functional role to a general management role or a P&L role was is direct happened for the first time when you joined Britannia?

Vinita Bali (VB): No, I was in a P&L role in Coke I was division president for Latin America, so I had been in a P&L role before and actually interestingly in Cadbury in many ways while it wasn't the full P&L but as head of sales and marketing the brand P&L was your P&L.

DJ: Where I was going with this was I have noticed that often when you in function you are often the master of your domain and there's a certain style of leadership that works but often when you are leading people who often know much more than you in their respected domains this style needs to shift so any reflections on how people can transition from a functional leadership role to general management role and what are the issues that sometimes people don't reflect on enough that could derail at that transition point any thoughts there?

VB: I think that is the most significant transition, there are other transitions which happen in a functional role let's say transition from a brand manager to a head of marketing where you feel oh my god my brand manager hasn't written a good enough brief for the agency and I could write it in five minutes and you have to resist that temptation of I could write it in five minutes so there is even in a functional transition there's an interesting thing, but functional to general management I think is a big transition where really what you have to set yourself is my role is one of there you really move in a significant ways to what I call moving away from functional leadership to adaptive leadership where your functional domain and expertise is less important than your leadership ability and that leadership ability really has to do with ability to get people to collaborate, your ability for future thinking your ability to envision your ability to sell ideas to your team your ability to inspire people it is nothing to do with anything because am I from the marketing going to become the best head of manufacturing? I can't, am I going to become a best CFO? I can't but if I can create a context for team work and inspired leadership getting the best out of people that is where your domain shifts from functionality to really inspiring people and the best out of them it also shifts from I think again something which we don't spend enough time on is what I called building capability, which to my

mind is four or five things it's about firstly ensuring you have got the right people in the right roles the second thing is, it's about ensuring that you have got the right processes to get the job done it's about management candles which is called what are the structures that you have? It's not the structure about who reports to whom? But what are the structures in the organization, where are the informal meetings are happening? Where are the formal meetings happening? It is a question of what are the metrics you prioritize which determined behaviour and it is about I think the biggest role you play in a general management role, what is the environmental culture you are creating? And I think that to my mind that environment and culture piece, the values, the authenticity, how you relate with people, how you relate with customers, how you deal with vendors I think those are the roles of a General Manager.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Two things occur to me here. In my work with leaders who are transitioning from a functional leadership to general management, I find two things very commonly prevalent. First is spending too much time on your function in the new role. Takes your eye off the ball in what is happening in other parts of the business and comes in the way of you coming upto speed on overall business dynamic and spending time on some of the long-term issues such as building a leadership pipeline, thinking through the strategy and so on. This also comes in the way of your successor in your function doing his job well. I have seen people often appoint a weak successor in the function because they think they can provide oversight there. That is a trap to watch out for. The second big implication is the way you lead when you are the content expert in a domain is very different from the style when you have several experts in the room and you have to get the best out of them. That is a shift that a lot of people struggle to acknowledge and even if they did, they find it hard to shift their behaviours. In several cases, some external support could help in hand-holding the leader in adapting to the new leadership paradigm.

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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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Podcast Transcript [16.07 Vinita Bali - Functional Leadership to General Management](#)

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