

The banner features the Play to Potential logo on the left, contact information (WhatsApp: +91 85914 52129\*, Twitter: @PlayToPotential, Website: playtopotential.com) in the middle, and a list of podcast platforms (Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts) on the right. A photo of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, is on the far right. A small note at the bottom left says: '\*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

## Context to the nugget

One of the key challenges as one moves from a start-up to a scale up includes getting senior talent from the outside and setting them up for success. Dheeraj talks about how he looks for the "operating system" of a leader to see if it fits with Nutanix. He also underscores the importance of focusing on the HOW and not the WHAT in the first 6-9 months

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** The notion of bringing a leader or CEO from the outside as the organization scales up at some stage founders and co-founders need to be honest to themselves on the should I lead versus should I get somebody to lead, how have you thought about that decision?

**Dheeraj Pandey (DP):** Its going back to what I said about constant revolution that if I as a business professional, as an individual if am not evolving faster in the company then the company is slowing down because of me and how do you build an objective view of that, I think people around you will tell you and obviously there's KPIs on objectives and que results that actually will show but I think a lot of it will come from people around you as well and living on the high on its own merits and sort of there's something special about it as oppose to living when things are actually going down and knowing that, when you talk about succession planning and things like that those are so important I mean talk about fall tolerance with the system and then when you deal with building software you are always thinking about fall tolerance and its so important thing about fall tolerance even in this world of business as well and many businesses have not done a good job of and if you look at venture capital firms in the US many of them shrivelled after the first generation one of the most successful generation actually tried to pass that because they held it for too long it has happened in company if you look at, company that would there in the last 30 years in 90 itself they just they had just kept the bottom with themselves for too long and by the way it's actually not that easy to make those calls but you need to think about it every day that how you actually protecting the company what kind of people are you bringing in, when one of the problems with succession planning is that potential success don't have patience, they were like look at getting another job outside and it's so special in the valley so it is not an easy problem to solve but again I draw parallels from the things that I have seen but not on past flow, and keeping it to back of my mind right now, you need to worried about these things because the company is paramount and honestly it actually serves my family will as well because there's something going to happen to me or at least I would leave something that is more robust behind than if I were to be selfish about just my own egos.

**DJ:** What's been your experiences on getting the transitions right? What do you do or what do you not do to ensure that people at very senior level come in and flourish in a company like Nutanix.

In the interview process first of all you hire slowly and you fire fast as oppose to be the other way where you hire fast and you fire slowly I think it is the biggest contagion of any company when you hire fast and you fire slowly. Which means you need to understand the operating system of the individual not just their resume and their numbers because any one can talk about their past performance by their numbers you don't know how many people were involve in that actually, In every body has an operating system every business has an operating system every individual has an operating system, every Machine has operating system. So I think you need to understand the operating system of individuals and if you think that they are authentic people that they are ambitious, they have an attention to detail they look like they are antifragile, they have learnt from mistakes and so on then you hire them and then in the first six months you need to be as authentic through the whole sort of shift as well because, you need to be vulnerable you need to know that your ideas are not everything you need to be in some new idea to be infused in their as well and you trust obviously you also verify eventually because that's the attention to detail that you need but you have to trust and it's a process of negotiation it's a process for first six months, I mean I have not gone through bringing in a CEO but when we bring in new individuals, executives and so on we have to actually be in this process of negotiation where you have to have empathy you need to understand what is it that they are trying to do are they focusing on some stints of the process and not the what and the how, you know the why like why did you bring them in and you look at the what which is their ideas, but the question is how is it that they are thinking about going and implementing these things is it about mass change to the existing team or they at least willing to figure out the process behind knowing the team first, do then want to go and understand the team and there is a bell curve of people in the team and how do you retain the best and how do you coach the once who is at the peak of the bell and then you can get to the once that are actually not being able to cut it but there's a process behind that so are the new leaders willing to go through that process itself?

**DJ: How do you sensitise a New leader to the operating system of the company?**

Culture has to be constantly evolving as well, because the culture is the function of insiders and outsiders and if you are saying you can't bring in new insiders then you are already dead and obviously culture is the function of the competitive landscape their micro environment in which you operate, the context matters actually. So culture is not a constant ideally it should be a few things that is the core strength of character of a company and it could be things like either four A that I talk about, where your Ambitious, we have an attention to detail and we are authentic and we are antifragile but everything else is off for grabs everything else is up for grabs actually whatever is not covered and it could be any three four letter for any company which are fundamental, you can't say ohh we will have company that doesn't have ambition, we will have a company which has huge ambition but no attention to detail so if you keep that constant everything else should and can change and must change because the world around you is constantly evolving and changing so I think if new people come in and they have ideas that are equally ambitious and you more they will operate with an attention to detail and the fact that they look like an authentic idea and you know that you are not betting your firm if their shocks in the system this idea can evolve and you can navigate through the changed based on the feedback from the market and so on you have to give these new things a try goes back to the point about if the worst is not bad enough you will navigate actually so to me the moment somebody says this is not what the culture and the company an like in what wat are you talking about the core principals in which you operate? Which is the character or you're talking about the culture that needs to constantly evolve?

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of things struck me here. One is the point about Operating System that Dheeraj makes. It's never too early to start thinking about what are the 3-4 things that you want to keep as core character of the company. Sometimes, founders think that this is the domain of large companies but when you think about it, there is more damage to be done in the early days than when it is a large corporation. Being able to hire that clearly and hiring for it is the related piece here. Even when I reflect back on my days as a Search consultant, the distinctive hirers were people that were very clear about the Operating system they were looking for rather than the surface items such as skills and visible accomplishments. The second takeaway for me here was the notion of transitioning the HOW. A lot of times, companies and leaders do a decent job of handing over the WHAT but often don't talk enough about HOW things get done here - How are meetings run? How are risk reward trade-offs made? What are the non-negotiables and so on. As an incoming leader, keeping an eye out for some of these elements is key for a leader to ramp up in an accelerated fashion.

Thank you for listening. For more please visit [playtopotential.com](http://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

**Effective Hiring:** Staffing up your leadership team thoughtfully is one of the key roles of a leader. However, the paradigm for hiring in the digital world is changing as we move towards a world where intrinsics are beginning to matter more and more. Leaders across domains share their insights on how one could hire effectively. You can access the playlist [here](#).

**Culture:** Culture eats Strategy for breakfast but how does one build it. Leaders across domains (Academics, Armed Forces, Silicon Valley, Bollywood, Venture Investing) talk about the notion of culture and how they go about building it in their organizations. 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.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Dheeraj Pandey - Nuggets

- 19.00 Dheeraj Pandey - The Full Conversation
- 19.01 Dheeraj Pandey - Early formative years (including retaking JEE)
- 19.02 Dheeraj Pandey - Building optionality during early career
- 19.03 Dheeraj Pandey - Relationship between Co-founders and Company
- 19.04 Dheeraj Pandey - Evolving as a leader with the company
- 19.05 Dheeraj Pandey - Building an anti-fragile culture
- 19.06 Dheeraj Pandey - Perspectives around career choice
- 19.07 Dheeraj Pandey - Hiring senior leaders into Nutanix
- 19.08 Dheeraj Pandey – Work,life and success
- 19.09 Dheeraj Pandey - Leadership Development in a turbo-charged environment
- 19.10 Dheeraj Pandey - 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.