

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, a portrait of a man in a suit is shown with the text 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small disclaimer 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

Meher talks about how the baton of leadership passed to her mother (Anu Aga) when her father passed away and how things changed even further when her brother passed away shortly after. She also reflects on the subsequent transition when her mother decided to retire as the Chairperson suddenly that pushed Meher to the saddle.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** What's been your journey? And what have been the lessons from your journey in getting the transition right?

**Meher Pudumjee (MP):** The way I joined the company was as an engineer trainee I think that helped having said that if I had to do it differently for my children I will say it's nice to be able to have had a little experience in another organization before you join your own family business, but the way it turned out I joined as a trainee and then sort of worked my way for two years in India then my parents felt it would be a good idea to send us to UK and try and turn around the business that was not doing well, and that would be really throwing us to the deep end and helping us to succeed so me and my husband went through that Firoz had also joined Thermax before we went to the UK, again working in an environment which is entirely new figuring out which products sell in that market, managing a company that had negative cash flows literally scrounging, wont able to fly, I had to drive to Germany to paint out boilers, ourselves, I mean it was a very difficult four years but I thought it was one of the best experiences of our lives both personally and professionally and then of course coming back unfortunately when my father passed away and then I was put on to the board of the company so circumstances made me get on to the board and then of course a year later my brother passed away and then I was looking after certain businesses I also got into finance so I think the whole journey has been to try and see how to expose us to different paths of the organization, but I think you never ever prepared for when a transition actually happens so my mother decided at the age of 62 that she wanted to retire, now my mum is a very impulsive person in that, she tells the whole world that she is going to do something so that it's a commitment that she can't go back on, it's a way for her to keep her commitment, so I heard about her retirement through public sources which I wasn't very happy about and of course the board then wanted me to take over as a chair person and I had many doubts to be honest at that time I wasn't quite prepared I honestly thought my mum would stay on till typically at the age of 70 or whatever and we have had such a good equation that I felt fine, I mean it's not like she is holding on to a particular position or anything like that she has always given us a lot of liberal, but so I wasn't ready for it, I didn't particularly wanted to take on the chair person, I was a little nervous of how I am going to perform visa v my mum and dad, who had reached certain heights and whatever they had done, and that's when I decided I will go to Vipassana and it is I find that just being with myself just being in my own

thoughts for ten days, without talking without writing reading really helped me to think through and then when I came back, I agreed to take on this role and mum then stepped back so was there a hand holding to see me through, not really, my mom, did it more to help me because she didn't want me to feel that she has decided to retire and yet she is pulling the strings so in some ways it was a total pull back, she was true to the statement and she said I am there when you need me and also remembered that mum had taken over, I mean she was head of HR, so she had taken over under circumstances when my dad passed away so it's not like my mum had dealt the business and things like that, it was my father and my grandfather who had done that, but the wisdom that I got and then I have always continued to get from mum has been tremendous throughout it's not been on terms so much strategy, not the typical business related stuff but I think the wisdom on life or relationships on people that has been just tremendous.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Three things struck me here.

First is the point Meher makes about her mother Anu Aga making a Public commitment about retiring. When I work with leaders, I find that there is tremendous power in public commitment especially when you want to drive a certain change in behaviour. Getting others to hold us accountable to our statements is a quite a powerful way to keep yourself honest as you go through the change.

Second is the notion of handing over the reins completely when you transition out of a role. I have seen that in several instances, when leaders bring in others to take on their positions they end up babysitting the new incumbent and often this is with the right intent but very quickly if they don't pull back completely, it ends up being a disservice to the new person coming into the role. And sometimes the bigger value adds is to provide overall wisdom about how to think about situations rather than the specifics of the business. In one of the recent transitions I was involved with, the hiring leader spent some time with the incoming leader on how decisions were made in the company and the culture of the company; The incoming leader later told me that this was a lot more value to him than the induction which involved him coming upto speed on the specifics of the business.

Third is the notion of being clear about the Why you want to do something. Meher talks about doing Vipassana and coming back to take on the Chairmanship role. One of my earlier guests was Viren Rasquinha – the head of Olympic Gold Quest. When I asked him about what made athletes resilient, he alluded to the fact that the ones that were exceptionally resilient were clear about the Why and to use his words that gave them the motivation to go through a brick wall every single day. You could look up Nugget 8.07 if that is of interest to you. Thank you for listening. For more please visit [Playtopotential.com](http://Playtopotential.com)

## End of nugget transcription

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## Meher Pudumjee - Nuggets

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- 22.08 Meher Pudumjee - 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](#).

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