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Context to the nugget

Jay discusses he thinks about picking ideas to champion and talks about how you could get a pulse of the acceptance of the idea. He goes on to talk about the criticality of setting up feedback loops for you to get a pulse of the real public sentiment.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How you think about influencing, how does an idea move from something in your head to something that's legislated?

Baijayant Jay Panda (JP): That idea about disqualifying convicted legislators didn't happen through the fear of politics even though I championed it and one or two others did it did not get traction but it was a supreme court ruling that made it happen so it was an externality in that sense we have many other such examples where the legislators and parliaments let the country down, go back 20 years when the courts again imposed natural gas for public transportation in Delhi it should have been a political decision and administrative decision, because of the pollution that we were facing but even today after much more pollution we are still struggling to take administrative decisions because of populism because of trying to pander to every section of society and that's the fact of the particular kind of political structure that we have whereas in many other countries even if you don't have everybody on board, you have a kind of majority on board then you can push through political ideas that again the idea of reforming our political structures our parliaments and how decision making happens but to take an idea and spin it and to get it to get traction communication skills are extremely important and also it is important to suss out public mood and try to latch on to the idea which is ripe because advocating an idea that is far ahead of its time is not going to get that much traction but advocating an idea that is only slightly ahead of its time maybe the right way of doing it because then the public maybe just about getting ready for it or your advocating it or communicating competently about it takes it over that hurdle and it becomes, it gets huge traction.

DJ: and how do you get that pulse?

JP: That is a critical political skill to be able to have feedback, you will notice, every time you ask a politician of any party they will always say they are doing very well they will never say they are doing badly very rarely they will say they are doing badly, particularly at any election campaign you ask the spoke persons of any party and they are all clear they are winning now that's the external face but internally the good politicians have a very good grasp of where they stand I have seen this among the most successful politicians they may externally be saying anything but internally they have a very clear grasp of reality and they know pretty much how they are doing whether they are doing well or

badly or well in certain areas and badly in certain areas so that feedback loop has to be very good if you have to be successful in the politics.

DJ: And what is it about the channels that you need to have in place to have an objective and an effective feedback loop?

JP: We have earlier talked about politics rewards loyalty above all else, about competence, so you have a lot of sycophants in politics some parties more than others but yes you do. So sycophants are never going to always give you the right information they will give you information that you want to hear you must have your own system of bypassing that so I find that even politicians who are surrounded by a lot of sycophants some of them so recognize that they have that ecosystem just because they need loyalists to entrench their hold on power but they don't rely on them for getting the feedback loop they get the feedback loop from other sources and if you don't then you are doomed to do badly in the next cycle.

DJ: And other sources would be things like?

JP: It could be journalists, it could be people on the ground that you know, it could be somebody several levels lower down on the chain of command whom you directly speak to, so for example I will make it a point because I meet with so many thousands of people in the constituency and I have an open channel, people can send me messages on instant messaging platforms and on social media so I get a sense for what people are talking about, so if I get a message or series of messages that runs counter to closest people are telling me then I will cross check and I will try to have it weighted as to what the reality is what are people really saying what are people really thinking? What is the factual condition, situation?

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Two takeaways for me here. The first was the point that Influencing is so much about listening, much less about speaking effectively. Jay talks about having a pulse of whether your idea is market ready or slightly ahead of the public sentiment before you really push for it. I have seen effective CEOs who lead teams with extremely bright CXOs walking the tight rope of democracy and decisiveness. They initially let the team engage on a few ideas and bounce around chaotically a little bit. But once they get a drift of where the pulse of the group is, they quickly manoeuvre the group forward towards an outcome. The key point being, listening intently to the where the group pulse is.

The second takeaway was the point Jay makes about having your own feedback loops across the chain. Several leaders in the corporate world struggle to do this. And the key point here is that you need to do this without disempowering your chain of command. Several leaders take a black and white approach to say, I don't want my team to feel that I am interfering in their business. But the tactful ones find an informal way of tapping into the sentiment of the people across the chain without really challenging the authority of your team members.

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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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