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## Context to the nugget

Amit talks about how he has benefited from mentors along the way starting from Hemendra Kothari at DSP Merrill Lynch. He also goes on to talk about how mentors need be from within the company and how clients could sometimes be great mentors. He talks about how the circle of mentors (which includes KV Kamath, Kalpana Morparia and KM Birla has evolved organically over time than him going out in an explicit, conscious way to build a group of mentors around him).

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** People often talk about the mentorship especially in the early years, if you had to decode the elements of that mentorship that people need to get right, are there any themes that emerge? What do good mentors do?

**Amit Chandra (AC):** I always tell people that one of the things that, you are obviously blessed with being born into the right family but you have to really earn the blessing of building the right mentors and then one of the most important things in life consequently is the blessing of the choosing right life partner but on mentors it's so important to have the right mentors because all through my life I have had extraordinary sort of mentors I have thought always followed their advice but I always make sure that I have great mentors for my life and I always had Hemendra but I also actually had great mentors in clients, I had people like Mr. Noshir Soonawala at TATAs, I had KV Kamath, Kalpana Morparia. I even had few others who I had very good close relationships with, who I could bounce things of whenever I had situation. I think what people really provided was you have go through situations and just the ability to talk to someone who has a lot of experience and depth is very valuable and the process of talking to them sometimes in itself provides you clarity and of course their own experience, sometimes answers come out of those conversations, you may not always choose to follow their answers but I think it's, they always very valuable perspectives, make you sometimes pause think about what course of action you are choosing, so I have always found that an extremely valuable process.

**DJ:** And is that some sort of an informal dynamic that emerges as you build trusted relationships with the ecosystem or is it more explicit...

**AC:** For me it's always been informal, it's never been formal, I have never thought that I am going to make this person a mentor, any of these names that I have mentioned to you I don't think that these are the names I have consciously choose to make as mentors I think they are all names that have kind of become, like I have a great relationship with Kumar Mangalam Birla I count him as a great friend and as a mentor, someone I can have conversations with whenever I have an issue I didn't consciously think him as a mentor or I never thought of him as a mentor but I can go and have a

conversation with him should I ever need to, so these are not conscious choices these are things that evolve over time but it arises out of having built a trusting relationship with someone who were a long period of time.

DJ: In your mind where do you see the delta between being a good service provider who provides a certain service on the contract whether it's a Consultant or a Banker or a Lawyer to becoming a person who can take the liberty of reaching out to somebody else for council what's the delta in your head?

AC: For me there has never been a dividing line and the reason there has really never been a dividing line is because I have always looked at a relationship in its purity I have never exploited a relationship never misused a relationship, I can completely understand when someone needs to do something for their own interest so I do not have any expectations, commercial expectations form a relationship if anyone of people with whom I have a relationship needs to act in their best commercial interest I can completely understand that and there have been situations in the past when people have chosen to act in a particular way because of their own commercial interest for the sake of the organizations that they are represent and I fully represent and understand that but for me the relationship has a greater and a deeper meaning and I will always help them, work with them, respect them beyond that relationship, it's not transactional and so those relationships are there for endeared my any positions that I have held.

DJ: What sort of situations do you see the relationship being put to test in your journey, what are those points in time or what are those characteristics of those moments, where you need to sort of lean into the relationship than the transaction?

AC: With any person, forget mentors, I think the only time when relationships are really put to test is when you are, when someone judges for your actions and sometimes you will take certain steps in your life and there are times when sometimes someone will second guess you I think that's the only time in my mind that a relationship really gets tested, otherwise in my mind I think relationships, don't really get, they really endure in most cases people know that if you have a relationship and you are a principled person you will always act in a particular manner but I think there will be some people who do not understand that and I have had very few instances in my life where actually that has happened.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This piece from Amit reminded me of my conversation with Pramath Sinha (PS) a few months back. He spoke about how he thought about mentors in his life.

PS: *"if you look at my board of advisors, my PhD advisor who I did my PhD with nearly 30 years ago is somebody I still stay in touch with she is now at University of California Barclay, so every time I go to California I actually spend time with her and hang out with her now again she is not straight related to what I do where I was heriot to was that ultimately people who inspire you regardless of whether they are related to what you do are on my board of advisors because just meeting with them just time spent with them pushes you onto think whatever you are dealing with better or do something you are struggling with better and so on so I think she is one example of somebody I have on my board of advisors. Rajat Gupta who was the MD of McKinsey and I have spent a lot of time with building ISB and of course Rajat got into quite a bit of trouble but you know as person he has been amazingly inspiring and particularly with all the troubles he went through with his case and then and then being in jail and out of it, so I really admire Rajat, I have always admired him for his ability to*

*think big and yet retain a certain humility and certain commitment to making other people successful so I stay very close to him and he is one of clearly my heroes in spite of everything that has happened to him and for him one of my investors Sanjeev Agarwal of Helion is somebody that I really look up to Sanjeev is a good example of somebody who was an entrepreneur scaled up a business came in investor I have to say that despite being an investor his selflessness and his almost detachment which then I think helps him give you very sound advice, even though he could be seen as in conflict has been quite remarkable for me and I find that very inspiring so varied three very different people, as you say who's there I would say that I could immediately think of these three people who really have been great guide posts overtime"*

DJ: The key takeaway for me here was the notion that there is no one formula towards finding a mentor. The bigger piece is staying in touch with some of these people who come our way in an authentic manner and reaching out to them as appropriate especially when we are faced with seminal moments where the choices we make can have a profound impact in our journey.

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## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Pramath Sinha that is referenced: [Personal Board of Advisors](#).

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### **Amit Chandra - Nuggets**

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- 27.03 Amit Chandra - Factors behind the rise at DSP Merrill Lynch
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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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