Context to the nugget

Mouli discusses that a lot of the wins in the first half of the career are often on the back of low hanging fruit but the wins in the second half are often harder. He mentions that apart from solving for successes in the first half, we should all build the muscle and resilience to be able to go after the complex win or the high hanging fruit. And that sometimes might require us to go slow and learn than run fast and miss out on building this muscle.

Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What are the foundation people can lay in the first half that helps them in the second half?

Chandramouli Venkatesan (CV): In the book Catalyst one of my strong believes is the first half is the Catalyst for the second half and I think that's the way I like to frame it but it is actually useful to start as a story, the Rabbit and the tortoise story as we all have heard which is the race between the Rabbit and Tortoise which the Tortoise wins because the Rabbit kind of becomes lazy and the moral of the story is slow and steady wins the race so sometimes as I do this sessions I ask people do you like slow and steady wins the race as a moral for careers? And typically the young people don't like it they don't like slow in anything and I also don't advocate people being the tortoise in their career but I certainly advocate and say don't try and be the Rabbit in your career no cricket match can be one in the first five overs in the match, similarly no career can be won in the first five ten years of your career and if you examine careers, I have noticed two things the first thing I have noticed is most people succeed in the first half of their careers equally I have noticed very few succeed in the second half of their careers and sometimes I like to say it provocatively to say even idiots succeed in the first half of their careers and even good people in the second half of their career so if you want a great career you have got to solve the problem of how am I going to be successful when I get to the second half that's the key problem to be solved every other problem will solve itself and the answer to that problem is in the first half. "The first half is the catalyst for the second half" there are two things you can manage your first half you can have an outcome in the first half of saying I want to be successful in my first half or you can have your outcome in your first half where you say I want to use my first half for being successful in the second half you can have two career objective for the first half, Many choices you make hopefully both the objectives are coinciding, what helps you succeed in the first half, helps you succeed in the second half those are the easy choices but there will be times when you have to make choices where what makes your feet successful in the first half is not going to help you in the second half. The trade off and that is where am I strong advocacy is always make the trade off in favour of what will help you in the second half.

DJ: Give us an example what do you have in mind? What is the kind of choices people, what are the mistakes people end up making here?

CV: One of the mistakes people end up making here is length of roles, typically they want to get to the next role in 18 months in the first half, they don't want to put into under three years in the current role because the next role is the promotion possibly a slight salary increase and so on and so forth now how does is this impact when you get into the second half, in the first half what tends to happen is a lot of your success is by conquering low hanging fruit, so typically in the first year of any job or 18 months of any job there is enough low hanging fruit in any road and if you solve the low hanging fruit, you have a degree of success, you look good and on the basis of that you can get a promotion, you can get a job, so on and so forth, when you come to the second half the job of leaders in the second half is to solve for high hanging fruits it is a junior who solves for low hanging fruits you don't get to senior and again solve for low hanging fruit but if in your first half you have never given yourself that time to solve high hanging fruits then you never built the skill of solving high hanging fruit so you end up being very successful in your first half by solving many low hanging fruits, one fine day you come to the second half where what you need to succeed is solving high hanging fruits and you never built to that capability now to build to that capability you needed to have some patience in the first half where you say I will give myself three years where the first year I solve low hanging fruits and then the second and third year I will solve for the more complex high hanging fruits, now that skill building is a contradiction with my need for a promotion every 18 months, so that's the example.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Mouli's point about building muscle to tackle complex problems in the second half is an interesting one. I might add a related point here on my experience. As I see it, the big shift between the first half and the second half from a competency perspective is people leadership – both in terms of leading people reporting to you and working with peers and the ecosystem around you to drive outcomes.

I find that people who have a good second half do two or three things in the first half

1)   They build that people leadership capability over time, they seek feedback, they change behaviours and they work on themselves to be effective with people.

2)   They build an asset of relationships across the corporate world (colleagues, mentors, clients, vendors, consultants and so on) and that cumulative difference really starts showing up in a telling way in the second half

I see several high IQ leaders take off in their careers like a rocket but when it comes to the second half, it is a lot less about how bright you are but a lot more about whether you have built the capability to go after high hanging fruit as Mouli says, whether you have the people leadership competencies and whether you have the relationships in the ecosystem to open doors and get things done.

Thank you for listening. If you are new to the podcast and want to get a sense of the nature of content that is covered, you might want to go to YouTube and type "PlaytoPotential Highlights from 2017". I have tried to capture the key takeaways from my various conversations last year with leaders across disciplines. From people such as Zia Mody, Nandan Nilekani, Viswanathan Anand, Vijay Amritraj, Amish Tripathi, Vinita Bali and the like. For more, please visit playtopotential.com

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End of nugget transcription

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Chandramouli Venkatesan - Nuggets

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- 28.01 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Genesis of the book - CATALYST
- 28.02 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Turbocharging your growth - TMRR
- 28.03 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Raising the game when it matters
- 28.04 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Playing the 1st half to win in the 2nd half
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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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