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Context to the nugget

Mouli talks about how people often mix up the two decisions and how they can end up over-appreciating what is right in the new context and what is wrong in the current situation. He brings it back to the point that careers are driven by capability and not by role/title. He urges us to think hard about the learning opportunity in the current environment and carefully evaluate the pros and cons of the current and the new opportunity before taking a decision.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I also like the point you make in the book about decoupling quitting decision and a joining decision, talk to us a little bit about the nuance here?

Chandramouli Venkatesan (CV): I must say that this is been one of the my insights from my own life where I felt that at least one decision I made poorly because I made a quit decision because I got something which looked attractive and I should have never quit that place in the first place and again in my HR times I have seen many people quit because they think they have got something better but they had no reason to quit and somehow I kept asking why is this happening? And that's when I realized that people are coupling these two decisions and the trigger to quit was actually coming in the form of an opportunity and I said that's where a lot of mistakes happen and that's where people kind of go wrong in their careers and hence the recommendation that I have is decouple these two decisions. You must know first whether you have a reason to quit? And the reason to quit cannot be that I found something else, that journey is the never-ending journey there also you will find something else and you will find something else so you must know do you have a reason to quit? And the way I like to think about the reasons to quit is I think there are only two reasons you should quit, one is either your learning is tapering off and you are stagnating in your learning or you are experiencing an issue of fit so it could be a culture or values or chemistry or whatever it is, these are the only two reasons you should quit everything else promotions, salary, career all that is secondary, if you are driving learning all that follows so you must first find out if you genuinely have a reason to quit which is learning and fit once you conclude that there is a reason to quit then you can figure out all the join opportunities but if you start the other way around and you end up saying oh I have got the opportunity but actually I don't have a reason to quit then you end up making mistake.

DJ: It's not that you are dissatisfied with the current place but there's an opportunity for a bigger play so how do you distinguish that kind of a situation from what you have just outlined which is leaving for the wrong reason?

CV: I think my answer to that question is you get to that bigger play and you get another bigger play after that and then another bigger play after that are you going to say yes to each bigger play that comes your way? We all celebrate the successes that are few people seem to have got by getting to a bigger place for every one success I have seen three failures where people have gone to what on paper looks bigger but their career hasn't necessarily moved in the right direction after that and they would have been actually better off if they had stayed so I think the question is again what drives careers? Is it position or is it your capabilities? The key mindset I bring is to say what drives career is your capability and if you are in a place where your learning is very rapid, your career is a given, even if you say no to something which looks attractive right now your career is a given because your learning is growing at such a pace and this is the market place that takes care of people who learn, it's a very simple mindset.

DJ: And for somebody who is in that maze going through that career how do you objectively determine if you are going through a learning cycle? Is there an insight into people recognizing the pace of learning or the quantum of learning that they are going through?

CV: I think I would possibly give an analogy of sport, sometimes you know a player is in a zone and is kind of effortlessly doing stuff and is also enjoying them. I would think your learning will be very high when you are in a zone, in whatever you are doing at work and if you are feeling that way you are possibly in a fantastic learning cycle and I wouldn't give that up for anything.

DJ: In the book you talked about the specific transition from Asia Paints to GE country wide and you talked about that's the transition that you shouldn't have made so why do you say that and what's the thinking behind that conclusion?

CV: That mistake I have made was actually an inspiration for me to write the chapter on quit and join to say how does one segregate the decision to quit and the decision to join and I made the decision to quit from Asian Paints without having sound reasons to quit I made the decision to quit because I thought something else is more attractive and then I realize that I was actually in a major learning cycle in Asian Paints I was in an absolute zone I was contributing effortlessly I was learning, I was getting to do new stuff but I gave all that up because I thought that something else is more attractive and I think knowing when you are in a learning zone, knowing where you have a company? Where you have a high fit? And these are important parameters in managing your career and that was I think the mistake I made and that inspired me to write a chapter.

DJ: What's the take away, in terms of how you evaluate the new opportunity both from a fit stand point and a potential learning cycle stand point?

CV: In my HR days I used to try and mentor a lot of people because you end up talking to a lot of people who are trying to quit and trying to explain to them, why it's not a good decision? And obviously in these things you have to get them to the right decision there's nothing you can do so I formed a 2by2 matrix and I said one is what's good about where you are? And what can be better? And equally what's good about where you are going to go? And what can be better? And what I found that most people when they make that quit decision they can see only two boxes, they are going to see what is going to be good where I am going to go? And what is bad about where I am? They are not able to see the other two boxes which is what is good about where I am and what could be bad about where I am going to go? And hence I think one of the important ways of what I used to do was to try and get people to see all the four boxes then make a fair decision so I think one of the things I encourage people to make those four boxes and do not underleverage what is good about where you are? And do not assume that there will not be bad stuff where you are going to go? Give those equal weightages and then make a holistic decision.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Let me make a slightly related point here. As a prior search consultant at EgonZehnder, I would often come across situations where the candidate would accept an offer but the current organization would often make an aggressive counter offer and the candidate would back off. Just a word of caution in those situations. It is important to be objective as Mouli says about the pros and cons in the new place and in the current and then take the call. It is also important not to get swayed by the enhanced warmth you might perceive once your current organization gets to know that you are leaving. That warm fuzzy, treatment is often short-lived.

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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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