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Context to the nugget

Mouli talks about the notion of Values as something that has a significant upside over the long run and challenges the current narrative which is often around showcasing the downside of people who display poor values and are punished. He also talks about the need for us to have an absolute view of this versus a relative view.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other piece you speak about in book Mouli is the notion of 'LODE star values' you emphasize humility and pristine honesty, so talk to us about what you have in mind when you use these terms and what's been your experience in cultivating these values over a period of time and what can we learn?

Chandramouli Venkatesan (CV): It's a phenomenal piece, so I think in the book Catalyst I think one of my strong belief is that values can be a great Catalysts to success and I think the first thing I am trying to changes in peoples mind is about values, what has happened in the corporate world, all of us have seen examples of people being reprimanded for poor values, so we have seen somebody being sacked because they travel bill, somebody being sacked because they did some form of sexual harassment or conflict of interest this and that, we have never seen somebody who have got a promotion because they were honest for 40 years in corporate life so the implicit coding that has got into all of us with respect to values is if you screw up on values you are in trouble but we haven't internalized that fact that if you raise your values it can actually be a means to success. So there is a coding in us to say limit is a down side I want to change that coding from limit is the downside in the book to leveraging the upside so that's the first message that I try to give in Catalyst once you decide you want to do that then the question is how to do it? And my belief is the way to do it is to be a load star in some values. All of us are moderate to above average in many values but that's everybody if you want to get the upside of values there has to be one or two values where you can say I am the best, in the million people I am the best on simplicity, that's what gives you the breakthrough impact, I like to refer to Gandhiji as an example, he is a leader I thought become a great leader based on great values, you can discuss whether he was having the best strategy for independence and I am sure there are many others who had good strategy for independence but the independence movement required a leader who could get people to follow because it was a difficult journey and that followership he got because he was in load star in integrity and simplicity so people who are willing to do difficult things including sacrificing their jobs and their personal lives for the sake of the cause he was leading so I think getting to load star value and saying I will be the best of integrity, I will be the best of simplicity, I will be the best of authenticity in whatever you chose is breakthrough in its leadership capability, it gets people to follow you, you can take difficult journeys if you are load star in values and specifically then going to the honesty value which I kind of really

feel passionate about and my mission is to change that value in society, The interesting thing is in the 50 years of my life, I am yet to meet somebody who themselves says I am dishonest so possibly I haven't counted how many people I met but I am sure its 100 or 1000s. So everybody is honest and the reason that happens is because you get to set your own standard of what is honesty? So it is not an exam where 40 marks are passed and 30 marks are failing. So if your current standard, your performance of honesty is 60 marks, you say the pass mark is 50, the current is 50 you say pass mark is 40, if your current performance is 40 you say your pass marks is 30 you get to decide what is the standard of honesty and you always set this standard of honesty lower than your current performance so everybody is honest nobody is dishonest and the tragedy of our country is every Indian thinks they are honest but collectively all of us will agree that India is more dishonest as a country than honest so we are in this paradox and we are in a slightly more dishonest country where every Indian thinks they are honest and I think hence the problem I was dealing to say how do we explain to people that they have to change their standard of what they consider as honesty. And that's where I came up with this 2by2 matrix which is saying, what bulk of us practice is what we call as majority honesty which is I do right when everybody else is doing right but I feel very comfortable doing wrong when others are doing wrong so if everybody is bribing for getting a ration card then I also don't mind bribing for a ration card and when I bribe for the ration card I don't feel I am dishonest, same thing in the traffic signal, if everybody is bouncing the signal I will also bounce now I am doing wrong but even if I am doing wrong I don't feel dishonest so that's what I call majority honesty which is we are comfortable doing wrong as long as others are also doing wrong the fact that it is wrong doesn't seem to affect us the fact that I am doing wrong doesn't make me think that I am dishonest and I think resetting the standard what I am advocating is we cannot be making decisions on what is acceptable we have to make decisions based on what I think is right. Which is different from what is acceptable, it might acceptable to bribe for something but the moment you ask the question is it right? The answer is different. And I defined pristine honesty as somebody who says I will do right even when others are doing wrong, it's easy to do right when everybody is doing right, but it's difficult to do right whether other seemed to be doing wrong be it a traffic signal or be it something else and if you have the courage to do thing right even when others are doing wrong that's where you get to load star at honesty.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just to add my personal experience here, In the Advisory work I do now and in the past at McKinsey and EgonZehnder, I have noticed that in the road towards the seat to a Trusted Advisor relationship, Competency often takes people upto the 80% mark but the last 20% (or the first 20% depending on how you look at it) is often values. Clients may not articulate it that way but that is what they are seeing especially How do you make decisions when you are interests diverge from theirs. One of the people I worked with broke down trust nicely into two things. He said it in Hindi and called it Aukaat and Neeyat. Roughly translated to Competency and Intent.

I like what Mouli says about having an absolute bar for yourself rather than having a relative view because the relative approach is a pretty slippery slope and an accelerated race to the bottom very quickly.

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 where the content is organized by nuggets and they are tagged by themes so that you could get

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End of nugget transcription

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Chandramouli Venkatesan - Nuggets

- 28.00 Chandramouli Venkatesan - The Full Conversation
- 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
- 28.05 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Picking mentors thoughtfully
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- 28.07 Chandramouli Venkatesan - Evolving views on the notion of success
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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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