

Podcast Transcript [29.08 Roopa Kudva - Women Leadership - The barrier that doesn't get spoken about as much](#)

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Context to the nugget

Roopa talks about the fact that there is a lot of commentary around women coming back to the work force after they start a family. She mentions that support structures and corporate policies are evolving and this problem is slowly being addressed. She discusses the barrier that shows up when women are in senior management roles. She talks about the notion of self-belief which often comes in the way of women raising their hand for top jobs and for a seat at the table.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Are there one or two areas where you think there isn't adequate commentary as you think about women rising to the top what's your insight around women in terms of how they manage their careers, how they make choices along the way are there one or two pieces you think there isn't as much public discussion around which is crucial for having more women leaders at the top?

Roopa Kudva (RK): The one that there is the most discussion around is the fact that women drop out of the work force when they start a family. And the challenges around that I think there's a lot of discussion around those things is changing on two fronts happily so. One is the fact that families today tend to be much more supportive of working women particularly in the metros because it is almost become a necessity now for both spouses to work and therefor the support available for child care from family and other sources I think has increased and that's a good thing, the other good thing that has happened is that organizations have realized that it pays to invest in women and I think they are more accommodating of the fact and more understanding of the fact that there will be this phase in a women's career when you have to be supportive, it will pay off multiple times when she comes back, it pays to be patient it pays to be supportive, it pays to be flexible and that is something that still continues to be talked about but I think that problem will get solved the second barrier that women hit is later on when they are in the upper end of middle management or in senior management but when it comes to them taking the top jobs I feel that there is a mental barrier of self-belief that I can and I should ask for the top jobs and I can do it I think women hold back, they hold back in asking for a seat at the table and I think that is where other women leaders can play a very big role, my own thinking on this has evolved in the last 15 years if you asked me 15 years ago I would have said it's all about merit and if you do good work you will be recognized women don't need special treatment is the argument that I would have made. Today I believe that the second barrier that I talked about is a very big barrier and therefor it is actually almost incumbent on other women leaders to reach out and talk about this issue and help other women to cross this barrier, I have also changed my views about things like quotas for women on board, this is something that I would have been opposed to fifteen years ago but I actually believe it's a good idea

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now and the reason I do so is I believe that if you actually, put women in those positions are they raised to those positions? There is an example that I like to give, which is not in a corporate context but in a context of a Village Panchayat when the constitutional amendment etc. lead to greater devolution of power to the villages and then you had the reservation of the Sarpanch position for women in certain villages and there was this anecdote which is oft repeated of a woman who reached on republic day for the flag hoisting she reached couple of minutes late and she found that the men in the village the elders reached hoisting the flag and had gone home, but when she reached there she said that I am the Sarpanch it's my job to hoist the flag and she insisted that all of them come back and she hoisted the flag so initially you may get the wives and the sisters and the daughters in law of men coming and occupying those positions and be so called puppets so to speak as it's well but over time I feel as women come to recognize the power to the position gives them and power in a nice way I think they rise to the occasion and they deliver and it's amazing the moment you have these quotas etc it actually pushes the boards to go out and look for more women on boards so typically you would get board members through your contacts etc. but the moment you go out and hire a search firm for example it's amazing the number of women who show up on the list of candidates which otherwise would have never happen for these board rooms.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ A related thought here is that this where women having a personal Board of Directors that could guide them would be of tremendous value. While the notion of having mentors is relevant to all, whether man or woman, I do think women leaders who have made this transition can help other women cross this barrier. If this topic is of interest, you could look for the Playlist on Mentorship in the Curated Playlists section at playtopotential.com.

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. If you want to listen offline say during a car ride home or during airplane travel, you could also access the Podcast on iTunes, Stitcher, Saavn and several other podcast apps. Google has recently launched an app for podcast listening on Android platforms too. If you went to playtopotential.com, you would also have the opportunity to listen to multiple voices curated by a topic. Play lists topics include – Reinventing Self (which is about how people changed trajectories significantly), early formative years where leaders talk about how their childhood has influenced them profoundly, Insight on career paths (various professionals talk about the ups and downs of their career and how individuals should think about embarking on that path)

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End of nugget transcription

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Women Leadership: The fact that we don't have enough women leaders in the Board room is well understood. Leaders share their perspectives on what needs to happen across various stages (education, maternity, late career) for women to rise to the very top. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Maternity Transition: It is well understood that maternity is a key inflection where there is leakage in the leadership pipeline. Women leaders talk about hard choices and trade-offs that women have to make but also offer perspectives on how they could think about Maternity & Career rather than making an Either/Or choice. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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Roopa Kudva - Nuggets

- 29.00 Roopa Kudva - The Full Conversation
- 29.01 Roopa Kudva - Omidyar Network and innovating for next Half Billion
- 29.02 Roopa Kudva - Early formative years
- 29.03 Roopa Kudva - Growing through the ranks at CRISIL
- 29.04 Roopa Kudva - Transitioning to a General Management role
- 29.05 Roopa Kudva - Choosing career direction post CRISIL
- 29.06 Roopa Kudva - Flexing leadership style at Omidyar Network
- 29.07 Roopa Kudva - Developing a sense of judgment
- 29.08 Roopa Kudva - Women Leadership - The barrier that doesn't get spoken about as much
- 29.09 Roopa Kudva - Perspectives on Success
- 29.10 Roopa Kudva - What they don't teach you at IIMA but should
- 29.11 Roopa Kudva - In summary - Playing to Potential

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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