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## Context to the nugget

Neera talks about how she and Deval have thought about where they have wanted to take Dasra. She also discusses how when they had a funding challenge a few years back, they had to revisit almost all of their key assumptions and have an honest discussion about where they wanted to take Dasra and move forward with increased conviction.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** Picking on the theme of ambition Neera, talk to us about how your ambition for Dasra evolved over time? What was it 18 years back? What is it today and how being it evolved?

Neera Nundy (NN): So, there's something about ambition that somehow I relate to ego so I don't entirely resonate with the word but may be aspiration or feels a bit better so to be very honest I was probably very young and naive and I was like I have nothing to lose I have everything to learn from joining and being part of what we imagined Dasra to be but we didn't actually imagine in a long term I think it was, Let's help a few NGOs and we were like wait a second we are helping a few NGOs now we should be working with funders and I think it was only five or six years ago because the first ten years was bumpy, like we reliving ... for lack of a better word, we were trying to figure out like what's our model? How is it going to be sustainable? Are we going to be able to hire people? And it was about five or six years ago where actually every year we had saved money and we had a point in time where we lost all of our funding and we had to let go over team that it made us very nervous about growing again and so and not only where we growing our family at that time we were also questioning like should we be growing Dasra and should it be just like Deval and I doing this boutique kind of thing and we told ourselves we are hit, we have lost all of our money that going forward we would always keep two years of cash so, whatever our team size would be we would always had two years of cash to be able to fund that particular team size which is really conservative so about five or six years ago we had asked ourselves that you know did we really create Dasra to be a tiny little shop and if we see the potential for the impact to be bigger than ourselves then why are we constraining us and we have money to be able to invest in new opportunities or initiatives I think then both of us said its almost irresponsible to always created something just for us and if we see more potential for impact ultimately on lives and solving some of these problems then lets fund this opportunity which we called the Indian Philanthropy Forum and so we started at that point in time that there's wealth in India, there is new wealth in India, there's business leaders and people who also want to participate in the social sector and that can we be part of this indigenous giving kind of moment why don't we start to build that? And we had conversations with give India to do this together and we thought to ourselves well we should do it and why don't we take that money we have saved and put it into this new initiative and I think that's where we realized now this is beyond to the two of us and it should be beyond two of us, now should it last forever? No! But I think there's

much more to be done and therefore I would be thinking about how Dasra grows in a role that we play and how do we both transition to a larger bigger one Dasra kind of organization and I think is where we are now.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Neera talks about how she and Deval have evolved the vision for Dasra especially through some of the pivotal moments. I have noticed that for every entrepreneurial story, almost always, there are at least 1 or 2 near-death experiences that the company goes through that pushes it to revisit the key assumptions and the North Star they are going after. I have found that leaders that are vulnerable and transparent are often able to create a climate for an honest conversation with the other key stakeholders and navigate through the storm. These are moments where some of the “larger than life” founders often break down because they are not able to realign the stakeholders around the new flag that they want to go after. The odds of coming through such a storm often have a greater correlation with the climate and trust at the top than either the gravity of the challenge or the individual brilliance of the co-founder.

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## End of nugget transcription

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### Neera Nundy - Nuggets

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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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