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Context to the nugget

Neera talks about how she has thought about her role as Dasra has grown and her plans for governance as we look to the future. She talks about the interconnect between the personal and professional life and how the role she has played in Dasra has been in the context of her personal context.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Picking on the point of transition how do you think about the transition to new phase, I am curious about your revolution as a leader as Dasra the organization is growing, what's sort of the next step from the governance stand point for you to transition to the next orbit?

Neera Nundy (NN): I want to be much more deliberate about the transition and I feel often as founders especially for non-profits we are very poor at transition and so much of the organizations whether its energy or dynamism and hence am being very concentrated with the founder and we are often very irresponsible I think about it. So I want to be much more deliberate about the transition but it's hard because you don't know anything else and so I thought I would transition earlier it was our board and I actually had gotten very sick two years ago to may be now three years and I think I got very sick, both of us like wait a second this is, why are we doing all of this should we really slow down, I was like let me phase out and then as I got healthier and healthier I got more and more excited about what Dasra was all about and wanted to sort of re-engage and so I think the personal phases of your life often will influence sort of where you are in your professional life? So I went through a phase of, is it the right time to transition now? ...

DJ: When you say transitioned, transitioned to?

NN: Transitioned to less day to day responsibility, and not being on execution and not being so responsible for fund raising for the organization and leading some of where we were growing a lot of it rest still with us and feeling like we really need to hire more, we have all gone through our phases of hiring leadership but I think we don't think enough of so you hire this leadership where is my role going to go? And I think as I got healthier and wanted to reengage with Dasra, the board, we had shared our transition paths or succession planning with the board and now our board came back to us interestingly enough and said you are still young at 40 you still have ten years if not more why wouldn't you still give this time to Dasra, why would you think about transitioning now and I thought to myself, that's a good point, but I do think in, I think between five to ten years one needs, five to eight years to really think about the succession so I am thinking about it coming much more off of day to day execution decentralising decision making there are a lot of things that one need to start to have the organization be able to do without us there on one hand and on the other hand how do

you build and continue the motivation and passion and sort of what, I love what Bain calls the founders mentality. I feel that there is something to be said about building that kind of culture and so as much as we are thinking about transition I think we still are at a point, at Dasra we carry the culture we still continue to influence what's not negotiable here and what is this organization is going to be like? And what are the kinds of people we want? Though we are just still small it's a 120 and although it completely freaks me out sometimes, you know you get out of the organizations there's hundreds and hundreds and thousands of people gives you a better reality check that 120 is still small so we are still like a family but that being said I do think transition is on to the top of my mind but transition to a potential role within Dasra partially, I wonder, but there's always a hangover, I do think when founders just hand around, theirs is that aura good and bad that whoever you will bring and the group that will start to emerge as taking that leadership shouldn't be hindered by and so that's a bit of a long term view right now we are like in the mist of how do we decentralise? How do we hire leaders? And how do we build our culture.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Couple of things struck me here.

1. Roles we play on the work front whether we are the entrepreneur or the professional is inexorably intertwined with what happens on the personal front; Neera talks about how she ramped down and ramped up at Dasra given her health context; No one right answer but I think it is imperative for us to take stock of the various elements of life and see if the overall system is stable and sustainable. Yes, we all have our temporary phases of confusion, turbulence and intensity but it is important to distinguish between whether that is the norm or an exception

2. The point Neera makes about "what will I do with my time when I have leaders running the day to day" is quite a profound one. I do notice that when organizations hit inflection point of growth and it is time to bring in a professional, there is a lot of the discussion around what the incoming leader could be doing. There is much less discussion around what the entrepreneur or the leader who is zooming out will be doing. Nassim Nicholas Taleb talks about the notion of Anti-library, a notion of being aware of what we don't know. I think, we need to think about writing an anti-job-description. A list of things that the entrepreneur will stop doing when they transition out of the day to day and leave a large chunk of the responsibility to another leader. This explicit conversation around what this should look like and how you would slowly transition to this new equilibrium doesn't seem to happen as much as it should.

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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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