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Context to the nugget

Neera talks about some of the common challenges that entrepreneurs in the Social Impact space face. She talks about founders often being “too mission driven” and thereby coming in the way of systems and processes that could build the organization sustainably. She also talks about the Founders not spending enough time on what they are distinctive in leading to spreading themselves across too many areas.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I want to pick up on the work that you do in the context of building leadership capacity in not for profits, given your personal journey in what you are building and with your personal experience in working with several not for profits what are the key peelers of leadership development you think about, which is specifically amplified in the social impact space?

Neera Nundy (NN): So, we run a leadership program and that actually emerged after we ran what we called an accelerator program so we started working with organizations and said what you need kind of a help, the heads of these organizations needed help to how to think about their business plan and how to pitch and that was sort of what we thought was the need and then we realized actually it's a leadership itself that if you can influence that it can be transformational for the organization and so we realised then that it was building leadership in the context of business practices so we run for ... we have leaderships in strategy, we have leadership in brand, we have leadership in talent and then our last one is sort of leadership in legacy and so bringing together the individual but also in the context of organization and therefore how does that leadership playing to the organization is a lot of where we try and help the social sector leaders, who don't actually get that kind of exposure, so we work really hard to translate a lot of sort of management business speak into how do you make available for sort of the non-profits leader is a lot easier than most realise but there's a lot of lessons to be learnt even from, ultimately for profits or non-profits organizationally I really believe you deal with the same challenges is just one has a model that can make money and one has a moral let try and have impact, so yes I mean what have we focused on leadership because we ultimately realized you get the most leverage there and there isn't enough research around how do you really kind of strengthen and magnify that.

DJ: And let's say within that if we double click on leadership as a theme are there one or two things that you find, that people find hard to scale, when it comes to development are there one or two areas that you see a lot of people struggling with or grappling with? When it comes to expanding their own capacity?

So I think and this is probably true entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs and founders involved is that, you play many roles and deconstructing those roles for ultimately to scale beyond that individual, I think it's very difficult and so these leaders don't always understand their strengths A, B they are in it for the impact and often don't build systems that are sustainable beyond themselves and so they are not thinking about paying themselves and then you are like the toppers are not paying themselves then what happens to salaries below and so they are thinking so much and they so driven by the mission of that they are thinking organizationally, what's going to happen or how we really going to grow our impact I think it's one part being Mission driven, two and then therefore compromising sustainability of the organization I think leaders don't understand in our sector frankly even in the for profit sectors really what are their strengths and where they should be spending time? And therefore they often are all over the place. So they are fundraising they are all the way in program and frankly not great people managers and I think where you reach that point in the organization is where do you start to bring people in and it's not about just growing, growing people from within there's often a conflict with these leaders around loyalty, commitment and the organization often grows beyond the group of people that you started with and somehow in the social sector whether it's an ideology or philosophy its making these kind of difficult decisions often is hard for these leaders.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In my work with some of the founders in the Social Impact space, they often get into this "Bhagavad Gita" like moment where Arjun is in the battlefield and grappling with the dilemma of "should I be fighting my relatives" or should I fight for what is right. One of my earlier guests Devdutt Pattanaik, frames it elegantly as the distinction between Focus and Perspective. I see a similar dilemma showing up in the minds of the Founders, especially in the Social Impact space. In one particular instance, the founders were two young purpose driven women in their early 20s working towards creating employment for women in impoverished communities. We noticed that they chose not to pay themselves and the team around them was operating on a thin budget. As we discussed scale-up, one of the key elements they needed was good talent and we all know, talent comes at a certain price. It took a few conversations to get to a point for them to realize that they were doing the organization harm by being harsh on themselves when it comes to pay. It was critical for them to keep the perspective on the big goal and ensure that some of the micro-choices they made were not coming in the way of the primary objective.

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End of nugget transcription

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- 31.00 Neera Nundy - The Full Conversation
- 31.01 Neera Nundy - Early formative years
- 31.02 Neera Nundy - Changing orbit - HBS, Wall-Street and Dasra
- 31.03 Neera Nundy - Thinking about levers of Impact
- 31.04 Neera Nundy - Role clarity with co-founders
- 31.05 Neera Nundy - Evolving the goal-post at Dasra
- 31.06 Neera Nundy - Transitioning roles within Dasra
- 31.07 Neera Nundy - Leadership Development in Social Impact space
- 31.08 Neera Nundy - Transitioning to the Social Impact world
- 31.09 Neera Nundy - Distinctive leaders in the Social Impact space
- 31.10 Neera Nundy - 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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