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## Context to the nugget

Arun talks about how one can listen to build credibility in a new context, especially if you are in a situation where you feel you do not have the capabilities on Day 0. He talks about how he learnt from Sumant Moolgaokar by watching him interact with people across hierarchies including how he would engage with the gardener. He shares that it is critical that we move from a “I will teach” to a “I will learn” mindset when you move to a new context.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** What’s your sense on missed opportunities when leaders transition from context X to context Y, while there are enough books written on what they should be doing what do you think people don’t do enough of in these situations?

**Arun Miara (AM):** Let me go back to my Tata’s years, I learnt a lot because of the challenges that I was given by the chairman of the company Sumant Moolgaokar, I was in my 20s only late 20s when our then General Manager of this was very large and very operational in Pune had a heart attack and he was a very strong leader he was at top of everything, he knew everything checked on everything and he made sure things happened and because of that perhaps he got a heart attack in his 50s and immediately had to be taken off for few weeks so there was a vacuum there because strong leaders don’t develop others also so there were very good experienced people at the second level but they hadn’t been given a chance to exercise decisions for themselves as also the chairman Mr. Moolgaokar was feeling that this is no way to developing leaders what was going on there that we are getting results, this top man getting the best of the experience of the others and technical skills of the others and producing results but he is not developing leaders so here was the instance that if the bus strikes the guy you better have someone else available so the bus struck this guy and there was no one available so he sent me immediately to say you are now the acting general manager now that was a shock because I was an executive assistant to him in my 20s and stuff, I mean me going and being the boss of these guys who were in their 50s and who have built things in Jamshedpur and win around the world and me, I mean what can I teach them? Or tell them as a world I used perhaps, someone said Miara you are not going there to teach anyone, you are going there to learn and by listening to them you will learn, listen to them and learn and he didn’t say the rest but I can now complete the sentence for the rest so they will respect you and they will follow you and that’s what happened, I mean this advice from this person just switched, don’t go to teach, go to learn to learn, listen and he himself Mr. Mulgavkar was a great example of the deepest listener I know, he would listen to the gardener and ask him, the plant is doing very well how come? And the person would talk in his language about plant and he would ask him about where did he learnt that from after all he is just a gardener without an education, so his listening to people and their lives what they did in their skills and how things were produced by different sorts of people, so observing him

on one side and then when you are asked to do it then I said ok I have got an example here and I would keep observing him, you keep come down to the factory every week to go around with me and he would do the listening to the others and I would listen to his listening, you know what's he asking for? And what are people saying? It was wonderful, that experience.

DJ: When one gets appointed as a leader of an organization, people often expect that you have the answers you have the experience you have the background and sometimes coming across as a listener, people start saying what's the value add? How do you sort of battle that quick judgement that people often form of you when you come in from that sort of context?

AM: I was being reminded by him saying look I am going there with this anxiety about what people will think of me? So, don't be anxious what people are thinking about you? Switch your inner concerns toward what am I learning? Who are these people? Just start paying attention to them and what I noticed and learnt them was they no longer are judging me. In fact they were appreciating me you see so that thing went over once I did the switch inside, that's not about me my ego and failing my ego threatened, it was my curiosity and which was found by them to be that I was being humble and so therefore respect and I was learning by the questions I was asking them in the spirit and the question wasn't say why not did you do this what have you done wrong but just really curious about their success and their concerns and it was a great relationship.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Listening when you are in a new context is often counter-intuitive to a lot of people that are keen to assert their power and influence by taking charge and by showing "who is the boss". But if you really are looking to drive change over the long-term, listening to build trust and a nuanced picture of what is going on is critical before you come up with the Theory of Change that will take the organization forward. Ravi Venkatesan (RV), one of my earlier guests spoke about this when he spoke about his appointment as the Chairman of the Board at Bank of Baroda.

*RV: "what you have to do in is listen intently and I did I made it very conscious effort to listen to a bunch of people retired chairman of a bank of Baroda so it helped me understand from your perspective, what I should do what the issues are? How would you handle them? And you get a certain perspective, I went and spoke to Waghul of ICICI and P.J. Nayak of axis Bank because they had, they have been around and seen revolution of banking sector, I met a lot of our own employees and so forth, so from this you begin to piece together first the situation and then out of that emerges a theory of change which is, what interventions are really going to Make a difference and who are going to be an important alliances if you don't listen and you start to imide you are coming with the point of view you starts jumping into action right away you going to make a lot of mistakes because you hadn't built this nuance and reasonably accurate picture of the landscape"*

DJ: Ensuring that we listen to a range of voices and form a nuanced picture before we move forward is critical especially when we move to a new context. Thank you for listening. For more please visit [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com).

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Ravi Venkatesan that is referenced: [Listening intently during Transitions](#).

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**Listening:** When you talk, you are only repeating what you already know. But if you listen, you may learn something new”. This is a quote by Dalai Lama. Several leaders talk about their experiences with listening and how they have grown with it. More specifically, leaders also reflect on the criticality of listening when transitioning into a new context. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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## Arun Miara - Nuggets

- 34.00 Arun Miara - The Full Conversation
- 34.01 Arun Miara - Art of asking good questions
- 34.02 Arun Miara - Steering by listening
- 34.03 Arun Miara - Giving feedback by listening
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- 34.05 Arun Miara - The art of facilitation
- 34.06 Arun Miara - Judgment and values
- 34.07 Arun Miara - Listening & "Thinking fast and slow"
- 34.08 Arun Miara - Being heard in a noisier world
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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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