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Context to the nugget

Ambi talks about his key insight around what it takes to influence clients. Given Advertising is a domain where there is arguably a lot of possible subjectivity; it is an interesting canvas to see how advisors influence clients. Ambi shares that it is often more about the intent and then followed by the content.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What have you learnt about the art of influencing in all the years off the work you have done?

Ambi Parameswaran (AB): I think there is an interesting book, right? Called 'influencing without authority', unfortunately I read it only last year, I should have read it 20 years ago because in advertising or any consulting space you are actually influencing without authority, you don't have the authority to sign the budget off, you don't have authority to sign off the copy but you know. So, I think you influence that client by first getting their trust, so I think trust is the basic, the client should trust you, once the client trusts you then don't take that trust for granted do your homework, do enough due diligence, so the challenge is do you know as much or more about the clients business than he does? Can you do that? I mean there is story in the book I have written about, the story about UTI mutual fund where Mr. Damodaran took over and I had strong biases against PSUs because they end up doing this L1 and waste a lot of time, but the moment I met him, the first time I realize he was a different man and then I met him the second time we suddenly developed a great sense of mutual respect and trust and it turned out to be a great relationship, we still continuous to be friends it's about more than ten years old. So I think the basic background is how can you establish a sense of trust? Of honestly sharing things, so it's not that just because I have brought this campaign to me doesn't mean that if you reject the campaign I am going to shrivel up and die, please reject the campaign, no problem and we used to tell our creative guys lets hold up yaar, lets listen to the client, let's not be defensive, and very often what happens is you let the client talk and you figure out that actually there is a way of saving this campaign, which you think is the right campaign for the client, so trust and last month I was in Bangalore and one of that book talks I was doing, one of my former client was doing it for me and he said look this brand is so big I probably think they deserve more credit than we do because they stuck by what was right for the brand we often got confused and I think that was the real high praise to come from a very large client.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: People often think that influencing is often about the quality of the thought, the depth of the analysis and the brilliance of the individual with the idea. I would concur with Ambi that what is often required before that is the client needs to trust your intent that you are aligned with him or her in terms of what you are solving for. Only then, would you have the door open to dazzle the client with your brilliance. Again it is not an either or here but we are often trained on the technical elements of getting the logic right in an argument but we are often not trained enough on the elements around establishing intent. My observation there in the cases where I have built a long-term trusted relationship is that clients often look for consistency in responses over a period of them to trust you, especially when things don't go per plan. Just ensuring that you keep building trusted relationships as you scale up your technical capability is crucial at the highest levels of an advisory profession.

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End of nugget transcription

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Influencing: Leaders reflect on what it takes to get the ideas in your head to a wider set of people and drive buy-in. It's often a function of being tactful about listening to what the various stakeholders want; getting a sense of when the timing is right and driving the change you want by influencing the various constituents. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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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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