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Context to the nugget

Ambi talks about what he has learnt from individuals like Late Pradipto Mahapatra, Late Mr Rohinton Aga and Mr M. Damodaran when it comes to storytelling. He draws the connection between storytelling and listening and discusses how it is not a skill-set that can be suddenly implanted into a team or an individual but has to be an integral part of the culture in an organization.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What have you learnt as somebody who has been at the thick of storytelling, what have you learnt about what is a take for an individual to be a good story teller?

Ambi Parameswaran (AB): To be a good story teller you have to be a good listener. To start with, you have to understand what works as a story in that context and then figure out how you can weave a story into your narrative and if you look at it in the book sponge, what I have actually done is taken 25 stories of various clients whom I met, written them as stories and then kind of segued that story into a managerial principle, or leadership concept etc. so if I just started by saying leaders have to be humble and then talked about RD Aga it wouldn't have worked whereas I flip it around see as a client from Pune who was going through a change, he called us we went and met him and then this happened that happened that's an example of a leader who had humility. So, today a lot of clients have this story telling, they invite a story telling specialist to do story telling workshops, now I think storytelling is not something you can parachute into a team I don't think that will work I think you have to build a culture of sitting and telling stories, we are fortunate we worked with a boss called Anil Kapoor, Anil Kapoor can sit and talk for 10 hours, one story after another after another,

DJ: Pradipto is also a great example.

AB: These are great examples of guys who can keep on telling you stories. So are you building that culture? Of people sitting and generally shooting the air and telling stories about various things and if you build that culture then people pick it up and storytelling is a great way of engaging the client in what you are going to do. Instead of going and saying how about this campaign? You start with the story and then get on to sell what you are selling, client knows you are telling a story and he is enjoying it and he also knows that you are going to sell something which is fine.

DJ: This is why you are there in most of the situations because the client knows that.

AB: And I have met clients who are great story tellers, I mean it's a pleasure for example meet Pradipto is always telling stories about something or the other or Mr. Damodaran you sit with him

for an hour or two he will tell you various stories about his days as an IAS officer in the north east to something else to something else so its great fun sitting and listening and in my own way when my colleagues come and sit, we will tell some stories about something and I will tell I am sorry I might have not told this before, and they say “yes, we have heard this three time OK, *thik hai*”

DJ: At least I am consistent over time.

AB: “Did story end the same way?” “*Haa* it ended the same way, you told the client that you can’t sack me, your father cant sack me your grandfather cant sack me,” “have you heard that, no? Moral of the story you understand, OK! Now go.”

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key insight for me here was Ambi’s point about the fact that story-telling is not a superficial skillset but it has to be something deeper. It has to be a part of the culture in the family or in the organization for an individual to really develop this skill over time. I am reminded of my conversation with KV Sridhar (also known as POPs) who spoke about a similarity between a homoeopathic pill (keeping discussions around scientific basis of the discipline aside for a minute) and a good story. He says, good stories have a sweet outer layer and feel good to consume but have a medicine inside that works on you when you consume it.

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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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Podcast Transcript [35.08 Ambi Parameswaran - The art of story telling](#)

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