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## Context to the nugget

Indranil talks about some of the common areas in the corporate world where we could use stories – building rapport, influencing and getting strategies to stick. He also talks about the distinction between narrating a story versus sharing something that has the structure of a story. He goes on to say that for the purpose of business story-telling, it is often sufficient to focus on the science and process of story-telling than get bogged down by the art which can be overwhelming for a few.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In the book you also talk about four different applications of storytelling building rapport, explaining change, handling mental blocks and sharing best practices. Talk to us a little bit about, how the storytelling approach is nuanced in each of this context, how is it different in each of this context?

Indranil Chakraborty (IC): So, this is not necessarily the, what is the nice word there? Mutually exclusive collectively exhaustive sort of area where you can use storytelling. To me these are the building blocks I start with to get people comfortable into their journey of storytelling so I keep talking about this both in the book and in any of my key note or training programs, is that I don't do the art of storytelling. Is there an art to storytelling? Of course there is you don't need it in business, not till you are doing something that I do which is three hour keynote, that's a long keynote you need a bit of art there but for almost all business conversations none of them are three hour keynotes you don't need art, you can do it with science and what is science? Science to me is process, repeatable, measurable and predictable. So if you did ABC and got D today, someone else should be able to do ABC and get D tomorrow so in order to get that kind of stuff what I have done is I have looked at three four areas and you took a four of them, I have five in my head, which are important for us in business where currently we have a challenge and I have put in together process for each one of them and said in this situation if you do ABC you will get a powerful story to use. Now, is it going to be that regimented in your life? No, not at all. To me the way I look at it is that this is what I called as my balance wheels of business storytelling, when you and I learnt how to cycle, you got up and a cycle felt graced our knees got up! Our children learn with these two training wheels of storytelling, fantastic stuff, you don't fall off, you don't bruised similarly in the business context the way I see it is you don't make mistakes and hence bruised your ego and then throw out storytelling. This will help you get your storytelling going. Most of my training programs we work for six months and people who read the book I talk about locked about practice in the book and I say after you get good at this throw your those training wheels, then you can do your wheelies, your stunts, your skits, so these are just getting the sort of rules right and what we have done there is looked at four areas which are powerful and important and we have a challenge, so the first one is building a relationship, building a rapport we know that what builds rapport is who we are, our

character yet whenever we get the chance to introduce ourselves you only use credentials and one of the reasons that might happen is because it's easy to come and say hi! I am a computer science engineer from so and so place and you will believe me but I can't come and say hi I am very trust worthy, doesn't work and so we have a challenge which is one we know that for people to build relationship with us, or people to buy us before they buy our product, Idea or Service they need to know who we are? Yet we use credentials the story bridges the gap then what is this, this I call a connection story, its tiny anecdotes from your life which when blended into your initial conversations sometime into your introduction can leave the listener with the inference of who you are and what you stand for, so that's one area we then talk about, so this is one the out of the four which is actually a story the rest of them are not stories as much as they are just story structures.

**DJ: And what's the distinction there?**

IC: A story is a story, we can break that after if you want but I guess most people understand what the story is. Now a story has a structure which means it has a, if you take a basic structure of the story which is called the story mountain or the Freytag's triangle, you start with exposition which is setting up the context, setting up the background then you set up the challenge or its call the rising action or the rising tension, then you reach to the place where you don't know whether it's going to work or not going to work called the climax then you have the solution that has come and then you have the falling tension or the falling action and finally conclusion that's the very basic story structure what we have done in the next few areas which is when we are trying to change messaging we are only trying to change people's mind or sharing success. We have used these various story structures to craft our messages. I do a lot of consulting work as well using stories so one of the big areas of work that I do is helping organizations when they are coming up with the change messages like new strategy, new vision, transformation and what I do with the team is help them craft their transformation or strategy like a story so I am not writing a story about the strategy, I am writing the strategy like a story and the structure I use is what in the book we have covered called the clarity story and the same thing another structure to change people's mind another structure to share success.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just picking up the point that Indranil makes about the Connection story, I have observed something along similar lines in my journey and in the way I introduce myself to people.

In the early days of solo-preneurship, when I set up Transition Insight after EgonZehnder, I would introduce myself through my credentials. It would typically go like "Hi – I am an alumnus of IIT Madras, IIM Ahmedabad and London Business School. I worked for 5 years with KPMG London, 3 years with McKinsey in the US and 6 years with EgonZehnder in India. Now I am an Executive Coach and I work with people during their key transitions". One of my mentors told me that by listening to this, they weren't getting a true sense of who I was. That really got me thinking and got me working on my connection story when I introduce myself. Here is a sample of where it stands now:

I divide up my life in 2 broad chunks. First chunk is when I did what I ought to be doing. I was good in math and problem solving. That took me to IIT Madras, IIM Ahmedabad and KPMG consulting in the UK and in India. A desire to pursue a global career took me to LBS and posts that once again the desire to solve complex problems took me to McKinsey in New Jersey. That is when I experienced the first big event of my life. I got to know that my father was diagnosed with Stage IV Colon Cancer. It was around early 2018. Given the prognosis was not clear, we decided to move back to India and take care of his treatment in Chennai. I worked on some non-client facing projects in McKinsey and

focused on providing the right care for my father. That phase also gave me the opportunity to reflect deeper on what gave me energy and I felt solving complex human problems would be more energizing than solving complex strategy problems. That took me to EgonZehnder where I spent a fulfilling 6 years largely recruiting CEOs, CXOs and CFOs. But within EgonZehnder, I realized that I enjoyed helping the candidates with their career moves more than helping the clients find their recruit. One of my friends said, I had more of a coaching mindset than a poaching mindset. To me, that was when the penny dropped and I set out to pursue my own path by setting up Transition Insight where I do Coaching work but with a focus on transitions because that is when people are lonely, problems are complex and stakes are high.

I have also been passionate about learning from people's journeys and content creation. So, the podcast is a manifestation of that where I strive to create purposeful content around leadership, transitions and careers.

I am sure there is a lot more room for me to refine my story further and make it more punchy but I can see that when I share this people see me very differently as compared to earlier where I would just give them a list of credentials and institutions.

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## End of nugget transcription

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### **Indranil Chakraborty - Nuggets**

- 37.00 Indranil Chakraborty - The Full Conversation
- 37.01 Indranil Chakraborty - Transitioning to solo-preneurship
- 37.02 Indranil Chakraborty - Demystifying Business storytelling
- 37.03 Indranil Chakraborty - Contextual applications
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- 37.05 Indranil Chakraborty - Story listening
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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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