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Context to the nugget

Stew speaks about how we should try and stretch the boundaries of our current context before we start thinking about drastic solutions including changing jobs. He speaks about the notion of the Theory of small wins that underpins that Total Leadership approach and also refers to the work of Herminia Ibarra – Author of the book Working Identity.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How people should think about where to play? When people come into your program, how should people think about flexing the boundaries within the current canvas versus looking for a new canvas?

Stewart Friedman (SF): Well, I think your approach to working the canvas that you have currently got in front of you to its limit is the smart approach. The theory of small wins is an important concept that is underlying the design of this total leadership method and this theory of small wins is really very simple, you are a lot more done when you take small steps in the direction that you chose, because it's easier to take small steps than big leaps there's less risk and you are going to go on because you take one step and you realise maybe I need to just low... may direction in this way so that I can get to where I want to go and bring this along with me you learn more you develop confidence, small steps at a time so incremental change towards the big idea and many people think well, my work situation is terrible I got to get out of here, I am miserable and instead of thinking well, other ways for me to make some experiments some small experiment that might create a different approach, a different feeling, if sets it myself in this role with a less radical less risky adjustments and so trying those first is generally a wiser approach because it costs less and you learn more faster.

DJ: I guess once you tried whatever you could try and you hit the limits and then maybe it's time to move to the different question but point well taken.

SF: And Herminia Ibarra has done great work on this especially in her book Working Identity when she studied career changers and this is essentially what she found. Its wiser to take small steps in it not radically familiar environment but in the moment you know and see which you can do the craft your job, change your experience or another parts of your life in ways that are better aligned with what you care about and what you get up.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: People often treat their current situation as fixed and see it as a binary decision, this job is not working out or it is working out. But working like a scientist and architecting experiments to pressure test the boundaries is helpful before we move towards taking a drastic call.

I am also reminded of the book “Stick with it” by Sean Young. It is a great book about how we should think about behavioural change and one of the concepts he talks about in the book is the notion of Step-ladders –taking baby steps to produce behavioural change.

He makes an interesting point here. He says, when we secure a mini-win, we have a dopamine release which acts as fuel and provides us with the momentum to move forward in that direction. Sometimes, when we set a large goal to ourselves, that big event is the only source of rush and you need to cross multiple points of failure before that. He argues that people often place a greater emphasis on smaller wins in the short term than bigger wins in the long term. Bearing that in mind when we think about harmonizing across dimensions is helpful.

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End of nugget transcription

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Stewart Friedman - Nuggets

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- 40.03 Stewart Friedman - Role of Authenticity, Integrity and Creativity
- 40.04 Stewart Friedman - Tradeoffs by stage of life - Early career, Mid-life, End-career
- 40.05 Stewart Friedman - Technology and psychological interference
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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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