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## Context to the nugget

Rajat speaks about what it takes to build trust at the highest level with clients. He talks about how sometimes, it takes several years to cultivate a client and how the door opens at the right time if there is adequate trust that has been built with the client.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): But may be persisting with the transition Rajat since you have lead in different markets, culturally different markets anything to be said about getting the culturally piece around the transition right especially given India, Scandinavia, US all these are different cultures what have you learnt about culturally assimilating / building trust at the highest level?

Rajat Gupta (RG): The first thing to say is that the approach that McKinsey takes in solving problems or developing clients is fairly uniform across is not that we very much change our values or change our approach so in some ways it is the same in many other ways there are differences I mean differences their probably as many differences within any country in terms of type of clients than there are actually between different countries because our client base is basically the fortune 500 of the world right so they are all global companies or most of them are global companies with people the senior executive are global business executive they are exposed to the world they have opportunities everywhere. So the mind-set is in many ways similar there aspiration as similar their needs are also similar in terms of what is important. Scandinavia had a disproportionate number of global leaders whether this the Ericson's or Electrolux, Atlas Copco, StatOil or you even name it they are leadership companies in Scandinavia and so they were not much unlike sort of large US multinationals. I also observed that there are different styles between very successful McKinsey Directors in developing clients' very different styles they all work in the same market place but very different styles.

DJ: Give us a couple of examples maybe just to illustrate

RG: For example there are directors who don't have any great bedside manner or don't have great relationship skills but they are primarily driven by sort of the professional skill they bring to the table and in fact sometimes rather harsh and rather, I would say don't have soft skills but yet they are very successful you named the couple of directors before the contrast you can see there in terms of how two very successful directors had very different styles so I don't think there is anything unique in that. My personal style which I think worked across these environments had to do with having a dialogue with the client and the perspective, issues they are facing being a very astute listener rather than saying here is the theory that I want to must apply, I don't have a hammer and looking for a nail to nail down somewhere, its more to lets really understand what the client needs and also not to

push very hard it's like you have to wait for the right time when the client is ready, I have so many different experiences. I met the CEO of Walmart in China we were on the same board and I said I would like to come and see you. They were not a client of us, he said yes you can come but don't expect any work we don't like consultants we don't use consultants, so I said OK I would like to come anyways. So, I went all the way to Bentonville which is not an easy place to get to and we spent an hour talking about various business issues and what and the hour finished and I said to him "I hope the time was useful, if you learnt something from this then lets schedule in another hour in three months' time" and I will think about what you have told me and I will have some thoughts and ideas and so on. He said yes I found it useful sure. So I went on these every two three month meetings for three years, there was no work and then one day I get a call from him and he says, I have an assignment I want you to do and it was not competitive it was nothing to Walmart is known for its competitive vendor relations and this and that nothing and I had similar experiences in many clients which is you just have to wait for the right time.

DJ: And let me just sticking to that example Rajat how do you draw the distinction between somebody trusting Rajat Gupta the person and trusting McKinsey the institution how have you thought about, in a lot of these situations people trust the individual sometimes and expect that individual to be heavily involved in something but as managing partner time is finite how have you thought about making that distinction and positioning the firm as well as the leader?

RG: It's clearly when you have a dialogue with a client, one of the things you have to communicate to them is what McKinsey is and what the talent pool and what the capabilities of the firm are? And that we are able to deliver, in the strategy project there was the thing came out called the 100% cube the notion was simply that we would provide the best of our capabilities along all these lines client understanding in the market place, industry knowledge, functional knowledge and the day we would be able to deliver that to a client, whenever the talent existed in the firm and it was not just limited to that office, because the firm was a world-wide partnership and not just a parochial set-up. So you have to along the way convince them of that but it is fundamentally based on the trust base relationship between you and the CEO that you are serving.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is an interesting insight from Rajat that I have seen play out given my limited experience. While we can go on a trust building journey with people, when that translates to work is often not in our hands. When one tries to be too pushy too soon, it often backfires. Given the finiteness of time, it is critical that we keep investing in the right set of relationships over time by continuing to add value in those conversations. I have noticed that very often people go after situations where there is near-term opportunity in sight but miss out on clients that could be attractive in the long-term but don't have any near-term opportunity. Those take longer to break open, but when they do, the work often pours!

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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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