



Context to the nugget

Michael speaks about the criticality of leaders transitioning from a competitive mind-set to a collaborative mind-set where they focus on building alliances and identify opportunities for cross-company collaboration, often even reaching out to rivals to co-create opportunities for the organization.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How leaders should make that mind shift at this level it's not even a skill shift right it's about how do you rewire you mind sets. What's been your experience with leaders that do this effectively Michael?

Michael Watkins (MW): So I took the ... it's a great observation about culture and I suppose to be smiling if you said that because we did some work recently for an Indian organization. You know part of it is wasn't transition worker but development work. Normally we use sort of little case studies to motivate some of what we do and I this organization the one the setup is sort of team versus team competition to see who would do best on the case study and analysis I had never seen a organization as per that before so it give me a better inside into what you are saying Deepak about the culture and competitiveness. But the essence of this mind set is to say at some point as you get to senior level you are orderly to move forward depend very strongly and orderly to forge alliance internally and externally. So, if you are locked in a zero sum competitive mind-set. You are gone struggle to do that and you got to kind of adjust to a set of a mind set about abundance, a mind-set about possibility, a mind-set of alignment, a mind-set of reciprocity and also recognition that you know at the top organization depend on strong relationships and alliances to move themselves forward and certainly issued what came to the externally environment the ability to shape the external environment, complex, ... social and other challenges really rest any ability to navigate diplomatically through those tickets. I'll give you specific examples I'm working with a leader who took on basically the responsibly for a global public health portfolio and a large pharmaceutical company including multi drug resistance tuberculosis This person had previously been you know running commercial responsibility for significant drive.... Are very competitive if you are doing and all of the son he was thrust in this environment whether all these NGOs or all the agencies crazy government and agencies and the and the resolution kind of shock can initially ooh my goodness how may I can do this and mean the good news without situation was I due to come out by negotiation and diplomacy background and that's part of why the chapter on building alliances is in first 90 days. But it is a mind-set shift to being the thing diplomatically right to become a corporate diplomat. I think as you get to the top in the organization and probably as true and India may be as true as Indians anywhere you got to be able to make that shift.

DJ: And in the book, you also talk about distinction between alliances and relationship could you talk to the listeners about what's the nuance here and what people often get wrong here?

MW: So I can have a one formal relationship with you but you may not be willing to support and doing some very important things but I want to do and I may have a turbo relationship with you but there may be no other things on which we can agree and pursue jointly right and so don't assume that a relationship translates into a supportable alliances and don't assume that the lack of relationship rebuilt in a negative relationship precludes the opportunity to build support to accomplish important things I mean that's the essence of this Deepak does that make sense.

DJ: I found that the distinction interesting because people often take comfort or invest in relationships but sometimes, they don't have that orientation towards a building an alliance from a change perspective right in terms of where you are trying to take the organization

MW: And they are shocked to discover that those relationships is good as they may be don't translate into the kind of support that they thought they have got.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Given my limited world-view, if I had to look at the CXOs around me who are at the cusp of making it to a CEO role and look at the graveyard, that is people that hit a glass ceiling and don't make it - This factor would be one of the key contributors to the reason why people struggle to make this transition. I guess the reasons are partly Darwinian. The competitive streak is what got the people an opportunity to play the game at the highest level and they motor along and suddenly we ask them to collaborate rather than compete. While a lot of them get it cognitively, they struggle to change the way they behave, they share information, give feedback, build relationships and so on to move from the competitive mind-set to a collaborative mind-set. And by the time people turn 35 or 40 or 45, the wiring is so ingrained that is often hard to rewire the person to behave any differently. You might as well ensure that you solve it by hiring carefully than getting somebody in with a different wiring and working on them!

To provide a metaphor here, I feel this is a bit like rocket launch. Given the viscosity in the air and the gravitational pulls, you need a certain escape velocity when you lift off but as the rocket climbs higher and higher the resistance and the gravitational pull comes down and it is critical to slow down the rocket for it to settle into orbit. I feel a lot of us grew up in a world of scarce resources where it required a certain competitive streak for us to break free from the gravitational forces of middle class if you will but once you hit a certain level, that competitive streak can cause significant damage if not kept in check.

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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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