



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right, a portrait of Deepak Jayaraman is shown with the text 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Michael lays out the key challenges involved when a leader gets promoted and transitions to a context where he/she has to lead a team with several individuals who used to be his/her peers earlier. He gives some useful insights on how leaders could think about re-engineering the relationships while walking the tight rope between being a “Napoleon” and a “Super-peer”.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What are some of the key elements for people to bear in mind and what mistakes common mistakes do you see people make here in terms of reworking the relationships?

Michael Watkins (MW): So when you are promoted internally and that she is going to CEO and examples right there is a piece of disc that really is about the reality the people who work for you previously are not going to be able to have much access as they use to. The reality that you are now over seeing and evaluating the performance if the people who were formally appears so your relationship with them to change in some significant ways. If you don't sort of embrace that reality you can get yourself into a lot of trouble and it could be saddle it's quite interesting so again CEO clan I'm working with internal promote very accomplish leader you know when from being CFO to CEO and I'm talking to his General Counsel right who previously was appear on the executive team and she said some interesting she said you know I came and I caught myself yesterday this guy what call him Anthony right made a request to me a made to do something and... the previous CEO I would have snap to attention and done it. But because I know Anthony and I know and sort of the way he operates I didn't react to him the same way. But then I realize wait a minute he is the CEO right doesn't he deserve the same amount of responsiveness as I would have given to previous CEO and so it means a small example but it's an interesting one and likewise you know I think that the risk of continuing to operates sort of more like a super peer then a true leader that can create real problems for people right so I'm really counselling people how do you sort of step up how do you promote yourself how do you fully occupy that role and what does that mean or by the way for the relationship you have before almost certainly half the change in some substantial ways.

DJ: And you talk about the tight rope between being Napoleon verses being a super peer in the book as well which I found interesting

MW: Absolutely, and it is a tight-rope because you don't to be coming in thank heavens I'm finally in charge clear the desk salute as I go bye but on the other hand you do have to step up in a way that demonstrates that you are operating from a position you reach them authority given in the...

DJ: You also talk about leaders having to be hard in issues and soft on people I found that distinction quite interesting when they start leading peers and what's the key insight here in terms of how people should think about settling into a role which includes leading several peers?

MW: So one risk you face when you are promoted to the former peers is that you know the may be perception that you have favourites you like this person but you are not crazy about that person you know if that takes hold that can really politicize you know the situation and under... substantial you are trying to do and so the advice that you distension when I give is one antidote to that is to focus on the business, focus on the issues, focus on the being hard on those things and very disciplined around. Paying attention to them and in that ways ... of the issues with the individual people you know become somewhat easier to deal with because it's gone become you know it will evident but you are not. Necessarily playing favourites of the people and such the essence of that piece of advice

DJ: Cafeteria section. What are the watch outs for keeping the old sets and breaking the new sets?

MW: So it's a fun little thought experiment to think about doing that and that thing is bad the answer almost certainly is if not immediately, pretty quickly you should be seating with your peers. But you need to manage that in a way that's reasonably deft unless you want to be sending a different signal right intentionally in the organization. But you still want to acknowledge people or you don't want to be perceived as disconnected or dismissive about a group of people and the process. But this is hard it's just hard because I think that I mean I was speaking again a one of the set of stake holder interviews that do one of the CEO I'm working with I was talking to one of this person's previous direct report who now obviously is you know one step removed and It was almost like he was going through a grieving process right he loved working with this leader and he is not gone have as much access as he used to have and the new person in the role you know as his past was an interim may be not the same necessarily quality or character person so it's nothing easy about it you know it's just really challenging. But the same time that new CEO can't afford to give in to the impulse to stay as connected with that like before people is they used to. I end up coming conversation about this all the time right its real struggle.

DJ: Leaders that do this effectively as they move from a high touch to the low touch kind of a mode when connecting the old set of peers are there couple of hacks that come to mind not there is a silver bullet here. But I'm curious about how people manage to do this effectively?

MW: So I think helps not to make it too abrupt but also to be very upfront about it you know one of the.... One day and sorry I can't talk to you anymore but still it's still fun. I enjoyed it. So either you can manage the transition a bit more gradually then that. But I think it doesn't hurt and then this cases what the CEO did just too kind of acknowledge this is what's going on better talk. I think that that will help kind of surface. It will move people forward more expeditiously they still gone have to through some formal previewing process and ... I think understand and keep that in mind.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In my experience, I see a lot of people treating this something that will evaporate after a certain period of time. They just look away from the issue and hope that it goes away over time. But the unfortunate reality is that it doesn't. The key is to be proactive about communication with the key team members, establishing some rites of passage into the new role, (re)enlisting the people that you want to have on your team and find an authentic way in which you establish your authority without swinging too far towards a Napoleonesque style or a "Super-peer" style unless the situation demands a particular style.

The key is to be deliberate and thoughtful about this and not hoping that it would solve itself over time.

Thank you for listening. Please visit playtopotential.com for more content. You could visit the curated playlists section for specific bite sized nuggets that are captured by themes some of which might be relevant for you. You might be specifically interested in the Playlist – Settling into a new context. This has perspectives from people from various domains including what Ramachandra Guha says about how Gandhiji settled into India and started driving the independence movement when he moved here from South Africa. To access this, please go to the Curated Playlists page and click on Transitions. Within that you will find this playlist – Settling into a new context.

You can also find the podcast offline on platforms like Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Spotify and more.

End of nugget transcription

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Leadership transitions: Perspectives around moving from one role from another especially while moving from Functional Leadership to General Management; Leaders also talk about how they thought about inter-generational transition as business owners. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a [Podcast Whatsapp distribution group \(+91 85914 52129\)](#) where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Michael Watkins - Nuggets

- 45.00 Michael Watkins - The Full Conversation
- 45.01 Michael Watkins - ROI of transition support
- 45.02 Michael Watkins - Creating the mind-space
- 45.03 Michael Watkins - The Transition timeline
- 45.04 Michael Watkins - Fit for purpose feedback loop
- 45.05 Michael Watkins - CXO to CEO transition

- 45.06 Michael Watkins - Warrior to diplomat
- 45.07 Michael Watkins - Leading former peers
- 45.08 Michael Watkins - When a promotion may not make sense
- 45.09 Michael Watkins - Mapping the influence landscape
- 45.10 Michael Watkins - Onboarding a leader
- 45.11 Michael Watkins - Entrepreneur bringing in an experienced CEO

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.