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## Context to the nugget

Michael speaks about how leaders could end up making a mistake by following the “default momentum” in their corporate journeys. He says that it is surprisingly easy to make yourself unhappy by the choices you make at senior levels. He talks about the need to pause and take stock of the opportunity even if it means that it is the natural rite of passage to the top of the organization.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** How should watch out for a promotion which seems like an elevation but fundamentally changes the nature of the job and it might actually be counted into be negative?

Michael Watkins (MW): No it's such ... and such a great question Deepak and I mean you see it in different levels and different ways right so this is the example that you just gave. I do a lot of with our global Health care company and they have a lot of operating companies you know operating companies, leadership roles are they are a lot of fun right you are leading a you know when a ... team of some form and you are very much engage with the business and the next level up is basically a group leadership role and so you are managing a whole portfolio, operating companies you are not part of any one of them and you know it's very sad after to get a promotion for being and operating company present at let's say it being a group leader but then people get there kind of ooh this isn't really whole lot of fun right I'm not connected in the same way that I was I'm not sort of active in the same way I was and why do I do this exactly right its sometimes your people. Ask and I think it's very much similar to what you are saying you also see people who on a ... concrete example I'm working with right now you now leader female leader in this case who is running a country operation for a large medical device company and very successful. The organization is more a kind of traditional country management structure right so she had a lot of courage a very dynamic you know for a very action oriented person on whom they put them on a regional strategy role where she had zero responsibility and its logical way station to even higher levels but she is struggled mightily right with the fact that she didn't have the any other level to put the she use to have. So I think first of all that is just the nature of the.... The transition whether or not you decide to do it look it's very hard for ambitious people to say I'm gone nit do something which probably a pre-requisite to get into even higher level is. But you know the people are they strong enough to understand what legally moves them, energizes them should be giving those things very... because it's surprisingly easy even at senior level to make yourself quite unhappy by the choices you make. In aid of thinking that you need to do something to get at higher levels and I'm not fully answering you question Deepak it's complicated question and it's a great question.

DJ: The related theme where I was coming from was people think about their journeys and their choices how much of it should be around let me find a play-ground where I can play to my potential versus this is the rite of passage and let me adapt myself and do whatever it takes to succeeded so I was just curious about your observation on how people think about those two questions verses of find a playground verses adept as they go through their journey?

MW: So I think there is an underpinning kind of idea or phenomenon if you are right I'm quite interested in certain forms of physiotherapist these days but you are not and one of the reasons I'm interested in that is because sometimes when I coach people I begin to kind of come up against the boundary of therapy almost it's find it in a way to think about where this coaching ending therapy begin and in fact this part is interesting relationships. I have done a few cases now we have done sort of joint engage therapist global leader with pretty interesting results. The reason I raise this is because there is certain personalities that have you know what sometimes unrelenting standing built into them that they just need to continue to push them for results for regardless of how unhappy it makes them and so I think then the reason I say this Deepak is sometimes people I don't think few of they feel like they have a choice right they have keep driving them self for regardless to one of those to them their families or otherwise and so to me the answers for your question is rooted in part in the level of up step awareness and... self-control in a deeper sense that a leader has and it's only of that thereof that they even have the ability to ask the question you know could I say NO to this never mind actually act upon it.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I was recently reading this book "Small Giants" by Bo Burlingham where he speaks about companies that decided to stay small and differentiated than going for scale. He says that scaling is a choice and not something that everybody should embark on by default. On a similar note, I would like to believe that every promotion in a company is a choice for a leader amidst several other choices in the market. Often, leaders come up to an inflection point where the dynamics of the next role and what it takes to succeed in it are very different from the past and how the leader is wired. It is helpful to pause and take stock of yourself and convince that the promotion makes sense amidst the different pathways that might be out there and then march forward.

Like Michael says, it is easy to feel that the promotion is inevitable and one needs to keep going with it but realizing that it is a choice to be made and looking at the role afresh and lining it up against potential market opportunities is critical to ensure that you continue enjoying the path you are on in the organization.

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## End of nugget transcription

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### 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](#).

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