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Context to the nugget

Michael speaks about the specific challenge when startups entrepreneurs bring in seasoned leaders as they transition from a start-up context to a scale up context. He talks about some of the elements that the entrepreneur and the incoming leader need to bear in mind.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Picking up on a specific trend that we are seeing in India these days, we clearly are seeing a significant entrepreneurial activity Bangalore which is often considered as the Silicon valley in India and several entrepreneurs setting up businesses and several businesses coming up to the point where they are transitioning from a start up to a scale up there you have young founders often in their 20s or 30s bringing in leaders who are possibly in their 40s who have sort of been there done that and I find that transition quite fascinating, in your experience Michel what are some of the watch outs? Both for the entrepreneur and for the incoming leader given there is so much is going on in that transition.

Michael Watkins (MW): So, first of all you know you are absolutely right, organizations do themselves transitions between phases at development and there's been pretty good research on that and the ... start up to accelerated growth when that happens typically, I describe it is kind of organization adolescence right? You need to kind of grow up and become more like your parents but it's painful and it means more structures more systems and that can be very painful for people who got into this start up world in part because they love the flexibility they love the Dynamics's, so you know one risk is that they don't make that transitions, they don't understand things you need to do that they don't bring in the leadership necessary to take that organization to the new level. Sometimes its investors the forcing issue on founders but sometimes it's not possibility to do that, so I would start with it's the wise young founder who understands that they need to bring in people with that kind of strong operating experience to take their baby and scale it into something really substantial I think it's also the rare founder that can make the transition through those stages of development to the point where there are the large global mature organization right and so sometimes it's about recognizing when you kind of want to step out because you are not gone able to effective in the new role. So there will be couple of thoughts on the founder side you know I mean you know... you people coming in but you want to be... sure of by thinkers you have got a founder, a boards and others who are gone support what you need to do and not get angry or undermining in some way or want to do things and for some reasons Uber came to mind where you can see a lack of maturity and leaders really that is undermined they gone think us someone coming in and have confidence that that they shank person who is going to understand and appreciate what I'm gone do with his or her organization.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The one thing I would add here to what Michael says is that I realize that start up founders often operate in a limited feedback environment. While they have a lot of mentors around them including the VC investors who give them guidance on business related decisions, there is not a lot of tactical actionable feedback that flows back to the founder in the context of his or her behaviour in the organisation.

I recently worked with a renewable energy start up that was at the cusp of scale up. The entrepreneur decided to hire a heavy hitter CEO from the industry and wanted me to work with the incoming leader to set him up for success. But when I asked the founder on how much feedback he got, he said not much.

So, I spent the first few weeks assessing the founder, through that got to know about his leadership style, culture in his company and built trust with him and his top team. That gave me rich context to work with the incoming leader and help set him up for success. Setting this up as a 2 way dynamic makes a significant difference to the odds of such an initiative working. But it requires the founder to be extremely self-aware and self-assured to be comfortable with that sort of framing.

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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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