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Context to the nugget

Matt speaks about how athletes come to him with excellence in one or two domains (cycling, running, swimming) but have to quickly come up to speed in a totally different area to be competitive in a multi-sport context. We discuss the parallels between this and how Functional leaders need to transition to General Managers.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I'm curious about the big shifts that people often need to make when they come from excellence in one domain but now they need to be good at multiple domains to me at some level it feel a bit like from a functional leadership role to general management role in a company so talk to me a little bit about what are some of the interesting things you have observe as people make this transition from excellence in one space to being good at multiple things?

Matt Dixon (MD): I think your analogy is absolutely perfect because the interesting thing about multi-sport you know put a sport in which almost three individual sports but ultimately it's not swimming, biking and running the sport is three disciplines swim, bike, run and it create one sport so it's multi-sport therefor it's multi-disciplinary and this is a very similar skill set that is required to be a high level executive, multi-level functioning and emotional intelligence and executive functioning and so it all becomes about intentional focus the real benefit is that idea to me any one coming into embracing a multisport lifestyle in which they have a perfectly balanced set up skills. So if I use triathlon as the example they are stronger for swimmer and a cyclist and a runner there is always one or two that are slightly stronger and there is one or two that needs growth and the interesting part about participating or going on a journey of this is it therefor create an arena a forced growth and very rarely in life as we become adults to we put our self in situations where we have to grow in an area of real weakness and so often when people take this on and they might be a very poor swimmer. Imagine somebody again come back to preparing for my Ironman Goa and they decided that's gone be their first race that they are going in this sport think and look at and the tendency is always going to be to fall towards their strengths and the reason for that is that they are familiar their strengths are familiar. But the necessity is to actually force growth in the weakness, yes really on the strength yes continue to look to grow and magnify those and use them but we have to actually see blind spots see weaknesses so that we can develop so the interesting thing that we see almost every time working with an executive who comes in and starts to deploy a multi-sport lens and it is a matter of if it's triathlon or it's just multiple disciplines there might be rolling and riding a spin bike and doing some strength training whatever it might be the development of weakness is very rare that they don't start to join the dots back to the requirement of themselves is being a really high functioning executive and CEO and if I can I'll tell you a really brief story this goes back several years now but one of my long time athletes and now developed into very good friend Sir

Michael Moritz who is a very well-known Venture Capitalists in the Bay Area and there was the chairman of a... when he arrived to Purple Patch and we started working with him his quest was a what's become a better cyclist and he had a wonderful goal he said is my goal and my mission is to reach 90% of my potential and we first say that that might sound defeatist but really what he was saying is I want to maximize my return on investment within context of everything else I have in my life and obviously a very busy person with travel and lot of responsibility in the work place but over the course of the development of becoming a cyclist we integrated something that was really critical for him strength the conditioning training and we also introduced into summing and at the time he could barely swim but that forced growth of development in where he was passionate in cycling but then introducing swimming it opened up his journey and he started to join the dots back to what it takes to be high functioning executive we spent a lot of time talking about this of the benefits of multi-sport to link back to many ways the work place or I'd even make it grander than that what it take to be successful in life.

DJ: If I may persist with the theme I like the term "Forced Growth" where you push on things which might possibly be a weakness and you yourself said that it's not just about playing to your strengths but in a world with finite time how do you reconcile with this let's say the ten thousand hours number that's floating around right thanks to Malcolm Gladwell where he says pick one or two things and get really good at it by spending a lot of time doing it. So, in a world with finite time how do you reconcile making time for forced growth verses may be using that time for doubling down on something else where you have already distinctive how do you think about that?

MD: Well I think that first in the ten thousand hours component is wonderfully hooky and it's a lovely concept and I think that the positive out of that messaging is it's a journey so nothing happens in an instant gratification so most the antithesis of that let's get what we need now mind-sets and so but unfortunately it's a myth. Ten thousands hours doesn't necessarily pretty excellent so it's wonderful but it's a myth but I understand the context behind it and I think that the really critical component that comes out of it is if you want to be excellent at anything and then it is without doubt a journey. It is not going to happen quickly. It's going to take time and therefore the most success is going to be come is going to arrive out of falling in love with the journey rather than just being outcome driven. So I first say that about ten thousand hours it's a great thing if you put it in context and let me also say that random collection of just doing a whole bunch of stuff is not necessarily is not going to yield results either and so what I am not suggesting here is by saying multi-sport or multi discipline that doesn't mean that you have to go along the escalator of life and grab everything that is in touch with you. Focus is important and intentional focus is critical understanding what the components that you have to focus on in order to give you biggest yield. But yes if you want to become the best Violinist in the world and you are 8 years old and you only focus on Violin there's potentially your path for you to do that and that might be critical but if you are looking to become a high functioning business leader it is impossible in that scope of what it requires for it to be a singular strength to be really good at. So, I would come back and I would argue that in order to become the best leader, the best CEO, the best executive you have to ultimately not just be really good at the financial implications so have to develop multi-disciplinary approaches and so I think you still have a narrow focus within the sporting world and there is something wonderfully. There is something very healthy about the multi-sport component where it forces growth in an area but it's still under a very particular very narrow focus in many ways.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I like what Matt says about what Sir Michael Moritz tells him when he joins Purple Patch. I want to play it back just to reiterate.

Rewind

MD: *“this goes back several years now but one of my long time athletes and now developed into very good friend Sir Michael Moritz who is a very well-known Venture Capitalist in the Bay Area and there was the chairman of Sequoia Capital when he arrived to Purple Patch and we started working with him his quest was a what’s become a better cyclist and he had a wonderful goal he said is my goal and my mission is to reach 90% of my potential and we first say that that might sound defeatist but really what he was saying is I want to maximize my return on investment within context of everything else I have in my life”*

DJ: This might seem like a simple point but situational awareness, to be aware of everything that you have going on is a key attribute of a leader. How far to push and where and understanding the constraints (which of these are flexible and which of these rigid) within which one operates requires a certain level of mindfulness, listening and awareness that often needs to be cultivated. While I see a lot of emphasis on habit’s especially with Type A leaders, it is critical that we don’t become slave of our habit’s, become situationally aware and are able to flex depending on the overall picture. That is why, the statement from Sir Michael Moritz that I want to maximize 90% of potential in this domain suggests a certain clarity of how some-one is solving the jig saw of life in the context of what matters to him.

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End of nugget transcription

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Matt Dixon - Nuggets

- 46.00 Matt Dixon - The Full Conversation
- 46.01 Matt Dixon - Coaching CEOs and Elite Athletes
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- 46.03 Matt Dixon - Athlete to Coach to Entrepreneur
- 46.04 Matt Dixon - Forced growth - plugging the weaknesses
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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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