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Context to the nugget

Herminia speaks about the different networks that we need to bring to bear especially when we are in transition. She speaks about personal, operational and strategic networks and goes on to say that the first two often evolve by default but one needs to be deliberate about the third. She also speaks about how leaders need to think about acting like a bridge rather than as a hub where everything converges into the leader.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And talking about networks Herminia you talk about leaders developing three different types of networks operational, personal and strategic. And you also use the term connective advantage which is about how these networks come together could you talk about the crux of insight here?

Herminia Ibarra (HI): We do pass certain point in our career we do everything through relationship this is how we get things done, that's how we find out what's going on, and that's how we get advice, perspective. And most people who are doing well have very good operational networks just help them get the day to day work done more smoothly maybe you know lets something done faster for them or they will get the information they need sooner but you know it is really kind of what's in the critical path of my routine day to day work that's the operational network. The personal network is the part that is you know the people that you have worked with who become friends and you have stayed in touch with and there is more emotional quality to it or may be some old mentors and there is often common interest there are longer term relations and most of this have those too and then the hard part, the tricky part is strategic network which has to do you know if the operation is about you today the personal often if about your past the strategic is about future and it's about how do you connect the dots between some of your interest and relationships that are may be external to your company, some of the internal relationships, help connect people, help bridge across different areas, help bring new ideas in, help export new ideas. It's really where you are adding unique value in the context of your work but in the most strategic aspects of it

DJ: And may be just to bring that aspect t life Herminia because a lot of the one and two almost come by default because they happen more organically has to be deliberate so are there a couple of examples you could share of people who have been thoughtful about cultivating this network given the journey?

HI: One example that struck my eye a couple years ago so what that to my mind when Beth Comstock was still at GE as chief marketing officer she felt that she was often times much more connected to the outside world than most people in operational jobs at GE which tended to be

more internally focused is though she felt even that wasn't the part of the job description that are part which is you can bring that outside in for those people and the example that I love is she was at a book talk in Silicon valley for the launch of "The Lean Start up" by Eric Ries about fast prototyping which originally had a book for start-up how do you go to skill quickly minimum viable prototype but she just has thought we are taking too long in a product department or turbines are taking too long to develop and I bet we could use some of these ideas in our more classic manufacturing context let me make the connection and she did and a big part of GE aviation then got trained on these methods to kind of make the process agile so that for me is a great example of how you can be strategic you have got access to something others don't is so you see the idea here in the need there and you bring them together.

DJ: And in the context of networks you also talk about the distinction between a hub and a bridge in the way though leaders can think about would this be an example of how she was?

HI: She was definitely acting as a bridge the way we talk about hub and bridge is I think it's important for all of us is we are making a transition to think about how we doing our day job and whether the way we are doing at opens up opportunity to see more and different or actually keeps encapsulated and so for me hub and bridge always doing your work and some people do their as a hub in which they are the centre of the action everything got to go through them and they are involved in everything critical and they are team or they are business unit or there are projects and other people do their work as a leader more as a bridge meaning they see their main role as connecting the outside and the inside and making sure that the team or the unit is getting political support money, budget, headcount, talent, information the relevant stuff is coming in that the relevant stuff is coming out. But really the one who can protect from the environment, who can bring the good elements in, who can sell their ideas upwards and so there are different ways of operating and they produce different networks.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: When I work with leaders in transition, I notice that they often have a reasonable operational and a personal network but a poor strategic network on the fringes of the work they do. That is because a personal or an operational network often gets built by default when you go through your journey but you need to be deliberate and proactive if you want to build your strategic network and bring that to bear whether it is at your role as a leader or during transition.

The other aspect that I have noticed when people are trying to reinvent themselves leveraging your CV or going through Search Consultants is not necessarily super-effective because of two reasons

- 1) Timing problem; the odds of them having an opportunity just when you need it is low
- 2) Positioning problem; Several of the Search Consultants barring a few, given their limited mind-space in processing the nuances in your journey and in your background, often extrapolate your past and come to you with roles which are more of the same. They struggle to slot you in a totally different context.

The answer is more likely to come through your networks that you have built over the years. Linking it back to what Herminia says, the more strategic they are, the more possibilities and pathways you open up for yourself in the journey ahead when you are in a transition.

Thank you for listening. For more podcast content, please visit playtopotential.com. The website also has content organized by specific themes in the Curated Playlists section. Given you are listening to this podcast; you might specifically find the themes Reinventing yourself and Navigational principles relevant.

The Playlist reinventing yourself is about leaders who were at inflection points who were courageous to try different things and move into a new context. This includes Amish Tripathi speaking about how he moved from a career in Financial Services to writing, Roopa Kudva moving from CRISIL to Omidyar Network, Papa CJ speaking about moving from Management Consulting to Stand up, Nandan Nilekani moving from Infosys to the UID project and to politics, Atul Kasbekar moving from being a Photographer to a Producer, Devdutt Pattanaik moving from Healthcare to Mythology and so on. Hopefully the diversity of perspectives will provoke your thinking around how to navigate the transition.

The Playlist Navigational Principles gives you a flavour of the frameworks that various people used to deal with the various inflection points. In a world with more divergent pathways than before, the quality of the steering wheel is possibly as important if not more important than the quality of the engine we have in our car. This playlist gives you some thought starters which will help you build a more robust steering wheel for yourself.

You can access these playlists in the Curated Playlists section at playtopotential.com. And to know more about the Leadership and Transition Advisory work I do, please visit the About section at playtopotential.com. Bye now.

End of nugget transcription

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Herminia Ibarra - Nuggets

- 47.00 Herminia Ibarra - The Full Conversation
- 47.01 Herminia Ibarra - Acting your way to new thinking
- 47.02 Herminia Ibarra - Experimenting with different pathways
- 47.03 Herminia Ibarra - Portfolio approach versus Full-time role
- 47.04 Herminia Ibarra - Pausing to reinvent
- 47.05 Herminia Ibarra - Operational, Personal and Strategic networks
- 47.06 Herminia Ibarra - Identity play versus Identity work
- 47.07 Herminia Ibarra - The perils of foreclosure
- 47.08 Herminia Ibarra - Role of the spouse
- 47.09 Herminia Ibarra - Transitioning from well-paying time-greedy careers

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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