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## Context to the nugget

Herminia speaks about two dimensions – commitment and exploration – when leaders go through a transition. She speaks about how there is a tendency for leaders to commit to something too early and how that could lead to a suboptimal solution because they haven't considered enough possibilities before they make a decision.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And back to Mid-career transition I'm curious about how people reinvent themselves and you particularly talk about a couple of dimension, commitment and exploration and you talk about the different back to my consulting root the 2 by 2 appeal to me. But I was particularly curios about the one quadrant foreclosure that you talk about which is a risk the lot of people don't acknowledge that it's a there is sub-optimality to it so talk to us about how you think about it?

Herminia Ibarra (HI): So that was part of playful thing I said when you are making a transition people think you are going from A to B but you don't you go from A to this transition thing which we call liminality in our technical jargon to be. So in between you neither here nor there and it's horrible because you lose your identity anchors and so in that space it behoves you to be a little bit more playful because you are neither here nor there so that means you don't have to be consistent you can try, you can talk to people about jobs you would never consider or you can do things that are pretty much out of character but you know you are trying to learn something and that can be very freeing because we don't often give ourselves permission to deviate and so the two principle are you said divergent exploration and delayed commitment. Diversion and exploration is what I mean by that whenever I teach people who are in transition one of the first thing I do is I say write a list of your possible selves they don't have to be feasible they don't have to be public they have to be something you are committing to do but just let your imagination run while what's the set of possibilities kind of brainstorming with yourself don't embarrass to write even if it is ridiculous put it in there and it's really interesting work people come up and it's quite in fact we are very multiple and often quite diversion does it mean you are gone do all of those things and certainly not at the same time but when you get permission to be diversion there is a lot there and in fact one of the things that is hard for people in transition is they feel that they must not be ready because they are considering such a different array of options and they feel that somehow that's wrong that they are equally passionate and excited about two things it seems mutually exclusive while get it promoted on my current firm and then starting up a business on something completely different and one day you are excited about this and the other day you are excited about that and you think you are out of your mind. But in fact what we are doing is trying to explore and compare and contrast and how I fell here and how did I feel there and so when you give yourself and that's why takes time that's why the

time factor plays in to explore more divergently and say this is actually this is natural and it gives me more information so that then I can make the right choice you make better decisions and you are less likely to do the other thing the foreclosure which is take the first thing that comes to your way because it's been 6 months and I can't tell people anymore that I'm still you know out of work. So the delayed commitment comes from understanding that it's gone take time and you are not gone go for the first things that comes up or the second things into you really had a chance to test because once you jump you are gone be stuck there at least another 2 years and so why not take a little longer at the beginning in order to make a robust choice.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I think there is something to be said about efficiency and effectiveness when it comes to transitions. The default tendency is to look at efficiency metrics when dealing with a transition. The default metric that people gravitate to is elapse time to find the next opportunity. They lose a lot more sleep over how much time has elapsed and a lot less sleep over how much they have explored and tried and how much they have reflected about themselves in that period. And this paradox is fascinating to observe. That's possibly because one is visible and the other is hidden, possibly in the blind spot.

While the period of limbo is unnerving, grappling with it, having a discipline around exploration, being at it for a period of time, reflecting on the experiences and then launching on to the next trajectory can be immensely effective and save a lot of churn and heart burn over the medium to long term.

In my experience, I find that foreclosure as one of the most critical yet, least talked about elements when senior leaders transition from one context to another. Over the long run, we regret our omissions more than our commissions. So, in that context it is worth reflecting on whether you have explored and reflected enough before you converged to something!

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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](http://playtopotential.com). And to know more about the Leadership and Transition Advisory work I do, please visit the about section at [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com). Bye now.

## End of nugget transcription

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### Herminia Ibarra - Nuggets

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- 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
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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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