



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129\*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' in a red box below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '\*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

## Context to the nugget

Alan speaks about how Bill and leaders at Google deal with super-star performers who can have enormous impact given their talent can be leveraged and multiplied with technology. He specifically speaks about what to watch out for as determine if we should put up with the complexity or the toxicity that is caused by the employee

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): One of the things that are mentioned in the book also is the notion of unlocking the potential of aberrant geniuses, people that are spikey and sometimes could be high maintenance. So, give us a sense of where he would draw the line on how much aberration he would take to tolerate a genius, how we would manage those?

Alan Eagle (AE): Yeah, this is always a great management challenge, isn't it and I think that one thing... this wasn't so much... we didn't get this so much from Bill but we are talking about this concept in our other book "How Google Works" as well. Aberrant geniuses often need protection from senior management. We live in an age where individual employees, superstar employees can have a huge impact because they can just be so highly leveraged using technology tools especially if you are in the technology business where in places like Google superstar software engineers and product managers can just have enormous impact, they can create whole new product categories and lots of the times they can be difficult but if managed and coached properly they can have enormous impact both to the bottom line, to your product suite but also to your culture. You need to protect those people because sometimes they are difficult and the culture may want to push them out. So, one of the first lessons I think of aberrant geniuses is to do your best to protect them if they have a few key characteristics correct. What would those be? One is integrity. You of course cannot tolerate lying, abusive behaviour, harassment or anything like that, of course that can't be tolerated. Two, and this is something Bill would always look for and I think it is super-important is a team first mentality. With these aberrant geniuses if it's all me first, me first, me first then that's a problem but many of them even though they can be difficult to work with really are trying to do what's best for the team. Maybe they want a little bit of a spotlight on them as well but they really want to do what's best for the team. So that's really what you are looking for, its integrity and a team first attitude. When things start to go wrong it's when it's all either a lack of integrity or other poor behaviours that can't be tolerated and more of a me first attitude and also just... we actually talk about this a lot when we are working on the book because it's a hard decision to make. When is it too much and so we kind of came up with a formula which is just when as a manager or a coach if you are just spending way too much time you are cleaning up from the toxicity of the aberrant genius then that's probably enough and I don't even have a formula for that but just look at the time you spend managing that person or cleaning up around that person and there just comes a time

when that gets to you too much and we have had situations here at Google where there are wonderful highly productive people that do amazing great things and then at some point it was just time for them to move on and usually they kind of agree with that.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This reminds me of a funny comment by a Start-up founder I was working with. This is a Saas Tech start up that is looking to get listed in the US in a couple of years. The company has an informal code of behaviour where they say that they don't tolerate brilliant jerks (Pardon my French here). The founder went onto say that one of the employees asked him a question in a town-hall which stumped him. Apparently the employee went to ask, is it Ok if the person is not brilliant but is a jerk, how will that work? How culture gets misinterpreted is a longer conversation for another day but Alan speaking about how they deal with aberrant geniuses reminded me of this episode.

Thank you for listening. For more you could visit the recently revamped website [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com). For bite-sized content by theme, please visit the Curated Playlists section. If you are deriving value in the content and wish to pay it forward, please consider contributing to Antarang foundation by visiting the Pay it forward section on the website – [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com). Your contributions will help 1000s of young adults in India play to their respective potential.

## End of nugget transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

### RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Context based leadership:** You can access the playlist [here](#).

**Spotting Potential:** As we move towards a world where intrinsic capabilities count for more and more, how we spot diamonds in the rough is a capability that will begin to matter more and more. This is as relevant for hiring as for investing. Leaders across disciplines share their insights on how they look for raw potential that can then be honed. You can access the playlist [here](#).

### SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

**Podcast Newsletter:** Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

**Nuggets on Whatsapp:** We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating "INTERESTED". Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Alan Eagle - Nuggets

- 50.00 Alan Eagle - The Full Conversation
- 50.01 Alan Eagle - Sports to Business to Coaching
- 50.02 Alan Eagle - Building trust as a Coach
- 50.03 Alan Eagle - Coaching a Team
- 50.04 Alan Eagle - Dealing with aberrant geniuses
- 50.05 Alan Eagle - Having difficult conversations
- 50.06 Alan Eagle - Being an evangelist for courage
- 50.07 Alan Eagle - Receiving feedback as a Coach
- 50.08 Alan Eagle - Enabling good decisions
- 50.09 Alan Eagle - How Bill thought about impact
- 50.10 Alan Eagle - Influencing Eric Schmidt's key transitions

### 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](#).

### Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.