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Context to the nugget

Alan speaks about how Bill would go about engaging with leaders and ensuring that they made good decisions. There is a piece here around following the right process for making a good decision. He also speaks about his role in helping leaders move on once a decision is made (whether it is in your favour or not).

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And you are saying that in the context of Bill to say that he would ensure that people followed the right...

Alan Eagle (AE): Yeah, exactly. In the coaching I think Eric in particular learned a lot from Bill on this and they talked a lot about decision making but one of the most important things managers do is make decisions and like I said before you can't guarantee that you are going to make the right decision, you can never guarantee that but you can guarantee that you are on a good decision making process and that process entails making sure everybody is heard. Everyone needs to make sure that whatever side they are arguing they have a chance to really be heard. You know when sometimes in meetings there are the people who are the outspoken ones, who are always talking, they will always get heard but you need to look for the people who maybe aren't so outspoken, maybe not comfortable in arguing against a more powerful person in a meeting context. There are other ways to make sure that person gets heard, side meetings in the hallway, that sort of thing. So, when you are running a decision-making process, one, make sure you hear every possible perspective, you really stay open to it and then Marissa Mayer tells the story of how... but Marissa is such a smart person and she had a hard time doing this but Bill was coaching her that in your meetings when you are discussing decisions he made a rule for herself to follow: don't say a word other than maybe prompting other people speak. Don't opine until everyone else has had a chance to speak because of course when the leader speaks up then people are going to maybe want to align with that or whatever and so Bill's advice to Marissa was kind of stay quiet until she heard all the perspectives. So, no. 1 hears all the perspectives but then sometimes you've got to make a call. We have all been in situations where people would just get an analysis paralysis and not make the call and so when the team is talking about something and everyone has had a chance to be heard lots of times the right decision would just come out of that discussion but if it doesn't the manager needs to make a call and then everybody needs to rally behind it and this is not consensus. Bill would talk about oh, I hate consensus, and I hate the concept of consensus because the concept of consensus is getting everyone to agree which will often lead to a watered-down decision which is not the right one. What it really is... my boss here at Google talks about is disagree and commit. Okay, I spoke up in the meeting, I had a chance to be heard, I don't agree with the decision we made, and I think it's the wrong decision, but I am on this team and I am in. I am going to play all in for this decision and

not sabotage it in any way and that's the sort of behaviour Bill would expect. One of my favourite anecdotes in our book, it's just a little anecdote, it came from Rachel Whetstone. Rachel ran Policy and Communications here at Google for a long time and she was in Eric's staff meeting and there was something the company was doing or was planning on doing and she didn't want to do it; she thought it was a bad move and she argued passionately against this. She is a very passionate person and argued very passionately about it and she lost. After the meeting, Bill noted that she was disappointed in this so after the meeting he found her and he said, hey Rachel, that didn't go your way and as she was expecting kind of a pep talk and him telling her that maybe there is another way to get her decision made or something like that and instead he basically said that didn't go your way this time, suck it up, go with what the team decided, maybe you will get it next time and that was it. You didn't get it, you disagreed but they made a decision, you are on this team, you've got to be all in on it. That was his attitude.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is interesting to hear Alan speak about Bill's approach in ensuring that leaders followed the right process in making a decision. If I may relate it back to my experience, when I work with leaders in their individual capacity through a career or a life transition, a big part of the work is actually ensuring that they are getting the process right. It is often about the following steps:

- One - Are the leaders developing a healthy level of awareness in terms of their strengths, sources of energy, passion and a clear sense of what matters to them as they move forward. I also ensure that this is a combination of insight (that comes through their reflection) and Outsight (which is often how people see them)
- Two – Are they making a coherent Go to Market in the context of the various pathways they can undertake and going after it in a systematic and a thoughtful way
- Three – Are they exploring enough; Several of the people that go through transitions get insecure during this phase of transition where there is often an identity vacuum and want to grab onto the first thing that comes their way. It might be efficient but may not be effective in terms of setting them up for the future.

One of my earlier guests, Herminia Ibarra (HI), speaks about the need to explore adequately and reflect on our experiences before we converge on something.

HI: *"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."*

- DJ: Back to the process of making a good decision, the fourth thing that we work through is to have a robust decision-making criterion based on the self-discovery during the assessment phase and subsequently through the phase of experimentation.

I realize that in something as nebulous as a career transition especially when somebody is at cross-roads, the best bet is to ensure that we follow the right process to get to a meaningful outcome. Given that it might take a while to figure out whether it was the right decision or not, that is the best hope we have. Do tune into my conversation with Herminia Ibarra and Tasha Eurich if this element is of specific interest to you.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Herminia Ibarra that is referenced: [The perils of foreclosure](#).

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- 50.05 Alan Eagle - Having difficult conversations
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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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