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## Context to the nugget

Sudhir speaks about why people in organizations like HUL provide an opportunity for people to pursue a career over the long term. He alludes to the quality of HR processes (specifically Career Management and Leadership Development) that keeps motivated through their journey. He also speaks about the criticality of early shared experiences in the field which builds a special culture and creates a camaraderie that keeps the cohort together as they grow in the organization.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And back to your journey Sudhir, we spoke about this sometime back as well, you've been in HUL for two decades and when we did the inventory from our batch, maybe you and a couple of others have been in the same institution for that long and all the others have moved on. How have you thought about staying on in HUL? I'm sure there were moments in time where you got those calls about opportunities elsewhere. Give us a sense of what is it about institutions like HUL which give you an opportunity to pursue a 20-year career and beyond and also tell us a little bit about how you have thought about some of those moments in time where you could have possibly branched off.

Sudhir Sitapati (SS): I think HUL is among the few organizations that do tend to have a lot of people staying on for a lot of time. And if a lot of people stay on for a lot of time notwithstanding some of the daily irritations at every job it means broadly you are happy. I think HUL does a few things right. I think it has excellent HR processes I would say, it has excellent training processes early on in your career and it has excellent career management and career development wherein you are learning throughout. So, you are kind of constantly building on yourself and I think that's one of the reasons that this really strong... and there are some one can say that careers are structured, it's a bit slower, etc. etc. but broadly I would say this HR system when you take a step back is outstanding. As a consequence of this HR system I think there's a lot of camaraderie among the people. So, you kind of work with friends, so you enjoy coming to work. There are also a lot of very bright people here so that is also something you like and there are shared experiences, early experiences in HUL are one of the differentiating factors in HUL versus any company in the world. Actually, there are a very few which give such a tough early experience when you're just a greenhorn out of a business school and you think you know it all those shared experiences also kind of form a bonding. And I suspect finally the values of the company are of very, very high quality so you go to sleep feeling good about yourself. I guess in general terms these are reasons why it's not just me; it's a lot of people who last for long periods of time. I mean there haven't been that moments when I have thought about leaving; once or twice I have and I guess the reason that I've never left is they were always rational reasons to leave never emotional reasons to leave. So, emotionally I was always happy and fulfilled and so on and so forth. Somebody might have come with a salary which was higher or a job which

seemed like a higher status, etc., etc. So, the rational mind works, but it's again going back to a decision the heart and the mind have to sync and for me anyway they haven't been in sync yet.

DJ: And the other reason is I ask is in an organization as large as HUL sometimes you could get opportunities where it's a smaller company but it's a CEO role and leaders sometimes struggle to think about business head in a large company versus the company head of a smaller company. So how do you think about that?

SS: You know, DJ again to be honest it's a slightly rational question, right, which is I guess you just have to feel it at some point. You've got to feel at some point that this game is up here or you've got to move on and it need not be for a CEO of a smaller company, it could well be for a business head of a big company. So, I just feel that that has to click and maybe in conversation with you in the past as well transition moments, they have to work here and they have to click so...

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It is interesting to hear Sudhir talk about alignment between head and heart during key decisions. One my guest at the podcast was Amish Tripathi (AT). He is an alumnus of IIM Calcutta and had a career in Financial Services before he transitioned to becoming an author. He had an interesting take on how we can use Head and Heart during transitions.

AT: *"I will go back to, if you are doing something you love doing so much, genuinely failure does not demotivate you now I am not saying that you should be impractical. Like for me to react to that failure by leaving my job and commit to this as full time and then realize at the end of three months I don't have money to pay my bills that would turn the books which were the source of joy for me into a source of frustration. So, I always suggest that use your heart to decide the destination but use your mind to plot the journey so I was very clear that I was not goanna give up on my book no matter how many people rejected it, I was going to do everything that I could to make it work, aage chale naa chale Bhagwan ke upar hai but I will do my best, that I was very clear on. Now that was the destination my heart had decided so, what should be the journey to that I allowed my mind to make up my decision. Which is why I did not resign from my job? Into the marketing of my books I invested only what I could afford from my salary, I didn't take loans from anyone, I of course didn't ask any of my relatives, anyone for anything, only my money, I invested only I could afford."*

DJ: Linking this back to the Advisory work I do. My work often revolves around helping leaders get clarity around 2 questions, Where to go and How to grow? How to grow often is a contained problem where we are often saying given your current context, how you enhance your effectiveness. But where to go is a reasonably nebulous problem, which is actually asking "what is the canvas or a portfolio of canvases for someone with your skills, personality, attitudes, aspirations and context". It is a messy exploration but something that cannot side-stepped or bypassed as one is going through a transition

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## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Amish Tripathi that is referenced: [Dealing with failure](#).

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## Sudhir Sitapati - Nuggets

- 51.00 Sudhir Sitapati - The Full Conversation
- 51.01 Sudhir Sitapati - Getting the problem definition right
- 51.02 Sudhir Sitapati - Choosing to stay in HUL
- 51.03 Sudhir Sitapati - HR - a department with teeth
- 51.04 Sudhir Sitapati - Entrepreneurial Professionalism
- 51.05 Sudhir Sitapati - Identifying and nurturing potential
- 51.06 Sudhir Sitapati - Building a personal brand

- 51.07 Sudhir Sitapati - Specialization versus Generalization
- 51.08 Sudhir Sitapati - Core Competence versus Competitive Advantage
- 51.09 Sudhir Sitapati - Company men, Mavericks and Rogues
- 51.10 Sudhir Sitapati - Secret sauce behind the culture

### **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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