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Context to the nugget

Sudhir speaks about some of the principles behind building a strong brand and a personal brand. He speaks about a strong brand as one where people might like or hate the brand but will align on the key attributes of the brand. He also speaks about the notion of brand archaeology where he says that it is helpful to understand the history of the brand to uncover what it stands for. He finally goes on to speak about how brands should look within and let consumers discover them than being different things to different people.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Now just coming back to the bread and butter themes for which HUL is known for marketing and in the context of the work I do I'm curious about how that plays out with individuals and personal brands. Give us a sense of how some of the principles around marketing and branding can be applied to leaders as leaders go about their respective journeys and as an observer of the world around you what are some of the, I won't say funny things, but what are some of the inefficiencies you see in the way sometimes people think about personal brands?

Sudhir Sitapati (SS): So, DJ I haven't actually to be honest thought deeply about personal brands, right? It's not an area that I have... but let me tell you about brands and let's see if there are some parallels between brands and personal brands one of the things that great brands have is that people who love the brand and people who hate the brand must say the same thing about it. That is the mark of a true outstanding brand. So, you may not like the things that... people who like and people who hate it may not like the same thing but they say the same thing. So, a brand as I have written in the book is...

DJ: Give me an example just for me to get a sense of what you are saying.

SS: So, let's take a strong brand that I worked on, let's say Lifebuoy. People who love it will say it's got the strong smell which is really disinfectant and I love it, it makes me feel really clean and hygienic and guys who hate it will say it's the strong smell and it is disinfectant and I really feel like I'm in a hospital.

DJ: They'll align on the attribute.

SS: They will align on the attribute. So, they will say the same things about it, but they may like it or they may not like it, right. So, that's the characteristic of really, really powerful. It's a good way to judge brands and I suspect that's the same about personal brands as well. You cannot be different things to different people. That's the principle of branding, you have to be the same thing to

everybody whether they like you or not and therefore you got to choose those few attributes or those few associations you want to own, close your eyes whether it's a personal brand or a real brand you'll be able to identify people in three four words then their strong brands. They have to be authentic. They have to be true also to their... you know, one of the things I do a lot when I do brand work DJ is we do something called brand archaeology, which is go into the deep history and many of our brands are very old, the deep history of the brand, the founder and what was the vision with which it was founded, what was the birthing qualities of the brand because they tend to be the true qualities of the brand that 70 or 80 or 100 years later and you got to kind of rediscover it. And I think that's the truth about personal brands. I'm not an expert as I tell you but as I am talking about it, I guess you've just got to go within... you can't game it and say what will that person like and what will this person like and how can I be... you've got to understand what it is that you are and whatever it is that you are if you are true to it, people ends up liking you and that's true about brands, the sharper they are you will always have people respecting you, they may not choose you or may choose something else, but I guess those are the parallels that I see.

DJ: But I love the point on archaeology. It's a cumulative and not an incremental. You can't ignore the past and create a future.

SS: But you know one of the things I think is true about personal brands and real brands is and it's one of those paradoxes which is Levers in marketing are consumer obsessed but ultimately brands have to turn inward. They have to be what they are and then they have to attract a set of consumers towards them. So, I guess that's the same about... if you're gaming who you're talking to all the time in your mind, how do I be to this person, how do I be to that person rather than focusing on what you are you will end up being a weak brand.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This reminds of a conversation with another HUL alumnus, Prakash Iyer (PI) earlier in the podcast. I asked him about how he thought about personal brands. He said something interesting in the context of professionals in the Gig Economy including myself where we are trying to build our personal brands:

PI: "I think it's an important one for us to be able to look at it from a consumer stand point how do I change what value can I add for you what does it means for you? A good question a brand should ask themselves that why should a consumer buy me? And therefore, to be mindful that you are not constantly looking at your portfolio of services and offering from a manufacturer stand point but from a consumer stand point, I think we got to be careful that we don't keep looking at ourselves in the mirror and say look everybody how pretty I am, I think that won't take you too far, but I think you can actually look out and say, let me try and understand what's happening there and how do they see me? How does the consumer look at me? Rather than saying what my view of whole world, I think that can make a difference."

DJ: Having a consumer's perspective rather than a producer's perspective on what is the value they are seeking and looking inward to discover and staying true to who you are critical I guess in building a credible Personal Brand.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Prakash Iyer that is referenced: [Building a Personal Brand](#).

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Sudhir Sitapati - Nuggets

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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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