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Context to the nugget

Lynda speaks about how she thinks about specialization and generalization. Earlier, we would think that being a generalist but with a deep spike in a specific area would be valuable. Now value is being added more and more at the intersection of two disciplines (often one left brain heavy and the other right brain heavy). She speaks about how this trend is playing out.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And back to learning Lynda and also back to the point you made about curiosity I wonder if there is something to be said about too much curiosity around fitter I am sort of talking to the point about specialization verses generalization how do you think about that or how should leader think about that in the emerging world?

Lynda Gratton (LG): Well you know there been a sort of debate about and I think it where it started was to say best thing is to be a generalist you know to learn quite a lot about, to learn a little bit about a lot and actually many years ago in my writing I said you know this isn't gone be right because the very thing that machines do is that they know a little about a lot of things so if that so do you are then honestly Wikipedia is going to do the job better then you got to be in special in that skills and that sort of became the idea of the T shape leader where you do have some Journalist skills but at the same time you have a deep expertise and I think expertise is really important because it teaches you not just the thing itself but it also teaches you the discipline of the thing yourself. So, I am a psychologist so not only if I learn the knowledge of psychologist but I also know the way we think about the world the framing of it. However, what I would say more recently is that actually having two areas of specialism is really valuable and I stared to say to my students if you know something about science in an expert way and you also know something about arts those that combination is very powerful. So I am not really talking about combinations.

DJ: And I think I have remember seeing one of your speeches I think where you talk about the symbol pie and the fact that one the straight line and the other is sort of the curve line which suggest some flexibility or agility?

LG: I think the pie symbol is a very good symbol for this actually something that I learnt in fact really from Tata consulting services TCS because they work really hard within their business to identify people who have these both art and science.

DJ: And back to your point about you know adding value with the intersection of two discipline depth from two disciplines. Flipping it to the other side from talent market perspective do you see

the market rewarding people with the spike in two areas just to get a sense of how these people are sort of been recognized?

LG: Well you know I think the market is realizing that simply say for example in one of the London university has launched about three years ago a program which has both deep arts specialism and a deep science and they have placed those graduates with a lot of ease. So you know I never think that when u are thinking about skill development you should be completely transitional about the about the labor market because honestly is very difficult it's like buying stocks I mean you know honestly they are very difficult to work out what's gone say you should really do it because you think it's good and you enjoy it for yourself and I think that should be the spirit of enquiry.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I do think it is good to have a deep wiring in one subject and then top it up with another subject to form the Pi. Like Lynda says, when you study Psychology, you are not just studying Psychology but framing the world from that lens. Same applies whether you are a studying physics or economics. You are processing the world from that discipline's lens and that is really valuable. That is why, when people pursue an undergraduate degree in Business Management just to take a particular example, I start getting a bit worried because it is like focusing on the table top but what are the legs on which the table will stand. It is worth going deep in one or two things and forming a view of the world from that paradigm before we think about going broad or building another leg.

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End of nugget transcription

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Lynda Gratton - 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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Podcast Transcript [53.04 Lynda Gratton - Specialization versus Generalization \(T to Pi\)](#)

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