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Context to the nugget

BJ makes the distinction between an Action Prompt (something that we do in our lives) versus a Context Prompt (an external trigger such as an Email, Pop-Up, and Message etc.). He speaks about how Product Managers in companies could be more thoughtful about how they could understand user behaviour to figure out when to use the product to increase the likelihood of adoption.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And talking about prompts BJ you also talk about the fact that in the long run action prompts will matter more and more than context prompts and as you speak about the implications for business here and I found that quite nuanced. Could you talk about that for a couple of minutes?

BJ Fogg (BJ): Yeah, really important. So, most of the book Tiny Habits can help business people who are creating habits in others or themselves or creating products and programs. Even though the book is written for everyday people to change behaviours in their own life, I do a lot of work and I have for 20 years working with businesses and start-ups and helping them be effective and I couldn't add the full business approach in the book because it would have been too long and my editor thought it would confuse people, but what's there you can apply to business and I do talk a little bit about this issue and let me explain it. So action prompts that is the category like the anchors where you are being prompted by something that happens naturally whether it's your own routine, whether it's a baby crying, whether it's a stoplight changing or your kid coming home from school and saying hey dad, I am home. Like any of those can serve to be a reminder to do a new behaviour. Like your kid coming home saying hey dad, I am home, might be the prompt that you go give your kid a hug. Now those kinds of prompts are all around us, we already have lots of those and they are not annoying because they already happen to us. All we have to do is build an association between your kids saying hey dad, I am home and the habit as opposed to the context prompts. Those are the post-its, the email reminder, the pop-ups, the notifications on your phone, we are overwhelmed with those and those are getting less and less effective and people are just becoming blind and deaf to those because there's so many of them and we can turn some of them off. So the thing I am trying to help business leaders understand is that your investment in context prompts in trying to put something in front of somebody whether it's an email or a sponsored post those are things that are going to get less and less effective because there is more of those and we are tuning them out. So, if you need to help your customers create a habit find what fits naturally in their routine and tell them. Let me give an example. LinkedIn, yay LinkedIn, so I am for... probably most of 20 years I have had no use for a LinkedIn because I am not looking for a job and I am not looking to hire people but with my book out and my aspiration of helping as many people as I can with my book, it's like oh okay, I need to really... I need to get back with the program on LinkedIn. Yeah, my profile is

embarrassing and it's out of date and I have got over a thousand people I have not linked to but I need to make this a habit. And so, I found what comes after for me and it's basically after I read The Guardian. So, I read The Guardian every morning to get an outside perspective a little bit, then I go and I just look at my LinkedIn feed, that's where it fits. Now if I were a LinkedIn Product Manager, if I was trying to get more people to use LinkedIn who had stopped using it, I could just do a tiny bit of research and say when people use LinkedIn on a daily basis, where have people found that it fits naturally in their life. Oh, we did some research and we found that after people check the news then they check LinkedIn and then we found for other people after they sit down on the bus or the train then they check LinkedIn and we found for other people it's as soon as they sit down for their lunch break that's when they check LinkedIn. So, they could take those insights and they could feed that back to people like me who had lapsed on LinkedIn and said, hey using LinkedIn daily is a great way to keep up with important things in your industry and try one of the three spots after you finish reading the news, after you read the news then fire up LinkedIn or after you sit down on the bus or train then fire up LinkedIn and so on. So, you could tell your customers this is where... here are some possibilities where it fits in your life, try it out and see what works for you. So, then they don't have to send me notifications or emails or just lose me as a customer. They tell me how to design the LinkedIn habit into my life.

DJ: I like that and maybe back to your metaphor of hanging a painting maybe proactively work with you to figure out where to hang that painting in your house.

BJ: Yeah, right and with the little bit of research, they could probably discover and I am going to make a guess here that there are... I'll just stick with three places that there are 50 percent of their daily active users probably position it... no 50 percent is too optimistic, 25 percent with just three suggestions that could cover 25 percent of their daily active users and then probably 10 spots 10 routines probably cover 50 percent. So, it's not like there's a hundred spots it fits. There's a finite number, well, there's a finite for most people and they could just discover that and then just help their customers create the habit. So I think that's the future for most businesses that need to create habits rather than using annoying reminders and emails and whatever is you help your customers or potential customers, you help those people design it into their life, so don't let them just guess, tell them where it goes just like if I were to buy a painting and somebody says guess what this painting needs to go on a big wall and it needs to be facing away from having natural light. Then you have guided me where to put that painting and I won't make a mistake of putting on a tiny wall in the dark.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This reminds me of my conversation with James Clear (JC) (author of Atomic Habits) on the importance of the environment in ensuring that we build habits.

JC: *"And by making it more visible in the environment I increased the odds that I was going to follow through. So, the first thing you can do is kind of increase the visibility and you can also do that with your phone. For example, when I want to build a reading habit I moved to pocket and audible which are two... a pocket lets you save articles to read for later and audible for audio books, I put those right on the home screen in the home bar so they were the first two apps that I would see every time I opened my phone. So, I made that app more visible which increased the odds that I was going to perform the reading habit. The second thing you can do to shape the environment to kind of nudge or improve your habits is to either increase the number of steps between you and the bad behaviour or decrease the number of steps between you and the good behaviour. So, basically you want to make the good habit the path of least resistance. As an example, I have one reader, he would practice*

guitar and when he would come back from his guitar session, put the guitar in a case and put in the closet and so he just wouldn't see it for like a week and maybe forget to practice. But so, his new habit became I'll take my guitar, put it on the stand in the middle of the living room, pass it all the time, it's right there, it's very obvious, it's also frictionless to just pick it up and play for 5 minutes. So, now he practices all the time because it is highly visible. You can also increase the friction of a task. So, for example, if you want to watch less TV you could take the batteries off the remote control so you have to get up to turn it on manually or you could unplug the TV after each use and only plug it back in if you can say the name of the show that you want to watch. So, it's now you know you can just mindlessly turn on and find something. And those are examples of kind of increasing the friction or reducing the friction associated with a habit and the lower the friction is the more convenient it is, the more likely a habit will be performed and the higher the friction is, the more inconvenient it is, the less likely you are going to fall into that habit."

DJ: Both the concepts, the notion of the role of environment and the role of a context prompt are actually quite powerful in the way we think about planting the seed of habits in the fertile soil of our life context.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from James Clear that is referenced: [Environment and habits](#).

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BJ Fogg - Nuggets

- 58.00 BJ Fogg - The Full Conversation
- 58.01 BJ Fogg - The ABC of tiny habits
- 58.02 BJ Fogg - The MAP of behaviour change
- 58.03 BJ Fogg - Prompts - the low hanging fruit of change
- 58.04 BJ Fogg - Action versus Context Prompt
- 58.05 BJ Fogg - Build ability to beat motivation cycles
- 58.06 BJ Fogg - Celebrating to wire in a habit
- 58.07 BJ Fogg - Tiny habits to big change
- 58.08 BJ Fogg - Untangle (not break) bad habits
- 58.09 BJ Fogg - Getting out of screen addiction
- 58.10 BJ Fogg - The knowing-doing gap

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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