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Context to the nugget

Andrew speaks about how we all have intellectual and emotional biases when we make decisions and he speaks about how we can minimize being influenced by the biases during such moments. He speaks about some tactical tips around how one of the organizations tackles this by unearthing prior biases that different people in the room might have towards a situation.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let's move to the next one Andrew which is detachment, right? You talk about identifying and then challenging the biases and you talk about two types of detachment: emotional and intellectual. Talk to us about what you mean by each of these and how leaders could address these?

Andrew Likierman (AL): Well, this comes I think back to your earlier comment about the role of values. This is also heavily involved in this area. So emotional detachment I hope we can all recognize this, we approach many issues, most issues arguably with an emotional viewpoint. We either like or don't like somebody, we like or don't like an issue, we know we feel about things, we don't just approach as automatons and it's important I think to understand exactly where one is with this. If I just give an example, you know, somebody might ring you up and say, you know, can I talk to you about so and so and your reaction might well be subconsciously I don't actually like this person and I don't think I want to do this but nevertheless I am going to listen politely or there might be oh, I am so pleased to hear this person, I am looking forward to what they have got to say. One starts off with lots of emotional views about people and about issues. On the intellectual side one approaches things knowing what one knows and one has facts, one has experience and so on and you can be honest I mean in terms of saying well, you know, am I looking at all the facts here and am I looking at all the arguments in a way that is analytic, is detached analytically or am I just getting around that and ignoring that. So, I think these are the two elements here, the emotional and the intellectual and I believe we approach every choice even quite trivial ones with both these things being relevant.

DJ: Once again, like the last time to make it tactical for the listeners, could you talk a little bit about a few things that you see effective leaders do to ensure that their biases don't come in the way of a decision?

AL: Yes, I talked to one company and this is an extreme example where people were encouraged before a key discussion to declare their biases, in other words to say look, I come to this, I have been working on this for five years, of course, I believe this is a great project. So, I just want to let you know that before I start whereas somebody else might say, you know, coming from Finance say, well, no, this looks terribly expensive to me and I don't think we have got the resources. So, my

immediate reaction to this was well, actually I don't think this is a very good idea because I don't think we can do it. Now, I think that's remarkable in a way, it's a well-known company, I am not able to quote it but if everybody's heard of the company but I think that's a very interesting idea. Most often and more usually if we talk about for example a discussion between different functions you would expect the Marketing function to look at marketing aspects to say well, look, I think we can do this, I think we can do that, this is a great opportunity and so on and know in one sense everyone around the table says oh that's marketing, of course, they would say that, wouldn't they in the same way as they might say well, finance is always conservative and they don't like taking risks and so on. So, I think that somebody who is in the business of saying I will gather views around me has to know where everybody's coming from so that they understand that what is said is not said necessarily at face value but is colored by the biases that they have. And so, if it's not just words as it was the matter, it's also the sentiments behind the words that I think somebody who is getting to grips with what's relevant for this particular choice has to do. I mean, if I just take, I am steering well clear of politics here but I think we all know that when a politician in any country says something there is an agenda there, usually means politicians in general talk because they believe in a set of ideals and ideas and we understand that and so after a while we get to know where their biases are and we take account of that. Of course, if we agree with them, they think it's wonderful, you know, that's a different matter.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of the insight from one of my earlier guests Jennifer Garvey Berger (JGB), an Executive Coach based in London who has written a book about the traps we fall into because our human operating system is not wired to cope effectively in the world we are in. One of the traps she speaks about is the fact that often when we think something is right, it is actually an emotion and not a cognitive process.

JGB: "In a brain scan we see that the arrival of the emotion of certainty comes before, not hours before but milliseconds before the cognitive part of our decision-making actually comes online. And so this shows that we feel certain and then we figure out why as opposed to we feel like we don't know and then we figure out what we believe. Now, of course sometimes we absolutely do it the other way, but by and large we don't."

DJ: I went to ask her how as leaders we can overcome this trap. This is what she said.

JGB: I have us look for what certainty feels like and begin to notice that as separate from a cognitive process like what does it feel like when you feel certain. You can often notice some things your body does like I move forward in my seat, I start thinking ahead to how I am going to defeat the disagreement or the perspectives of others, like I have a sense of righteousness in me. Now when I notice those things I am able to say oh wait, wait, wait, this is an emotion, this is closing me down to new possibilities, new data, and I could totally be wrong here. So asking myself what is it that I am really believing right now, not what's true but what I believe is true and then how could I be wrong about this allows me to listen in a new way not to defeat the other person, not to listen to win or listen to fix their ideas, but to listen to learn from them to hold my mind open as a practice, as an intention or practice as opposed to just going with this emotion that bowls over my capacity to learn."

DJ: Listening to learn can help us understand the multiple perspectives in the room and the various biases that are at play including ours and then help with the decision making.

Thank you for listening. If this topic is of interest, you might like the playlist Judgment where we have insights from leaders across domains speak about their take on this topic. This ranges across Zia Mody who speaks about judgment in a legal context, Amit Chandra who speaks about on judgment in investing, Vinay Sitapati who speaks about Narasimha Rao's sense of judgment, and Dr Ramachandra Guha who speaks about Gandhiji's sense of judgment when he took big calls and so on. To access this, please go to playtopotential.com/tags/judgment (/t a g s /judgment)

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Jennifer Garvey Berger that is referenced: Trap 2 - [Feeling right doesn't mean it is right](#).

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Sir Andrew Likierman - Nuggets

- 60.00 Sir Andrew Likierman - The Full Conversation
- 60.01 Sir Andrew Likierman - Defining and measuring Judgment
- 60.02 Sir Andrew Likierman - Listen attentively; learn critically
- 60.03 Sir Andrew Likierman - Seek diversity, not validation
- 60.04 Sir Andrew Likierman - Keeping track of judgment run-rate

- 60.05 Sir Andrew Likierman - Identify, then challenge, biases
- 60.06 Sir Andrew Likierman - Question the solution set offered
- 60.07 Sir Andrew Likierman - Judgment during COVID times

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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