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## Context to the nugget

One of the key elements of Judgment that Andrew speaks about is the notion of looking at the entire range of possibilities. Sometimes we fall into the bias of “what you see is what there is” during a transition. It is critical to ensure that we examine the entire range of possibilities before we take a call in a certain situation.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I think moving from detachment to options Andrew, you talk about questioning the solution set that's being offered and you use the phrase not being boxed by the way things are presented to you. Talk to us a little bit about what that means and how that shows up in leaders' lives.

Andrew Likierman (AL): Well, very often leaders are faced with choices presented to them which are you can do this or this. Sometimes it's you can do this or this or this and the indication is well the middle one is actually the one which we are steering you towards. Sometimes I give them one option. Now, in all these cases I think somebody who is running an organization has got to ask the question have I been given all the options and in particular, you know, for example, do I understand how risk plays out in these options? So simply being presented what I meant by not being boxed in is if you are presented with two options and you feel there are more options then you should be asking for more options not just simply accepting there are only two options because that's what has been presented to you. Sometimes it may be that you say we are not going to take any of these options because we haven't got certain important facts and we need to think again, go away and look at it again. So, there's another option which is do nothing at this stage. Now, I am not suggesting by the way that there should always be delay because in some cases delay is disastrous and there maybe... in that sense you may be boxed in because you can see that if you wait for another 10 minutes or a day or a week then matters will be outside your control, you will have taken a bad decision by taking no decision. But what I meant therefore is that leaders ought to make sure that when options come to them, they are careful that these are not the only options available.

DJ: Do you have an insight on when you know when you have sort of fleshed out the different possibilities? Is there anything empirical you found there?

AL: This is so context-specific; it's quite difficult to give instances. I can just think of many examples in my professional life where people have not thought about all the possible options and actually if you think about it, this is one reason why you have decisions brought to a committee so that you have a different lens and different viewpoints brought to bear on a particular possibility. So, it seems to me here that no, there should be the check there because the people who are working on

something themselves may be so blinded to the alternatives and go down and firmly say, these are the only options. But a board for example, at its best will include people who say have you thought about this particularly if they have seen something in a different context which says well, actually if somebody tackled this in a completely different way. So I am not saying that self-editing is always intentional, it may be unintentional and I think the good leader will be someone who has established the fact that this has gone through enough scrutiny to make sure that the options are being considered and one doesn't say afterwards I wish we had thought about that.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I am reminded of my visiting a coffee shop in London a few years back. I remember it was a busy day at work and I stepped out to get some fresh air and get a quick cup of coffee. This was not one of the chains like Starbucks or Costas but a boutique one. The lady at the counter asked me what drink I would like, I asked for a Cappuccino. Then she said what size would I like, Medium or Large; I said Medium and paid the money, picked up the coffee and walked back to the office. At that point, I asked myself the question, was there a Small size in the Menu! I walked back and as expected there was very much a small option on the Menu, it is just that the lady didn't offer it to me and I didn't apply my mind.

In the work I do, I see several leaders in transition into this trap especially when they are in transition. That is possibly because the options don't line up concurrently. The option that might make the most sense for you might emerge a few weeks/months down the line if you persist but you might see a couple of more attractive options ahead of you and you might end up picking from those!

This is well explained by Herminia Ibarra (HI), another professor at London Business School who speaks about the risk of foreclosure when we are in transition! The risk of closing our doors too soon to options.

HI: *"When you are making a transition people think you are going from A to B but you don't you go from A to this transition thing which we call liminality in our technical jargon to be. So in between you neither here nor there and it's horrible because you lose your identity anchors and so in that space it behoves you to be a little bit more playful because you are neither here nor there so that means you don't have to be consistent you can try, you can talk to people about jobs you would never consider or you can do things that are pretty much out of character but you know you are trying to learn something and that can be very freeing because we don't often give ourselves permission to deviate and so the two principle are you said divergent exploration and delayed commitment. Diversion and exploration is what I mean by that whenever I teach people who are in transition one of the first thing I do is I say write a list of your possible selves they don't have to be feasible they don't have to be public they have to be something you are committing to do but just let your imagination run while what's the set of possibilities kind of brainstorming with yourself don't embarrass to write even if it is ridiculous put it in there and it's really interesting work people come up and it's quite in fact we are very multiple and often quite diversion does it mean you are gone do all of those things and certainly not at the same time but when you get permission to be diversion there is a lot there and in fact one of the things that is hard for people in transition is they feel that they must not be ready because they are considering such a different array of options and they feel that somehow that's wrong that they are equally passionate and excited about two things it seems mutually exclusive while get it promoted on my current firm and then starting up a business on something completely different and one day you are excited about this and the other day you are excited about that and you think you are out of your mind. But in fact what we are doing is trying to*

*explore and compare and contrast and how I fell here and how did I feel there and so when you give yourself and that's why takes time that's why the time factor plays in to explore more divergently and say this is actually this is natural and is gives me more information so that then I can make the right choice you make better decisions and you are less likely to do the other thing the foreclosure which is take the first thing that comes to your way because it's been 6 months and I can't tell people anymore that I'm still you know out of work. So the delayed commitment comes from understanding that it's gone take time and you are not gone go for the first things that comes up or the second things into you really had a chance to test because once you jump you are gone be stuck there at least another 2 years and so why not take a little longer at the beginning in order to make a robust choice."*

DJ: Ensuring that we are making a decision from the right menu card of options is critical especially in high stakes situations where the options show up asynchronously.

Thank you for reading. 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' sense of judgment when he took big calls and so on. To access this, please go to [playtopotential.com/tags/judgment](http://playtopotential.com/tags/judgment) (/t a g s /judgment)

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Herminia Ibarra that is referenced: [The perils of foreclosure](#).

## RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Judgment:** Judgment is a key trait that differentiates the great leaders from the average ones. How do you make decisions and exercise choices in a world full of options and grey areas with multiple stakeholders around you. In addition, the playlist has nuggets that discuss how one creates a climate for the people around you to exercise good judgment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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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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