



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129\*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' in a red box below it. At the bottom left of the banner, a small note reads: '\*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

## Context to the nugget

Andrew shares his perspectives around the criticality of the various steps involved in getting to a good judgment in these times. Given that there are so many unknowns for leaders to grapple with, and given that this is a once in a life-time crisis that all of us are facing, there is no real playbook for us to work with. In that context, Andrew underscores the importance of having the right process of getting to meaningful judgment.

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Andrew, great to have you back at the Play to Potential podcast although in strange times.

Andrew Likierman (AL): Well, I am delighted we are back again.

DJ: And Andrew we spoke a few weeks earlier about your work in judgment, but given we are going through Covid-19, I thought I will take the opportunity to spend a little bit of time with you to understand how your research plays out or how it can help us make better decisions in these times. So how does one think about judgment when there are so many unknown unknowns as is the case with Covid-19, Andrew?

AL: Well, I believe that having a framework to consider these difficult choices is very helpful because granted there are so many elements that are simply unknown, how is one to make sense of all this? So, my hope is that by applying a framework one can reduce one's personal anxiety and professional anxiety and make choices that are carefully considered. This also means looking at the risks and I believe that assessing risk is an essential part of the good judgment process.

DJ: And specifically, you know, last time when we spoke, we spoke about the six-step process that you spoke about around exercising good judgment. Any particular steps you would call people's attention to as we think about judgment in these times, Andrew?

AL: Well, I hope that all the aspects are relevant because if I think of each of the steps the business about listening and reading, I mean there's a bit of a tendency perhaps to blot out the things that one doesn't like, you know, if one's an optimist one doesn't listen to the more pessimistic side and vice versa. I think in terms of trust it's an important element that does one trust to give one advice here and we have seen some remarkably poor advice given I think on the world stage and also does one trust what one reads. The figures, the statistics look very doubtful in a number of cases. In terms of experience, I would say that there has been a lot to learn from the experience of other countries and you could argue that the Asian countries in general have done better than Western Europe and

United States because they have had more experience in MERS in particular which didn't affect the rest of the world in quite the same way was nearer, I think, no... Europe and United States should have learnt more from Asia in that way. And in terms of one's feelings and so on I think it's very easy to get swept along by a sense of anxiety or panic and whatever it is and one has to realize that that's going on. The choice is complicated and we need to make sure that the process that we bring all these things together in making our judgment is a sound one. And finally, this is the question of actually delivering. So, a lot of countries have found that they know they made a choice to do something; they have not been able to deliver it. So, I think each of the stages of the judgment framework is applicable and has been applicable during this crisis.

DJ: And when you see, when you look around Andrew, leaders whether it is business leaders or government leaders or other individuals in other domains of life, where are you seeing leaders trip up in the way they are going about exercising judgment? Where are the missed opportunities from your vantage point?

AL: Well, I have mentioned the fact that I think that advisors and numbers sometimes need to be questioned more than they have been. I think that sometimes people have taken rather on faith the advice they have been given and they have taken the numbers and neither of those it has turned out have been very reliable. Sometimes not using the relevant experience and I mentioned the Asia, Europe, America relationship. Sometimes I think people have not waited for long enough to get the rest of information before plunging in doing something and sometimes public figures have not followed their own instructions and advice with disastrous consequences. So those are the kinds of things I think where there have been slip-ups and missed opportunities. But I should say you would expect that at a time like this. I think that, you know, I am speaking here about how they might have done better, but I think one has to understand in these circumstances that getting everything absolutely right is also unrealistic.

DJ: Yeah so true Andrew and sometimes it is hard even knowing what is right, right, given the circumstances it is hard to, it is difficult to have a reference point against which we conclude if we are moving in the right direction or not. So I guess the related question I had Andrew was one of the elements you talk about is experience but in this case we are actually dealing with a once in a lifetime situation for a lot of people where there are no markers, no real past playbook to work with, so how does one make decisions? How does one exercise judgment when one deals with a once-in-a-lifetime kind of situation which is sort of where there is no anchor or reference point?

AL: Well, I have been through the fact that simply having a framework and going through a number of steps to make sure that one has thought about things is really important and this doesn't have to be something that takes weeks or months. I mean we have to make a lot of judgments very quickly, but still just thinking about the question about do I believe this information, what are my feelings, you know, these are very important elements. But one particular fact, I would bring out which is very much part of my judgment framework is to do with risk. And I think it is about acknowledging the fact that risk is there, bringing it into the open, being frank about it, acknowledging what this is and acknowledging that in taking any judgment, it is going to be a balance and the balance involves risk. So that is what I would particularly emphasize.

DJ: And when you say risk, are there certain dimensions of risk you have in mind Andrew? Could you sort of elaborate on that?

AL: Well, if I think for example of the speed of decision taking, the risk of waiting as opposed taking a quicker decision, and we have seen some countries apparently do better than others, we have seen also the question of consequences. The current debate in many countries about the trade-off

between health and economic welfare and so on, so that's another kind of element there and again, there are no absolutes here. One is trading off risks here and risks and consequences where one doesn't always know the consequences. And simply having that process transparent and in the open seems to me a huge benefit rather than just sort of floundering around and guessing.

DJ: And as we look around Andrew, who are the people that inspire you, people that you see exercising good judgment in these times? Any examples that come to mind that you can share as we think about exercising good judgment? Sometimes it's good to have a few people as markers of what good looks like, so any individuals that stand out for you?

AL: Yes, absolutely and I think it is very important to get good examples and not just problems and disasters and issues. So, I would... just picking a few at random, I would mark out the prime minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern who seems to me to have got the tone right in addressing the issues surrounding her country. And I thought that was very good judgment in the way in which she decided to communicate and explain things. I would say, you know, if you are laying people off and if you are asking for sacrifices from your employees, it seems to me the bosses know who have taken pay cuts in solidarity with their workforce, I think that was again an example of very good judgment in terms of understanding what the implications are. I will just take an example of some companies. I have been watching very closely how companies have been forecasting the future and some have said, we won't open until September or we have no idea what's going on? The companies that have done this best it seems to me are those who have said look, we have two or three scenarios here. This is what they are and here's a more optimistic one and a more pessimistic one, the middle one, and at the moment we are on this particular scenario, and we will be keeping an eye open to see where we go. Now this gives a very good idea of the dimensions of uncertainty for the shareholder audiences. So, I thought that was a good example. And finally, it seems to me organizations who have realized that this is a great opportunity for change as any crisis is and for example medical remote consultation has taken off, remote learning has taken off. So, these are the kinds of examples where people have exercised good judgment in saying this is a problem, it is a crisis, all right, so how do we make the most of it. So those are a few examples it seems to me of people getting it right.

DJ: And maybe just coming back to Jacinda Ardern, Andrew actually interestingly enough one of my earlier guests, a lady called Jennifer Garvey Berger who was on the podcast, she also mentioned Jacinda as a role model. I wanted to understand what you had in mind when you said tone. Could you expand on that in terms of getting the tone right? It's a much nuanced point because it's not just about what you decide but it's about the tone with which you carry out whatever you decide. So, if you could expand on what you had in mind when you said that?

AL: Yes, and it looks to the mind more general point about exercising judgment. This is not just about big decisions and I give the example of chief executives sending out memos to their employees. Now, most of the ones that I have seen in my life sound terrible. They are patronizing or they are obscure or they are, you know, there is something odd about it. And I have been very impressed by a few people I have seen who have sent out memos that are straight, to their employees, that carry credibility. So that is very much seems to me the tone here. It's somebody being straight, setting out what the difficulties are, setting out what the issues but explaining too why they are somebody who can be trusted. You have looked through at the implications and you kind of have a feeling that they know what they are talking about. And that seems to me for a leader a very important quality.

DJ: Got it. Andrew, I think these are great insights around Covid-19. Anything else in your mind in the context of judgment during these times that I may not have explicitly touched upon?

AL: No, I do think that it has illustrated how much, in a sense, how much easier it is if you think about difficult choices in a more structured way. We will all have difficulty with choices that are particularly in unprecedented times, and so I would, you know, I am encouraged by the fact that applying a framework to one's judgments I believe actually gives one a better chance of getting it right. It doesn't guarantee it, but it gives you a better chance.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: It's fascinating the number of arrows that point to Jacinda Ardern as an effective leader in these times. I happened to ask this question to Jennifer Garvey Berger (JGB), a seasoned Executive Coach who is also the author of the book – *Unlocking Leadership Mind traps*. I asked her what is the paradigm of leadership we need in the post Covid world.

*JGB: "I think that leaders in the future will need to respond not to the short term but to the long term; we are seeing that right now, not to the disconnected but to the interdependent. I think leaders will need to respond with their whole selves, their mind, their bodies, their emotions and to the whole selves of other people, their minds, their bodies and their emotions and in a much clearer way away from competition which has often fuelled humans and organizations and into a deep sense of interconnectivity because here we are all together and trying to find a way for all of us to thrive is going to be every leaders' job into the future."*

*DJ: And as you look around Jennifer any role models you see while it is still early? Any role models of leadership that you see emerging as you see different people deal with this crisis that's in front of us?*

*JGB: I mean, I have a bias here, but I am just finishing a blog today that highlights Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand who has had to face more crisis in her time as prime minister than other New Zealand prime ministers had to in many, many years, and I find her blend of clarity, humanity and experimental approach, I find that refreshing and incredibly helpful and hopeful for what great leadership looks like in the future."*

DJ: If this topic is of interest, you might like my conversation with Jennifer Garvey Berger where she speaks about 5 different traps we fall into and how we trip up as a result of those as we navigate a complex world. You might also like the playlist "Coping with Covid19" at the Curated Playlists section of the Podcast.

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's 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

\*\*\*\*\*

Nugget from Jennifer Garvey Berger that is referenced: [Leadership in a post COVID world](#).

## RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Coping with Covid 19:** Leaders share their perspectives around how we can navigate through the Covid-19 situation that we are all going through. You can access the playlist [here](#).

## SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

**Podcast Newsletter:** Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

**Nuggets on Whatsapp:** We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating "INTERESTED". Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 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](#).

## Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the

Podcast Transcript [60.07 Sir Andrew Likierman - Judgment during COVID times](#)

Also available on Apple Podcasts | Google Podcasts | Spotify

[www.playtopotential.com](http://www.playtopotential.com)

audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.