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## Context to the nugget

Atul speaks about how had to straddle both the worlds concurrently – the world of business and stand-up comedy. He had to ensure that the business partners didn't feel that he would let them down and vice versa. He also speaks about the fact that he had been battle hardened in life to deal with the ups and downs that the world of stand-up threw at him.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): What is the... I am also curious what the bad days look like Atul if you... I am sure you had your moments, talk to us about maybe the bad days that you had to battle through. Yeah, in those six months and beyond I mean, I am sure you had your high of being great on stage but in any new endeavour I find that there's no new path without obstacles right, so I am curious about what those looked like in your path?

Atul Khatri (AK): So, first of all, one of the biggest obstacles was this constant thought process, I mean, thought behind me that I should not... because for four years I was riding two horses, I used to feel like none of the horse should complain, it's not my office should never complain hey dude you are not, you know, because I had other directors also, they should not complain that hey you are not spending enough time on this, business is suffering because of your passion or my passion saying because sometimes you have a meeting because most of the other comedians that time were all young kids, half of them were dropouts, or they are having or they have got full time into comedy. A lot of the comedians that time they stopped their education, they stopped their job and got full time into comedy and that was the option to me and they would say hey we are having a meeting, it's a new show we are writing, would you be a part of it? I said, yeah, dude, I am willing to be a part of it because at that time, I remember we used to like some of these IIFA Awards and these Film fare awards, we used to write for them. Even today most of these people who don't know, some of the listeners who don't know, most of these award shows are written by comedians as like, you know, Shah Rukh Khan is funny but finally he requires jokes. So, we write, most of the comedian's write, even I think this year or last year's IIFA Awards by written by some fellow comedians of... so, I have also helped in the writing process of some of these. So, when you have a... and they would say, hey dude, we are meeting at one o'clock in this coffee shop on a Wednesday afternoon, and I said, hey shit, I can't leave that because I have a meeting, so I used to just... so they should not complain that hey, you have taken this writing project but you are not contributing, you are not coming for the meeting, and also they should not say, hey dude, he is working in a company, he is the CEO of a company, how the hell would he come, let's not take him. So, I didn't want both to suffer. So that was initially the challenging part to be honest with you. Second challenging part obviously was time, managing time, and I think also seeing that because when you are running a company and there are some small and because I was an SME, most SME people who are probably listening to this call, the

buck stops at you man, you are responsible for your employees' salary, you are responsible for answering your CA your income tax query, for paying your vendors on time. So, everything sort of comes on to you at the end of it. So, I didn't want any of these things to suffer but fortunately we have technology, you have your phone today which is as smart as your laptop and that time you had all this. So, I think, those were really the challenging part in terms of managing both the things and yes you do have sometimes a bad gig, bad gigs are a part of parcel of every... no comedian can say that I never had a bad day, I have had my share of bad gigs and that sort of sometimes throws you out but I still tell people that I am just 8 years, I have worked with comedians who have performed for 35 years, I am still in the learning phase. So if I bomb, genuinely I look at it as a learning experience ki what did I do wrong, because I have this clear theory you can't blame the audience for anything, whatever the bad show good show you have to take the blame or the credit for it because there are ways and because I have seen other comedians who are better at their craft who even they are bombing how they recover from that bad show to make it a super hit show. So, I am still learning those crafts, some craft I have got it but still you are learning, you are learning every day in this. So, yeah I think you just pick it up, you just pick up your boots and you start next day again thinking why you did you do it may be talking to other comedians why did my set bomb, what happened, it worked the previous day, why it didn't work this day. And I think it's... I think one thing which really helped me to be very honest is my age also because you see I am not a 22-year-old kid or a 19-year-old kid who will see failure and say, oh shit, my life has ended. I have seen enough failure, I have seen days where like the client has told me hey, come to my office, your order of 50 lakhs is ready, come I want to give it to you, I want to hand it over to you personally and I am can you imagine that journey I am leaving office in Andheri going to somewhere in Lower Parel to collect an order of 50 lakhs and this time I have already called my wife, hey, we have got a new order of 50 lakh rupees. And by the time you reach there, the guy says, hey dude, sorry, our MD said ki yaar uska koi cousin brother hai usko bhi opportunity dena hai, so maybe we are relooking at it. Hey, I am sorry, I was trying to call you up but I thought you would be driving so not to disturb you so... you reach the place and have those kinds of rejections. I have handled rejections, you have not had payments from your vendors, but you still have to pay your employees, so arranging money in two days to pay your employees' salaries on time. So, I have had those my ups and downs of life usually and also married for 20 odd years that time, so I have been woh kya bolte hai hardened by life, I was hardened by life.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I just want to pause here and talk about perspective here. In a lot of ways, we have an opportunity to look at things from our wider frame and that can help us see failure in the right way. Vijay Amritraj (VA), the very first guest on this podcast, spoke about Richard Williams who coached his daughters Serena and Venus Williams despite the challenging background they came from.

*VA: "I think in Richard Williams case, where the fact that they had the single minded devotions to those two children who were meant to be tennis players which is the way they were literally born to be number one, number two is he was almost fighting an uphill battle in the fact that he wanted these two African American to play a white sport and literally show the world that we can do it and the fact that these girls and boys are making so much money and he thought that this is the way to come out of an economic difficulty which they were in and the biggest risk for them as he always said oh was there a big risk at thirty forty five if you asked him that question he would always tell you that , oh there is no pressure on that at all because the biggest pressure for us was to be able to walk out of home to the tennis court make sure you don't get shot on the way, that was the high risk venture for us. So I think you are coming from two different perspectives of the way people thought and*

*Richard was very clear in the way he was able to actually have that belief and work ethic to get these girls to be able to become what they are.”*

DJ: There are some lessons that you learn only from the School of Hard knocks! Now let's get back to the conversation Atul Khatri. If you are deriving value from the podcast, do consider paying it forward to Antarang Foundation, a not for profit I work with closely that works with children from challenging backgrounds and helps them with accessing the world of opportunity. You can get more details at [playtopotential.com/payitforward](http://playtopotential.com/payitforward). Now let's get back to the conversation with Atul Khatri.

So these were not really... it didn't sort of, but yeah, obviously it throws you off because as a creative person you want each and every show to go very well, but sometimes shows bomb, you don't do well, it could be one wrong word thing you had said right in the beginning of the show which could just turn the audience against you and after that they just switch off, they just start hating you, could be anything, could be they have entered the auditorium and the loos were not clean and they look at you, they don't look at the housekeeping, they say this Atul Khatri show experience was not good. So, it's all about all those things. But I think you just learn to pick up and you just go along.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I guess there are a couple of things to be said about riding two horses.

- There is a time management piece to it, which is really ensuring that you don't let down one set of stakeholders because you are over committed on the other side. And this is often a combination of perception and reality. You might be doing your bit on both sides but one side might perceive that you are not doing enough. It's a bit like getting staffed on two projects as a consultant and each Partner believing that you are not pulling their weight on their project
- I think there is a deeper point here around Identity. When you operate in different ecosystems, you often need to keep your ego aside and ensure that you don't judge the actors in the new ecosystem based on your past identity. Atul speaks about selling computers to CEOs and CIOs and then hanging out with college graduates and that I am sure must feel like a very different conversation, to put it mildly. If I take my example, the ecosystem I interact with in the context of my Leadership and Transition Advisory is very different from the one I interact with as a Podcaster. In the coaching work, I am working with people in their 40s and 50s typically, often well pedigreed and materially well off. In the podcast world, I meet people in their 20s and 30s with fire in their belly and a very different approach to life. And that's quite energizing to say the least.

I guess the limited point I want to make here is that it is easy to get judgmental about one world when we view it from the lens of the past. Just suspending that a bit and going with the flow can often open up new possibilities.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Vijay Amritraj that is referenced: [Role Of Coaching In Development](#).

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## Atul Khatri - 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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