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Context to the nugget

Whitney speaks about how sometimes constraints bring out the best in us and drive us to innovate – at some level, I guess that is the whole raison d'être of Jugaad innovation. She speaks about the need for an optimal number of constraints that bring out the best in us. She urges to leverage constraints as a tool of creation to gain the momentum up the curve.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And along the way you talk about the notion of leaning into your constraints, right and the initial part of the S-curve whether it's a new role in a company or a different job or an entrepreneurial plunge, there's often the significant resistance that we face and you speak about leaning into the constraints here and you talk about multiple dimensions right, money, knowledge and time? I found this quite interesting. Talk to us about the notion of leaning in to the constraints.

Whitney Johnson (WJ): Yeah. Okay. Alright. So, let's go back to our S, right. We're starting to move up that S, so you have been at the bottom, you're playing, you're feeling strong, you're playing where no one else is playing and you hope to hit that knee of that curve where you're going to move into hyper growth. And so there's this tendency for us to say, well, if only I had more time or if I had more money or I had more expertise or people understood my idea then I could move into the sweet spot of that S-curve, but that's actually not correct, it's not accurate. We know that it is a law of physics that we need something to bump up against in order to have enough energy to move forward in order to gain the momentum that we want in order to climb the curve. Let me give you just a few examples that will illustrate this idea of the importance of leaning into our constraints. So, the first example is there was a film produced by Steven Spielberg some years ago and we all know who Steven Spielberg is and he... the most famous scenes in that film they came about because of constraints. So, he is completely over-budget, he is completely behind schedule, everything that he wanted to use it didn't work, the mechanical shark that he wanted to use it didn't work. And so, he finally had to shoot the scenes from the shark's point of view and let the music and our imagination do the rest. Well, we all now know that this film that we're talking about is Jaws and without those constraints Jaws may very well have been a sort of B-movie. It's sort of its good enough, but with those constraints, it has become a classic. So that's one example. The second example is more of a business example. There was a post-mortem a few years ago done of about 200 failed start-ups. And so they divide the start-ups into funded start-ups, so the start-ups that had gone, raised outside capital, they had investors and then the unfunded start-ups which had not been able to raise outside capital, they had to bootstrap and basically build their business with the cash that they had on hand and their operating cash flow. Well, when they did the post-mortem, they discovered that the number one reason that the funded start-ups, the ones that had money went out of business was

that they ran out of cash and it was only the number 10 reason for the unfunded start-ups. So, the question then becomes was Spielberg, were the start-ups successful because of or in spite of constraints. And so, what I argue is that in order for us to climb a curve, we need constraints. Now, we don't need so many constraints that they crush us. Like there's an optimal amount of constraints, but often times we find that the very thing that you think you don't have enough of whether it's money or time or expertise or buy-in, if you will reframe this as a tool of creation, then you will start to get the momentum that you need and you want to move into hyper growth along that curve.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: If this is of interest to you, you might like the Playlist – Reinventing Self where various leaders speak about how they climbed a different S curve, whether it was an adjacency or something completely different. Thank you for reading.

End of nugget transcription

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

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Whitney Johnson - Nuggets

- 62.00 Whitney Johnson - The Full Conversation
- 62.01 Whitney Johnson - The S curve of personal disruption
- 62.02 Whitney Johnson - Picking the right S curve
- 62.03 Whitney Johnson - Discovering our distinctiveness
- 62.04 Whitney Johnson - Leaning into constraints
- 62.05 Whitney Johnson - Cutting our losses
- 62.06 Whitney Johnson - Rethinking our metrics
- 62.07 Whitney Johnson - Handling our identity
- 62.08 Whitney Johnson - Discovery driven career planning

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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