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## Context to the nugget

Whitney speaks about how we need to often rethink the metrics with which we need to measure ourselves as go from one S curve to another. Very often we are hardwired to think about metrics in a certain way and we often become a slave of that wiring/habit leading to disconnect with what we measure when we move from one S curve to another.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And going back to the earlier example of this executive in LinkedIn that you spoke about, Dan Shapiro. In the book you talk about stepping down stepping back or stepping sideways to grow and the one thing I found interesting as you explore that theme is you talk about rethinking our metrics when we do it. Say more here.

Whitney Johnson (WJ): Yes. Okay. So if you think about in any situation... so if you are on... okay, let's go back to our piece of graph paper right and you're at 18 and you go down to 15 and let's say... well, let's take Dan, let's go back to Dan as you just illustrated. So, the metric for success for Dan when he was in Sales very obvious, right? Are we growing top line revenue? That's an easy one. But if you now go into product and you're building great product can you use the same metric of success? Am I growing revenue? Well, you can but if you do then you're going to fail every time; it's not the right metric. The metric when you're in a brand new role is going to be totally different and in this particular instance it was how quickly am I learning, how quickly am I iterating, how quickly can I get to the point where I can contribute and bring my insight to help the people on my team develop and build a great product. And so whenever you step back or you jump to a new S-curve it's really important to rethink the metrics that's inside of your career and certainly for anybody who is making the decision to become an entrepreneur or making the decision to leave the workforce and retiring and to go run a non-profit. Like if you continue to use the metric of how much money am I making and you're running a non-profit, you are going to fail every single day of your life, but that's because it's the wrong metric. And so, when we're stepping back to slingshot forward in order for us to be able to be successful, we need to make sure that we're using the right metrics to measure our progress.

DJ: And could you maybe illustrate it with a couple of examples on what's the kind of shift that we need in the metrics just for people to get a realistic sense on what the traps could be and therefore how we should, you know, what's the language around how we rethink the metrics?

WJ: Yeah, absolutely. So, I think one of the ways that we can do this is to say to ourselves... I remember when I was writing this book I came across a gentleman who was telling me about how he had been on one S-curve and he was an executive inside of a company and so the metrics he was

using were things like are we generating revenue, are we expanding margins and you know typical things that you would look out from a P&L perspective when you are running a business. He now retires and decides to become, you know, be a grandfather full-time. Well, he is on a brand new S-curve, the tendency is when we jump to a brand new S-curve is to use the same metrics that we used before because it has become part of our wiring but if this gentleman everyday was waking up and saying how much revenue have I generated today, have I expanded margins because that's what he is now wired to do, that's what he's in the habit of doing. Every single morning, he was going to feel like he was ineffective, the metric had to shift to how present am I for my grandchildren today? Did I take them to the park? Did they discover something that made them feel full of wonder and curiosity? Was I able to be present during that time? I'll give you an even simpler example because I think this is... to drill down on this idea. I have a checklist every day that I use sort of 10 things that I want to accomplish every day. So, you know, I want to run today, I am going to read some type of spiritual sacred text, I have a list of four things I am going to accomplish, I am going to, you know, things that I am going to do every day. Well, one of the things I discovered is that that is a great checklist for me Monday through Saturday. But Sunday, I want it to be a day of rest, I want it to be a day of worship and one of the things that I was finding that was very frustrating for me is that I was carrying over my checklist for Monday through Saturday to Sunday. So, I was getting really frustrated because I was thinking well, I am measuring myself by this checklist that I am using the other six days. And so, what I had to start doing was create a new checklist for Sunday, you know, things like did I go to church today? Did I spend time with my family? Did I do family history? Did I write in my journal? Totally different checklist. And so, that's what I mean is when you look at the S-curve that you've decided to jump to whether it's in your personal or your professional life the metrics you use make sure that that is measuring what you want to measure so that you'll know if in fact you're successful and not measuring yourself against metrics that actually aren't relevant and just lead to frustration and a feeling that you're on the wrong S-curve. So, one quick quote around that that I love and I think this is important, it's from Liz Strauss. She says it's not possible for the world to hold a meeting to decide your value that decision is yours and that's where this idea of metrics come in. You have to decide what metrics you are going to use to decide your value.

DJ: That's profound in the sense your organization might evaluate you on certain terms which are their terms. You need to evaluate yourself on your terms and that's the point you're making, I guess.

WJ: Yeah, absolutely and I would take that one step further Deepak is this idea of if the way that they are measuring you doesn't match to how you measure yourself then you've got to figure out what you're going to adjust.

DJ: That Reminds me of conversation with Stewart Friedman of Wharton who talks about work life and he talk about exactly this which is you know he talks about self, Work, home and community and he says if there is a disconnect between where you are spending time and where you want to spend time then maybe it's something for you to reflect on and make choices consistently with what's important to you. So that's lovely quote from...

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In his book, how will you measure your life, Clay Christiansen says that we always have the propensity to invest the time in doing things that give immediate outcomes. Hence, we end up spending that one extra hour at work rather than spending with our kids. Because the former is measurable and outcomes are attributable to your effort while on the home front, neither can you measure outcomes, nor can you directly attribute it to the incremental time you spend with them. Something similar can be said about jumping S curves. Being aware of the evolving context and

making adjustments to what you measure can make a big difference in the way you evaluate progress in this new trajectory.

## End of nugget transcription

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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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