

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' below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left 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

Venkat speaks about the notion of playing to potential and why he feels him and a lot of us significantly underplay to our potential. He discusses the criticality of reflection as we go through our journey and the importance of keeping our saw sharpened. He also speaks about the notion of going after efficiency optimization that often comes in the way of understanding the big picture.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Just as we wrap up the last question Venkat, actually coming back to the title of this podcast Play to Potential, and you actually alluded very early in our conversation about who you thought about yourself, with my background, maybe I under-achieved to my potential that was a statement you made, but just as we wrap up, what are some of your thoughts on people playing to their potential, given your view on life?

Venkat Krishnan (VK): I think it's almost a truism that most of us don't live up to even 2%, 3%, 4%, 5% of our potential, right, or 1% or whatever it is. And, I think, it sounds a little bit clichéd when you say those things. But the reality is, I think, you ask anybody and I am sure everybody would have said this to you across all your talks, no matter how successful, you had some really, really successful people but I am sure even they have said that they have not achieved even 1%, 2% or 5% of what their potential is. And I think if you ask me the biggest factors to it is, I would really say that people who have learnt to reflect a lot will have achieved a lot more of their potential than many of us. People who have learnt to learn about themselves, who have learnt to observe themselves earlier in life. People who failed early in life will tend to achieve a lot more to their potential than people who don't. So, if I look at myself and why I feel I have hugely under-achieved to my potential, I would say a variety of things. First is my ridiculously low emotional quotient and the inability to understand not the unwillingness, just the inability to understand why people are the way they are, right, has dramatically affected my ability to get things to happen. Because then you wind up becoming a lone soldier more often than not or you are working with much smaller teams, your idea is getting carried less farther than they could, potentially so that I think is the biggest thing. Second is, I have a tendency sometimes to be penny wise and pound foolish. So, I am an efficiency optimiser and I often have that left-brain tendency to get very anal about improving efficiency as you tend to lose focus of the big picture, forest for the trees kind of situation. I think both of these have led me to massively underachieving. So, I would say that to help people achieve more to their potential I think people need to get time to reflect a lot more and you have to make that time, nobody is going to come and give you a plate of time saying here is this reflection and... we make it for ourselves and if we can take the step back and keep looking keep doing our own slots again, looking at our own strengths, weaknesses etc., keep doing your own IKIGAI again and keep asking what am I doing right, what am I not doing right. The earlier you start and the earlier you can also do a correction journey, right?

Because I think one of my biggest problems is, I was pretty much mid-thirties by the time I realised how important emotional quotient is in life. So, I had had only successes till then right and when you start failing and you realise that emotional quotient plays a big role and unfortunately you are already too old to change it is kind of like, you are screwed. But if we could get people to realise their strengths weaknesses much earlier in life, I mean, imagine getting a kid to do its own IKIGAI at the age of 8, 9, 10 and make it a birthday habit for every kid to do once every year, right, make your own IKIGAI, go back to it etc. and help do that. And that's what the old Gurukul used to do, right and this is not just about being that patriotic Indian, about ancient Indian things but whether it's a Gurukul or even in Europe, if you look at how the Kings used to educate their kids, right? They would get a really wise guy to come, hire the guy fulltime for their kid and the job would be take my kid and travel all of Europe for the next 20 years. The kid will go somewhere to Paris and learn art for six months, phir kahi aur jayega, 20 years nahi, 4 years, 5 years or something like that. But that guru who was assigned to the kid, the advisor or whatever this thing, their main job was to get the kid to keep reflecting, to keep asking, what am I good at, what am I not good at etc.

DJ: Build perspective, haan

VK: Build that perspective because if you do that then you know you keep going back to what is my potential, where am I, and how much am I playing to my potential. And I think if you can keep doing that every year then chances are you will re-invest in yourself. When I asked myself that question in 1998, I made the decision to go and spend all the money traveling to the US, right, instead of buying a house, but I haven't done that again. For the last four years, I have wanted to go to China because I have been equally this thing but for some reason or the other it has kept getting postponed and now, I don't know when that will happen next. Or I actually about four years back I wanted to take a break go and study for a year or two in the US; I have just not been able to do it for a variety of other situations. So, I think, if you don't give yourself opportunities to reinvent yourself, to reinvigorate yourself, sharpen the saw as Stephen Covey says, then you will wind up underplaying to your potential.

DJ: On that note Venkat, a real privilege and an honour to spend time with you. Thank you so much for having the time.

VK: Thank you, Deepak, thoroughly enjoyed it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I really like the point Venkat makes about optimizing for efficiency than focusing on the big picture. The way I see it, a lot more people focus on solving how to grow than on solving where to go, which is a more fundamental question? And a big piece around figuring out the where to go is around building a deeper level of self-awareness (which is a combination of internal and external self-awareness). Do tune into the conversation with Tasha Eurich if this is of interest. You might also like the play list Self-awareness that you can find in the Curated Playlists section of playtopotential.com.

End of nugget transcription

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Venkat Krishnan - 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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