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## Context to the nugget conversation

Dan speaks about the notion of a “highlights reel” like in sports. He suggests that we reach out to people that we have interacted with across domains (not restricted to work) and get feedback on their memory of a time when we were exceptional. He suggests that we reflect on that and use that as a compass as we navigate our journey forward.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And back to work, Dan, in the context of the book *Exceptional*, maybe if I could ask a provocative question, right, I think there is a lot being said about build on your strengths, right, do not over sweat the weakness but double down on your strengths. In what ways is your work, you know, talk to us about the nuance that you are bringing to the discussion here.

Dan Cable (DC): Sure. The first thing I would like to say just to kind of put it out there is, it still does mostly have to do with playing to your strengths and doubling down on your strengths. I mean, I am going to say some things that I do think add quite a bit, but it is nothing really new under the sun and I would say that it plays on that theme pretty much primarily, you know, if I am honest, one of the biggest difference is and perhaps, the biggest difference is, how you learn about your strengths, has been a real interesting journey for me. I think that a lot of people think they know their strengths, but my research suggests that we often do not. We have ideas about what we think we are best at but a lot of times, we forget that our strengths are not what we are best at it. It is more the intersection of what we are good at doing and what we love doing. But it also has a real important element of how we make an impact. And so, if you start to think about that as a Venn diagram, you might know what you are good at, you might know what you like but oftentimes, we do not know what affects other people the most. You could call that your impact or you could call that kind of like, it is good calling your purpose, you know like, what you are sort of doing for the world and for other people. And one thing that we have been finding is self-reflection often does not yield that. By the way, so I did not invent any of this but at the University of Michigan, there were some, I would call them my heroes, frankly, but these would be people like Dutton, and this would be like Laura Morgan Roberts, and this would be a Gretchen Spitzer, Bob Quinn, these people, you know, this was 15 years ago, they started writing in an abstract conceptual way about how, if you want to know your impact, you should ask the people that you impact. And that concept of a reflection of your best self was really intriguing to me 15 years ago. Well, they and many people in the field did not do empirical research on that. And so that is the sort of bucket that I picked up and ran with is, we really should work on that, we really should understand if that is even true. And so anyway, over the last 10 years, I feel like I have learned a lot about how surprised people are when they get one of these highlights reels. And basically what that is, it is memories and stories from family, from friends, from colleagues, from mentors, it is people that have watched you over the years, even over the

decades. And then they write a story that is their memory of a time you have done something exceptional, that is name of a book, that is why that book is called Exceptional, there are times when you have had an extraordinary impact and here is my memory of you doing that. I just cannot tell you, number one, how powerful and emotional that is to read it from other people, as opposed to just self-reflecting, so that is one thing. I think a second thing I will put out there is, just the vast amount of new insights that you can get, because a lot of things that people remember for 15 years, 20 years, and they write down in a lot of detail you might not even think of as a big deal. You might think oh no, that is just easy, that is what anybody would do. And if you have seven, eight, nine people writing different stories but around that same theme but you yourself just do not think that is a big deal, that highlight reel starts to unveil ways of you becoming exceptional and I call them high leverage moves. It is just a way that you can do a little more in area and create a much bigger impact but you would not do it because you kind of downplay, you think anybody would do it.

DJ: And there may be a couple of questions just to understand this a little better, Dan. One is, are we asking the question when have I been exceptional or are we asking the question when have I done something exceptional to you, something that made a difference to you, that is sort of question number one, and second is, how do we think about who to ask, how narrow or how wide should the catchment radius be.

DC: Hmm. Yeah, let us start with this, like I mean. So in terms of who, I just try to get people to go with as many people as they can who know them quite well. So usually, I recommend one or two people you have met in the last couple of years, you know, who know that newest version of you so often that is work colleagues and new friends. Then I ask for people that have known you a long time. So this is going back perhaps in the childhood. In my own for example, I had a high school buddy, I had a junior high school buddy, I obviously had a parent, I had people from university, so, you know, that would be 18 to 22 and then I had a mentor, so an old, well, professor but somebody that kind of helped me through my career. So diversity of people, so work, non-work, family, non-family, that sort of thing and newer people that just have known you a little while and people that have known you a long while, that is the sort of. You really cannot go wrong. To be honest, you are not going to get that wrong other than asking to few people.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I have come to realize that we sometimes don't appreciate enough how we come across to the people around us and how we touch their lives. The best way to get to that is to ask them! I also realize that we cannot meditate our way out of this by going to a Vipassana camp. The vectors of internal and external self-awareness are often orthogonal. One of my earlier guests, Tasha Eurich (TE), an expert in the area of Self-Awareness speaks about this notion.

TE: *"Several awareness is made up of two type of self-knowledge. The first is something we named internal self-awareness which essentially knows who we are on the inside. What do we value? What are we passionate about? What are our aspirations? What are the pattern of behaviour that we exhibit across situation but equally important is something called external self-awareness and in a nutshell what that means is knowing how other people see us and what was fascinating at least to me in our research was that we found that those two types of self-knowledge which are required for us to really be self-aware but they are not related to each other which I was kind of surprised by I was thought you know if somebody kind of knows you they are from the inside of course they would do the work and find out how they were seen on the outside and vice versa. But we discover that they are you sort have to think about the... independent skill set within the self-awareness area."*

DJ: In the work I do, I have started realizing the value of speaking to people beyond the immediate work colleagues. The question I often ask them is How 360 is your 360?

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Tasha Eurich that is referenced: [Self-awareness: Meta-skill of 21st century.](#)

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## About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the 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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