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## Context to the nugget conversation

Darleen speaks about how leaders need to look at the way an organization works and the cadence to ensure that people are not overloaded with responsibilities and information. She goes on to say that it is less about technology but more about how it is used and applied in an organizational context.

## Transcription

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**Deepak Jayaraman (DJ):** Picking up on one of the things you said Darlene about how we communicate context or cues in a remote setting, what have you seen some of the interesting things that leaders do to ensure that the communication is packaged with cues and context both in the way it's sent and the way it's read?

**Darleen DeRosa (Darleen):** Yeah, I think that people this is an area people are struggling with. I think, in the very beginning of the pandemic, you know, people were really worried about their employees. So, they are checking in, they are having these big townhalls, they are doing surveys, they are gathering a lot of data and I think many organizations over-indexed on let's have a lot of virtual happy hours and too many meetings. And it was just like, let's just give you, we are trying to be communicative, but we went overboard and we are actually creating more stress and anxiety in the system when people are already busy. So, that was one thing we saw early on. I think, now we have seen a bigger shift that people have gotten used to the virtual setting and realized that your tone in an email or a text might be misconstrued. So, I have seen many good examples of leaders being more thoughtful, even things like, if your status on instant messaging is red meaning you are in a meeting, don't ping someone just because you have a sense of urgency and need to do that, send an email or have a delayed send on your email. Be... re reading things. Don't send an email if it might have any significant news in it or anything that might lead to conflict or feedback in emails; I used to see really bad examples of this where leaders would actually try to coach people through email and you and I might say, well, that's just ineffective, but I believe that a lot of the communications get distorted with technology and have what we call a neutrality bias. So, if you think the intent of your message is positive, it might be perceived as neutral. If you think it's neutral it's more likely to be perceived as negative. And so, best-in-class leaders are very thoughtful with their communication, are picking up the phone when it's a more sensitive issue, having calls or video chats with people, those types of things are really important to help detect cues.

**DJ:** Hmm, and I guess there are two choices, right? One is, is the communication synchronous or asynchronous and second is, is it just text or is it layered with voice and visuals. So, I guess, leaders have an opportunity to make the choice on both fronts to transmit cues.

**Darleen:** Absolutely and what we say is match your technology to the task. So, for things that are complex like coaching, conflict management and even some types of brainstorming doing that on a...

it's a very synchronous tool like video conferencing is going to be the richest like face-to-face, right? It's the closest to face-to-face that we have right now for most of us. Using things like email just to summarize your points and having a meeting where you need a dialogue and you need people to actually make decisions and problem-solve don't bring people together just to have a meeting. So, I think again, what we saw early on and you may have seen Microsoft's big article recently, they did a huge analysis of technology over the last year, meetings have gone up, you know, hundreds of... and the percentage increase in meetings is ridiculous. The use of instant messages is way up and what they basically concluded is people aren't using technology effectively and they are not necessarily being thoughtful about their audience like you were saying earlier with the Uber example. So, there's so much information and digital overload and fatigue right now that leaders have to be much more cognizant of when and how to interact using some of these technologies.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Just to quote the specific example from Uber, this was something I picked up from an email exchange I had with Pradeep Parameswaran – Head of Asia Pacific for Uber. This is what his Email signature read *"We work flexibly at Uber. I'm sending this message now because it suits me, but I don't expect that you will read, respond to or act on it outside of regular hours."*

It is such a simple but a powerful signature that gives the recipient agency and puts him or her at ease. Apart from being mindful and thoughtful in our conversation, I was struck by how we could set some of these defaults so that we create a productive workspace and minimize anxiety around us.

## End of nugget transcription

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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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