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Context to the nugget conversation

Amy speaks about the implication of psychological safety on how team members learn. She makes the distinction between “Learn what” behaviours and “Learn how” behaviours and goes on to say that Psychological safety has a significant implication on the latter.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And when you describe psychological safety, the other piece I found interesting was you say that it's correlated with learn how behavior in a team as compared to learn what behavior and it was super-nuanced so I would love for you to clarify this.

Amy Edmondson (Amy): You are referring to a study that I did with the amazing Anita Tucker who is a professor at Boston University and Ingrid Nembhard who is a professor at Wharton when they were both PhD students and we studied intensive care units in the U.S. and Canada and all of them were actively engaged in quality improvement projects, right? So, we were studying people who already were dedicating themselves to trying to make the care delivery better. And we measured two kinds of learning behavior in these improvement projects, the learning activities that they did, the improvement activities that they did fell roughly into two kinds of categories. And the learn what category was the category of reading the literature, you could think of this as google it right, to sort of find out what do people know, what's best practice, what's the recipe for the best way to do something and then the... and also may be participating in literature reviews and various other things quite... well, I won't say that yet. The other category was learn how, where you had to do things, you had to try something, you had to ask for help, you had to be vulnerable in some way with other people whether they were in your own workplace or in another workplace where you were trying to get information from them about how they did it. And this was an amazing result really from a research perspective because both of those activities as you can well imagine are effortful where people say, okay I am going to, I am going to work hard today and I am going to read the literature or I am going to try something with people or I am going to ask for help, all of that takes effort, but learn what let's just say simply reading the literature has no interpersonal risk associated with it whatsoever. You wanted to google a definition of a word you don't know; you wouldn't be embarrassed to do it because nobody knows you just did it. Whereas, if you were asking a friend, hey, I don't know this word, what does it mean you might be embarrassed? And so, the beauty of this result in this research was that learn how behavior, that interpersonally sensitive behavior, was absolutely related to psychological safety, if psychological safety was high, people in this case nurses felt able to do it. When it was low, they didn't feel able to do it. Whereas, the learn what behavior, psychological safety had no impact because there's no charge to it, there's no interpersonal risk.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I was reflecting on this piece of insight from Amy and it reminded me of something we would experience in my previous stint as a Search Consultant at EgonZehnder.

If I reflect on how searches would get solved, we would informally use the term, Google approach and Facebook approach to talk about the two different styles. The Google approach would be things like, searching LinkedIn, looking at the internal candidate database and so on. The Facebook approach would be to ask a colleague who has expertise in that area in India or a related market. Very often we would find that the Facebook approach beats the Google approach as the colleague would understand the nuanced context while suggesting a solution and sometimes that makes all the difference. And I would put that in a category of “learn how vs learn what” where if you have the relationships within the organization you willing to that interpersonal risk and make that call and find the right answer with more of a Facebook approach than a Google approach. Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

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Psychological Safety: Insights around what it takes to create a Psychologically safe environment for leaders and teams to feel safe for taking interpersonal risks which is at the heart of learning, taking risk and much more which drives effectiveness in teams especially in an environment of significant complexity and interdependency. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Curiosity: "A Curious Mind" by Brian Grazer (Oscar winning Producer of movies like A Beautiful Mind and Apollo 13) was the inspiration behind the Play to Potential Podcast. In this playlist, Leaders reflect about the role of curiosity and how it has helped them in their journeys. As Alvin Toffler says, the Illiterate of the 21st Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn. You can access the playlist [here](#).

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Amy Edmondson - Nuggets

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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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