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Context to the nugget conversation

Amy speaks about what traits we should look for in leaders if we are solving for psychological safety in an organization. She shines the light on three traits – Curiosity, Humility and Empathy. She also speaks to the limitations of the interview process and how we could consider getting the candidates to interact with the team to suss out the manner in which they engage with the people around them.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And just changing frames here Amy. I used to be a recruitment consultant at Egon Zehnder in my past life and as I was reading your book, I was wondering from a search perspective if we are solving for psychological safety in an organization, what should we be looking for in the leader that we are hiring to ensure that he or she will create a climate of safety? Are there... what are the few traits that come out in your research?

Amy Edmondson (Amy): I am going to say three. Two of them I have already mentioned but then we might have to talk a little bit about how do you measure these because you probably know more about this than I do from a search perspective but the three I am going to say are humility, curiosity and empathy. Now notice, I didn't say brilliance, I didn't say extensive industry experience and all of the rest because I think first of all often there are certain kinds of experience that are just table stakes for you, you are not going to be considered for a job if you have no background that's relevant. And so, I am assuming you have got those. But then humility is that Alan Mulally's sense of I don't have all the answers and I am confident that if we pull the best minds together with a good process around the table, we will come up with the answers we need, right? So, that's humility. It's a confidence in what we can do rather than what I know. Curiosity, I have already talked about and then empathy is that emotional intelligence to understand what others are up against. So, you are capable of framing the work and framing the challenge in ways that they really can rise to the occasion, it's the ability to respond productively when people bring you bad news.

DJ: Hmm. And how do you think about measuring them in the sense if you were hiring a CEO, what... how would you...?

Amy: It's tricky, I mean, I really don't have any super easy answer to that question. I can say I often say to my husband who is Dean of the Harvard Medical School and he has to do a lot of hiring and they often say anyone can ace an interview and I really believe it. I mean, I think people can show up in a one-on-one and act the part. If they can't, you definitely should run the other direction fast. But so that's sort of necessary but not sufficient that someone is, you find them appealing in an interview and so often times the useful thing to do is bring people together with, let's say if you are

serious about if they are really a serious candidate, bringing them together with the team and watching their reactions to others. Are they, are they genuinely curious, are they dismissive, do they inadvertently belittle or engage in eye-rolling of any kind, do they interrupt in a problematic way rather than an enthusiastic building way?

DJ: It's a great point actually, you know, just building on what you said sometimes I have noticed micro moments in behavior, sometimes shine the light on what the person is so...

Amy: Yes.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I guess the Work from Anywhere context we are in given Covid 19 has made it harder to evaluate some of these soft elements in leaders. If this topic is of interest, you might like my previous conversation at the Podcast with Darleen DeRosa of SpencerStuart, one of the reputed Executive Search firms. She speaks about how companies have managed to recruit effectively in a 2D world while filtering for some of these subtle skills which can be even harder in a Digital context. She is joined by 4 of her colleagues in India –Ritu Kochhar, Sahiba Singh, Atul Bhandari and Rohit Kale in the conversation. Do tune into that conversation if you are looking for more insights on how to recruit effectively in a remote world. You will get to hear about this from the people who do this for a living.

End of nugget transcription

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- 78.02 Amy Edmondson - Implication on Learn-what vs Learn-how
- 78.03 Amy Edmondson - Impact on leadership transitions
- 78.04 Amy Edmondson - Calculus of silence
- 78.05 Amy Edmondson - Traits that drive psychological safety
- 78.06 Amy Edmondson - Effective feedback processes
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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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