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## Context to the nugget conversation

Harish speaks about the navigational principles that he has used in his journey. He speaks about how we all could explore for 5-10 years and once we have some sense of what we enjoy and what our unique skills are, we start converging and going deeper in a certain area.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And maybe given you have been one large institution for a long period of time, if you had to lay out the framework through which you have made some of these transition choices, when you are, let us say, at an inflection point from Tata Tea to Jewelry or from there to Consumer Products, how would you think about, you know, what would your advice be for people to navigate a long-term career in a large corporation, how should you think about some of these choices?

Harish Bhat (HB): So let me tell you what I thought about during the transition from Tata Tea to Jewelry, which happened in 2000. I was doing very well in Tata Tea, I was the Head of Marketing of the company at that stage, the brands of the company were growing, when I was offered an opportunity to run Marketing and Retailing in Tanishq, and Jewelry was a business that I knew nothing about, but I knew marketing by then, build brands like Gemini Dust, Chakra Gold, had begun the process of building Tata Tea in my role in Tata Tea. So I knew the consumer space in marketing and, in my mind, I thought those skills were transferable across businesses because marketing is marketing whichever consumer space you go into. But I think the critical points which kind of helped me make the decision were, in Tata Tea, I was perhaps in a zone of comfort at that time. I had handled only one category which was tea. So I thought I was young enough at that stage to push myself into a zone of discomfort, move from a category I knew well to a category I did not know anything about, tea to jewelry, also move from a company, which was quite profitable to a business, which was making losses and one never knew if that business would continue to exist after a few years. And that move into a zone of discomfort taught me many things as a professional and a person, which have held me in good stead across my life. So one lesson for young professionals of today is, do not stay for too long in a zone of comfort. If you want to learn, move into a zone of discomfort because that is when your learning curve is likely to be at its steepest. The few years that I spent in Tanishq, I learnt a hell of a lot. I probably would not have learned so much if I had stayed back in Tata Tea. So if you need learning and learning is critical to professional growth, I would say evaluate your choice and see whether you are moving to a zone of discomfort where your learning curve will probably be the steepest. The second choice I have made is, see, Tata is a huge organization, we have Consumer and Retail businesses, we have Industrial businesses, we have IT Services, we have Infrastructure businesses, Financial Services businesses, the second choice I made was to stay with the Consumer and Retail businesses. And that is because I thought that is where my

competence lies, and I wanted to build depth in the Consumer and Retail businesses. And that once again, I would tell professionals, that is not a choice you should make too early in your career, but 5 or 10 years into your career, you also need to decide that this is the sphere or this is the area where I will build depth and then, give it your all, which is what I have done in the Jewelry business, the Watches business and Tata Tea, and which is what I am now also doing in my role as the Brand Custodian of the Tata Group. So I would probably leave only those two lessons. Lesson number one, try to move into a zone of discomfort where your learning curve is the steepest. Lesson number two, based on your inclination, your passion and your interest, choose an area that you love, choose a category that you love or an industry that you love and build depth in that industry or category.

DJ: It is a great point. And you say that, even I realized, you cannot do it too early, sometime needs to elapse before you get clarity on that I guess.

HB: Yes, I tell all my younger colleagues this, do not be in a rush to discover your passions, meander a little bit, work with two or three functions, and understand which of them provokes you the most, which of them is most fulfilling to you. Those kind of truths you do not discover very easily, they take some time and neither should you rush into them because you may actually end up making the wrong choice.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This reminds me a little bit about the notion of how much we should diverge before we converge. In the world of computing, this is often called the Explore, Exploit problem. How long do you explore and when do you start reaping the benefits of what you have tried and start exploiting. The key is for us to let some time elapse and have a certain level of reflection as we go through the various journeys for us to tease out where we have skills and what energizes us and then leaning into that over time. The one tactical thing I suggest to the people I work with is to maintain some sort of a journal to record your thoughts and feelings at different points in time. It can really help in seeing some patterns in the way we go through life.

If this topic is of interest, you might like the Playlist Navigational Principles in the Podcast. You can find this at [playtopotential.com](http://playtopotential.com).

## End of nugget transcription

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### Harish Bhat - 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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Podcast Transcript [80.02 Harish Bhat - Perspectives on Navigating Career](#)

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