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Context to the nugget conversation

Lloyd speaks about hitting the pause button in 1993 when he got to a position of success and influence. He also speaks about how he manages to build some deep reflection time in the middle of his busy life. He goes on to reflect on the words from the song by Michael Card - it's hard to imagine the freedom we find from the things we leave behind.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And going back to your journey Lloyd, you talk about hitting the pause button in 1993 when I read your book. Talk to us a little bit about how leaders can build that pause in their life as they approach that sort of phase of life. What have you discovered about building that pause for people to take stock?

Lloyd Reeb (LR): Yeah, great. It's not easy to do, right, because our lives are busy. But if you look at the, if you ever watch the Olympics and you watch the swimmers, it's interesting that every swimmer swims hard into the pool wall and then they do a flip turn and they push off the wall to start the next lap. And as they push off the wall, they take a glide and they don't take the glide because they are lazy, and they don't take the glide because they are tired, they take the glide because that's how you win. And it's important to go through the water as smoothly and as fast as you can and that's one way to do it. So, the same is true with transitions in life. When you sense that there is a transition, a new season is coming, then it's important to take some time to pause and reflect as opposed to just work on the solution. One of the most common mistakes that managers and executives make when they begin a transition in their life is they work on a solution too quickly. Now we would never do that in our business. We wouldn't start naming a product or working on advertising, we start with who is the customer? What does the customer consider value? What is our value proposition as a result of that? What is our strategy? We work through all of these things before we name the product and we come up with creative advertising. So, when you are in transition, the temptation is to start ask the question what will I do next and it's the wrong question. You have to start with some inside questions. Who am I? What am I good at? What do I care about? What are my long-term desired results or what are my long-term metrics? And so, when you think about being chief life officer, it's about knowing the long-term metrics in your life. It's about knowing your role and your mission. It's about allocating and investing your time not just spending your time. These are all things that Chief Investment Officers do inside a company, right? You don't just give your time away, you don't just give your capital away, you invest your capital. So, invest your time based on your long-term metrics. And so, I would say that the key thing is to pause is to create some daily time of silence and solitude, some weekly sabbath time where you take time, you know, what a strategic coach teaches is you have focused days, buffer days and off days. And when they coach executives, they tell them the most important days are the off days, you need to count

them. So, if you don't have any off days, you can't reflect. It's interesting that the Chief of Staff for Bill Clinton convinced him to take two hours every day with no meetings scheduled just to think. Now, if the President of United States can take two hours every day just to think, I think you can do that. So, and then to take a more extended time every year. What I do is a silent spiritual retreat day. Three days a year, three separate times a year, I take a day alone that I am silent and it's a time of reflection and thinking and I come back to my plan. And so, now if you are...

DJ: Do you travel somewhere to do that Lloyd, or do you do that at home?

LR: Yeah, no, I don't do it at home Deepak because there's so many distractions, there's, you know, something needs cleaning, something needs mowing or whatever or fixing. I go someplace, it's beautiful, it's quiet and yeah, you probably... do you do that a bit in your life to take some time to think?

DJ: Not in as structured a way as you do Lloyd, but I do like to sort of have do nothing days, right, where you just... but I haven't tried complete silence. One of the things on my list is there is something called Vipassana meditation where you go on a silence retreat for about 12-13 days. It's been on my to-do list. I haven't gone there yet.

LR: Yeah, and that's probably good for our listeners to hear is that it's good to have these aspirational goals and work towards them and you may not get there 12-13 days right off the bat, but you might be able to do one or two full days. I found my first silent day drove me crazy. I could... I just wasn't accomplishing anything. Everybody is getting ahead of me. And finally, after a few of those I learned that actually I am accomplishing something much more than I ever dreamed and without doing it I am sacrificing. Now, if some of your listeners, Deepak, have a transition where they have the luxury of taking more time for a glide, for a pause, you need to structure the time. You can't just sit and stick and stare at your tummy for three weeks. You have to structure the time or you won't do well with it. So, you want to work through a process. This is what the Halftime Institute does is it creates a process for people to work with peers to gain clarity and you want to think about it this way, get clear, get free and get going. You don't want to get going first, because you could be going in the wrong direction, and nothing worse than running really, really fast in the wrong direction. So, you get clear, and then you get free, and then you get going. Now, the clear part is who am I, what am I passionate about, what's my purpose in life, what are my long-term metrics, that's clarity. The get free is getting rid of the clutter in your life, those good things that are the enemy of the best things. My wife and I just spent three weeks in Germany because our daughter, our middle daughter got married, and she married a German and so...

DJ: Congratulations.

LR: ...her wedding was... thank you... was there. And so, we said to ourselves in the interest of simplicity, let us just take a backpack each, no suitcase and we will only take public transit, no Ubers, no Limos, no rented cars. So, we each took a 13-pound backpack. Now, she was going to be the mother of the bride, think about that, that you are the mother of the bride and you are traveling in jeans with a 13-pound backpack. Well, it was so freeing.

DJ: Did your daughter have an opinion on this?

LR: Well, my wife didn't wear the jeans. She borrowed a friend's dress in Germany and she looked beautiful.

DJ: Lovely.

LR: And simplicity forced us to be more creative and what happened is she borrowed the dress from the bridegroom's mom, and it turned out to be a wonderful bond between those two women. You see it forced us to be more creative and so, you know, we went all around Berlin on little scooters that you rent like, you know, like with your app for like 20 cents a minute.

DJ: Got it.

LR: It was such an adventure and so freeing. So, that's what is to get free. There's a song that says you can't imagine the freedom you find from the things you leave behind.

DJ: Who is this is by, out of curiosity?

LR: Michael Card, Michael Card, you can't imagine the freedom you find from the things you leave behind. So, very often at midlife, things like lifestyle and toys and cars and club memberships, and even friends that are dragging us down sometimes there are necessary endings, right?

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Something similar came up in my conversation with one of my earlier guests, Herminia Ibarra (HI) of London Business School speaks about the benefit of pausing to reinvent.

HI: *"It's really about bandwidth and the more we were trying to do is non-habitual. The more need not just clock time but mental availability, the sense that you can kind of step back and reflect and you not gone jump into something just because it's come to you on silver platter and so in the work place it manifest self just being too busy and cramped with meeting and so in leadership transition work what we find is that people leave such small slivers of time that then all they can do is fill it with the few minutes of answering email because it's not big enough to do anything else and so thinking about précising chunking a little bit more so that you can do more value added things is important. In career transition it's a little bit different it is often times you have to let the process go for a while before you actually start to get the alas of what you are trying to do and what you are really running away from and what you would like instead it's not all that obvious at first and it take going through the process but what happens is people got kind of nervous once it's been a few months or you know what's it gone look like on my CV and I'm meeting the same people ooh you are still on that sabbatical you know it feels quite not right and so they can substantial themselves because it feel like they are being idol when in fact may be what they are doing is just recouping, gathering forces, incubating ideas they haven't found the right thing yet but that time can be quite necessary even if it is uncomfortable to go through it"*

DJ: If this is of interest, please look up my conversation with Herminia Ibarra. You might also like the playlist Reinventing Self where several leaders speak about how they moved from one orbit to another.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Herminia Ibarra that is referenced: [Pausing to reinvent](#).

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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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