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## Context to the nugget conversation

Sukhinder speaks how one could possibly discern some of the elements around values fit while considering an opportunity at the very top. She speaks about how some of these could be unearthed in a conversation and how we could reference some of these from the ecosystem the leader operates in.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And reflecting on that Sukhinder, for leaders that are at the cusp of making a transition who are deciding between choices, what has been your experience in understanding the value systems of your destination, whether it is the organization or the leader, any reflections on that to minimize the post-purchase dissonance if you will?

Sukhinder Singh Cassidy (SC): Yes, exactly. No, it is true. By the way, I think it is so much the values of the who not of the company because at the leadership level and I know a lot of your audience is leaders, so you are totally competent, like, no leaders fail because they do not have the competency to do the job. It is often culture fit and also culture fit with the rest of the leadership, even more than the company. The people you are going to battle with every day are the CEO, the other leadership team members on whom you are intrinsically dependent. So often say, when I think about where I succeeded, it has been the values overlap with the leader who I look for, here is what I look for, I look for skills that are diverse for my own. I fundamentally believe that you win when one plus one plus one equals three but when you look for values that are congruent, there is a bunch of ways to discern them. Number one, ask them what their values are, just ask what are your top three values. It is amazing when people reveal about themselves when you just ask them. Number two, ask for people who work with them, I always say when I am asking people who work with them, you know, and you know, when you think about what are your best interactions with this person and then like, I am going to work with the CEO, I might say like, hey, what are the things you are going to do that are going to drive me crazy and I am like exactly ask me the same question. So sometimes I want to tease out from all of the people who work with someone like, where do you get energy from, what drains your energy in those interactions, back channels, I definitely do. I just want to understand like what is this person's strengths and development areas. And of course, today we live in a world where honestly so much information on how people participate is public, reputations are small. If a leader has burnt bridges, it is easily discoverable. I mean, we live in a world that is so small if you are a leader. You can get on LinkedIn and find five people who know the person you are talking to and quite frankly, at least two or three who have worked with them. If it is not one degree, it is two degrees. And you really want to understand. And obviously the tell-tale signs of better leaders, yes, a healthy organization, which whose values you admire, company values are often a reflection of a leader, that is true. The talent they have been able to attract and retain, that is

another good indication. But like I said, sometimes there is no substitute for asking directly and then the observed behaviors and their reputation. But I think you have to go into any equation knowing what your values are. Does that make sense, and I think I have learned some very painful lessons in what my values are in hindsight.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Nandan Nilekani (NN), one of the co-founders of Infosys had an interesting take on this in the context of Co-Founder selection. He speaks about aligning on the timelines for which the leaders are able to postpone gratification.

NN: *“First is that you must share common vision, you must share a common value system, you must share a common desire to postpone your gratification for another day. Because building companies, especially building companies to last, is not a sprint; it’s a marathon. So, if your partners are short-term oriented, your partners want quick rewards, if your partners have ethical issues, it doesn’t work. Everybody should say, OK, we’re willing to defer reward for a decade. That’s a big ask. So, I think the big lesson in Infosys was and [N R Narayana] Murthy had done a great job in assembling the people the fact that all of us were united in a common vision to create a global company. All of us were united that we want a very ethically run company with clear standards of ethics and corporate governance, and that we were willing to defer gratification for decades, if required. That was the binding glue and the fact that we put the vision above any of us. So, I think, getting the right co-founders is very important from a vision, values, timeframe of gratification point of view.”*

DJ: This is a very nuanced point that Nandan makes. How we think about postponement of gratification often depends on spousal preferences, stage of life, kids education, parental context and other elements that might drive our financial trade-offs in life. Aligning on this explicitly in addition to the things that Sukhinder speaks about might be a good idea as leaders come together in the context of a start up.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Nandan Nilekani that is referenced: [Selecting the right co-founder\(s\)](#).

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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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