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Context to the nugget conversation

Sukhinder speaks about the scene from the movie where Nemo's father catches the East Australian Current to get to Sydney quickly to rescue his son. She speaks about how we can look for some of the tailwinds that can turbocharge our career and how we can marry that with our understanding of ourselves as we think about our career.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other thing that struck me in the book Sukhinder was you use the metaphor of finding the wave from the movie Finding Nemo. Our younger son as a matter of random trivia is nicknamed Nemo, his name is Nirmal we call him Nemo at home. But what I found interesting was at every point in time, there is always this inside-out versus outside-in piece. One is about saying, who you are, what really drives you and that leads you to a set of choices. It is a bit like strategy, is it capabilities driven or is it opportunities driven. What has been your reflection on this whole, do you see a tension there following the current versus following your heart, how have you managed the two?

Sukhinder Singh Cassidy (SC): Well, I think you just made the perfect analogy. In strategy consulting, any five forces model would tell you to measure both. It is only to your point. Maybe, something sometimes is in conflict but often, you are just basically rating them all and saying, like, if I had to add up the probabilities. Obviously, probabilities are maximized when we enter environments that have momentum and they maximize our skills and our ambitions, yes, everybody would wish for that all the time. Sometimes, we face more of the choices where we really want to do this but the indications of the macroenvironment are, it is not the right thing to do. So the point is, any smart risk-taking involved, an outside-in and inside-out perspective, and if anything, I would say, our failure mode in risk-taking is, most people tend to believe far more that risk-taking is in the micro moves they make entirely. And so, remember, I am a fan of micro moves and micro choices but we want to be in anticipation and response, not feeling like we are, like, 100% of the universe is in our control, it is not. What is in our control is our anticipation and our response, anticipation, response. So I believe in those kind of micro moves. When people are like hey, I am just going to outexecute my way out of this problem and I am like, oh, really, might be you think it is all about you, you think you can just, I will tell you what, like, you know, sometimes when good teams meet bad markets, bad markets win. You can keep trying to outexecute your way out of a hurricane, it is still a hurricane. So then a micro move is not going to do any good. You want to bolt your doors, I will go ahead and try. You need to, like, get in your car and like literally, drive a 100 miles an hour around the hurricane, like no micro move is going to save you. The best thing you can do is like try and figure out when the hurricane is coming and with what force. So I think that that is the analogy I would give. I think that it is not an OR but an AND but I think that more often, I see executives believe they can outexecute their way

out of anything and I often see this in the strategy room where people will be like, well, if we just execute better, if we, like, just execute better. Yeah, sometimes it is about execution and sometimes literally it is about like are you in the wrong market, do you have momentum, what are the headwinds that are coming your way that you may not be able to outlast. So, I think we need to have a lot of confidence in our own agency to make moves. But we need to be absolutely looking for things that increase our probability of success from the outside.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The parallel I use with leaders especially in the second half of the journey is that we need to think through “Where to go” and “How to grow” and if you get the “Where to go” wrong, then no amount of intervention in “How to grow” is likely to help. To be clear about Where to go, we need to really get to a really good place in terms of self-awareness (through reflection and through structured feedback from the people around).

I realize that if we get this architecture wrong, then no amount of developmental coaching is likely to help.

The other piece that I have found that leaders often get to a point and believe that they are good all-rounders. I was speaking with an Entrepreneur who had had a good exit from his previous venture after about a decade of building it. He is currently evaluating various choices in terms of what next. Should it be Investing, should it be building the next Venture, Should it be politics or something else?

One provocation that is often helpful in these situations is who inspires you and what is common to them? May be there are some cues there in terms of what next?

One of my earlier guests Rama Bijapurkar (RB) speaks about this in the context of the choices she made in her journey.

RB: “so I have friend who said to me that why don’t you figure out three role models of people who you really respect and my list of three was C.K. Pralhad, P. Chidambaram and Bhimsen Joshi, I knew two of them C.K. and Chidambaram pretty well, I didn’t know Bhimsen at all but I then realize that all three of them was absolutely solo performers, I mean C.K. who is my teacher and my guru in every way actually sat in wherever his office in Michigan and gave the whole world not just the theory of core competence, the idea of competing for the future, the idea of fortune at the bottom of the pyramid I mean the man just did it repeatedly again and again and again, the idea of co-opting your consumers, the whole set of things. And then when you look to Chidambaram, when he wasn’t being the minister and he was out of power he was just a damn good lawyer and he was stop being a lawyer he was a minister but he was pretty much because of his individual stuff and I went to Bhimsen’s 70th birthday at that time and he said that and he sang for himself and he basically said that day from the podium that I have said to the lord, I stopped singing please take me away, once I had those three M, and its again serendipity how did that three come? Then I said there are guys who don’t have any umbrellas, platforms, nothing but they have basically given the world what they have given the world.”

DJ: Like Sukhinder says, I guess it has to be a healthy combination of Outside In and Inside out but as she says you cant outexecute your way out of a bad strategy, whether it is your company or your own journey.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Rama Bijapurkar that is referenced: [Becoming a solo-advisor](#).

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Sukhinder Singh Cassidy - 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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