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Context to the nugget conversation

Rajiv speaks about why he chooses to work with the leader as a whole and not limit himself to the professional elements. He speaks about how some of these elements are intertwined and why one has to approach this holistically to be of value to the leader.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Rajiv, you say that when you work with a leader, you ask the sponsoring organization to allow you to work with the leader as a whole, can you talk a little bit about why you say this and how it impacts the leader that you work with?

Rajiv Vij (RV): Yeah, it is a crucial point for me, Deepak, and I am glad you picked it because I find that at leadership positions, you cannot differentiate between professional effectiveness and personal effectiveness. Who you are fundamentally begins to come through very quickly? I mean it happens at all levels but in leadership positions, you are obviously more visible, you are in the spotlight, so all of these little little traits get amplified a lot. So, whether you are insecure or courageous, whether you are aggressive or permissive, whether you are trustworthy or manipulative, and so on. And so, if you want to be a greater leader, you have to be willing to invest on looking within working on your inner self, in fact, almost reforming your inner self because the work you do with your inner self, that eventually reflects in the quality of your external leadership. And this is the fundamental belief based on which I approach. When organizations talk to me about coaching, I always highlight this and say, please allow me to work with the leader as a whole person because their professional success, the leadership success which is what they are eventually after, is very closely intertwined with their personal effectiveness and who they are, so with again all these traits and so forth. So just working with leaders at all levels of their being, you know, in terms of their physical habits, emotional makeup, their mindset, their beliefs, all of that is such a crucial part of how they show up as a leader. And the organizations, they all agree to that and value that. And I think the leaders find that part more than, you know, learning to be more strategic, or grow my business in a certain way, etc., etc., the richness of the conversation comes from almost this whole personal being. And also, not to forget, that this work, then not only translates into their becoming greater leaders, but equally, it affects their personal relationships, it impacts their sense of balance, happiness, fulfillment and so forth. So, they just find themselves in such a better place at the end of this conversation. So that to me is really the pillar of this work.

DJ: Hmm. And to expand on that, Rajiv, when you say that you engage with the leader as a whole, what does that mean, if you could break that down a little bit in terms of the kinds of things you do or the kinds of conversations you have or the reflections that you guide the leader through, could you shine the light on that?

RV: Yeah, so this is quite crucial, Deepak, because it is the work, they do in different aspects of their being which eventually translates into the leadership. And I still remember this client of mine, for example, in Japan, and their regional head had suggested to me that he is a fantastic individual, doing a great job, etc., etc., but one of the real challenges is interpersonal skills. Now if I had approached this person and talked about interpersonal skills, I do not know how that could go. I mean many times leaders can tend to be defensive and so on. But I said, listen, let us see what are your pain points, what is bothering you and life, and let us work through that, knowing fully well that whatever comes up is eventually going to help him become a better leader. As we were talking in the conversation somewhere, this person, we came up with one goal, two goals, we were still sort of what else, what else, and this issue had not come up at all. And as we were talking, then this individual said that, you know, there is one other thing and I do not think you can help me with that. But I said, like, what is that, and he said, sometimes I feel I am not a good human being. And I said like what makes you say that. He said, no, just conversations with me do not end well. So, we call this goal a better human being. Now at one level, you could argue a goal like that sound such a personal goal, what has that got to do with leadership. But we all can see that working through that whole idea actually helped this leader to enhance on all of those interpersonal and other skills as we went through the journey. Another example, maybe, if I am talking to a leader, let us say the feedback is this leader needs to be more strategic, for example. We are talking and I say, like, what are you struggling with, anything that you wish to change in your life, etc. and they say, I just feel overwhelmed, I am very stressed, and so on and so forth. So, it is okay, so what do you want to work on, maybe life under control, or a calmer me, or something like that which again, if I describe it to you or HR, it will sound like a very personal goal, like calmer me, like okay. But the thing is that the journey to that calmer me or to life under control revolves around learning to be more strategic because one of the reasons I may be stressed or overwhelmed is because I do not delegate enough, I get too involved in the operational details, maybe I do not have enough interests outside of work, and so on so forth. So, there is a bunch of things that may come up, which are solutions to help reduce the threats or feel like life is under control, but actually indirectly, they are all going to help this person become more strategic as well. So that is where I am saying that the leadership effectiveness will anyway happen once leaders can sort out their emotional, mental and other traits that might be holding them back.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: In addition to what Rajiv says, I find that gathering data outside the domain of work and from the past sometimes can provide deeply insightful context to be of value to the leader. In most of the situations, I end up speaking to a sibling, spouse and possibly even a parent. On the work front, I like to go back to some of the past colleagues to get feedback and not restrict myself to the current set of colleagues. I find that these conversations give me a unique glimpse into the wiring of the leader in terms of behaviours and beliefs. And that insight can be 10 times more powerful than having bland strengths and development area type conversations with current work colleagues. The phrase I end up using is “How 360 is your 360”?

End of nugget transcription

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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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