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## Context to the nugget conversation

Dorie speaks about how we should think about situations where the green-shoots might take a while to appear especially when we embark on something new. She shares some perspectives around how we should think about cutting losses versus persisting and what metrics we should track.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The other theme I am curious about, Dorie, is a term that I picked up from James Clear, the author of Atomic Habits who was on this podcast as well, he uses this phrase, plateau of latent potential, where he says, often, there is a time delay between us starting something and us seeing the green shoots. Even in your case, you say there is a five-year delay between somebody prodding you to write the book and you actually writing it. At the same time, you go on to say that very often, the question in my head is, how do you know you are climbing the wrong tree versus persisting with the climb, and you talk about some raindrops that often give you some sort of guidance that you are probably on the right path. Can you talk a little bit about this phenomenon?

Dorie Clark (DC): Yeah, definitely. So what I often will tell my clients, when they do get discouraged sometimes, because, I mean, we all want it faster, you know, it would be great. In the book, I talk about strategic patience and strategic patience is kind of my antidote to regular patience, which I just do not really like at all because it seems so passive. But for strategic patience, you understand that things are going to take longer than you want. You do not necessarily like it, you do not have to like it but it might take longer than you want, but you are doing things, you are taking action, you are coming up with hypotheses, you are testing things, you are adjusting it. You are not just like waiting like, oh, maybe something will happen. And so waiting for the raindrops and looking for the raindrops is really powerful because where a lot of people go wrong is they get so fixated on the final outcome, which in our metaphor here, we can call the thunderstorm and that is like, oh, well, it is a New York Times bestseller, oh, well, you get to be the keynote speaker at the huge conference. Those things really take a while, and it is very easy for us if that is all we are fixated on to talk down or to negate some of the smaller victories. It is like, well, you go from nowhere and then you start to get invited on a couple of podcasts. Well, but nobody listens to those podcasts. Yeah, but, okay, it does not have to be Oprah, it is that you went from nobody knowing who you were to a couple of random people knowing who you are. That is actually progress like, I know you wanted to be bigger and faster and better but to understand that to have anybody calling you up and asking you to be on their show, that is a victory and we need to understand it as such and not get snooty about it but instead, to really appreciate, okay, this is what it looks like to make progress, this is what it looks like to be getting there. I think that is powerful.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Whenever we change trajectories, it is critical for us to rethink metrics of progress and sometimes this can be hard. We can fall into the trap of measuring our progress in the currency of the world we used to operate in, but we need to be cognizant of what we are solving for and proactively reset some of the metrics.

One of my earlier speakers, Whitney Johnson (WJ), has used some of the principles of Clay Christiansen to illustrate this when we jump from one S curve to another.

*WJ: "And so whenever you step back or you jump to a new S-curve it's really important to rethink the metrics that's inside of your career and certainly for anybody who is making the decision to become an entrepreneur or making the decision to leave the workforce and retiring and to go run a non-profit. Like if you continue to use the metric of how much money am I making and you're running a non-profit, you are going to fail every single day of your life, but that's because it's the wrong metric. And so, when we're stepping back to slingshot forward in order for us to be able to be successful, we need to make sure that we're using the right metrics to measure our progress.*

*DJ: And could you maybe illustrate it with a couple of examples on what's the kind of shift that we need in the metrics just for people to get a realistic sense on what the traps could be and therefore how we should, you know, what's the language around how we rethink the metrics?*

*WJ: Yeah, absolutely. So, I think one of the ways that we can do this is to say to ourselves... I remember when I was writing this book I came across a gentleman who was telling me about how he had been on one S-curve and he was an executive inside of a company and so the metrics he was using were things like are we generating revenue, are we expanding margins and you know typical things that you would look out from a P&L perspective when you are running a business. He now retires and decides to become, you know, be a grandfather full-time. Well, he is on a brand new S-curve, the tendency is when we jump to a brand new S-curve is to use the same metrics that we used before because it has become part of our wiring but if this gentleman everyday was waking up and saying how much revenue have I generated today, have I expanded margins because that's what he is now wired to do, that's what he's in the habit of doing. Every single morning, he was going to feel like he was ineffective, the metric had to shift to how present am I for my grandchildren today? Did I take them to the park? Did they discover something that made them feel full of wonder and curiosity? Was I able to be present during that time? I'll give you an even simpler example because I think this is... to drill down on this idea. I have a checklist every day that I use sort of 10 things that I want to accomplish every day. So, you know, I want to run today, I am going to read some type of spiritual sacred text, I have a list of four things I am going to accomplish, I am going to, you know, things that I am going to do every day. Well, one of the things I discovered is that that is a great checklist for me Monday through Saturday. But Sunday, I want it to be a day of rest, I want it to be a day of worship and one of the things that I was finding that was very frustrating for me is that I was carrying over my checklist for Monday through Saturday to Sunday. So, I was getting really frustrated because I was thinking well, I am measuring myself by this checklist that I am using the other six days. And so, what I had to start doing was create a new checklist for Sunday, you know, things like did I go to church today? Did I spend time with my family? Did I do family history? Did I write in my journal? Totally different checklist. And so, that's what I mean is when you look at the S curve that you've decided to jump to whether it's in your personal or your professional life the metrics you use make sure that that is measuring what you want to measure so that you'll know if in fact you're successful and not measuring yourself against metrics that actually aren't relevant and just lead to frustration and a feeling that you're on the wrong S-curve. So, one quick quote around that that I love and I think this is important, it's from Liz Strauss. She says it's not possible for the world to hold a*

*meeting to decide your value that decision is yours and that's where this idea of metrics come in. You have to decide what metrics you are going to use to decide your value."*

DJ: I love what Whitney says here. The world is not going to hold a meeting to decide your value. That decision is yours and unless we set up our own bespoke Balance Scorecard, we are likely to solve for metrics that others set for us and more often than not, that is not a sustainable recipe.

## End of nugget transcription

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Nugget from Whitney Johnson that is referenced: [Rethinking our metrics](#).

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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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