



The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number '+91 85914 52129*', a Twitter icon with the handle '@PlayToPotential', and a globe icon with the website 'playtopotential.com'. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the right side of the banner is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget conversation

Ravi refers to the work of Charles Handy and says that in the future, there will be three broad kinds of work – Creatives, Caregivers and Custodians. He goes on to say that it is critical that we map ourselves into one or two of the three and develop deep capabilities to ensure that we are the top of that particular field as there is a significant risk of commoditization if we are an “also ran” in a field.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And diving into one of the concepts you discuss in the book, Ravi, you refer to Charles Handy and you talk about the three kinds of roles that he says will exist in the future: creatives, caregivers and custodians. I like the framing as these three, can you say more about how you see these and the implication for individuals to pick a pathway as we go through our journeys?

Ravi Venkatesan EP2 (RV): Yeah, I am a big fan of Charles Handy over the decades. It is just a lot of both vision and wisdom in his work. And so, when I read this, I said, aha, these fits, it is exactly what I have been experiencing and noticing except I have not articulated quite as well. So, yeah, I see, I do think that the vast majority of what we call work will fit into one of these three categories. So, you can think about creation as all forms of creation. So, people who are writing software, people who are creating content of different sorts, people who are building businesses, people who are inventing, that's the creative and I think there is going to be a flourishing of creative work of all sorts. Then you have frontline workers, who are what he calls caregivers and they are all sorts. So, this is the sanitation workers, this is the nurse on the frontline and the teachers and so on and so forth. And despite automation, I don't think there is going to be a substitute for that human touch that human interface, so there will be a lot of frontline workers. And then you do need to organise in some fashion. So, I don't think companies in the way we recognise or organisations are going to go away and you need a set of people to manage infrastructure processes and so on and so forth. So, there will always be what we broadly call the category of managers, but that number is going to be sort of smaller and probably smaller over time. And so, not only will work largely fall in these three buckets and therefore it is useful for you to reflect on which are my most likely, what are my best two. But also, more and more all of us will just be independent freelancers. Not everybody is going to be an entrepreneur but very few of us are going to be in long-term stable employment contracts. So, that's going to be another feature of this future of work. And finally, there is going to be sort of I suspect greater and greater inequality. So, for instance, if you are a superb creator and there is a lot of value people see in your creativity then the chances are you are going to be able to monetise that exceptionally well and be fabulously wealthy. On the other hand, if you are mediocre then you are essentially not going to do too well in any of these categories. So, unlike in our generation where there was a large middle for people who were moderately okay, I think we are going to see more

binary outcomes going forward. So, being excellent is I think really important regardless of which of these categories you fit into. I am sorry for giving such a long-winded response.

DJ: No, no, no, it is a great point. I think this came up in a different conversation as well. I was talking to a photographer, a gentleman named Atul Kasbekar in the conversation as well and he said, same thing, the sort of the one who's at the top of the pole will get the contracts or the assignments, but the next in line, there is just so much supply that you just get crowded out and commoditised in that space.

RV: Yeah, like they said, who was the second man to set foot on the moon. There is a vast difference between 1 and 2 and then an even vaster gap between 2 and everyone else. So, and yeah, it is not fair, it doesn't feel sort of morally just but that's just the way it is.

DJ: Hmm, and the way I, you know, the way I think about that Ravi, therefore, the onus is higher on picking something where you will naturally drive yourself to become excellent, right?

RV: Yeah. So, in fact, I was talking to a young audience and one of them said, look, I really need your advice, I am mediocre at everything, not good at studies, I am not good at, I don't have any exceptional, so what do I do? And I think the answer out of mediocrity is to follow your passion and curiosity which I write a lot about and not live your life by somebody else's expectations of what you should be doing and so on and so forth but have the courage to sort of figure out what you are best suited for in terms of what you enjoy, what you are good at and more likely to be excellent rather than mediocre, more likely to be successful and sustain that over the years if you follow that path.

DJ: It's so true. I think the way sometimes I think about it is we all face the two questions where to go and how to grow at different points in time. I just feel that from a weightage perspective, the where to go question has become a lot-lot more critical to solve today than it was maybe 30 years back, you know, because the stakes are so high.

RV: Hence, the book.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Ravi's point about Independent Producers reminds me of an insight from Lynda Gratton (LG) – the author of 100 year life - on a similar theme.

LG: *“Well I think you know we have the work that we do is completely changing in the sense that there is more opportunity if you start your own business because technology is very expensive or anybody can build platform for example and we do as many as people in India are doing right now. This opportunity is if you do crafts work you know to do something that people want to buy. I spend a lot of time in Japan and there are still a huge number of people who have engaged in craft work as indeed there is in... and I would call these independent producers. The reason that term as a post of entrepreneur is the idea of entrepreneur is that you are growing something you know you do it because you wanted to be big and I think that there is a role for each of us in our lives to do something where we are not doing it to grow we are just doing to do it you know for example I write books, I am an author I am an sort of an independent producer is not that I am saying you know I want to write 50 books or I want to run a publishing company it's just to say I'd like to produce something for myself or with friends and I think that's marvellous part in a way. The industrial*

revolution took quite a lot of that out of humanity you know as we mechanize work and mechanized the production process, we sort of took away the joy of just making something.”

DJ: In a way, I would say my practice is that of an Independent producer where I am able to cobble a portfolio initiative together which are in line with what give me energy and which are of value to the people around. What goes into that portfolio is Work in Progress and I am trying to rebalance the portfolio on a dynamic basis as the life context evolves. But the agency to control what I do, how I do it and at what intensity is tremendously liberating.

If this topic is of interest, you might like reading the book Small Giants by Bo Burlingham. He focuses on companies that focus on being great rather than large. How these companies have deliberately resisted the push for scale and focused on refining their craft whatever that is.

One of the questions I ask my guests when I wrap up my conversation is What does the term Play to Potential mean to you. One of the guests Abhijit Bhaduri, eloquently said that you cannot Work to your potential. You can only Play to your Potential. I don't think there is a more eloquent way to make the point.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Lynda Gratton that is referenced: [Independent producers vs Entrepreneurs](#).

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Inflection point: Inflection points are when the notion of “what got you here won't get you there” hold. Whether it is a company moving from a start-up to a scale-up or a leader moving from a CXO to a CEO role, these passages of play have to be navigated carefully as there is a high risk of derailment. You can access the playlist [here](#).

Reinventing self: “How do I stay relevant” is a question that all of us have to grapple with as we go through our respective journeys. Careers aren't linear any more. Some of the leaders talk about how they managed to pivot during their journeys and significantly change trajectories. You can access the playlist [here](#).

SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

Podcast Newsletter: Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

Nuggets on Whatsapp: We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 87914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Nuggets

- 87.01 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Key choices post the corporate path
- 87.02 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Punctuated Equilibrium
- 87.03 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Three roles in the future of work
- 87.04 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Being intentional about life
- 87.05 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Cultivating an abundance mindset
- 87.06 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Different forms of Capital
- 87.07 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Specialization vs Generalization
- 87.08 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Unlocking Entrepreneurship
- 87.09 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Leadership next door
- 87.10 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - How will you measure your life
- 87.11 Ravi Venkatesan EP2 - Develop your voice not your brand

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](#).

Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.