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Context to the nugget conversation

Ravi speaks about his work with Udhyam Foundation along with Mekin Maheshwari and how they have gone about creating a curriculum that helps children develop an entrepreneurial mindset as they grow. He speaks about immersive experiences that drive Empathy, Tenacity and Resourcefulness in children.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Moving topics Ravi, you work with GAME, you have set up GAME and one of the themes I have been curious about is how do you think, how do you get somebody to think and behave like an entrepreneur and you are trying to do this at scale with GAME? Can you talk to us a little bit about GAME? What you are trying to do there, but also what have you learnt about building entrepreneurs?

Ravi Venkatesan EP2 (RV): Sure. So, look, the world is going through a period where the supply of jobs will not be able to keep pace with the demand for jobs partly because jobs as a construct is an industrial era thing, which is going away as companies want more fluid contracts. And also, we are doing a better job educating larger numbers of people. So, the supply side is increasing handily. So, if this supply-demand gap is not short term, but actually is structural and long-term and what you want to do is get more people becoming entrepreneurs and both to feed themselves as well as maybe create livelihoods for a few more, and of course, in some parts of the world, entrepreneurship is flourishing, in our own country it is doing very well in some of the larger cities like Bangalore or Gurgaon, but the question is how do you, is it possible to catalyse this so it spreads like wildfire to our smaller cities, towns and rural India, So, that's the whole purpose of GAME and our work is to try and make it aspirational, get more people to think about this as a conscious choice and number one or two on their choices, rather than a government job. And then how do you help them think about an idea and incubate it and how do you create an environment that promotes growth so on and so forth. That's what we are trying to do in GAME. But along the way we have realised that look, while not everybody may want to be an entrepreneur or capable of being an entrepreneur, in a very, very fast changing 21st century, everybody needs an entrepreneurial mindset. It doesn't matter what you are going to do but the chances are if you have an entrepreneurial mindset, you will be more successful. Now, what is it about the entrepreneur's mindset? I think there are four or five things. One is they are able to sense opportunity, every problem to an entrepreneur is an opportunity in disguise. To somebody else every opportunity is a problem. So, you want to help people make this shift. So, this garbage lying on the streets oh, it is an opportunity for a waste business, climate change is the mother of all opportunities. So, every, so get them to sense and see opportunity and then act on something that moves them. So, that's one aspect of an entrepreneurial mindset. A second one is this idea of resources versus resourcefulness.

Don't get crushed by the fact that you don't have resources to start with. How do you bootstrap yourself is a very powerful idea? So, for instance, somebody may have an engineering degree from a not a particularly good college and they can't find a job. If you have this bootstrap mentality and say, look, I don't mind starting out as a Swiggy delivery person, but that's not where I am going to end my life, that's just how I am going to get going and bootstrap myself and then in the off hours I am going to do something else and then I am... so, that's why I point out that this mindset is very crucial, problem solving is another thing that every entrepreneur has to do. Every day there are new problems and you better figure out how to solve them fast. That's pretty handy in life as well. Tenacity, not giving up staying with it, staying with it until you encounter success is another attribute. So, what we are saying is every person will benefit and be more successful if they have some of these mindset and skills and we found that it is teachable. So, my co-founder Mekin has done some of the most pioneering work in the world and in over a 1,000 Delhi government schools for three years, he and others have been running this entrepreneurship mindset curriculum for young people, grades 9 to 12. And from the sort of most difficult challenging backgrounds. Think about, who sends their kids to government schools these days because even your cook, maid, security guard, driver, they send their kids to English medium schools. So, this is the next level of the pyramid and kids from that environment have flourished. So, we have demonstrated and learned that this is not something you are born with, it is no way correlated to socioeconomic backgrounds, everybody can learn these skills. Some will become entrepreneurs; most won't, all will be better off.

DJ: Hmm. And of course, this is a large programme but at a headline level what do you see are the key elements of the curriculum? What does it take, what are the different vectors to think about in terms of unlocking an entrepreneurial mindset?

RV: So, these are some of the attributes. So, empathy is one. Without empathy, you are not going to be able to connect with an opportunity. So, for instance, one person goes walks down a street completely oblivious to what's around, another one looks at all the garbage lying around and is offended by this. The second person is more likely to do something about it. So, how do you teach empathy? How do you people to open up all their senses and feel? So, there are ways we do that. It is a rare that you are going to be able to accomplish something on your own, forget entrepreneurship, in this world, very few things require you to be a solo. In fact, the more, if you are actually just an IC, your work can probably be most automated. You are at greatest risk of automation. The more your work is interdisciplinary, collaborative etc., the safer you are. So, learning to work in teams is a very, very crucial skill. So, you know, and that can't be taught in a classroom. So, you do it experientially by giving people projects or tasks to accomplish where they have to work with others.

DJ: I understand.

RV: Through practice they get better at it. You give them lots of challenges. So, in the book, I gave the example of how Udyam teaches tenacity? You have to accomplish some complicated tasks with your non-dominant hand, and it is intensely frustrating to build a paper plane with your non-dominant hand, but no, even if it takes you one hour and the end product isn't all that great you stick with it. Now, it starts exercising that muscle called tenacity. So, every one of these attributes that we have laid out and there are about 10 of them can be learned in an experiential way in a relatively short period of time. It is very encouraging.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. For more do visit the Curated Playlists section at playtopotential.com and look up the Playlist Entrepreneurship.

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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