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Context to the nugget conversation

Ravi refers to the phenomenon of Stotting found in the jungles where quadrupeds, especially gazelles, spring in the air and lift all four legs off their ground often to signal their fitness to the predators. Ravi speaks about how we all should communicate our capabilities in a crowded and a noisy market. He urges us to focus on Marketing and not Sales when it comes to creating opportunities for ourselves.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Another term I loved in your book Ravi was this term stotting. You talk about how a gazelle in the animal world signals its capability and you also quote Sheryl Sandberg, where she says develop your voice not your brand and you suggest that we need to think marketing and not sales when it comes to signalling our capability in a crowded world. Can you expand on this for us?

Ravi Venkatesan EP2 (RV): Yeah, it is a very fine balance. So, first of all, this is a difficult unforgiving world in some ways and so it is important that you have some skills and be excellent. But the world around you needs to recognise that, and so you have to signal and that's why I use the metaphor of stotting where the gazelle just goes up and down in the same place while it is grazing. So, the leopard knows don't waste your time; I am a pretty fit guy and I am going to outrun you. So, go find somebody else who's not able to spring up quite so well. And so, you need to find ways to do that without becoming one of these just ugly relentlessly, self-promoting individuals. It is a fine line, you can easily cross over without even intending to, to where all you are doing is self-promotion. And I see some very smart, very good people who have lost that plot. But some of it is important, and that's why I like what Sheryl Sandberg says, which is don't talk about yourself or just go on tweeting or doing something silly, actually lead with thought leadership. So, signal, where putting out some ideas that are well thought through, genuinely useful and that's a useful way. I have embraced that myself. I am not out there just relentlessly on social media. I occasionally put stuff out there on LinkedIn and I put a lot of thought and effort into it. And as a result, I think there is a growing number of people who are drawn towards listening to those ideas. What happens then is you build a reputation and that reputation then attracts opportunities. And so, I think in today's world it is just a failing strategy to go chasing opportunities, chasing a job and one of these things. The far more and in fact the only effective way is to build a reputation and attract people and opportunities to you and then you can sit there and say this interesting or that interesting or not, and that's why I talk about marketing rather than sales. And in fact, that's the way it works. I often get people to do a simple exercise, and maybe some of your listeners would want to do it. You write down all the significant experiences, professional, personal that you have had over the last whatever period of time, 20-30 years and then you ask yourself how did this happen? How did Microsoft

happen to me? How did UNICEF happen to me? And then you look at, and as you look at it very carefully you will find except maybe some of the earliest ones, nine out of ten times the opportunity came to you. It is rare that you will find that you did something because you decided, you went and made all the effort and you landed it. Maybe that was applicable early in your career where you decided I want to go and study at that college and you were very intentional and focused around it and you achieved but since then much of what happens is attracted into your life. I think there is something spiritual out here but even if you leave the spirituality out it comes down to two very practical things called your networks and your reputation. And if you have built your reputation and your networks, you would like a fishing net, you land a bigger and bigger catch. And so, I think this is very important to do. But maintain a balance and not go nuts and do self-promotion.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the point Ravi makes about Stotting and the fact that we all need to focus on Marketing and not Sales when we think about the long term. As we move towards a world where there are more and more free agents and the number of people doing one thing keeps increasing, pursuing Sales is a slippery slope and has pricing implications. I like what Photographer Atul Kasbekar (AK) says in this context.

AK: *“The other thing is there are just far too many human beings out there. Whatever it is you are looking to do, there is someone who is willing to do it cheaper. I don’t know about better, but certainly cheaper. Not many clients out there want to pay for Louis Vuitton. So, either you have to be so good that ‘woh chahiye toh uske paas jaana hi padegaa’. Then, whether you are a kadia placing marble, but what you do, you are a freaking artist, great! You will get money and you will get paid your due. If not, then you better be the guy who is literally everywhere and you are the Coke can, you are 30 feet away from whoever. That in-between guy is going to get wiped out if you are not careful. So, you just need to, sort of, be everywhere. That’s a very simplistic level. I am no economist, but it seems like that’s the way.”*

DJ: I love what he says, whatever you choose to do, can you be like that artist even if it is laying bricks or marbles. I think that is the where the opportunity lies for each one of us else there is a risk of being commoditised away.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Atul Kasbekar that is referenced: [The Full Conversation](#).

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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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