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Context to the nugget conversation

David speaks about personality (which is often hard-wired) and behaviour (often in the realm of growth and change). He speaks about how we cannot use our personality as an excuse for our behaviour.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): So, David moving to a different theme, as a practicing coach, one of the questions I often think about is what's in the realm of change and what's hardwired in people, right? When we are trying to figure out what are the development areas that we need to focus on, that's a question that often comes up and what's worth really investing time and making the effort. How do you think about that? You talk about that in the book as well. How should we all think about what's hardwired and what's in the realm of change?

David Bradford (DB): The distinction people often make is between personality and behavior. And sometimes people say, well, that's just my personality and I say, I am not concerned about your personality. I think it is a long discussion actually what is personality; there's a lot of dispute about that. I would say that that's pretty hardwired. I think if I am introverted versus extroverted, I can become more social, but where I get my energy is pretty hardwired. But what we are concerned about in organizations, what we are concerned about as leaders, what we are concerned about relationships is behavior. It's behavior that's a problem. So, I could be an extrovert and I can have good social skills or I could be an extrovert and I could want to dominate the interactional conversations, not my extroversion. It is the behavioral form it takes. And I think we have a lot of control over our behavior if we want it. So, when I deal with people the thing which I watch for is how willing are they to look, how willing are they to look at their behavior and maybe do something about it. If they in essence are not at all willing, I say to myself, is this going to be worth the effort and it may not be. So, the problem I see in the coaching I have done with executives is the problem is not in personality, it has been an unwillingness to learn.

DJ: And is that hardwired do you think that to use Carol Dweck's language, the growth mindset versus fixed mindset and the willingness to learn and grow? To what extent do you think that's hardwired versus something that we can work on?

DB: No, because what she says is that you can learn to have a growth mindset; she is very clear that, that is something that you can learn. I think what it comes from is probably early socialization and it is probably easier for some than for others. But I think that one can have a growth mindset if you want it. Now, I remember once asking a therapist; no, that's not the story. I heard this from a therapist that one time a patient asked her when am I cured? And the therapist said, when you stop

wanting to learn. And I don't think that's a cure, I think that's the end of therapy, that's when therapy ends. So, do you have a mindset of wanting to continue to learn and it varies with areas. Now, there are some areas where I may not want to learn so it is not a generalized statement but there might be other areas which I do want to learn. And I think not being willing to learn is the one dimension that holds most people back in organizations and in relationships.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Over the last 6-7 years of my doing this kind of work, if there is one thing I have learnt, it is that the outcomes have a greater correlation with the coachee's willingness to learn, listen, see the mirror and do the hard work to change rather than my capabilities. While I end up being the catalyst often in their growth, they are the people doing the heavy lifting when it comes to behavioural change. I tell the clients very often that "Houston, I have a problem" often leads to a better outcome than "Houston, He or she has a problem". Very often HR would come and say that this leader needs a coach or a VC investor would come and say, this entrepreneur needs a coach. While they may be right in the diagnosis, unless the individual owns the need to change and wants to change, nothing much happens.

Thank you for listening.

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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