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Context to the nugget conversation

Michiel speaks about how he takes various retreats (3 days, 10 days, 6 months etc) at various points in time and how that often creates the space for new things to emerge.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And just maybe going back to couple of things you said Michiel before we dive into the book, you spoke about taking a sabbatical each time, whether it was HUL to McKinsey or McKinsey to the current version of you, I find that interesting because very often when I work with leaders in transition, there is a temptation to back to back their journeys. You know, I use a metaphor of a trapeze artist, you know, you are sort of swinging trapeze and then you want to pull down to the next trapeze before you leave the previous one. So can you talk a little bit about, just maybe your experience of having done the sabbatical and therefore, for people in transition, what would your advice be, just in terms of going through a reflection process before figuring out what next?

Michiel Kruyt (MK): Yeah, so I think it is not only in transition. So my McKinsey sabbatical was basically, I wanted to renew, and of course you can see a transition as a renewal, but in the end, it is very important to withdraw yourself from your active life now and then because that is when creativity starts to waken up when you really start to deeply rest where you get new stimulus, where you can do things that you typically do not do when you are back to back in Zoom calls and meetings and other things. So the practice of retreat whether it is a sabbatical or whether it is a three-day silent retreat or whether it is a weekend walk in the mountains that you plan on your own, is a very very healthy leadership practice, and I have done it all my life. So these sabbaticals are longer ones, I have done two of them, they were like six months, but I do shorter retreats every year.

DJ: Got it. And just to maybe get tactical, how long are they and can you expand on how you think about your retreats?

MK: Well, anywhere between three days silent retreat or a 10-day silent retreat or the last years, I have done a couple of more like active retreats where I was more like walking or, you know, but very often in nature. And there is a practice to it, so I go in there with an intention, it is not like just doing nothing, I go in there with an intention to relax and discover and let new things emerge.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: When I look around, I see too many people busy with the rough and tumble of life that they don't make the space for new possibilities to emerge. If there is one practice that I have seen in leaders who have changed orbits effectively, they have all pressed the pause button to find a new possibility.

Lloyd Reeb (LR) – Founding Partner of Halftime Institute that helps leaders move from Success to Significance, speaks about this phenomenon quite eloquently.

LR: *"When you sense that there is a transition, a new season is coming, then it's important to take some time to pause and reflect as opposed to just work on the solution. One of the most common mistakes that managers and executives make when they begin a transition in their life is they work on a solution too quickly. Now we would never do that in our business. We wouldn't start naming a product or working on advertising, we start with who is the customer? What does the customer consider value? What is our value proposition as a result of that? What is our strategy? We work through all of these things before we name the product and we come up with creative advertising. So, when you are in transition, the temptation is to start ask the question what will I do next and it's the wrong question. You have to start with some inside questions. Who am I? What am I good at? What do I care about? What are my long-term desired results or what are my long-term metrics? And so, when you think about being chief life officer, it's about knowing the long-term metrics in your life. It's about knowing your role and your mission. It's about allocating and investing your time not just spending your time. These are all things that Chief Investment Officers do inside a company, right? You don't just give your time away, you don't just give your capital away, you invest your capital. So, invest your time based on your long-term metrics. And so, I would say that the key thing is to pause is to create some daily time of silence and solitude, some weekly sabbath time where you take time, you know, what a strategic coach teaches is you have focused days, buffer days and off days. And when they coach executives, they tell them the most important days are the off days, you need to count them. So, if you don't have any off days, you can't reflect. It's interesting that the Chief of Staff for Bill Clinton convinced him to take two hours every day with no meetings scheduled just to think. Now, if the President of United States can take two hours every day just to think, I think you can do that. So, and then to take a more extended time every year. What I do is a silent spiritual retreat day. Three days a year, three separate times a year, I take a day alone that I am silent and it's a time of reflection and thinking and I come back to my plan."*

DJ: The question to ask is, what is the space you are creating in your journey to make meaning of what is happening around you and for new possibilities to emerge?

Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Lloyd Reeb that is referenced: [Pausing after success](#).

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Michiel Kruyt - Nuggets

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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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