

The banner features the 'play to potential' logo on the left. To its right are social media icons for WhatsApp (+91 85914 52129*), Twitter (@PlayToPotential), and a globe icon for the website (playtopotential.com). Further right, it lists 'Also available on:' with icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right is a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, with the text 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman' below it. A small note 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

Stephen speaks about how we can tune into micro-moments where we get a glimpse of what somebody might be capable of. He says that if we don't look for it, we will never find it. He goes on to talk about the four steps involved in unlocking the potential of the person - See, Communicate, Develop, Unleash.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): And talking about potential, how do you think about spotting potential? One of the things that very often you discover in organizations, I completely agree with you, I have an issue with this term, high potentials, low potentials, everybody has a potential for something, so the real discussion in my mind is potential for what. All of us have a potential. How do you think about the term potential and measuring potential if I may I ask you?

Stephen M. R. Covey (SC): Yes, I have a little model that goes like this, see, communicate, develop, unleash, it is kind of a virtuous cycle that can then repeat. And so, it starts with seeing the potential in others, that is spotting the potential. The first thing is you need to look for it. It is like Ralph Waldo Emerson said, no, sorry, Henry David Thoreau, these early American thought leaders, I mix them up sometimes, Henry David Thoreau said, it is not what you look at that matters, it is what you see. And so, people can look at the same thing and see something different. And so, you are trying to say, look, I believe that, you know, again if you have the paradigm, then there is greatness inside of people, you will be looking for it, you are more apt to spot it if you believe that paradigm. If you do not believe that paradigm, you might not even look for it and you might not spot it because the potential could be lying dormant, maybe no one has really seen. It is like the seeds. I tell the story in Trust & Inspire at Death Valley, California, hottest place on Earth, you know, 134-degree temperature, that is nearly 57 degrees Celsius, and it is hot but it is dry. The average rainfall at Death Valley in a year is 1 inch of rain. There was a 3.5-year period when only half an inch of rain fell, so nothing grows there, nothing grows, it is too hot too dry, that is why they call it Death Valley. But interestingly, in the winter of 2005, for some unexplained reasons, 6 inches of rain fell in a very short period and then just shortly thereafter, sure enough, these wildflowers popped up and carpeted the entire valley. It turns out it was not dead after all. It was just dormant, there were seeds over there. They needed the right conditions to flourish and to grow. Many times, people are like that. The potential might be there, it may be dormant and if you do not have the paradigm of looking for it, seeing it and communicating it, so others can come to see it in themselves, developing and unleashing, you might go right past it, it remains dormant but if you have the paradigm, you are looking for it, maybe you will see it and then, you will start by seeing looking for it, then when you do see it, you communicate it to others so that they come to see it because often times, people do not see it themselves. That is what great leadership is, communicating, it is seeing and communicating people's worth and potential so clearly that they

come to see it in themselves, that is leadership. And because I can now do this, it is like, Eleanor Roosevelt said, a good leader enables people to have confidence in the leader, a great leader enables people to have confidence in themselves because they begin to see their potential because you saw it first and you communicated to them, so you have to look for it. I will give you one little paradigm, an analogy. I guess it is more, I do not know if it is a metaphor or an analogy but it is the story of Michelangelo. When he carved the David, the statue of the David, the famous statue, here is what he said. He said, you start carving with a big slab of marble, he said, I saw the angel in the marble and then, I carved until I set him free. So, he saw the David in the marble and carved and set him free, what if as leaders we saw that as our stewardship to those who are leading. See, if you can see it, it is my stewardship to see the potential inside of each of the people I am leading and help them come to see it in themselves.

DJ: Hmm, absolutely. I was just trying to understand in a little more granularity when you say you look for it, what is that it, in terms of spotting potential in others and looking for it, what do we need to be mindful of as we engage with people, whether it is at work, whether it is in our homes or otherwise?

SC: Yeah, we are looking for manifestations, even if it is small, of some talent, of some skill, of some gift, of some expertise. It is like, Lin-Manuel Miranda who created Hamilton and is also a playwright and has written music for Moana and other things, great talent. When he was in eighth grade, he had an English teacher and he was supposed to turn in his homework, and instead of turning his homework that was assigned, he turned in a musical that he wrote. And the teacher, it was Dr. Herbert Rembert, he could have just said, hey, this is not the assignment, I asked for this assignment and you are turning this, what is this. Instead, here is what he said to him, he said, wow, this is amazing, you could be good at this and it is time you stop hibernating in my class and you have a talent and a gift. So, he did not, in other words, you are looking for talent, you are looking for gifts. It may be that you got the person, your direct report, they might be in the wrong seat on the bus, to use the Jim Collins metaphor, maybe they have a talent that would be better used somewhere else but you are looking for gifts, talents, insights, expertise, inside of them. It may not always be immediately manifest, maybe dormant. It is sometimes you do not know about that until you maybe give them a little opportunity to show something. Maybe when you start to give them an opportunity to do something, to show something. And if they are never given opportunity, maybe you will never see it. So, it is an iterative process, see, communicate, develop, unleash, give them an opportunity and then maybe they show something, and I say, oh, I saw, I saw a glimpse, I bet there is more there. And then if you begin to treat people according to their potential, not just their behavior, you tend to move them towards their potential and so, you treat them that way too. So again, I think it is an iterative process but you have got to look for it. Again, the role, it is not what you look at, it is what you see. So, you are looking for this and then you can begin to see and help them come to see it, that glimpse, that gift, that talent, that skill, that expertise.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: A lot of my work is with leaders who are often grappling with Mid-life and are trying to figure out what next in their journeys. A big part of my work with them is often about showing the mirror to them about what they really have potential for. We often have clear view of what our experiences and skills are (this is the CV level view of ourselves). But what gives us energy, when we come alive is a very different question altogether and tuning into that can sometimes give us directional cues as we think about pivoting and navigating through life.

One my earlier guests was Lloyd Reeb (LR) – Author of Success to Significance. He has a beautiful phrase that captures the crux of the issue. He says that people often arrive at mid-life with their passions smouldering under wet blankets. I see my job as a Coach and a Sounding Board to lift those blankets and blow some Oxygen into their passions.

LR: *“That is what I have believed for a long time that your passions are buried under blankets of busyness, obligation, responsibility and that if I could lift the corner and blow oxygen in, they would ignite. And so, what I have been doing recently is studying the science of how interest forms, for example, there’s a big compilation of social science recently done called “The Science of Interest”. It’s \$100 book, it’s very, it’s like reading one PhD thesis after another and so I have been studying that and I think this is an area where I think I was partially wrong Deepak. And let me share with you what I have been learning about how passion forms. So, let’s say that one of your listeners is in a place where they have got an opportunity to transition, or they have some extra time because something’s changed in their life and they have got 40 hours of work at work and then they have got 10-15 hours of free time that they could do something new and they want to make a difference, right? And so, let’s just say that they are looking for what their passion is. And so, here’s what I have been learning and I will just read to you some things that I think may be helpful. Many Halftime clients or many people who come to Halftime have not been exposed to a wide variety of human experiences or causes. And as a result, they have not tasted the pain of those issues nor the joy of those who are helping us wage the pain. So, it’s true that for some people, they might have been abused by a spouse and they are passionate about domestic violence, they might have grown up as an orphan and they may be passionate about orphanage, maybe they were very sick as a child and they are passionate about that. Maybe they saw their father lose a lot of money as an entrepreneur and they want to help entrepreneurs, something like that, that happens sometimes. But more often than not what happens is that this published compilation, the science of interest suggests that people gain interest through stages, they get clear on their passion through stages from exposure to knowledge about it, to confidence around a particular topic and then they move into a passion as they engage with the topic and experience joy. And then this new interest becomes part of their identity and it becomes a passion that they are self-motivated to engage in. So, let me tell it to you in a story form for your listeners. Suppose a parent notices a child’s interest in taking nature photos. So, they buy the child a cheap camera, the child takes a few photos, some turn out, but many do not and the family celebrates the ones that do turn out beautifully and the parent points the child to some YouTube videos to learn more about photography. Soon they begin to capture better photos. The parents buy them a better camera and the family experiences them coming in with great pictures and they start to celebrate them and the person feels the joy of their family seeing their beautiful pictures. And then, as a result, they gain confidence in it. Next thing they notice the child is out when it’s hot or when it’s raining taking pictures and they are self-motivated to do it. And eventually they begin to hear the child telling people that he is a photographer and it becomes part of his identity. So, part of what you need to do if you are looking for your passion is look past that what’s happened in your past, was there a painful experience, but then, also explore, explore a wide variety of things through photos, through stories, through case studies, Google searches, do an urban plunge, we go downtown and see what’s happening. And I remember driving through New Delhi with a driver that was driving too fast because we were trying to get to see a congressman or a parliamentarian, right in New Delhi and hit a dog. And the dog was on the ground yelping behind us and the driver didn’t even look back, the driver didn’t feel any compassion and it made me sad and I wondered is that, does that happen all the time, do people and children and dogs get just hit by things and if so, what could you do about that? Now, that was an experience for me, right? It obviously moved me because I remember it was three years ago, I still remember today. That might be the start of a passion would be to bring more compassion to animals or to children in some poor parts of New Delhi.”*

DJ: I love the song Besabriyaan in the movie MS Dhoni. There is a lovely line in the middle of that song – Kyun Roshni tu baahar talaashe, teri mashaain andar tere. Can we lift the wet blankets on ourselves and the others around us to unlock what really energizes us and fulfil our respective potentials?

Thank you for listening.

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Lloyd Reeb that is referenced: [From Interest to Identity](#).

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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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