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Context to the conversation

Carol and David speak about 3 different dimensions of Mindfulness that leaders need in every context. They suggest that we are attuned to what is going on around us, inside us, and with others, and respond in an agile and an appropriate manner.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let us talk with M, mindful alertness. One of the things I really liked in the way you describe it, as you say that leadership is a three-dimensional challenge and you lay out the three different dimensions around which we need to be mindfully alert, so could you expand on that for the listeners?

David Noble (DN): Sure. So, I think all of us are exposed to one or two-dimensional leaders. So, they are the people who are incredibly results-oriented and hit every target but that comes at the expense of their people. We all know people who are wonderful servant leaders, who care deeply about unlocking others' potential but they find it hard to establish boundaries to hold other people accountable. And then, we also know these great individual contributors or subject matter experts who are individually brilliant but they actually cannot relate to other humans. So those are all one-dimensional leaders and they all fail in terms of being extraordinary. So, we think that to literally be a whole person, a whole leader, someone who has the potential to be extraordinary, you need to be three dimensional. So, the first dimension is the external dimension which is what is it that you want or need to accomplish and that could be financial target to hit, it could be a decision to make, it could be a merger to complete, it could be a culture to implement but it is like what is it that you are focused on doing, what you want to accomplish. The second dimension is the inner dimension which is okay, we are clear on our goals but who you want to be as a human as a person while you are doing this, so do you want to be a leader who is patient, a listener who has perspective, who is fair, who is inclusive, like what are the character strengths and traits that you want to cultivate and project as a leader. And then, the third dimension is, once you are clear on what you want to get done and who you want to be, the third dimension is how can you best relate to other people so that you can achieve goals through them and achieve goals together. So for us, it is, and everyone knows the golden rule which is I will treat you the way I want to be treated and I can tell you in my own case that works for a very small subset of the population because I like to get the news direct and not everybody does, so for us, it is more the platinum rule which is we want to relate to people in a way that they want and need to be related to so that they can receive what we have to say and we can work together. So that is the three dimensions and Carol has got some examples if that is helpful too.

DJ: Sure.

Carol Kauffman (CK): First of all, I can seem obvious what you are supposed to do, you know, you go in, two examples, one is your walk into a team meeting, you have got to make a big decision and so clearly, your goal in the meeting is to make a decision. Well, what if that is not correct and the actual goal is to create psychological safety so the team can have a good conversation or to create a diversion thinking, etc. So, in terms of a quick tip, it is like you walk into the room, see bunch of people at the table, you are about to launch in, quickly ask yourself what do I actually need to do, what is the most important thing, like am I right, that is okay, so what do I need to do. Then, who do I want to be and we sort of shorten that up to who do I want to be right now. And the bigger identity of who do I want to be, we actually have a number of starter questions in the book for that, but it is who do I want to be right now. And one example is, talked about that with one of our CEOs who we suggested and by the way, every single person, including you, I would like to challenge you to do this, like today, tomorrow, ask yourself who do I want to be right now at every meeting and then at every moment when you are annoyed. So you are at a store, there is the cashier in front of you who is talking and talking to someone about their vacation and you are in a hurry, okay, and just as about you want to say, excuse me or explode or just feel really frustrated, just say who do I want to be right now. Now the answer is then, I need to be a nice person but for you to have that choice of who do I want to be right now. And this one woman, CEO of a major tech company, asked herself that before every meeting, this was during COVID, the 16th meeting of the day, she is like I just want to go home and going to the next meeting, she asked herself who do I want to be right now, and that opened up the way for her to think, wait a minute, the least important meeting of my day or of my week is the most important meeting of theirs. And then, she opened up and a different her showed up, like who do want to be, do I want to be that bored person who is not present and everybody can tell because leadership is often what you emanate more than you say, so that is that one. And then, how do you want to relate. David's example of the platinum rule is really just perfect but the whole point is to make space for choice, for conscious choice.

DJ: Hmm. And in your experience working with leaders, you know, in terms of the knowing-doing gap is, of the three, is there one or two where they find it harder in terms of practicing it and bringing it to life?

DN: So, one of the things that we urge people to do because there is so much content in the book and in the MOVE, model is that, you do not have to apply the whole thing in sequence. Depending on what you are facing, one part of the model could actually unlock you. So for example if you did a quick scan of like what is going on with me right now in a major leadership challenge that I am facing, you can just ask yourself, am I really clear on those three dimensions, do I really know what the goals are, and if you are, that is great, if you are not, that is a great place to get started because actually, naming and as consciously and as fully as you can what your goals are, is actually really helpful in order to set up the achievement of those goals and to make every moment count as a leader because that is what our book is all about, making every moment count and that is sometimes standing on your reflexes but often, it is transcending your reflexes so that you can face something new or something good or something dangerous. So, the other thing is, sometimes we are stuck in the way forward. So, if you are stuck, then you go to the options generator to figure out practical ways to find four more ways to win. Another thing that is really good, particularly if you are in new situations, like a big new job for example or just a new environment with new people, is to really check your vantage point and make sure, like am I seeing reality for what it is or am I discounting or exaggerating threats or opportunities or am I even just missing the point. And then, the last thing is if you are kind of stuck in achieving alignment on your direction with your team or with your organization, then you go into E and focus on engaging on that change. So, there is different ways that you can unlock and everybody has got a different situation.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I love the point David makes about the distinction between the Golden rule and the Platinum rule. We need to tune into what will move the people around us. Treat others like the way we want to be treated is arguably flawed because people around us are not like us.

I also like the insight they have around the fact that we have a choice around who we want to be in crucial moments. Very often we think about the solution space in the To-Do plane but very often, we miss out on the opportunities in the To-Be plane.

I am reminded of an insight from Rajiv Vij (RV), Author of Inside-Out Leadership. He talks about the notion of how we can be deliberate about a To Be list instead of a to do list.

RV: "So, one of the things I tell people is, walk into the office, sometimes throw your things to do list and replace it with the things to be list. You decide the kind of person, the kind of leader you want to be, and try it for a week or two. And every day say, what kind of a person or a leader I want to be and try being that way, and you will be surprised how the doing will take care of itself. So, for example, if you were to tell yourself, you know what, I am going to be just more mindful as a leader, or I am going to be more courageous, or I am going to be more empowering, I am going to be more strategic, or even in our personal life, I am going to be more loving to my family, rather than saying I want to spend more time with my children, because you may spend more time, but if you are getting upset with them every 20 minutes, I do not know how good that quality of time was. If you say I am going to be more loving and more encouraging, more reassuring or whatever is your need, then you spend even 10 minutes instead of those 45 minutes, but they were loving moments, they will be better spent than simply just the doing part."

DJ: I find that ticking off the To Do list leads to P&L outcomes, while working on the To-Be list drives Balance Sheet outcomes.

Let me share a personal anecdote in this context. It is not quite a high stakes leadership situation but still a moment where I felt taking a pause made all the difference. I was at a toy shop looking to buy a gift for a birthday party that my son was going to attend. My son and I were the only customers in the shop and in the shop were a father daughter combination. The father was at the cash counter playing candy crush on the phone and the daughter was engaging with me and my son, helping us find the right gift. As we were going through the various options, she suddenly paused and hesitatingly asked me "Sir, can I ask you a question". I said "go on". She went on to speak about the fact that she was a graduate in Commerce and she was evaluating an MBA programme which was structured as 1 year in India and 1 year in the US. She asked me if it made sense to do it? My instinct was to quickly brush this aside to say, sorry, don't have a clue and move on with my agenda. I don't know what came upon me. I just paused and asked myself the question – "Who do I want to be in this moment". If my mission is to help people play to their potential, am I showing up in line with my mission in this moment. I think that brief pause got me to reflect and say, while I may not be the right person to guide her, I might know a couple of people who could guide her. I shared their email IDs with this girl and spoke to her as she gifts wrapped our present to share a few additional perspectives. This is work in progress for me and am sure there are many moments where I miss taking a pause. But I just realized that pausing and asking who do I want to be in this moment to be very powerful! I am trying to do this more and more often these days!

Thank you for listening.

End of transcription

Nugget from Rajiv Vij that is referenced: [Staying open to possibilities](#).

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Carol Kauffman - Nuggets

- 102.01 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - The MOVE framework
- 102.02 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - 3 Dimensions of Mindful Alertness
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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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