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## Context to the conversation

Carol and David speak about Validating the vantage point that a leader has. They speak about the various elements of a vantage point – resolution, level of detail, biases, near term vs long term and more.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Let us move to the V, the vantage point. In the podcast sometime back, I had an opportunity to speak with Amy Edmondson of Harvard Business School and in that conversation, she used a term naive realism which said a bias that leaders fall into which is to say that what I see is all that is and when I read the V, it felt like a very concrete way of overcoming that bias. Am I reading this right or is this a different interpretation of...?

Carol Kauffman (CK): No, it is absolutely, you are totally reading it right and I forgot about that. So, I am very happy to be reminded. To validate your vantage point, the first question is, how do I assess if I have a good vantage point, as a leader how do I assess if one of my reports has a good vantage point, so what is the cure for naive realism. And we think first, four ways to describe what a 10 out of 10 in a good vantage point is and then, we have another section on what is it that can distort your view and how to be grading yourself on both of these. The positive one is, is your vantage point and I will describe each one, is it clear, is it at the right kind of resolution or definition, is it broad enough or narrow enough or is your altitude right. And it would be clear, okay, am I looking at the world with rose-colored glasses and I am thinking everything is going to work out, of course, I am right. Or are you working with charcoal-colored glasses and nothing is going to work right and you are not going to be happy at this, so the emotional tone... Then, are you near-sighted, so you are maybe great with tactical things but not good with strategic, or you are far-sighted, you are really great. Here you are at the top of the skyscraper of your career but people are like little ants and you have lost track with your frontline people. So, these are things to be thinking about, you know, rose-colored glasses, charcoal glasses and are you near-sighted, far-sighted. And sometimes with one leader, you will basically, one person is like near-sighted and far-sighted but nothing in between, so that is clear. The next one is basically resolution, do you need a high-definition view, do you need that, 5,000 super high clear but we all have an attention budget, so you can blow your wad too early if you are that level of attention on everything. So how do you make the choice of what do I really focus on clearly and where is it okay to have an impression as a view, so that is resolution. Then, breadth and depth are a little more obvious which is, to do what I am doing, can I look at the entire horizon, is that ideal or do I want to narrow in. If it is creative brainstorming, you want a wide view, peripheral view because two dots may suddenly, you can see them at the same time but if you are doing a budget, you better not be doing blue sky thinking. And the same with altitude, Rosabeth Kanter's work on zoom in zoom out, do you want to be a hawk or a hummingbird in this situation. So

those are the four things to look at like four ideal vantage points. But then, what can distort your vantage point and we need to be very much aware of that, some things are conscious, some are unconscious. Some of us, we all have biases, familiarity bias, attribution bias, but we also have cognitive styles that are not necessarily content biases but there are just ways we think. And then of course, there is unconscious bias and things that we do not even know that we do not know and blind spots. And in the book, we go in detail on all of these, including the I do not know what I do not know, or the one that is really interesting for coaches as, what is it that I do not know that I actually know and how good coaching questions or self-reflections can go, oh, that is what I think. So that is the V, that is the vantage, and as David says, whoever sees things first has a, pardon the pun, advantage.

Thank you for listening

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Very often as a CEO, you need to think of the various perspectives with which people look at a situation and have a view on what success would be in that context from their lens. Ramesh Srinivasan, Senior Partner at McKinsey, Dean of Bower Forum, McKinsey's program for CEO learning speaks about the notion of discerning the mandate.

RS: *"At one level, you know, as a CEO nobody tells you exactly what you should do. So, it's your job to figure out what's your mandate. And back to this topic of stakeholder capitalism, it's a mandate you have to establish with your customers, with your employees, with your investors, with society at large, with your family and it's very important to be clear on the mandates that you have and that mandate actually evolves over time. Early in a CEO tenure there might be one or two things critical things that need immediate attention, which if you ignore could result in a crisis and then later on once you have settled in in your role, you actually have an opportunity to establish an even bolder broader mandate to drive change in the system whether it be your own company or the broader system that you are participating in. So, reflecting on that mandate and then thinking about the unique challenges that come in the way of accomplishing that mandate I find quite helpful for CEOs."*

DJ: As a leader it is critical to ensure that you get the right vantage point before you pick an option and move forward to a solution. And this requires deep empathy, the ability to put yourself in someone else shoes.

## End of transcription

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Nugget from Ramesh Srinivasan that is referenced: [Discerning the "mandate"](#).

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## Carol Kauffman - 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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