Context to the conversation

Carol and David speak about how leaders can engage and effect change once they have been mindful across 3 dimensions, have generated adequate options and have validated the vantage point. This where the rubber hits the road. They speak about how leaders can get the intent across in these situations.

Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Yeah, just to go through the M O V E, if you could just give the listeners a sense of what is the E.

David Noble (DN): Sure. So E is where everything comes together. So, it is taking the mindful alertness to the three dimensions which is what you want to achieve, the options generator which is how you can achieve it, and then vantage point which is like what are the rules of reality that we have to respect and then how do you scale it up. So, for us, it is about sending leadership signals and very briefly, we have taken an adapted military theory of leadership on how to decentralize a mission effectively and it is called commander's intent. So, if the commander or in our case the leader is not in the room or on the ground with the organization, the organization all the way out to its edge can still take decisions in alignment with the mission and also act in a way that is consistent with the values and the culture of the organization. So that basically is talking about sending leadership signals for M what we need to do, it is where are we going, why are we going there and what are the steps along the way to know that we are winning because you can set a big inspiring goal for example which can overwhelm people, so they need something to really ground them in terms of what is the next best steps. So that is kind of the M part of leader's intent. Then for O, as a big leader, I am not going to be prescriptive to my people about how they need to go forward with things, there is many ways to a win which we want but I might be prescriptive about the big guidelines, the guardrails of what we can play in. So, for example, I might say, hey, for 2023 or 2024, inorganic growth is off the table, it has to be organic growth, but within that knock yourself out, can be a change of business model, pricing strategies, channels, products, geographies, whatever you want, so do that. And then the V is, what is our vantage point, so the vantage point is how much time have we got to do this mission, what are our financial constraints, and, oh, by the way, how do we have to behave while we are doing this in terms of the rules of engagement and the values that we live in the way we relate to each other. So that together is sending a leadership signal. You do that, you put a stake in the ground with that direction and then as you learn new stuff because you want to hear back from your organization, and this is often co-created with your team, you still want to hear back from the organization about, hey, I think you are wrong on this or I think you missed this or why don't we adjust this and you are also learning from the external environment, so all the

way along as you continue to learn, you refine your leader's intent and update it based on the things that you learn over time.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: David speaks about borrowing from the Military theory of leadership. In this podcast, I had an opportunity to speak to a former Army Officer – Captain Raghu Raman (RR) who spoke about an interesting framework that can be helpful in transmitting intent down the chain! He calls it Z-KITBAG.

RR: *"So, how to assume orders in the absence of orders. That is the fundamental reason for a framework like this. So, it's a very simple framework. Its origin lies in the orders and the briefing of the Indian armed forces and as you probably are aware, the Indian armed forces' heritage is largely from the erstwhile British Indian Army. So, the use of the lingo is peppered with Urdu and erstwhile Hindustani and, of course, some elements of English, because it was British officers and Hindi-speaking, Urdu-speaking troops.*

So, Z stands for Zameeni Nishsan. The loose translation of that in the civilian street would be environmental scan. So, before you begin an operation, you've got to give the troops an orientation: you are fighting in a desert, what does that mean, the day time temperature goes up to this much, in the night time it plummets to this much, these are the canals which describe our boundary so if you cross this canal it means basically you've gone past your target. So, you're orienting them to the environmental scan. That has an application in the civil street as well. If you are trying to decide the strategy for, let's say, the Pharma sector, then your environmental scan will talk about what are the regulations in that space, who are the regulators, what are the boundary conditions, what are the patent laws, you need to understand all of that kind of stuff.

The KITBAG as an acronym is also chosen so that soldiers remember. KITBAG is simple to remember; you'll never forget KITBAG. And Z, of course, if you just prefix it, you will remember Z-KITBAG. K stands for Khabar and khabar is information. It always starts with your competitor's information first, so you will always brief your team on the org structure of the enemy, the enemy commanders, what are their strong points, what are their weak points, which are their hot buttons. So, you could mess with some of your, say, competitors in all over India, but if you mess with them in their home town, the response will be disproportionately hard. So, understanding your competitors' khabar, information. Then, it's followed by your own khabar: who are you, what are your strengths, what are your sister organizations, what are the boundary conditions between your sister organizations, so that two of the sister organizations are not pitching for the same account, so you understand whom can you call for support in case you require assistance in, say, digital, there is an arm which can provide us with that support. So, it's khabar apni.

'I' stands for Iraada. What is the strategic intent, what are you trying to achieve out of this entire exercise? So, it's not just the transactional steps; it is what is the overall intent of the commander, how that intent is sort of checked back. So, you actually give out an iraada and then check back with your troops that repeat the strategic intent, so that verbatim they are able to repeat it. Then, it becomes ingrained in every person as a north star that this is the strategic intent of my commander, not the interim steps; those are only ways to achieve the strategic intent.

'T' stands for Tareeka. Tareeka is methodology. How are you going to achieve this strategic intent, what are the various phases in which you will do that, how will you hand over from one phase to the next phase, who will be the phase two commander, what will be the sign that phase one has ended

and phase two has begun, what will be the milestones and how will you communicate with various different teams, if there is overlap who will be responsible for the overlap? And the tareeka goes into those details.

Bandobast is resourcing, troops to tasks, as we call it. To achieve this objective, how many troops to task do you need? Do you have sufficient troops? Is there a backup if the first piece doesn't work? Do you have enough resilience in, say, your cashflow, to take care of, say, six months of your sales plan not actually fructifying? What we call troops to task means for this task, how many troops do you need, what are the resources?

'A' stands for Administration. Again, many companies fail because they don't look at that part. They do the hiring, but they haven't got the laptops and PCs in place. That's in a dissonance. So, you suddenly have 40 employees whom you have given employment letters to, but you have seating space for only 13, so 27 of them are supposedly working from home or not working at all, or are drawing pay and waiting for... Administration basically talks about all the administrative requirements which need to be done.

'G' stands for one of the most important aspects, which are unfortunately ignored several times in organizations and that are Ghadi Milao. What that implies is… If I am an infantry commander who is going to launch an attack at my target, let's say, at first light, which is 6 o'clock in the morning. Before I launch my attack, I want that complete area to be softened, as we say, by artillery fire, and I want the firing to start from 5:50 to 6 o'clock. For 10 minutes, I want intense firing on that target. As soon as the firing lifts, when the troops there are badly damaged and dazed, then I launch the attack. Now, you can imagine what could go wrong if my watch and my artillery commander's watch are off by just one minute. In that one minute, I will launch the attack and they will be firing, still firing. So, it's extremely important to synchronize our timelines. Time lining, I think, is extremely important but often ignored, especially when you are looking at large enterprises which have many moving parts.

So, once aging Z: Zameeni Nishan, K: Khabar, I: Iraada, T: Tareeka, B: Bandobast, A: Administration, G: Ghadi Milao."

DJ: Back to what Carol and David say, it is critical to ensure that we give the teams the autonomy to thrive, we set the broad guard-rails which can help them make good choices as they move forward.

End of transcription

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Nugget from Captain Raghu Raman that is referenced: Z-KITBAG: Communication lessons from the Army.

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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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