



Guest

Stephen M. R. Covey is an American writer and public speaker and the author of the books: The SPEED of Trust, Smart Trust, and Trust & Inspire: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash the Greatness in Others. He is the co-founder and CEO of a company called CoveyLink Worldwide and former President and CEO of Covey Leadership Centre. He happens to be the son of Stephen Covey, the author of the pathbreaking book - 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

In our conversation, we spoke about how Stephen broke away from his father's shadows and created an identity for himself over time as a thought leader by building credibility on the business front. We spoke at length about his recent book - Trust and Inspire. I loved his distinction around being Trust and Inspire in Paradigm but Command and Control in the moment. He also speaks about "Enlightened Command and Control" which gives people a false sense of having evolved their leadership style. Highly relevant piece of work in this world of complexity and possibility.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to 101st conversation at the Play to Potential Podcast, a series of reflective conversations on Leadership, Transitions, Careers and Life.

If you have been following the podcast, you know that this is a labor of love of mine and first and foremost, it is a space where I get to learn and grow from some of the conversations with these leading minds. We are also possibly the only podcast in the world, where we slice the conversation into smaller pieces of content that we call nuggets, cross reference the insight to something that might have been said in a different conversation and curate all that using tags that make the content easy to navigate. While you may not be able to see that when you consume the podcast on Apple or Spotify, if you went to playtopotential.com and saw the Curated Playlists section, you will see the nuggets organized by theme. Thank you for your support and love over the years and look forward to having you as part of the journey where I explore these themes further in the years to come.

While podcasting accounts for 10-20% of my time and effort, my primary vocation is that of an Executive Coach and a Discreet Sounding Board with CEOs/Entrepreneurs. I engage with leaders and organizations with a growth mindset and help them play to their unique potential. You can learn more about the podcast and my work at www.playtopotential.com.

I am excited to present the next conversation with Stephen M.R. Covey. He is one of the leading thinkers in the area of building trust. He has authored 3 books – The Speed of Trust published in 2006, Smart Trust published in 2011 and Trust and Inspire, published in 2022. In my Coaching and Advisory work, one of the themes that comes up very often is leaders hitting a glass ceiling of sorts because of their default style which is some sort of a version of Command and Control. For them to unlock their potential and move up, they need to adopt a different style of leadership which Stephen calls Trust and Inspire. And that transition is not easy. It requires a rewiring across many levels. I feel

this conversation would be relevant for any leader who is looking to understand the style of leadership that is likely to be relevant and effective in the complex future we are growing into.

Without further ado Let's dive into the conversation with Stephen MR Covey!

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Stephen, thank you so much for making the time on the Play to Potential podcast, really excited to be talking to you.

Stephen M. R. Covey (SC): Thank you Deepak, I am delighted to be able to talk to you as well, really looking forward to this.

DJ: Lovely. Stephen I must mention, the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People was arguably the very first book I read in the genre of self-improvement, self-development, self-help, call it whatever. So, in a way, it is a true privilege to be to be speaking to you. I also recognize it was your father who wrote that book, and in a way, he was larger than life in the way he established himself in the profession. Over time, you found your own voice and identity. Can you talk a little bit about how you have 'joined the family business' while sort of finding your own voice under these circumstances?

SC: Yes, absolutely. Well, here is the interesting thing Deepak, is that, when I decided to join the company, this is before the 7 Habits book had been published. And I knew it was going to be published and I knew that people would resonate with it because my father had been speaking about it, talking about it for years, but until the book was out, it was hard to scale. And so, I had different opportunities to join, I had done investment banking, I had an opportunity there on Wall Street, I had an opportunity in real estate development where I worked before, some exciting opportunities. And I chose to join, well, this is a small company that my father had founded because I felt like this had a chance to truly change the world, to impact people everywhere. And it did not look like it at the time to an outside observer but I felt like it could. I think I was right because the impact my father's work has had has been enormous and it has impacted people everywhere. So, I felt compelled to that because I believed in it and I believed in what my father was doing and I thought it would have a great impact and I could help, be a part of that. But it was difficult, especially at first to carve out my own identity, carrying my father's name and he was the thought leader and the speaker and the teacher and author. I came out of Harvard Business School and so I felt like what I could contribute initially was focus on the business side to turn my father's ideas into a business. So that is where I spent my energy, I was focusing on that. After learning the business for a while, I became the President and CEO and ran the company. And my identity became one kind of like, well, my dad was a thought leader and I was a business guy, building the business and growing it and forming partnerships around the world in the like. And I felt like, that was my strength and my role. So, my dad talked about it and I helped turn it into a business and helped us scale this business. And we did, we figured out a business model that worked because prior to this point, we always had a great idea, a great customer value proposition but we had not figured out how to make money and we had not figured out how to be scalable. And so, we needed to learn that and that is what I felt like I helped bring to the firm. And then, we were able to...

DJ: And this is Franklin Covey, just to understand the...?

SC: This was actually before the merger. So, this was what was called Covey Leadership Center which later merged with Franklin Quest to form Franklin Covey. So, the early days of Covey Leadership Center and my role was the business guy. But then, interestingly, it was in the merger when we merged the Covey organization with the Franklin organization, Franklin was really big into time management and we had our own foray into time management with my father's first things first work. Suddenly, these two arch competitors in the marketplace, Covey Leadership Center and Franklin Quest, now we are combined, were merged. And initially, it did not work at first, not because it was bad strategy or a bad deal, no, it made complete sense.

DJ: And what is the timeline on this, when did this merger happen?

SC: This was clear back in 1997. So, Covey was established in 1983, it had been going for 14 years, I joined in 1989 when we were just a few people before the book came out, and then, I became the CEO and ran it for three years as CEO, then we did the merger. And at first, we struggled. It was because we were coming at it from different angles, different approaches, different mindsets and we had been competitive in the marketplace for years and so, there was some distrust there. And I saw firsthand, Deepak, the high cost of low trust. I saw how everything slowed down, everything cost more. And we recognized that we were not going to achieve the potential of this merger if we did not build trust with each other. So then, we made a conscious deliberate attempt to say, we have got to build trust internally with each other in this merger to achieve what we were trying to achieve. And we worked at it, we focused on it and we became intentional about it and we began to move the needle on trust. Long story short, as we went from low trust to high trust and that changed everything. Then I saw firsthand the great return to the high trust, how we could move faster, less cost, more creativity, more innovation, more commitment, more inspiration, more passion. And I came out of that whole experience saying, well, trust matters enormously and we all know that but I came to a conclusion that we were underestimating the impact of trust by a factor of 100. It is far greater than any of us imagine. Trust matters, you can move it, you can actually build it, grow it intentionally, it is not just, you either have it or you do not. Now, you can move the needle, you can build trust on purpose and it is the most significant thing you can do. And I recognized that most of the stuff on trust, most of the books in the like, they either were too academic or too simplistic, kind of like you trust everyone and it will all work out and I said, no, this is such a practical tangible idea, trust and really currency. We have got to get good at this and so I found my voice of what I wanted to do now as a thought leader. And I think I went down the business path for two reasons, initially, one, I was good at it but two, I was a little bit reluctant to try to follow in my dad's footsteps because no matter what, I was not going to measure up to seven habits of highly effective people, that is hard to replicate, and I thought, that is a little bit daunting. But certainly, what was interesting Deepak is, once I found my message that trust is the most significant thing, the one thing that changes everything and is learnable, I suddenly lost the fear of trying to be a thought leader myself and following in my dad's footsteps as a thought leader, as an author, as a speaker. And I went down that path and I wrote The Speed of Trust, followed by Smart Trust, followed by Trust & Inspire which we are going to talk about today. But again, when I found my message, I found my voice and I lost the fear. And that is the second act of my career. So, first act, businessperson helping to build a business scalable, reach people worldwide, second act, now I also have something to say, and that trust is the most significant currency of our time. That is the idea, that is my two-act career.

DJ: Lovely, I am sure many more to come. I love the way you frame it. You sort of let the voice emerge over time rather than try to sort of force your way into it rather.

SC: Yes, I did not know it, until I had something to say, I held back my fear. And it had not immersed. So, this immersed from my experience, and I earned the insights.

DJ: Hmm, lovely. So let us dive into the book Stephen, Trust & Inspire. Just at the outset, in the book along the way, you say that 30% of the organizations are operating in authoritarian command and control mode, 8% are in trust and inspire mode. But you go on to say that 62% are in enlightened command and control mode. So, can you talk to us about just these two terms, command and control, and trust and inspire as two ends of the spectrum but specifically shine the light on what you mean by enlightened command and control?

SC: Right. Well, the basic premise of the book is that the world has changed but our style of leadership has not. At least it has not kept pace with this changing world. Too many of us as leaders and as organizations are still operating out of the old model, and whether you call it the traditional hierarchical model, an authoritarian model or some type of just basically, a traditional kind of industrial-age model, that is what we started with, with scientific management. And the Industrial Revolution, all of these things and that was a good thing because we became more efficient. But over time, we started to realize that we are not valuing people in the way that we can and should, we are not tapping into their potential and talent. And so, what started out kind of as an authoritarian command and control over time became better, more advanced, more sophisticated, and we brought strengths into it, we brought emotional intelligence into it and trustworthiness into it and mission into it and it became an enlightened version. But because we had not shifted the paradigm, it still was kind of an enlightened version of command and control, a much better version but we still viewed people as things through which you get the job done. Even the idea that people are most important asset, nothing wrong with that expression per se and I get the sentiment but even the idea that people are assets or things and not an end in of themselves. And so, getting results through people where people are just a means to an end to get results versus trust and inspire the idea is getting results in a way that grows people. So yes, we have two ends. We have got to get results but we also want to grow people, we want to focus on both performance and people. And both are vital, we have two ends, the results and the growth of the people. So, command and control are heavy management oriented where you manage things and people, trust and inspire, you manage things, but you lead people. And nothing wrong with management, we need good management of things, of systems, of strategies, of structures, of finances, of the inventory, of the numbers, of the business, we manage things but we lead people. The moment we start to manage people as if they were things, we are going to end up with no people and a lot of things because they are going to go elsewhere, they have options today. So, my whole premise is that it is not enough to even kind of move from authoritarian command and control to a much better version of it, enlightened command and control. If we still view people as things, then a shift to paradigm, cross the chasm if you will into what I call trust and inspire, a self-governance approach of managed things leads people that is recognizing their potential, their greatness, their talent in people, seeking to develop it as we get results. And so, it is different in kind whereas within command and control, it is different in degree, an enlightened command and control but that is much improved in degree, trust and inspire is different in kind because...

DJ: Let us say more Stephen, so you say it is a different paradigm, so can you break It down for us in what ways do we need to sort of, what are the different dimensions in which we need to think differently rather than just more of the same?

SC: Yeah, well, here is a few thoughts on this. Again, I mentioned, managed things lead people versus managing people as if they were things, and no one would go out to do that, but what happens is we have gotten so good at management, people start to feel like we manage them that way. Command and control are more of a mechanistic mindset, a machinist, tinkering, trust and inspire, I view myself I am a gardener. I am trying to create conditions for the seeds to grow, for the people to grow but the life and the power is in the seed, the life and the power is in the people, I am a gardener, not a mechanic, it is an organic system. Command and control will focus on motivation,

carrot and stick. And there is nothing inherently wrong with that, it is just limited. So do rewards work, sure, they motivate people to want to get more rewards, more carrots, more sticks, we have got to constantly feed at more external stimuli. Trust and inspire, the focus are on inspiration, it is intrinsic, it is internal, it is inside of people whereas motivation is external, it is outside of them, inspiration is in turn inside of them. So, I light the fire within. And when that fire gets lit inside of somebody, that can burn on for months if not years without the need for constant new external stimuli. And so, I am really tapping into that to inspire means to breathe life into. So, I breathe life into relationships, in the teams, in the cultures whereas command and control often suck the life out of people and teams and cultures. Command and control, it is kind of compliance based. Trust and inspire is focused on commitment. It includes compliance but so much more because you are really tapping into what is inside of people. Command and control will achieve association, it is a good thing but trust and inspire, you can really achieve a sense of belonging and inclusion, it does not go to a different level. Command and control are good to coordinate but trust and inspire enables you to truly collaborate among partners and interconnected teams versus mere coordination among groups or silos, you know, different in kind. So, I can kind of go on and on and on and you will see there is a contrast. And I liken it less as bad and good, with command and control being all bad and trust and inspire being all good, look at it this way, be efficient with things and effective with people. So, efficiency is a good thing with things, systems, structures, strategies, processes but the moment you try to be efficient with people, you lose effectiveness. So, it is not good and bad, it is not either/or, it is and, efficient with things, effective with people, manage things, lead people but when we start to manage people like things and be efficient with people like things, that is too much the command-and-control paradigm. And I might be kind about it and thoughtful and in the like but that is just an enlightened command and control paradigm, better than the authoritarian which is just barking out the orders but I am not going to really tap into the potential, the greatness, the talent that is inside of people, we would not play to our potential, to use your phrase, play to potential, we would not be playing to our potential. And it was Mahatma Gandhi who said that difference between what we are doing and what we are capable of doing, would solve most of the world's problems. That is a leadership challenge and question, they were not leading in a way that, this tapping into our capabilities, our potential and the command and control would not draw that out but trust and inspire can and will. And in the new world of work where everything is changing, with all this disruption going on, with new workplace where it could be work from home, work from anywhere, remote work, hybrid work, intentionally flexible work, with all these new generations and all this diversity in the workforce, new generations, as many as five generations at work and these younger generations, millennials, gen Z and this upcoming alpha generation have completely different expectations of how they want to be engaged. And now, people have all kinds of choices and options they did not have before, there is an abundance. All these things happen and it says, the world has changed, so our leadership style needs to change with it because we are not going to attract and keep the best people, win the war for talent with a command-and-control model we cannot command and control your way to a high trust culture that inspires. We have got to do it through trust and inspire, it is the only way we are going to accomplish it, that is the idea.

DJ: Lovely. Building on what said Stephen, you actually talk about the acceleration of human knowledge. What struck me was in the book you say that if you went back to 1900, the human knowledge doubled in a century, took 100 years for the knowledge to double, in 1982, it was 13 months and now it doubles every 12 hours and I was struck by just the compounding and the exponentiality of that curve. And you talk about moving from know it all to learn it all. I think Satya Nadella spoke about it as well when he took charge. So can you talk about that transition from know it all to learn it all and especially if I bring in my observations as coach, I find that very often when people grow within a function, in a way, they could get away with a know it all approached leadership because you are leading people who are a subset of their capability very often, but when

you move to a CXO to a general management role, you are leading people who know much more than you would often offer higher caliber, so the know it all really starts breaking down and I find that a lot of people end up hitting a glass ceiling, especially around that transition. So, I would love to hear from you on what that looks like from know it all to learn at all.

SC: Okay, yeah. Know it all to learn it all, the reality is that it is happening around us with the explosion of knowledge. There is just too much for any of us to know everything and because it is just changing so fast and as soon as we know it, it will be obsolete. The half-life of the knowledge is just shorter and shorter all the time and so it puts a premium now on us to learn how to learn and how to bring in the right talent of people that know things but also know how to learn so that we can stay relevant. I like how Liz Wiseman says, we are not the genius, we do not need to be the genius, we need to be the genius maker that tries to help people and build a complementary team that can do that. So that is the shift that has to happen when there is just an explosion of knowledge. And we need to go from knowing to learning and from a know it all to a learn it all and also then as a leader, to bring in people that are experts because we are in the knowledge worker age today and none of us can know everything. So all of us is better than any one of us and so we are now collaborative, we are interdependent, we are connected on this and it is a better way to learn, it is better way to lead in this world of deep expertise that any of us could be an expert at everything, just too much to learn, too much to know and it is all shifting so fast.

DJ: Hmm. And if I bring it back to the context in an emerging market like India where there is also, you know, if I look at my early years and a lot of my peers, we grew up in a context of scarcity, scarcity of the number of colleges to apply to, scarcity in terms of the number of jobs, so, in a way, a lot of our instinctive muscle memory is built around knowing things and signaling that as a differentiator. And suddenly, you keep motoring along, it works for you for a while and then suddenly, you hit a point where suddenly, you are asked to completely switch paradigms. In the book, you talk about what happens when by mistake, you hit your finger with a hammer and you go back to your mother tongue and you liken that to the command and control being muscle memory, instinctive when under crisis. I find that it is a little more pronounced in a market like India where a lot of us grew up in that paradigm. So, can you talk to us about how we can overcome that years of muscle memory to build a new set of connections to move to trust and inspire?

SC: Yes, and I think that this represents one of the challenges most of us have because we grew up in command and control, we know command and control, we are good at command and control, we have had mentors and models in command and control, it is our native tongue. And so, as we transition to new role or new style of leadership, these kinds of transitions, we want to say, I am going to lead in a new way, trust and inspire because, by the way, here is a way I am thinking about this, think of Marshall Goldsmith, what got us here won't get us there. The style of leadership that got us to where we are today is not necessary the style that will take us where we need to go tomorrow, so we need to transition and that is trust and inspire. And yet, we know command and control so well, so when the pressure is on, it is easy to revert back. So, I think we need to rescript ourselves when we have been deeply scripted in scarcity for example or in the idea that you have got to really control people instead of unleash people. We have to look at our paradigm and challenge it, challenge the assumptions behind it. And our paradigm is a mental map or model that is trying to describe the territory but the map is not the territory. And you could have a bad map of the territory, an inaccurate map. And I think scarcity might be good economic theory. The scarcity is lousy leadership theory because while there might be a scarcity of resources in certain situations and contexts, I acknowledge that, there is an abundance of what we can create together of everything that truly matters. There is an abundance of respect, of caring, of compassion, of empathy, of understanding, of trust, of inspiration, of commitment, of creativity, of innovation, almost everything is good. There could be an abundance of those things. So, we have got to challenge our

paradigm and that is hard when we have been deeply scripted in a model. And most of us have been scripted in that. We learn it in school, in sports, in all kinds of things. It is a win-lose, you know, winner or loser, there is scarce resources, you have got to fight for them and I acknowledge there is some context in which that is the reality but there is leadership context in which abundance is the more accurate map of the territory.

DJ: I love what you said.

SC: That is the idea behind it. And so, here is how I phrase it in the Trust & Inspire book. I go through fundamental beliefs of a trust and inspire leader that collectively, those beliefs comprise the paradigm, the mindset and for this one, I put it this way, this is a fundamental belief of how I do leadership. I believe that there is enough for everyone. So, if I buy that belief, my job as a leader is to elevate caring above competing. Yes, let us compete in the marketplace but let us care and collaborate in the workplace. There is enough for everyone, there is an abundance mentality. Look, I am not naive. There might be a scarcity of certain resources at a certain time but I have most everything that is good through leadership, creativity, innovation, commitment, empathy, understanding, trust, there could be an abundance of that. So let us elevate caring above competing. This is part of how Satya Nadella revitalized Microsoft. He had a growth mindset for everyone, not just for some, not scarcity, abundance for everyone. And he inherited a workforce that was very cutthroat competitive internally with each other and they had competed and he says that we have got to change that mindset to caring and to collaborating and to coaching as opposed to competing so that we can compete outside in the marketplace but it starts with the paradigm, the fundamental beliefs. And until we shift those beliefs, we are still operating in a command and control model that can abuse people as, you know, just economic beings that where some have greatness than most do not, you have got to control them and where leadership is their scarcity and leadership is you are right as a leader and instead of the idea that there is abundance and leadership is not about right, it is about responsibilities, about stewardship, completely different paradigm shift.

DJ: In terms of how to make this shift Stephen, let us talk about that. Clearly, the need for trust and inspire is sort of glaring, it is hard to not understand that it is a need of the times. Having built a muscle memory in a certain way, what is your advice for leaders to start moving the paradigm from command and control or enlightened command and control to trust and inspire, what are some of the baby steps they can take to move in that direction?

SC: I think the first step we can take is to really become self-aware of our fundamental beliefs, of our paradigm. And it is hard to, because almost by definition, the paradigm is in the lens through which you view the world. So even becoming aware that we all wear lens, we are looking through a lens, we are looking through a paradigm and to maybe challenge it, to maybe question the assumptions that we are based upon that how we view people, how we view leadership. And so, that is where I try to map out these five fundamental beliefs of a trust and inspire leader because I believe that those beliefs are more accurate, more complete, more relevant paradigm of leadership in the people. And so, challenging yourself on those and asking some questions. And so, here is a way of doing it. So, the very first fundamental belief, this is how you view people, is this that I believe that people have greatness inside of them. So, if I buy that belief, my job as a leader is to unleash their potential, not control them. Now you might suddenly hear that and say, okay, yeah, I believe that. So here is a way of maybe really challenging ourselves and how deeply we believe it is to ask this question, okay, I believe that people have greatness inside of them, ask this, how would those who I lead and serve describe me in terms of seeing and unleashing their greatness and it was just not me saying, I believe people have greatness, it is how would those I lead describe me in terms of seeing and unleashing their potential, seeing and unleashing their talent. And you have to be really self-reflective because what they say the same thing that you might think which is I see the greatness,

too often, we have more of a limited paradigm versus an expansive paradigm on this and we might say, well, the high potentials have greatness inside of them. Even our systems and structures are all designed with a scarcity, command and control mindset. High potentials have greatness, so you have got to develop them but everyone else, you have got to make sure you contain them, control them and people have greatness, I did not say some people, I said people have greatness inside of them.

DJ: And you spoke about five believes, this is one of them. Could you quickly throw the light on some of the others?

SC: I will quickly state them because the reason this is important is that these beliefs collectively, when you put all five together, they comprise a more accurate paradigm, a better map of people in a leadership than a command-and-control paradigm, you know, fundamental beliefs that a command-and-control person would have. So here is, yeah, I will go fast. First, I believe people have greatness inside of them. So, my job as a leader is to unleash their potential, not control them. Second, I believe that people are whole people, meaning body, heart, mind, spirit, they are whole person. So, my job as a leader is to inspire, not merely motivate. Now if people were just economic beings, motivation would be sufficient. If all they were is a body, then motivation would be enough, just pay them. But they also have a heart, they want to care and belong, they have a mind, they want to develop and grow, you talk about growth and play to potential, they want to grow, develop and contribute and they have a spirit, they want to matter, make a difference, have impact, so inspiring taps into a better way of moving them than just motivating. So that was commentary around the belief. I am sorry, I will try to stay with just the beliefs, not the commentary.

DJ: No problem. This is helpful.

SC: Yeah, so I will just repeat that second one, I believe that people are whole people, so my job as a leader is to inspire, not really motivate. Now I shift from people to leadership. Third, I believe that there is enough for everyone as an abundance mentality. So, my job as a leader is to put caring above competing. Fourth, I believe that leadership is stewardship. It is about responsibility, not rights. So, my job as a leader is to put service above self-interest. Finally, fifth, I believe that enduring influence is created from the inside out. So, my job as a leader is to go first, someone needs to go first, leaders go first. If you take those five fundamental beliefs collectively, it is a more accurate, more complete, more relevant paradigm of people and of leadership. And I can go through a command and control of paradigm of people and leadership and it will be, high potentials have greatness inside of them but not everyone and people are really just economic beings, you just pay them well, so you motivate, not inspire. And there is scarcity, not abundance. And, you know, hey I am the leader, I am the boss, so it is rights, not responsibilities. And we have got to work on systems and structures to make the change, not I go first and look in the mirror, I go first. So, it is just a more expansive, more accurate paradigm of people and leadership. And the reason it is important Deepak is until the paradigm shifts, we really would not follow with the behaviors and it will just be an enlightened command and control, a better version. Here is a way of thinking about it, authoritarian command and control operates on the premise of fear, that is what I can do to you as the old model, most of them have moved away from that. Enlightened command and control operate on the premise of fairness and transactional exchange, much better, what I can do for you. Trust and inspire operates in the premise of inspiration and partnership, it is what I can do with you. So authoritarian and enlightened command and control is still motivation, trust and inspire is inspiration, what I can do with you and partnering, different in kind.

DJ: And in the book, I loved one of the phrases you use, I think you say this in the context of stewardship, you say that you rent your title but you own your character. I love the pithiness of that phrase. Can you expand on that for us?

SC: Yes, I heard it from Thasunda Brown Duckett. When she became the CEO of TIAA, big financial services organization and she became the CEO and new title, new role and that is kind of position right, title, I got this new title, I am the CEO, and her old thing is, no, titles come and go, I rent my title that will change but I own my character, this is who I am. And the whole idea is that it is not just enough to have formal authority, we want to have moral authority of who we are. Yeah, position matters but what really matters is influence. And if you have to rely upon your position, upon your title, not upon your character and your credibility and your influence, then again, you are in a command-and-control model, not a trust and inspire model, you are using your position to get things done. And so, you are talking about rights, not responsibilities. I believe that leadership demands stewardship, its responsibilities that we have as a leader and I, in Trust & Inspire, talk about, there is three of them, three key stewardship we have to model, to trust, to inspire, we have leaders for those that we lead, those that we serve, these are responsibilities, not rights. And we do it through influence, not through position. I could come back to Satya Nadella, beautiful modeling. He modeled, he trusted, he inspired and unleashed the potential of Microsoft by first unleashing the potential of his people.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman. I want to share my experience in the context of some work I have been doing with an organization called Antarang Foundation. Antarang Foundation works with young adults in low-income communities and helps unlock their potential by giving them aspiration, teaching them life skills and by providing clarity to them on the path that would make most sense for them. However, when I look at the world of opportunity and the manner in which the potential employers look at these young adults, it is often in the frame of “Enlightened Command and Control” – What can I extract from this person at this rate? However, I firmly believe that while the world of opportunity might be skewed and there are haves and have nots, the world of potential is uniformly distributed. There is no reason to believe that a bright kid in the slums of Dharavi is not as capable as somebody going to a posh school in the city. While, I may not have an answer on how to do it at scale, I must say that empirically speaking, the two people who edit this podcast, Akash Deore and Arman Bansod are both alumni at Antarang Foundation. One of them was a ticket seller at a Metro Station, the other was a Barista at Starbucks. Today they handle the Social Media Marketing and Audio Editing respectively. I learn so much each day working with them.

Back to what Stephen says, I my limited point here is that very often, when it comes to our children, we are willing to think like a gardener but when it comes to others around us, whether it is the helpers that come to us, the staff in the communities we live in or others, we very quickly move to the mindset of a machinist. Worth reflecting on whether we can bring a gardening mindset to some of those conversations too.

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Let’s now get back to Stephen Covey.

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?

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: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. 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 mashahein 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. Let's get back to Stephen MR Covey.

DJ: And one of the thoughts here Stephen is that intuitively, I understand the huge opportunity for us to move from a command-and-control paradigm to a trust and inspire paradigm. When I think about running businesses at scale, when you look at it from an artisanal perspective, if you have one or two people with you, clearly, it is easy to move to that paradigm and unlock potential. When you are running a 1,000-10,000-person outfit, a million-people outfit, how does one run trust and inspire leadership at scale, what are some of the things leaders need to bear in mind?

SC: Yes. I think actually it is beautifully scalable. You might say, well, command and control are more efficient but you are not going to bring out the potential and the greatness in people because there will just be too much left there. Here is how trust and inspire can work, you are still working with people but you are building the agreement together and yes, it takes a little bit more time upfront but once you build that agreement, then you move fast and allows you to scale. I acknowledge there is more investment initially to build the agreement, to build the relationship but then once you have it, you move fast. So that is why I like to say with people, fast is slow and slow is fast. So if I have just got to be efficient with people, I say that I am fast but they are not committed, they are not bought in, we do not have the same vision, we do not have the same agreement around expectations and accountability and I have to hover over and micromanage but I was efficient but in the long run, I am going to be spending a lot of time fixing things and checking on things and doing things and it might

be later but it is going to happen at some point. Whereas if I go slower upfront, build the relationship, build the agreement, yes, it is, maybe initially, not as efficient but I build the agreement around the trust I am extending to them, expectations and accountability, once we have that, once you build that, you move exceptionally fast. You have the speed of trust operating and nothing is as fast as the speed of trust and nothing is as profitable as the economics of trust and nothing is as efficient as a culture of trust because you are in a different place in kind but there is an investment to get there. So, I will concede and acknowledge that at scale, there is an investment that is disproportionate upfront but it is worth it because the very thing that you will gain is the speed and the efficiency that will come from it if you are willing to pay the price. Build the agreement together, there is buy-in, there is commitment, they will be more innovative, they will be more creative and they will get the job done and you will grow the person and therefore, your ability to get the job done and the future has gone up because people have greater capabilities, they are grown. Whereas with command and control, they often do not grow, they might perform but you are directing them, you are telling them what to do. So you are responsible for results, not them if you tell them the methods but if you get people the objectives, and say how you do it, it is up to you but let us build the agreement, here is the results we are after, here is the guidelines we have to work within, here is the resources you have, now let us agree to a process of accountability, here is how you will evaluate yourself against those objectives and desired results and here is how why it matters, here is the consequences of that, good and bad. You build that agreement together, there is commitment to it, the data shows you will perform better and you will grow the person and therefore, your ability to perform in the future has just gone up, talk about efficiency as the alternate.

DJ: Got it. And when I go back to my McKinsey days Stephen, one of the things we were taught was the principles of trust as articulated by David Meister. We were taught to trust equation, trust is directly proportional to credibility, reliability and intimacy and inversely proportional to self-orientation, I am curious given all your work on trust, how do you think about that sort of articulation of trust?

SC: I love the David Maister and Charlie Green model. I think it is beautiful. I have my own one but it would be aligned with theirs I believe and I have spent time with Charlie Green who is the co-author with David Meister on that. And we have done an interview together, we both agree that our models are aligned. They come at it from different angles, use different language but all those components, it is in my core model as well of trust, and so, I like that. And the credibility is absolutely foundational, the reliability, the intimacy but I love the idea of all over against the self-orientation because that is to me is what I call intent and when your intent is one of caring and of mutual benefit versus uncaring and self-serving, you will never build trust in the long run that way if it is self-serving and not seeking the best interest of another as well. Mutual benefit win-win, win-win is the only sustainable approach in an interdependent relationship. Or it will just be command and control using the advantage of hierarchy or who has the power but you would not tap into that, you know, you would not build the trust and you would not build the creativity and the commitment. I love Trusted Advisor thinking and my model is aligned with it. I came at it from a little bit of a different angle focusing on credibility which is part of their model but also behavior, how you behave your way into trust and that includes needing to extend the trust to give it because here is what I find, you could have two trustworthy people working together, both trustworthy and yet, no trust between them. Even though they are both trustworthy, if neither person is willing to extend trust to the other. So, if we want to have trust, if the outcome we want is trust, yes, we have to be trustworthy and you might call that credibility and reliability and trustworthy and honorable, where that is part of intimacy and open, trustworthy but we also need to be trusting and you are willing to give that trust in order to have trust. And it is possible that trustworthy people but no trust because neither extends trust to the other, they are not trusting. And I find Deepak, as I have worked with

organizations all around the world, especially the better organizations, when the trust is not where they want it to be, the bigger issue is not that they are untrustworthy, the bigger issue is that they are not trusting enough, bigger gap is they are not trusting enough, extending their trust. There is lots of reasons because we start with a command-and-control mindset and maybe you do not have a growth mindset but also, maybe we have been burned before in trusting and we are allowing the 5% who we cannot trust into find the 95% who we can and penalizing the many because of the few, that type of thing can easily happen. So, I call it smart trust, you tailor it and it is good judgments, it is not one-size-fits-all but I challenge everyone to become more trusting in order to build more trust. Can I give you one quick example on this?

DJ: Please.

SC: Just less than a month ago, I was in Metzingen, Germany with Hugo Boss, a fashion retailer, great organization, great brand and they have real extraordinary ambitions of what they want to be and become, they are already doing phenomenal. I was with Daniel Grieder, their CEO and he came in as the new CEO about almost two years ago and he came in and here is what he said, the first meeting with his senior team. He said, okay team, I am new, I am new to you, you are new to me because he came from the outside. And he came in with a vision and a plan. He said, look, let me give you two choices, we can spend the next year getting to know each other, you deciding whether you can trust me, me deciding whether I can trust you and we will waste a year in doing that. Or I will give you another alternative. We can start right out of the gates by trusting each other and we will move fast on this plan. So let me go first. I want you to know something everyone, I trust you, please trust me back. I think with trust, we can create a whole new culture and I start, I trust you. People there were kind of blown away. I was going to say taken aback but more than that, it was just so refreshing, so bold. And he meant it, he started with trust, he was trusting as well as trustworthy. And people were inspired by it. They responded to it. They reciprocated and returned the trust right back to him. And I was just with them and he says, we are two years ahead of our plan, of our goals and we are achieving these numbers so much faster than we ever thought was possible because we had the speed of trust operating. We started with trust but he was trusting as well as trustworthy. It is very simple, another model of simply bringing about, this is the one I highlight in Trust & Inspire. This is the second stewardship to be trusting. The first stewardship is modeling. And you might say that is modeling the credibility, modeling the character, the competence, modeling the behavior. So, you model, you go first as a leader, you model what you would like to see. So, you model character, you model competence, you model credibility. modeling goes first, then trusting. So, in essence, modeling is trustworthiness, trusting is the extension of trust and then we go to the third stewardship which is inspiring. And we actually have a stewardship of responsibility to inspire those who we lead. That is a paradigm shift for most people, they think you have got to be charismatic to inspire and I am saying no, charisma and inspiration are two different things. Everyone can inspire, it is a learnable skill. I know people who are charismatic but who are not inspiring. I know other people who no one would describe as charismatic but who are extraordinarily inspiring because of who they are and how they lead, how they care, how they connect. So, it is different than inspiration. Inspiring others is a learnable skill. Everyone can inspire. It is a stewardship we have as a leader, you model, you trust, you inspire.

DJ: Fascinating. A couple of questions before we wrap up Stephen, one of the things you say in the book, you say is that no extension of trust is ever wasted because its value does not lie in reciprocity but rather than the very decision to trust, can you talk about the nuance here?

SC: Yes. It is a belief that saying look, we are trying to move from transaction into transformation. And if the goal is just simple, quid pro quo, I do this, you do that, that is transactional exchange. So, I trust you, you trust me back. There is nothing wrong with that. It tends to be the outcome that there

is a reciprocity of trust that when you give trust to people, they tend to give it back but even if they did not, it is my point, that the value of you leading out, exercising the stewardship to find the appropriate way, the smart way to be trusting of your people, of your team, of a given person, even if it is within a smaller domain because that is what they are ready for but you find that way to extend that trust. Even if they did not reciprocate and return it, you have not wasted anything because the value is not in the reciprocity in the exchange but it is in the generosity of spirit that enabled you to extend that trust, the abundance of the mindset that says, there is enough for everyone and I want them to get the credit, I want to empower them, trust them, they have ideas, they could do this better than I could, so I believe in them and I see that, I want them to come to see it in themselves and to grow and I cannot grow, they cannot grow, they do not have opportunity, they cannot have opportunity if I do not extend trust to them to take on the opportunity, so they can grow. And so, the value is in that very act, that very decision, that very manifestation of abundance and of generosity, not in the reciprocity alone. Now I love reciprocity, it is a good thing, you know, you trust people, they are going to trust you back but even if they did not, I still think trusting is a better way to lead because you are being a real steward of those that you are responsible for, to trust them, to see their potential, to communicate it, to develop it, to unleash it, and how do you develop and unleash it, they should give them an opportunity and how do you give them an opportunity unless you trust them.

DJ: And you use the term smart trust Stephen, what are some of the guardrails we need to have along the way just so that we are pragmatic in the way we live the trust and inspire paradigm?

SC: Yeah, two domains, first domain is as you look at the trust you are going to extend, then we will talk about how you extend it, so when you decide to extend trust, start with the propensity to trust the bias, the inclination that flows from your heart, I want to be trusting as a leader. But by itself, you could trust too much and maybe give people too much responsibility and they are not ready for it, they are not skilled at it, they do not have the capabilities yet, there is too much risk, so you can go too far and I acknowledge that. So, you are trying to use good judgment, you are trying to set everyone up to win. And so, you start with the heart but then you balance it with the head. So, the propensity to trust balance with the analysis or the assessment and I am assessing three things. First, the opportunity, what am I extending trust on, that is the job to be done. Maybe, I am going to say, people, you can work from home or work remotely or in a hybrid thing and I trust you or maybe, I trust this person, I trust Deepak to lead this team or to lead this project, what am I extending trust on, what is the opportunity. Second, what is the risk involved, what could go wrong, how likely is that, what is the cost and consequences of that. And third, what is the credibility of the person or the people involved, how ready are they for this. And look, if certainly there is lower in risk and the person is very high in credibility, you can be very abundant in trusting and give a lot of trust. If certainly there is a lot of risk involved and the person is brand new and their credibility is not established, you are going to be far more measured and give a smaller amount of trust. It would not be smart to just completely trust someone on a huge risky situation. If I needed brain surgery, I would not ask my family doctor who I trust to perform brain surgery because they are not a trained surgeon, they are not skilled, they are not in that, even though I trust him as a family doctor, that is beyond their expertise, that would not be smart. So, I am just trying to scope it, size it up, good judgment, it is not a one-size-fits-all. And so, I am trying to make sure, as I extend trust, I am doing it in a smart way, setting people up to win, including our team, myself and them. That is the first domain, good judgment in the extension of trust. The second is then a good process in building the agreement together because whenever you extend trust, you want to make sure you always do it with clear expectations around the trust being extended and within agreed-upon process of accountability to those expectations. Collectively building the agreement around the trust being extended, with expectations, with accountability. And if you do that well so that it is not dictated, it

is not you just top-down command and control saying, here is the expectations and here is the accountability, I am going to come back here and see how you are doing, instead, it is a two-way process of, here is what we are trying to do, what do you think, does this seem fair, does this seem realistic, you build it together, it does take a little bit of time but you go fast later. You create the expectations around desired results, around guidelines, around resources, what we have to work with, guidelines, within what limits, desired results, what is it that we are after, then we build a process for accountability, how will we know how we are doing. And you can move it from you judge them to the judge themselves against the expectations that we built together. They can evaluate themselves and report back to you, they feel far more ownership and then, you can be informed and still in control but not through micromanagement, rather through an agreement you built together and then, you also talk about consequences involved. So, expectations and accountability, so smart trust is always, whenever I extend trust to people, there is clear expectations and agreed-upon process for accountability. So, some is working from home, I trust them because we built the expectations of going to get the results, here is what we are trying to do, here is the guidelines, resources, here is the accountability, report back in these ways. You build it together, they are committed to it, they perform better around it, they become more creative, and that is so much better than dictating it, saying do this, do that, do this because then, you become responsible for the results, not them, if you are telling them the methods they should use. And so, you get more creativity, you get more growth and development, you get better results and outcomes but you have got to build the agreement together, that is how you extend the trust. And we go deep in this in the book as you know from building thought and stewardship agreement around that trust being extended.

DJ: And the last thing I wanted to explore before we wrap up Stephen was just; you say that you could be command and control in the moment but you could still be trust and inspire in terms of paradigm and you make the distinction between what is the paradigm and what is the tactical manifestation of your leadership style. So, can you unpack that distinction for us?

SC: Yeah, let me put it this way, in essence, trust and inspire is not so much the true opposite of command and control, it is more like a third alternative. Look at it this way, if command and control is excessively hands-on, the opposite of that might be more aptly described abdicate and abandon, that is excessively hands-off, there is no leadership there, there is no vision, no direction, it is just complete, hey, whatever happens and I think trust and inspire is hand in hand. So the premise is this, a trust and inspire leader can be strong without being forceful, a trust and inspire leader can be authoritative without being authoritarian, a trust and inspire leader can be decisive without being exclusionary, a trust and inspire leader can be visionary without being isolating, a trust and inspire leader can be detail-oriented without being distrusting and a trust and inspire leader can be in charge and have control without being controlling. So it is kind of a third alternative that enables you, so you can, in the moment, do what is appropriate because I have had people say, well, Stephen, I have got to go command and control right now because, I am a trust and inspire person a leader but quarterly earnings are due next week and I have got to just go command and control to get it done. And I am saying, you can take action, strong decisive action and still be trust and inspire. And if a child, if you are a parent and you build it, you are a trust and inspire parent with your kids, you care about them, you love them, you are trying to help them grow and develop, you see them as human beings and you have a stewardship for them, if your three-year-old runs into the street with cars, you are not going to say, well, I trust that they are going to see the car and they will know to turn around and come back, now you are going to just go in there and grab them and pull them out, so that action might look and appear like command and control but I am saying, when you are trust and inspire in your paradigm, your heart, those actions are not command and control, that is what this situation needed. You have to just take decisive action and pull them out but how they look and

feel about that is different because they know your love and care and concern for them, whereas if they felt like you were just a thing to them that you did not really love and care for them, then when you pull them out, they might feel like that was almost abusive or, you know, this and that, they interpret it differently. And the whole point is that, we can still be decisive and strong in a trust and inspire paradigm and too often, it gets kind of labelled as this is slow, this is soft, this is weak, takes too long and I am saying, no, you can be authoritative without being authoritarian, it is a better way to lead. And we can take the needed action and if there is time constraints, you can move fast and still be trust and inspire because you have built the relationship, you have involved people but there might be some situations where we do not have time to make all these decisions, so I am going to move ahead with this but you know why I am doing it, you interpret it completely differently, it was what was needed in the moment but we are partners and that is what a partner does as opposed to I work for you and that is what you do, you just do everything yourself instead of involve us. So, it is just a different interpretation of everything you might do. So, I do not think there is ever a time we have to be command and control. You can be trust and inspire, including taking decisive fast action when that is what the situation calls for.

DJ: Lovely. Stephen, this has been a wonderful conversation. This podcast is titled Play to Potential. One of the questions I ask every person who comes on the show is what does the term mean to you.

SC: I think it means that, two things, one, we want to make sure we play to our own potential that we all rise up and live to our potential that it would be a shame if we felt like I am not contributing to my potential in the work I am doing. And so, sometimes we might feel like we are not allowed to in our current jobs but the more we can find a way to play to our strengths and ultimately reach our potential, the better. But I would say that, what if we could do that as a leader ourselves and play to our potential, first for ourselves but also then as a leader of how we help others play to their potential. And that is where I see, that is the pay it forward of, you know, just like each of us might look back on a person who believed in us and helped us come to believe in ourselves, maybe someone saw something in us that we did not see, could be a boss or mentor or coach or family member or friend or a parent or aunt, some of them saw a potential in us, some of them saw greatness, some of them gave us an opportunity, gave us a chance, how we responded to such a person, how we rose to the occasion, how we felt, how we saw ourselves differently, so you think about that. I bet most of us, if not all, have had at least someone in our life who saw in us, certainly maybe we did not voice in ourselves and helped us come to see it. What if, in turn, we could become that person for another. So, we would love to do it for all that we lead but maybe we just start with one. What if we could do that for a child or one of our direct reports and help them become all that they are capable of becoming, help them achieve their potential and if we could do it with one, we could do it with another. And so, I think we first start with ourselves, I want to be that kind of, I want to live my full life, my best self and rise to my potential and as a leader, I want to help those who I lead, rise and play to their potential and I see it, I communicate it, so they come to see it, I develop it and I unleash it. My passion is your potential. That is one of the things I want people to feel from me that I want them to live at their potential and I am going to treat them according to their potential, not just their behavior and help bring it about. So twofold meaning to me, first for me, I want to rise to that level. Second, I want to help those who I lead and serve and come in contact with rise to their potential, my passion is your potential.

DJ: Beautiful. Stephen, it has been an absolute privilege talking to you. Thank you so much for making the time for this conversation.

SC: Thank you Deepak, I love what you are doing. I love playing to potential. I think we are kindred spirits. I am trying to unleash the greatness inside of people. That is another way of saying play to potential, it is greatness. Let us unleash that, all of us, you are doing it, I am trying to do it and I bet

that our listeners are trying to do it too. So, this is exciting to be on your podcast. I admire you in this work that you are doing. We are in the same team trying to play to potential and unleash greatness in people and it is exciting work, it is fulfilling working. And maybe, we achieve our potential as we help others achieve theirs.

DJ: Absolutely, thank you for the kind words, Stephen and could not agree more. I think it is work in progress but it has been a fulfilling journey trying to sort of walk this path.

SC: Absolutely and I think journey is the right word. It is a journey moving from command and control to trust and inspire, we are all in that journey. It is very easy to kind of go back to our muscle memory or native tongue, easy, happens to me. I wrote the book and I still can get triggered or pressured and kind of revert back to my old scripting but we are not a program, we are programmers. We can write the program; we can rescript to trust and inspire. That is the transition is needed.

DJ: That is a sobering thought given the emergence of ChatGPT, generative intelligence, the fact that we can program and we still have agency in the way we live our lives.

SC: It is about awareness and choice and we have the agency.

DJ: Lovely, thank you so much.

SC: Thank you my friend, wonderful to be with you and with our listeners as well, thank you.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Three things struck me in this conversation.

- 1) The fact that two people could be trustworthy but not extend trust to each other and how that impacts the relationship
- 2) While there might be a scarcity of resources, there is an abundance of possibilities; I thought that distinction was very powerful
- 3) Finally, the fact that we could be Trust and Inspire in paradigm but use Command and Control contextually and they are not two ends of the spectrum

I would love to hear from you what stayed with you after the conversation.

Thank you for listening and bye now.

End of 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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