



Guest

Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. This quote is attributed to Viktor Emil Frankl, an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, devoted his life to studying, understanding and promoting “meaning.” Carol Kaufman and David Noble give us practical tools that we can use to make the ‘space’ count.

Carol and David have authored Real-Time Leadership - Find Your Winning Moves When the Stakes Are High. In the podcast conversation they expand on the 4 step MOVE framework which lays out the various ways in which leaders can be deliberate in the way they go about playing the role of a leader.

Context to the conversation

Welcome to 102nd 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 labour 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.

I wanted to share something with you. Given that we crossed 100 guests, we wanted to pause and reflect on the library that we have accumulated till date. So, as a result, we are going to stopping new guests for a while. Instead, we are going to look at themes where we connect the dots across what different guests said on particular themes. A lot of our listeners have told us that what makes this podcast unique is the fact that we cross-reference insights across the various sections of the podcast. Hope you will like that. Needless to say, once we do that for a period of time, we will come back to marching forward with new guests.

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.

My guests this time are Carol Kauffman and David Noble. Both are world-renowned coaches and have worked with several leaders who have led Billion Dollar Companies. David is also a colleague at EgonZehnder, a firm I worked with for 6 years before transitioning from the world of Poaching to

Coaching. Carol and David have recently co-authored the book Real Time Leadership. Carol describes it beautifully. She talks about the quote from Viktor Frankl - "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." The book tells us how we can do this. Without further ado, let us dive into the conversation with Carol and David.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Carol and David, thank you so much for making the time on the Play to Potential podcast.

David Noble (DN): Great to be here Deepak, thank you.

Carol Kauffman (CK): Thank you for inviting us.

DJ: Absolutely, and congratulations on the recently published book Real-Time Leadership. Maybe just at the outset, if you could give us a sense of why this book. There are thousands of books on leadership. What I find helpful understanding is, trying to get a sense of what is the void the authors are trying to fill with the books they write.

CK: I will start a little bit. One of the things that really stunned us is that our book sold in about 15 minutes to HBR when we were in fact not even trying to sell the book. So, I can tell you what they said. What they say about the book is, there is a number of things that make it very different and fresh. One is the complementarity of me and David, me coming from a clinical psychology coaching background, David from an operational executive strategist, etc. So, the book is part leadership book, part business book and then, part really very good stories about leaders where we do not make the case for coaching, we just show you, kind of, we open up that door for you to look at it. And in that way, it is quite different from other leadership books. The other thing is that Marshall Goldsmith who is this wacky coach that everybody knows, who wrote What Got You Here Won't Get You There, he said the book is dense in a good way. And this is a very dense book. It really is like a very snazzy leadership textbook along with business in there. David, what do you say?

DN: Yeah, Carol and I, unlike a number of coaches who tend to rely on one or two frameworks, we have an evidence-based approach that spans hundreds of frameworks. And so, we really wanted to distill the essence of that in terms of what we found, sort of, good leaders to great, to extraordinary leaders, so that was kind of a genesis of that. And as Carol said, the book is dense, so we, kind of like, think of it as a reference guide. So, it is an operating manual that you can actually step into, that is very practical to help you move from where you are today to where you want to get to. And I also wrote the book frankly because from the time I was in my very first job when I was a speech writer, I remember writing a speech for the CEO, and this is while ago, saying we are now in an unprecedented time of volatility and uncertainty. And so, that has not changed and I really wanted to write a book that would help leaders step in with more confidence to those new types of crises or opportunities that they face.

DJ: Got it. As they say that speech has aged well.

DN: Yes, exactly.

CK: We went to VUCA, then we went to VUCA Squared, then in COVID, we are like we thought we were in VUCA before, are you kidding, then we have got war, uprisings, inflation, supply chain, like seriously, 20 years ago, people were thinking we are in VUCA, so...

DJ: Yeah, the term I came across recently was BANI, Brittle, Anxious, Nonlinear but yeah...lovely. I think just quote a statement from your book, you say that in a recent survey by Egon Zehnder of nearly 1,000 CEOs representing a total of annual revenue of \$4 trillion, you say that 90% said that personal transformation was necessary before succeeding in organizational transformation. And you go on to say that in the same survey three years earlier, only 30% said personal transformational was key. I was curious what has changed in three years according to you.

DN: I think it is what Carol was talking about earlier. Bear in mind that this survey was done about two-thirds of the way through COVID. So, what we have found there was that leaders had suddenly realized that their old playbooks just completely fell apart, that it was not helpful in dealing with the new type of crises, it was not helpful in helping them transition from being decision-makers to being comforters, to caring greatly about their people, to inspiring them, to giving them hope, and it was presenting a challenge to them as individuals just in terms of their own resiliency. And then when you pile on all the other factors that Carol has noted that came subsequently, it is like you have to transform in order to just stay in the game.

DJ: Got it.

CK: And also, all of a sudden, you are seeing into people's lives in such a different way. So, there you are, I mean, in what ExCo team meeting in the past has someone's child come in and crawled on someone's lap. I was working with one, actually quite frankly, very scary guy who was chair and founder and owner of a multibillion-dollar company and there, he is talking very seriously, and the next thing, there is a little kid on his face, crawling all over, and you suddenly see such a different side. So, when the world is unsafe, people become exaggerated versions of themselves and they have exaggerated needs. And for some, here is the exaggerated need and understandable need for a comforting figure. And then for others, I think it is, possibly one of the reasons everybody has been drawn to going to the right so much is someone who really makes life simple and gives you an answer, etc. And a lot of it, there is a real pull and polarization in what people are looking for and then how leaders can respond.

DJ: Hmm. And diving into the meat of the book, you organize the book around the MOVE framework, M O V E, which is the underlying architecture of the book. At the outset, for the purpose of the listeners, could you sort of paint a picture of what this is and then, we will of course get into some of the specifics?

CK: Okay, so the acronym is M O V E which we do for two reasons. One is, we are American and apparently, Americans do acronyms. The other is so you can remember it under fire. And I will just lightly touch on each one and then if you want, David and I can share a double or triple click on any of them. But the overriding principle first backing up is, an overarching theme in it comes from a quote from Viktor Frankl, which is, between every stimulus and response, there is a space, and in that space, you find your freedom of choice. And Real-Time Leadership is about helping leaders make that space. Then once they have made it to have choices of what to do in that space and in our frameworks, the M O V E gives people a lot of ideas on how to move forward and also can be used very quickly. So M is to be mindfully alert, mindful in terms of noticing, not prejudging, alert like an athlete. O is to be an options generator to have at least four pathways forward, four ways to win, no matter what the type of challenge. And David and I published an article in Harvard Business Review in the January-February Edition which was called The Power of Options. V is to validate your vantage

point. So much of business failure is safer over optimism or overcautious, and how do you really see reality for what it is which gives you a vantage point. And then, E is to engage and effect change at scale. So that is M O V E and each one of those has multiple chapters and deep dives and stories in the book.

DJ: Got it. David, anything you would like to add?

DN: No, I think that is a good high-level fly-over. If you think about it, M is what you want or need to get done, O for the options is how you get it done, V is vantage point check on reality to make sure you are seeing reality for what it is, and then E is how you take all those things, what you want to get done, how you might approach it, your reality check and then you scale it up as a leader so that you can work through others to achieve more things to get there.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host, Deepak Jayaraman. I love the reference to Victor Frankl where he speaks about seeing the space between stimulus and response as an opportunity. This reminds me of something that came up in my conversation with Rich Fernandez (RF) who is the CEO of Search Inside Yourself, a Leadership Development company incubated in Google. He speaks about the difference between Reacting and Responding and speaks about the notion of Response Flexibility!

RF: *“to exercise that response flexibility when you are aware of your emotions you are able to manage them, when you are aware of your emotions you are able to respond rather than react. Now some listeners might say well look Rich it’s really important to react I’m in a business where I have to react and I would say to you unless you are experiencing an existential threat it gone always be far more effective to respond rather than react because responding doesn’t mean going slow. Let me give you an example to make this really concrete and really clear have you ever been in airplane and experienced heavy turbulence, you have right and so the listeners have too who do you want in the cockpit in that moment somebody who is reacting and just alarmed and on fire or someone who is calm, competent, clear headed and knows exactly what need to happen and when it needs to happen. You want Captain Sully Sullenberger. That I actually met the man he came to give a talk at Google and he is that way when you meet him like one of the calmest most grounded people but what does he say actually he says that he trained and this is by the way for the listeners who aren’t familiar with Captain Sully Sullenberger he is the man who landed the jet plan that was flying over New York City. It flew through a flock of birds so they lost all jet proportion because the birds flew into the engines and burnt them out so in the space I think I have about 3 minutes to make a split-second decision to land the airplane on the Hudson River it was the only available large open space over New York City but he thought about it very calmly.”*

DJ: Bringing it back to David and Carol’s work, I guess the key opportunity is for us to pause, slow down the tape and to create the space for us to exercise the MOVE in that space!

Thank you for listening. If you want to tune into the conversation with Rich Fernandez, you can just go to playtopotential.com and find him in the Guests section. Let’s now get back to the chat with Carol and David.

DJ: Let us talk with M, mindful alertness. One of the things I really liked in the way you describe it, as you say that leadership is a three-dimensional challenge and you lay out the three different

dimensions around which we need to be mindfully alert, so could you expand on that for the listeners?

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

DJ: Sure.

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

want to be, do I want to be that bored person who is not present and everybody can tell because leadership is often what you emanate more than you say, so that is that one. And then, how do you want to relate. David's example of the platinum rule is really just perfect but the whole point is to make space for choice, for conscious choice.

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

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

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

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

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

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

RV: *"So, one of the things I tell people is, walk into the office, sometimes throw your things to do list and replace it with the things to be list. You decide the kind of person, the kind of leader you want to be, and try it for a week or two. And every day say, what kind of a person or a leader I want to be and try being that way, and you will be surprised how the doing will take care of itself. So, for example, if you were to tell yourself, you know what, I am going to be just more mindful as a leader, or I am going to be more courageous, or I am going to be more empowering, I am going to be more strategic, or even in our personal life, I am going to be more loving to my family, rather than saying I*

want to spend more time with my children, because you may spend more time, but if you are getting upset with them every 20 minutes, I do not know how good that quality of time was. If you say I am going to be more loving and more encouraging, more reassuring or whatever is your need, then you spend even 10 minutes instead of those 45 minutes, but they were loving moments, they will be better spent than simply just the doing part."

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

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

Thank you for listening. If you are deriving value from the podcast, do take a moment and rate and review on Apple or Spotify. It will really help us attract better speakers and help audiences find our work amidst 1000s of podcasts out there.

Let's get back to David and Carol as we walk through the rest of the MOVE framework.

DJ: And moving from M to O, I like the phrase you use, where there is a will, there are at least four ways, and you go on to talk about the four different stances we could take in the way we engage with the situation, could you talk a little bit about the four stances, lean in, lean back, do not lean at all and lean with, and more specifically as I was processing it, I was trying to get the nuance between lean back and do not lean at all but would love to hear you unpack that?

DN: So, let me just set that up and then Carol can talk about the four stances because that is one way of finding four ways to win and there are also many other ways to find four ways to win in the book, it is a really crucial thing. But the premise is that because volatility is on an escalating trajectory, we get nonlinear kind of curve balls and obstacles thrown at us all the time. So, what we find is that good leaders can identify one way to win but in many cases these days, you need a backup to that plan and you need a backup to the backup. So that is why we want to have way power which is multiple ways forward because the more viable options you have to achieve a goal, again the more likely you are to achieve the goal. And then, Carol can pick it up for those stances.

CK: Right and there is a lot of research based on this, many studies have looked at it and looked at predicting success based on, do people have this way power. Where does this come from, it comes from the four main reflexes that we all have which are fight, flight, freeze and the friend. The friend is a new one in terms of people understanding it and that is, if you see a little kid in front of a bus coming on, you do not think whether or not you should save them, it is a reflex to just grab them. We have translated this into what we call the four stances. So, if you watch tennis for example or even play it, it is not like they do with the arms, it is how they set their legs, the stance they take before, it is a forehand, a different stance for a backhand or close to the net, etc. And that is basically what we think is what is your default stance that you can take and then, how can you expand it. And the four stances are in a nutshell, first, lean in, lean back, do not lean, or lean with. So lean in is rolling up your sleeves, really engaging, if there is a conflict, going there. Now, it does not mean you lean in in a directive way, it means you are actively engaged. It could be edgy, it could be enthusiastic with a lot of zest, it could be with the delicacy of a ballerina for the intensity of a rugby player. So, there is many ways and, in the book, we actually have a host of examples and directions that you can take. So that is lean in. Lean back is basically data driven; inquiry driven. I am going to take a lean back, I am going to look at the topography, I am going to look at the data, I am going to be very rational in what I am thinking and in my choices. If I have to do a reduction in force, I am not going to be leaping in and doing that, I am going to really get out my spreadsheets and figure out what is right. Leaning with is leading with caring, concern, nurturance and if it is at scale, its culture, if you have a merger and acquisition, your integration, you are going to be thinking people first. So lean in is action first, lean back is data first, lean with is people first, and do not lean at all is reflection first. And the capacity to not lean, which is the toughest of all, requires a decision to be able to tolerate doing nothing for, it could be seconds, it could be moments, it could be a decision. So why does that one matter, one reason it matters is the other three are all kind of what your brain is producing, this one is making a reflective space. So, an idea can like hit you, it kind of opens up to kind of intuition or kind of new thoughts. A simple example is, let us say okay, so Deepak, you are giving a talk and it is important to you. And maybe it is even being filmed, and then somebody in the audience sneers at you and really, like you know, has that like, this is so stupid, I cannot believe we are wasting our time. Okay, so you can imagine the different stances. You would respond rather differently. So, if you are going to lean in, you might say, excuse me, what is going on, or okay, I am not going to look like a bully in front of everyone but I am going to talk to this person after the meeting. Okay. Leaning back, it may be like, okay, what is the data, what might the person be responding to, what are they thinking, what is the best way for me to interact in this moment, like, I am just going to go with the data. Now leaning with, I am like, oh no, what did I do, this person I have offended them, and I might like then, the whole rest of the talk be like, honing in on them and making them...like what I am doing but do not lean is, I am just not triggered, this person has sneered and it is nearly a non-event for me, I will just go on, I am reflecting and I do not have to react. So those are the four stances and one way you can think about them.

DN: I think that not leaning is the most difficult one as Carol said, and that is something because as leaders, we are all very action-oriented but when you think about it, it can manifest not just in allowing your intuition to come to the surface or to take a moment to calm yourself. But also, sometimes you can just wait and hopefully, your team is going to fill that void. You do not always have to act on everything and that team should be filling that space in many cases too rather than you doing it again. And then also, the example of letting the sneer go. Sometimes when there is something, you do not actually have to confront it, you do not have to deal with it, you can just turn aside and let it go right past you. So, it is actually a very powerful stance that is quite underused in the repertoire of most leaders.

DJ: Hmm. And you also go on to say that we all need to pick an approach that is consistent with our core self, can you expand on that in the sense the stance we take needs to be resonant with who we are? I found that quite intriguing. A part of me was wondering, as I was reading that to say, I guess the corollary to that also means that we also need to learn to flex to go beyond our default response but I was curious to get your sense on that connection.

DN: Let me step into that because if you look at the sequence, we first want you to understand what your default response would be because again, the whole theme of the book is know when your default is not going to serve you well. So, we want you to know, like if you are a lean in person, to know that that tends to be overuse. Then, of course we want and need you to be genuine as you step into the other stances, so what we do is equip you to be more agile across all those other stances. So, we actually show you how to step in more. So, if you are a person who finds it difficult to lean with to connect with people, we show you how to do that or if you find it difficult to lean in, we show you how to do that. So, all the way through, you are being authentic where you are growing as a person so that you can be more agile.

CK: Yeah. Just remember that the whole point is for a leader to find that space between stimulus and response. And this is one of the key things in this space. And because we have made it so simple, you know, who do I want to be, what do I want to do, how do I want to come across, do I want to lean in, back, with, not lean, we are making it, so it can be super quick laser questions to ask yourself and possible micro behaviors. So, on one hand, it is very important to know what your default is and to who is your default when that is appropriate but also to tweak your default. So, one of the things we do in the book is, we have three chapter based on the options generator. The first one is just about, it is more of a business chapter and it goes beyond that how you can make more options, more business decisions. Then the second one is, how do you use that material in terms of your own development, how quickly or intensely you take it on, etc. The third one is, how do you lean in, back or whatever, and it actually has a series of sections on each one to talk about you can lean in, well how can you lean in with your strengths, how can you lean in with your values. So, there is lots and lots of nuances, you can do totally deep dive, and at the same time, you can do it in seconds.

DJ: Got it. And one of the examples that struck me which got me curious David and Carol, you say that female Olympic athletes, with high willpower and way power, did much better than most of the contemporaries. I used to train for half marathons a few years back but it was interesting to see this applied even in an endurance sport where you would think it is all about the physicality and the willpower but I am curious how way power finds this application on that context.

CK: Yeah, so there is a number of questions that, there is a very simple questionnaire on way power. And basically, people who said things like, when something goes wrong, I have a back-up plan or I have two backup plans. So, if I am approaching something, I can think of four different ways to do it. And what it is, it is almost like that person will be more resilient and agile. And also, it is like they are not assuming that the first thing they do is going to be successful. I mean, think of entrepreneurs, I mean think of, like Edison and the lightbulb, what was it, the 5,000th try did it, so that is what it is. But the studies go from, studies with toddlers to grandparents, to athletes, to CEOs, these findings are very robust and people can Google an article called Rainbows of the Mind and that will have a lot of references.

DN: There is a very practical example which might bring it home which is, imagine that you are one side of a chasm and there is a 2,000-foot drop or 1,000-meter drop between you and the other side and the other side is actually not that far away. Now if you only have one way to get across there, you are probably going to be very reluctant to cross that chasm. So, the things that might help you are, if you look for options that are based on strengths or assets that you can resource. So, for

example, you might be a good runner, so that might help you get some speed up and some lift, you might be a good jumper, that is great. You might be able to see assets on your side of the chasm that could build a bridge to the other side of the chasm, or you might be able to connect with people across that chasm who can help you get across it. So that is like four different ways to actually get across, so you are much more likely to attempt it, much more likely to succeed.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. I love the way Carol and David expand on the point around expanding the choice set when it seems like there is only one option in front of us. Something similar came up in my conversation with Sir Andrew Likierman (AL) of London Business School who has researched the theme of Leadership Judgment for a long time.

AL: "Well, very often leaders are faced with choices presented to them which are you can do this or this. Sometimes it's you can do this or this or this and the indication is well the middle one is actually the one which we are steering you towards. Sometimes I give them one option. Now, in all these cases I think somebody who is running an organization has got to ask the question have I been given all the options and in particular, you know, for example, do I understand how risk plays out in these options? So simply being presented what I meant by not being boxed in is if you are presented with two options and you feel there are more options than you should be asking for more options not just simply accepting there are only two options because that's what has been presented to you. Sometimes it may be that you say we are not going to take any of these options because we haven't got certain important facts and we need to think again, go away and look at it again. So, there's another option which is do nothing at this stage. Now, I am not suggesting by the way that there should always be delay because in some cases delay is disastrous and there maybe... in that sense you may be boxed in because you can see that if you wait for another 10 minutes or a day or a week then matters will be outside your control, you will have taken a bad decision by taking no decision. But what I meant therefore is that leaders ought to make sure that when options come to them, they are careful that these are not the only options available."

DJ: Sharing a very personal example here. I remember driving up to a restaurant by one of the highways near Delhi. It was 4 in the afternoon and I was looking for a cup of coffee. I remember going up to the counter and asking the person for a cup of coffee. The person asked me which size I would like – Medium or Large? I was about to blurt out my preference but I hesitated and did a double take and asked them if they had a Small. To which the person gave me a sheepish smile and said Yes. This is such a frivolous example of just choosing from what is presented to you but to Andrew's point and to Carol and David's point, given the stakes are so high, pausing to generate multiple pathways to a situation can be so powerful! Very often we talk about willpower, we should pay as much attention to way power. Thank you for listening. Let's get back to Carol and David now.

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...?

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.

DJ: Okay. Just building on the vantage point insight, I guess it is all the more pronounced when transitions happen, when a new CEO takes charge, then discerning what is the right vantage point is that much harder because you are also trying to make sense of the topography, the characters, the political magnetic forces at play, so do you want to expand on how to think about vantage point, especially in the context of a leader that is transitioning into a new role?

DN: Sure. So, when you look at the model of MOVE, again, it does not have to be sequential. So, the thing that really pops for us if you are in a big new job whether you are the CEO or not, is the vantage point because literally, whether you are being promoted into that role or you are coming in from outside the organization, all these relationships are new in some way. Even if you are within role, you are looking at things from a different perspective. So, your old peers are now you are direct reports and that is a very challenging situation. So, we actually encourage leaders coming into a role to look at all the people that are involved in that role from a 360-degree perspective. So, it is to really understand like what is the agenda, what is needed of me, what kind of relationship do I want to have with my new boss, even if I am the CEO, I have got a board to deal with, with other stakeholders that are around me, like regulators or analysts or whatever, with my team and then across my organization. So, it is actually trying to read what is actually happening there in terms of other people interpersonally and then, how I want to meet that challenge. And there are other

things around on vantage point that also come into play when you have got a new role. So, for example, there is mandates that are sometimes illusions or not illusions. So, you come into a job and you are the new leader in a group and it is like, yes, you have a mandate to transform the group, and the moment that you do that, you meet resistance from the very people who gave you that mandate. So, there is no amount of due diligence that you can do to actually make sure that that does not happen but how can you explore that in front. So, for example, if you are contemplating going into a new job and you understand what you think the scope of magnitude of the challenges, you just say like, well, okay, and what happens if we need to take the group in this kind of organization. And if you hear, oh yeah, that is okay, okay, let us keep pushing on that a little bit further, well, what if that means a massive investment, what if that means a massive transformation, what if that means a new type of acquisition, what if that means a product extension. So, you get more and more specific and if the answer is yes, all the way through, it is like, okay, that is not a red flag. But often when you ask those kinds of questions, it makes it more real to the person that you are talking to and they will say things like, oh, well, you know, it would depend on the circumstances, that is a red flag and that is something to really push on to make sure that your perception of the mandate is as close to reality as possible. The other thing is, just one other thing which really pops for us for people get into new jobs is, there is this tendency to want to do too much too quickly. So, if you do not read the organization's capacity that you have got, you can make people tip over and that can make you not succeed. So, it is like having enough self-awareness and self-regulation to calibrate how hard you are pushing the organization and to be able to read them as well. So, all these things are vantage points and then, being able to step into other people's perspectives as much as you could step into your own perspective which is part of diversity and inclusion, all those are important dimensions in a new role too.

DJ: Hmm. Got it.

CK: Yeah, we have a whole chapter on that by the way, I am stepping in, so we have two chapters on that and it is interesting you picked up on that because the first half of the two chapters is just on the vantage point of a new CEO and new leader. And then, the others are the mindful alertness, the options generator and engage and effect change of that leader, so that is great. So, you were asking about E.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This is Deepak here. I am reminded of an insight from R Gopalakrishnan (RG) who has studied fault lines in Leadership Transitions and has authored the book CRASH which profiles 15 high profile hires who couldn't quite land and despite a lot of fanfare ended up as a failure. He speaks about the criticality of discerning the pecking order of stakeholders.

RG: *"So, one of the things I learnt, I am not sure where I learnt it, how I learnt it but I am sure I learnt it from somewhere or the other some experience is if you want to change things in the organization which you are going to lead or be a leader of first you have to change yourself. The so-called objective metrics are actually subjective in the sense they focus on increase profits by 20%, diversify into X or Y, which are all fine, but those depend on the context. So, we set targets for various companies in February for the year 2021, who the hell knew Covid was coming? So, the context has changed and therefore the performance metrics automatically change, coming to the other part, the invisible part, boards are not interested only in your achieving objectives, they are interested in how you achieve the objective also. It is stylish to say just deliver me the results, I don't care how you do it but in reality, we are interested how they did it also. If a CEO is slitting a few necks every night to achieve his results, then you have to accept that there's a criminal case building up. So that's what I*

mean by the soft part, there are multiple stakeholders, you know, you have so far grown in your career thinking I have one boss, if I satisfy him everything is all right. Your board itself has a chairman and directors who have been around 20 years, directors who have been around 2 years but then you have your leadership team, your subordinates if I may use that word, then you have your stakeholders your shareholders, you have your allies, you know, suppliers, vendors, bankers and depending on the way you act and behave the pecking order emerges. If you are a very strong domain person, so you have been in the auto industry for 30 years and you joined an auto company then you pick up the phone and start energizing your old network, you know of some fellow who supplies very good components. That might be misinterpreted in your new environment you are doing that because you were a head of purchase in some other auto company you don't sort of bring in all your old buddies, but then very strong in recruiting talent and then you go and fill up the place with people from your own company or perceive to have done so even whether you have actually done so or not and people don't like that. So, I use the word pecking order of stakeholders to mean what was in your strength until the other day can play out to be a weakness. So, while you must have a 360-degree approach to all your stakeholders without doubt the angles of the pie keep changing depending on who is the person who's there. I have known situations where people say that, you know, he came from so and so place, he has filled it up with people from that place. It's not at all uncommon in CEO transitions."

DJ: I like what Gopal says. Even what seem like objective metrics are often subjective to context. Being able to read the room and discern the various vantage points can be a big advantage as you settle into a company. Let's get back to Carol and David now.

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.

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: This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. 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. Let's get back to Carol and David and hear them talk about the application of their framework in the context of Coaching!

DJ: And as I was understanding the M O V E framework, I was curious about how it applies in the life of coaches. I guess at some level while the primary audience for the framework I discovered was the leaders that we coach but I guess, as I was reflecting on it, I found it as relevant or even more relevant in the way I could apply it as a coach. I would love to hear from the two of you on how you bring M O V E to bear in the coaching work that the two of you do.

CK: I would say it is always with me. So let us say Deepak, you are my coaching client and a very first thing I will want to do is, I will go immediately to, in my mind, the second and third dimensions of change to start. Like, I am first going to want to create a safe relationship with you and like you and really try to be who I really am, not trying to impress you. So, I am using that as my self-regulation to start. And then, we might think about okay, what is it we really need to do, so let us start getting the objectives. Now, then I pass that on to you like what do you need to do, who do you need to be, how do you want to relate but I am using that with myself first. Okay, so then, and there is a whole story

about this in the book, is as I am working with you, I am going to be noticing your stances and my stances. I will give an example of working with a leader who is having a lot of trouble with his boss and he is really into it and he is leaning in and the next thing I know is, I have caught that leaning in energy and I am leaning in too and we are thinking about how he is going to manage this situation and all of a sudden I go, oops, lean back Carol, lean back, let us back up and then ask, well, let us look at the overview and the context why it might be going on and then all of a sudden, there is a bigger view. And then in that case, it may also be, if you put the well-being of your boss, they are right in the front and center, how would that relate to what, you know, you might view as the coachee and their boss for myself as well, And then, the other big one is say, you are talking to me as your client and I am thinking I know what to say is like, well, how can I not lean and give you space. So, all of a sudden, you stop talking, I need to be okay with that and be able to not lean. And then of course, vantage point, you know, as I am listening, I am not going to believe my first set of thoughts but I am also going to be noticing where are you, and I might say, hey, Deepak, are you connecting the dots with your hopes, your fears here, what is your sense of how clear you are. I would not necessarily the one who says you are not clear but I could say to you how clear are you, and if that is low or whatever. And then, engage and effect change, again, what are the leadership signals, as a coach what am I sending out, what am I noticing about you are sending out. So, these are ways to be making space for yourself in the person you are coaching in parallel basically all the time.

DJ: Got it.

DN: And for me, a lot of this lives in the options generator for me because when you think of a lot of coaches, there are a lot of one-trick ponies out there that would go like, Deepak, this is all about your energy or Deepak, it is all about mindfulness or it is all about strengths-based positive psychology and we are like, yes and a whole bunch of other things. So, for us, when you are trying to help someone move from the highest peak that they are at right now to the biggest peak in the planet, whether it is in the alps or whatever, it is very unclear about how to get there and so we want to try a whole bunch of stuff. So, we want to create many options that we can draw on our coaching. So, the idea is that you try something which is based on our hypothesis that we think this might serve our client and if it does and if they get a little bit more elevation like heading towards the alps on that, then we keep going. And if they do not or it does not resonate with them or they just say, oh, I just do not want to do this, then we try something else. So, for us, it is creating many different options so that we can best be in service for our clients.

DJ: And in a way, I am guessing that is linked to the two on one coaching model. When I read the book, what I found intriguing was the fact that the two of you very often work as a pair with coachees and I am sure one of the many benefits that the clients get is just the option generation which is that much richer given the breadth of your experiences and the diversity of vantage points.

DN: Yeah, you can tell just in the conversation that we are very different people in terms of our personalities, the experiences that we bring and the tools that we have got but it is interesting that we are extremely complementary in terms of how we come to, most often, the same conclusions from very different angles which really helps to validate things. And also, what we find is that each of us are we think pretty good coaches, that is what the world tells us. But you can always miss something in a one-on-one situation but just given the nature of the two of us, if I miss something in a conversation, Carol is almost certain to pick up on it and if Carol misses something, I am almost certain to pick up on that. So that combination together actually makes us to be much more powerfully in service of the leaders who are facing the most complex behavioral and commercial challenges.

DJ: David and Carol, it has been a wonderful conversation. This podcast is titled Play to Potential. One question that I ask all the guests is what the term means to them. So, what does the term playing to potential mean to the two of you?

CK: Being at my best on every single one of the M O V E subcategories, that is what it would mean to me.

DN: And for me, it is to be extraordinary, means being a real-time leader all the time. So that is like a goal that is almost impossible to achieve but that is something like coherence with being a real time all the time is something that I would aspire to and that would be playing to potential.

CK: That is right and we have talked about it. Our true goal for people is yes, it is great to be super successful, etc. but it is really to become a really good human and even to become an extraordinary person and help leave the world in a better place than we found it and to help our leaders do that.

DJ: Lovely. On that note, David and Carol, thank you so much for making the time on a busy Friday evening.

DN: Thank you Deepak. Thanks for inviting us. This was great. We really appreciate it.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Hope you found the conversation purposeful.

If you missed listening to the intro, I wanted to share an update with you here. Given that we crossed 100 guests, we wanted to pause and reflect on the library that we have accumulated till date. So, as a result, we are going to stopping new guests for a while. Instead, we are going to look at themes where we connect the dots across what different guests said on particular themes. A lot of our listeners have told us that what makes this podcast unique is the fact that we cross-reference insights across the various sections of the podcast. Hope you will like that. Needless to say, once we do that for a period of time, we will come back to marching forward with new guests.

Thank you for your trust and look forward to having you tune into one of the subsequent conversations at the Podcast. Bye now.

End of transcription

Nugget from Rich Fernandez that is referenced: [3 levels of resilience](#).

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

Nugget from Sir Andrew Likierman that is referenced: [Question the solution set offered](#).

Nugget from R Gopalakrishnan that is referenced: [Discerning the pecking order of stakeholders](#).

Nugget from Captain Raghu Raman that is referenced: [Z-KITBAG: Communication lessons from the Army.](#)

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Carol Kauffman - Nuggets

- 102.01 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - The MOVE framework
- 102.02 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - 3 Dimensions of Mindful Alertness
- 102.03 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - Way power over Willpower
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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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Podcast Transcript [102.00 Carol Kauffman and David Noble - The Full Conversation](#)

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