



The banner features the Play to Potential logo on the left. To its right are contact details: a WhatsApp icon with the number +91 85914 52129\*, a Twitter icon with the handle @PlayToPotential, and a globe icon with the website playtopotential.com. Further right, under the heading 'Also available on:', are icons for Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts. On the far right, a portrait of the host, Deepak Jayaraman, is shown with the text 'Podcast Host' and his name 'Deepak Jayaraman' in a red box below it. A small disclaimer at the bottom left reads: '\*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

## Context to the nugget

Did you always know which profession you wanted to pursue? Our career is often shaped by an opportunity that we seize on the way. Prof. Kartik Hosanagar talks about how academia came by as a career choice while he was researching options for his postgraduate education. Named as the world's top 40 business professors under 40, he certainly seems to have made the right choice!

## Transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): You've been an award-winning professor for several years at Wharton and you've also been active in the digital space in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. During our conversation, I'd like to touch upon both points: academics as a career choice and leadership in young organizations. Let's start with the first one. Rewinding the clock, you are an alumnus of BITS Pilani. Give us an insight into how you thought about academics as a career option at the time you took the plunge?

Kartik Hosanagar (KH): I think one has to rewind back to the late '90s, and there were two factors that played at that time for me. The first was that, I think, in India, the kinds of jobs that were available were very different, and from an entrepreneurial standpoint, there wasn't much of an ecosystem. So, I think the only kinds of jobs that a lot of my classmates went to were typical software-development jobs and I spent some time doing that. While I enjoyed technology, I didn't feel like I wanted to be a software developer long term. I was more interested in the business side of the tech industry, so I was really thinking about maybe a tech-focused MBA or something of that sort. Most people did one of two things during those days: they either took up a job at an Infosys or Wipro or some MNCs that had just come into India at that time like Novel, Honeywell — I worked at Novel and Honeywell — or they went to the US to do an MS. I chose the latter option, which was to go to the US, but I didn't want to do a Masters in Engineering. I wanted to do something which was more business-focused. So, I originally decided to do an MBA and I wrote to a bunch of schools that had a strong Computer Science department and a business school, and I kind of explored: could I do an MBA and get a fellowship? That's what actually led me into the path of a PhD, when one of the professors got back and said, 'I can't give a fellowship to an MBA applicant, but I can, if you apply for a PhD program'.

DJ: So, it was actually opportunistic in the sense that you didn't go out to do a PhD but responded to an opportunity that came along.

KH: That's exactly right. I think I had no such intent. I applied only to all these Masters' programs: some MBA, some MS in tech and business, kind of combination type programs. When this opportunity came up, I didn't know how to respond to that. I actually remember, an uncle of mine, who's been a big mentor of mine, was one of the people who really urged me to take it up. He kind of said, 'Look, if you want to do an MBA at a place, you would have to work two-three more years, so eventually there is a five-six-year commitment and as it appeared for the PhD, it wasn't as long' and also 'Don't worry, things will work out'. I actually wrote to the professor explicitly asking him, 'Have you placed students in the industry?' and he mentioned a list of students who had gone into consulting firms, to IBM, and firms like that, which is why I finally said, 'Ok, maybe I am ready to take that dive'.

DJ: It's very interesting you say this, because when I was considering a PhD, one of the pieces of advice I was given was, if you do not want to become a professor, then don't even think of a PhD. So, it's interesting that your professor was comfortable with the fact that you were looking at a PhD as a means to finding an industry opportunity and was willing to live with that.

KH: I am actually surprised, in hindsight, because now when I have my own students, I would prefer that the student end up in academia. Because you've put in a lot of time in training a student, and you want to see the student perform well within your community, and produce results within your community, and so on. The payoff isn't quite there if the person goes to the industry. My advisor said yes, but, of course, I will also say that in my final year, he was also instrumental in convincing me to apply to academic jobs as well.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key takeaway for me is that there are some professions where the light at the end of the tunnel is quite far away. Medicine, academics are two professions that come to mind immediately. But in these situations, it is all the more important for people to talk to a few individuals who have been on that path and really have a chat about the realities of that path, what are the highs like, what are the lows like and map it back to what you think gives you energy. I see several people jumping in taking the plunge and very quickly within a year or two realizing that there's a fundamental disconnect. Thank you for listening.

## End of nugget transcription

\*\*\*\*\*

## RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

**Insights on career paths:** There's nothing like learning about a path from somebody who has walked it. Professionals across backgrounds (Sports, Law, Banking, Consulting, Investing, Academia, Stand-up, Consumer Goods, Politics, Market Research, Entrepreneurship, Advertising etc.) talk about the path, the highs and the lows and share nuanced views on how people should think about traversing that path. You can access the playlist [here](#).

**Academics:** Insight from the world of academics on the realities of the path and the nature of questions individuals should ask themselves before they pursue a career in that direction. It is interesting to notice that excellence in academics in schooling and under graduation is not necessarily a predictor of excellence in the world of academia. You can access the playlist [here](#).

## SIGN UP TO OUR COMMUNICATION

**Podcast Newsletter:** Join 1000s of leaders who benefit from the Podcast newsletter. Not more than 1-2 emails a month including keeping you posted on the new content that comes up at the podcast. High on signal, low on noise. Sign up for the podcast newsletter [here](#).

**Nuggets on Whatsapp:** We also have a **Podcast Whatsapp distribution group (+91 85914 52129)** where we share 2-3 nuggets a week from the Podcast archives to provoke reflection. If that is of interest, please click [here](#) and send a message stating “INTERESTED”. Do also add this number to your Phone Contacts so that we can broadcast our messages to you when we share a nugget.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Kartik Hosanagar - Nuggets

- 05.00 Kartik Hosanagar - The Full Conversation
- 05.01 Kartik Hosanagar - Academics as a career
- 05.02 Kartik Hosanagar - Highs and lows in academics
- 05.03 Kartik Hosanagar - Surprises in the academic path
- 05.04 Kartik Hosanagar - Impact of technology
- 05.05 Kartik Hosanagar - Backing an entrepreneur
- 05.06 Kartik Hosanagar - Leadership inflection points
- 05.07 Kartik Hosanagar - Building the leadership muscle
- 05.08 Kartik Hosanagar - Building an entrepreneurial culture
- 05.09 Kartik Hosanagar - In summary — Playing to potential

## About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock 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](#).

## Disclaimer and clarification of intent behind the transcripts

This written transcript of the conversation is being made available to make it easier for some people to digest the content in the podcast. Several listeners felt that the written format would be helpful. This may not make sense as an independent document. Very often spoken word does not necessarily read well. Several of the guests have published books and the language in their books might be quite different from the way they speak. We request the readers to appreciate that this transcript is being offered as a service to derive greater value from the podcast content. We request you not to apply journalistic standards to this document.

This document is a transcription obtained through a third party/voice recognition software. There is no claim to accuracy on the content provided in this document, and occasional divergence from the audio file are to be expected. As a transcription, this is not a legal document in itself, and should not be considered binding to advice intelligence, but merely a convenience for reference.

The tags that are used to organize the nuggets in the podcast are evolving and work in progress. You might find that there could be a discrepancy between the nuggets as referenced here and in the actual podcast given this is a static document.

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission.