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Context to the nugget

Paddy speaks about the journey and the various steps he took as he moved from being the fitness trainer for the South African cricket team between 1994 and 1998 to becoming the Strategic Leadership and Mental Conditioning Coach (working closely with Gary Kirsten) of the Indian Cricket team between 2008 and 2011 (helping them win the World Cup in 2011).

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I am curious about how you thought about choices you why behind some of the choices you made and your journey in this passage of play?

Paddy Upton (PU): If I go back to you know the something when I had been 4 years for the South African Cricket team as a fitness trainer from 1994 to 1998 working under Bob Woolmer the coach in Hansie Cronje the team is a very fit team bubble most probably one of the most forth thinking and innovative coaches in the cricket work in the time Hansie Cronje an incredible leader of men so I was generous very good team and that was really that was the time where I looked to the players I looked at the team as a whole and fought but there was something missing from I thought we could be performing better, I thought the team could be doing a whole lot better but I really didn't know how or what that is something missing was and for resigning from that job was that choice was my very really intuitively because I couldn't answer anybody why I left the job I couldn't answer any questions about what was missing. It was really just the feeling, it was a sense, it was a gut so that decision to resign really was an ideal probably dream job for some people in their mid-20s was made completely intuitively and I just followed my gut and you are needed to move on in search of whatever might be next so that was probably one of the first times I really had the experience of making a significant or even life changing decision based on intuition, on gut feeling and in probably the next significant decision was to spent 2 years what ended up being 2 years working as a street worker with some of the hardened and most difficult to work with street dwellers in the Cape town city centre and when I say street dwellers you know there were also the some of the criminals who all of them are involved in some... and drugs and various forms of crime so Harden street children and criminals to a degree and that too wasn't really a decision it was something that I found myself just... playing soccer with them one day and then I would back the next week end played soccer with him and then sort of spend some time on the streets and started to without deliberately setting out to the... to understand how things worked and locates on one of the city centre under belly of you know street children and street new thing, crime and movement of drugs and how things worked and I ended up just spending 2 years what ought if she is making decision or planning to do so working with these street children and... a street children organization and I guess if I would just sort of if I would just take a another step to the right you know the probably the next big moved after or I had moved on from that was when a friend told me about this profession called executive coaching

which at that time you know that was in the early 2000 I had never heard of the concept of executive coach and he explains me that was a coaching of business executives and there was he said there was in fact what at the time was it the world's first two year master's degree in getting qualified as an executive business coach and for me there was just something as an explanation that in that moment it's like yes that's the something that I think I have been looking for to really understand the academics and science behind getting the best out of people and a higher performance business type environment which cricket or professional sport is a business. So that was a very conscious decision I felt that could be the path to discovering that something missing that I was looking for and it turned out it certainly was that path and I did there was the beginning of discovering the something missing and you know that's been in depending you are still today what are brought to the professional sports world.

DJ: How should I think about reinventing myself? What are the one or two things that you have learned from the way you have architected your journey?

PU: If someone came to me early 20-year-old and ask me to really reflect on things. I think I was at that stage in my life I was just personally way I was ready just exploring and experimenting and probably the best advice I could have got from someone then and it's in fact what I did for myself was my "Mantra" is and someone in the early 20s who really didn't know exactly what I wanted to do for a career and I think you probably find this even more of that in this then I got so many options and so many brand new career path opening up each month literally. My mantra was to spread my wings to as wide as possible and make sure I was moving forward and what that meant was by spread wings as wide as possible is taking as many opportunity as many experience learn as much as possible get the blinkers off in life and experience, learn, grow and the moving foot path was also tight into that was make sure that I am learning things that I am learning about myself I am learning about new profession, new options and just make sure that I was growing myself and having that sort of wing spread wide, blinkers off and make sure that I was advancing in terms of learning. If you are playing play station or x-box you are not advancing yourself you are not really learning a whole lot. Yes, there is some advancing your certain skills but you are not moving forward in life because you are not going to get the next job because you are a good x-box player. If you are over socializing, yes you are having a whole lot of fun but you are not moving forward in life and building the CV. So the advice that I would give would be to experience as much as possible but make sure those are things that are taking you forward in life that you are learning something that is even adding to your health advancing your health advancing your emotional intelligence, advancing your cognitive abilities and capabilities. I think at the same time probably my real turn around in my life came from when I stopped, when I didn't spend the bulk of my time looking externally at the external world but when I turn the mirror inwardly and started to understand who am I? What am I? What do I think I am on this world on this planet for? What are my strengths? What are the things that happened in my childhood and up bringing my personality my character that shapes who I am? And what are those things need some polishing? What some things needs some renovating? So really the journey of personal mastery and I probably only sort of embarked on that journey, very intentionally and deliberately may be in my late 20s probably on early 30s am I think the sooner somebody can embark on that journey of personal mastery of reflecting of looking inward and fine tuning ourselves as the instrument of leadership, of coaching of business or sport. The more we really get the foot up and go forward on life.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The way Paddy describes his move from the South African cricket team reminds me of my conversation with Prof Herminia Ibarra (HI) of the London Business School. She speaks about the

notion of liminality where she says that you have quit something without fully knowing what is next. And that in between phase, that she calls liminality, can be unnerving.

HI: *“So that was part of play full thing I said when you are making a transition people think you are going from A to B but you don’t you go from A to this transition thing which we call liminality in our technical jargon to be. So in between you neither here nor there and it’s horrible because you lose your identity anchor and so in that space it be who’s you to be a little bit more playful because you are neither here nor there so that means you don’t have to be consistent you can try, you can talk to people about jobs you would never consider or you can do things that are pretty much out of character but you know you are trying to learn something and that can be very freeing because we don’t often give ourselves permission to deviate and so the two principle are you said divert and exploration and delayed commitment.”*

DJ: Paddy speaks about how his friend describes the executive coaching programme and Paddy says that at that moment, it clicked for him and that was the thing he was looking for. But it is not as if that epiphany happened when he was working with the South African cricket team and it was a clean jump. The phase of liminality for Paddy was when he was working with the street dwellers in Cape Town. That phase created the space for the new possibility to emerge.

Several of the people I observe and work with are keen to get on with it and move to the next opportunity and this phase of liminality can be unnerving. But that is often the dark valley that we all need to pass before we get to a better place.

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End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Herminia Ibarra that is referenced: [The perils of foreclosure](#).

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Paddy Upton - Nuggets

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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](#).

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