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## Context to the nugget conversation

Darleen speaks about some the nuances in building and maintaining relationships in a remote world. A lot of things that we might do in the rhythm of an offline world don't apply. She speaks about some observations from the leaders she has worked with. Sahiba Singh from SpencerStuart India team also shares her perspectives on the topic.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): The more things change, more things stay the same, right, at some level fascinating. And let's talk about some of these in maybe double, let's double-click on some of these, building relationships, right? In the book, you talk about starting a relationship in 3D and moving it to 2D as something that's easy. But starting something in two dimensions and staying 2D for a prolonged period of time is a challenge. Talk to us a little bit about what effective leaders do in building and sustaining relationships in a two-dimensional plane, what nuances exist?

Darleen DeRosa (Darleen): Absolutely. I mean, and keep in mind, we are just coming out of a global pandemic and we are still not even fully out of it, right? So, there's some nuance of how much of this is because people have literally been at home not interacting with anyone outside of work. Now, you have got people who are literally working from home with their kids, their pets, their elders, you know, it's a really complex environment. So, keep in mind that some of this might be unique to the pandemic but in general being virtual too long just like we saw in the pandemic, the number one thing that people missed was the social interaction and they felt more isolated. And I think this point in time has caused people to realize that humans value connection with others. And as a result, leaders spend even more time building trust, getting to know people and investing in relationships. And really, it's not that you can't do that in a virtual setting but leaders who are more effective are really purposeful and deliberate. One leader that I am coaching actually blocks time in his calendar to do this. I mean, that's how planful you have to be otherwise you get busy and distracted and you are not as focused on engaging with the team but perhaps more importantly making sure that your team members are engaging with one another. And so, I have seen really great examples of leaders step up and check in with people just with no agenda, which at first might seem a little strange if you haven't had that type of relationship with your manager, but just simply calling someone to say, hey, I was just thinking about you, would love to know how you are doing and is there anything I can do to support you. That's a great example of one CHRO that we interviewed who makes what he calls care calls just to check in on people. Dedicating time in your day, putting it in your calendar to check in with your key customers or stakeholders, having a virtual coffee chat or a lunch. So, again, it's simple things but these things might occur more naturally if you happen to run into someone in a hallway in the office but in a virtual setting people get so busy that they are not as purposeful about building time for the relationship elements.

DJ: Sahiba Singh (Sahiba), who heads the Leadership Advisory practice for SpencerStuart in India, has an interesting example of a CEO she is working with who creates a safe space for his team members to attend to any important issue outside the realm of work.

Sahiba: So communication increasingly is actually about not only what you are saying but what you are not saying what is happening in the background. So when you are talking to leaders, and their children walk into the room, or their pets walk in, and they are okay with it, they are also sending a message that it is okay for the others that there is a life beyond work that is playing out behind our Zoom backgrounds, so that is one aspect. I think the other is, I remember a story when the second wave that hit and most of us had family and friends who were impacted and it was really difficult time, there was a CEO who I was working with who would start every meeting by saying to whoever was on that call that if anybody needs to drop off this call to take care of their families or if they are feeling just very, sort of, emotionally or mentally burdened with what is going on, they are free to drop off the call, we will cover for them, no questions asked, and I thought that was really powerful because you were communicating your intent very well through that as well.

DJ: She goes on to talk about another leader who shows empathy towards people in the ecosystem not just caring for people within the company.

Sahiba: I think the other thing that I found was that during the time, again during the second wave, I was working with a few clients who were in the logistics space or healthcare space and we would get onto calls obviously to discuss business topics and they would start these discussion by offering any help that I or our families or our teams needed, you know, in order to get vaccinated, to get access to hospitals, healthcare, whatever that might be, in whichever way their businesses could help. And I think it was really powerful because you think of these as moments that matter, and they stay with you in terms of the special things that people have done and that really makes an impression as well.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The one thing I have observed in the online world is that it is very easy to ignore the silent voices. We need to create the space to check in on what is happening with people outside of work and create the safe space for them to share what is top of mind for them. Something that might naturally come up in a face to face conversation may not come up in a Zoom meeting.

## End of nugget transcription

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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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