

Podcast Transcript [103.01 Ricardo Sunderland - Leadership – shaping context rather than setting direction](#)

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Context to the conversation

Ricardo speaks about how leadership is much more about creating the right conditions for people to flourish than pushing them in a certain direction.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): Lovely, and I want to pick up on what you said about Professor Linda Hill in the book. You say that leadership today is much more about shaping context than setting direction. Can you say more, it's... again, there is a lot that's sort of packed into that sentence but I am curious...

Ricardo Sunderland (RS): Yes, there is a lot, a lot on that, I remember, and I quoted in the book when I was having a workshop with Linda and we were having this with Jane Fraser at that Citigroup and Jane was taking copious notes when she was actually saying this... mentioning about shaping context and I asked Jane, why are you taking all these notes? And she said, this is the kind of leader that I want to be and that's first time that I hear this term and to your point, I want to become more curious about it. Shaping context allows... basically what it means is that a leader can feel very comfortable in saying I don't know. And when this kind of vulnerability, you can enable psychological safety in the organisation. When there is psychological safety, people will trust you more, they will share more information with you so you can co-create together. When you can co-create together, you can enable the future in your organisation, you can realise what you can do and what you cannot do. You are able to create experiences together that are not possible by one leader alone. And with that, you can change the environment in which the company performs and you change the context that your organisation is growing and thriving. Am I answering your question?

DJ: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I hear you. Actually, as a matter of fact, Amy Edmondson was on the podcast as well where we sort of spoke about psychological safety in-depth so that's a term that resonates. I hear you. It is about setting the right climate and sort of, I mean, another person I spoke to spoke about mindset of a farmer rather than a machinist. So, you sort of create the right soil, create the right conditions and then the crops will flourish and the outcomes will come rather than just push, push.

RS: Totally right. You create... you create... in the system, you create the conditions for the energy to flow and when you are in the zone you connect to the creative power of the system, the leaders and its teams. Through that... in that place not only you can lead from that place, you can create from that place and from that place you can change the context in which your organisation lives and thrives.

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Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: This insight is very similar to what Stephen MR Covey (SC), author of the book Trust and Inspire, speaks about. He makes the distinction between command and control and Trust and Inspire and urges to behave more like a gardener than a machinist.

SC: “Command and control is more of a mechanistic mindset, a machinist, tinkering, trust and inspire, I view myself I am a gardener. I am trying to create conditions for the seeds to grow, for the people to grow but the life and the power is in the seed, the life and the power is in the people, I am a gardener, not a mechanic, it is an organic system. Command and control will focus on motivation, carrot and stick. And there is nothing inherently wrong with that, it is just limited. So do rewards work, sure, they motivate people to want to get more rewards, more carrots, more sticks, we have got to constantly feed at more external stimuli. Trust and inspire, the focus is on inspiration, it is intrinsic, it is internal, it is inside of people whereas motivation is external, it is outside of them, inspiration is in turn inside of them. So I light the fire within. And when that fire gets lit inside of somebody, that can burn on for months if not years without the need for constant new external stimuli.”

End of transcription

Nugget from Stephen MR Covey that is referenced: [Decoding “Trust and Inspire”](#)

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Ricardo Sunderland- Nuggets

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- 103.01 Ricardo Sunderland - Leadership - Shaping context rather than setting direction
- 103.02 Ricardo Sunderland - 7 layers of the human energy field
- 103.03 Ricardo Sunderland - Tuning into our emotions
- 103.04 Ricardo Sunderland - Downside of professionalism
- 103.05 Ricardo Sunderland - The spiritual dimension
- 103.06 Ricardo Sunderland - Tuning into our purpose
- 103.07 Ricardo Sunderland - Role of breath in tuning into ourselves
- 103.08 Ricardo Sunderland - Tackling self-limiting beliefs
- 103.09 Ricardo Sunderland - Finding your rightful place in your family system
- 103.10 Ricardo Sunderland - Spiritual energy - The yeast in the bread of human energy
- 103.11 Ricardo Sunderland - In Summary - Playing to Potential

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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