



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 right side of the banner is a portrait of a man in a suit and glasses, identified as 'Podcast Host Deepak Jayaraman'. At the bottom left of the banner, there is a small text note: '*Just send us a Whatsapp with your name, number and email and we will add you to our distribution list.'

Context to the nugget

Mr Bhatt talks about how Chief Executives should be thoughtful about deciding which Boards they want to get onto. They need to have a very clear “Why” before they take a Board role. He also goes on to discussing the key behaviours that leaders need to embrace and let go as they transition from leading a company to influencing a Board. He underscores the criticality of a contributing mindset and says that it is possibly a greater indicator of effectiveness than competence on a topic.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): I want to talk about the transitions to board roles, but first is I think I wanted to understand having been a board member for several years now, what is the question people should ask themselves – Senior Executives to see if boards is an avenue through which they could contribute or to put it more bluntly who should not become a board member?

OP Bhatt (OP.B): So, board by definition is a bunch of people who bring diverse experiences, diverse backgrounds diverse competences and collectively maybe all that they bring is what the company requires at that point of time so, all board members are therefor to some extent quite different from each other and yet what I think is, at the board level, see any company, whether it is bank, whether it is steel, auto whatever, IT company any company has enough expertise within the company. Any good company chief executive, senior executive officers, senior officers they have lots of competencies within themselves. And what they don't have they can hire, they can get consultants, they can have people in contract and all kind of things, so I am not minimizing Domain competencies or specialist knowledge or whatever it is, but what I am saying is this is mainly one of the requirements or board member, there are other things which I think are more important to a board member, so that mindset whether everybody has or does not have is a bit of a question in my mind but in that mindset, you know that mindset comes or does not come because of where you were in the past, if it is a chief executive who becomes a board member. He is trained to be the boss, he is trained to be in command and control frame work, he is trained to get all credit and bask in all that glory and things that happened and now he is here one of many and whatever he contributes to the board even if it is the most important idea or most important intervention that is made in that company, it is the CEO, chairman or somebody else from the company who gets that glory out of it, so how much it disappoint him if not hurt him and therefore because of this he is not able to give his best to the board. So, to my mind it is apart from competencies for which you have been chosen to participate in a board, apart from that what is important is a contributory mindset or want if a better word maybe coach or mentor is also not the right thing. Can you enjoy giving of yourselves to the occasion, to the problem, to the person, to the company, in a manner that you actually enjoy doing it, you like doing that, you like doing because you have got so much in life you have so much, in terms of experience in terms of wisdom, what am I going to do with it if I am not going to give it ever

for a better cause, so if you have that mindset you will become a very good board member, because you are giving away for the good of others, other people other executives, the company etc. and the pleasure that you get is to see them succeed, to see the company's succeed, to see the company building great reputation or whatever it is, for all the things that you care for, it could be sustainability, it could be corporate social responsibility, it could be whatever right? But if you don't have that mindset that no matter what kind of competencies you have, there is a certain harshness around you or there is a certain reserve in giving and you may say all the right things at all the right time which others will also do or which the executives will also do but you may not bring about that little extra in your interactions, which makes the difference.

DJ: And for people, for senior executive who have transitioned from an executive to a non-executive kind of a role what are the few things they need to learn and unlearn, what are the new muscles that they build and plus what are the behaviours they need to stop?

OP.B: So, it's around this contributory mentality, for example they will be leading a team now they are a part of a team they have been giving instructions commanding people, now they have to use persuasion, influence through conversation sometimes it seems that it's a big change therefor, for some people this transition, once they are aware that this is the transition they have to make they can actually make it, it can take some time and effort but they can make it. Some people even after becoming aware that this is what needs to be done so that they are the right mindset for the board, some people actually cannot make it.

DJ: And why is that? What's the reason in those situations?

OP.B: I think its hard-coated psychology, it's too much of ME, I. you see a lot of speeches around with that language also you know every sentence or even across the tables. So, I think its psychology only and therefor these days there are a lot of psychometrics being done when you recruit people for an organization, any capacity, so I wonder if there should be some psychometric tastes for board members and there after give them some induction into some of these attributes which are required.

DJ: And again talking about maybe the first three to six months or let's say first two to three board meeting as the case might be again any wisdom for things that board members should do to settle well into a new board context?

OP.B: So there are something which the company should be doing so one which I have been advocating very strongly is that the company should prepare a kind of an induction program may be 5 sessions 10 sessions 20 sessions whatever it is, with senior executives on different subjects, maybe visits to plants and offices and things like that so that is something what company needs to do so it exposes to new director to the innards of the company so that whatever comes to the board subsequently agenda papers etc. he is ... at home, also he know some of these people, senior executives, in addition to the board member the people who are immediately below the board as executives etc. he gets to know some of them either personally or the otherwise so that is I think that company needs to take this step and to take it in a very structured thoughtful way, the person who joins the board also has to be very thoughtful, I mean if I get 10 people, when you get invited to join a board, you must think why do you want to join this company? Do you like the domain in which they work? Do you like the chairman? Do you like the company's reputation as the market? Do you know any board members? What do you think of them? Are you going there for your ego satisfaction? Are you going there because you have got spare time? Or are you going there because you think you can make a positive difference? What is the difference you think you can make it to this company, so it's important for them to think about some of these things before they say yes to

joining a board but even after joining a board for example on a few companies on a board level so supposing I am in company which deals with auto you mean there is any news item not only about his company but about the auto sector I am sort of drawn to it, I want to read what it is about, what it is this that and the other. So how do you keep yourself hungry to get all knowledge not information but knowledge around this company and how do you sort of become such that automatically you subconscious is processing it against this company, against some old agenda paper, again therefor something you are willing to talk in the next meeting or ring up and tell the CEO something about it, will your involvement and engagement come to this level where it becomes lagenas, if it becomes lagenas and you are constantly doing things to remain relevant knowledgeable, because you know in a board whatever agenda paper comes someone there is a presentation of 10 slides for those 10 slides those people would have gone from thousands of pages, they would have spent days, weeks, months in preparing that, right? You get only those ten sheets of paper if you are going to participate in an intellectual discussion based on just that then you are completely inadequate the asymmetry is huge and you are not in the organization, you are not part of the organization, you don't have access of many of this, you can if you want to but then you should know what to ask, so if your board member wants to meet so and so and discuss so and so topic, nobody is going to say no to him, no company will say no to him, so therefore how do you keep abreast, what do you read who are your friends? Who do you meet? What do you talk about? In the context of board meeting and it is sort of you know are most continuous so if you don't have that mindset, you are in only switch on and switch off board meeting is, so you do something then maybe you will not be good board member.

DJ: And you briefly spoke about this, in terms of selecting which board do you want to get on to and you also spoke about some criteria but what are some of the mistakes you see people make when in terms of selection of boards that they get on to.

OP.B: So I think the first mistake that people make is that they don't select, they say yes to the first board that they are invited to, I don't think people select, most of people do not select. See most board positions are such that they are not available all the time, not many of them available, rarely it comes 1 2 3 4 its by word of mouth or somebody your friend or your old boss or somebody maybe just call you or a head entrepreneur call you. One at a time, next come out of three months or one year or whatever it is may not come also, so when it comes I don't think people give themselves a luxury of selection, they say yes, and this is what I tell everybody, I said the first time you get invited to join I would always say no. if they have really done research on you and they really want you for all the rise, they will come back they will persuade you, they will want to have a conversation with you at least. Meanwhile you do your research, so when the conversation takes place it will be more meaningful, it will tell you more things, things that you do not know, things which will help you take a decision, yes or no whatever it is but you can't say yes. In this most people do not go unless they are over bodied, they don't have time, this that and the other, but the person who is transiting from an executive or some other level, academician bureaucrat or whatever it is and now wants to transition into board most people take the first things that come.

DJ: how have you chosen the boards you are on?

OP.B: So, actually I got invited to all those boards, I didn't have to choose, I just got invited and the kinds of boards that time I was invited to as you are saying yourself, it is very little reason to say no except you don't have enough time

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Two things stayed with me in this segment.

One is the point Mr Bhatt makes about having a contributory mindset possibly being a bigger indicator of effectiveness than the specific competency you bring. In most profession this mindset versus skill-set dichotomy exists

- Commercial acumen versus Finance toolkit
- People orientation versus HR capability
- Giving mindset versus Social Work degree

I guess the key is that when you are on the margin, the skill-set can often be taught but it is often much harder to rewire a mindset especially when somebody is at the tenure of a Chief Exec looking to become a Board member. So, it's worth having an honest look in the mirror to see if you have that mindset and whether you are getting on to Boards for the right reasons.

Second is the notion of saying No to the first Board role that comes your way and letting people convince you that it is the right thing for you. It is an interesting way of ensuring that you do the right diligence before getting onto the first Board.

I am reminded of my earlier conversation with Vinita Bali (VB) who has been a leader in 6 countries across 5 continents and for her, opportunity to continue to have a global perspective and learn about new industries was the key criterion as she thought of Board roles.

VB: "Board serves the purpose of a continuous learning and development plan for a non-exec. You learning about different domains how they look at opportunities and businesses and so on so certainly for me global board are critical and important because I do like a global perspective in fact I got of a lot of Indian boards and I wanted to restrict them really A only because there are so many boards you can do if you want to be a productive board member, so again I joined the board of Crisil which is very much an analytical company it does a bunch of other different things ratings is only part of their business it has again ability to interact with executives from SNP and McGraw-Hill who are on the board so in my case I have chosen boards that will expand my horizon both from a domain perspective as well as a geographic perspective"

DJ: I guess the key is for each one of us to be true to what gives us energy and use that to decide whether Boards make sense for us and to guide which Boards we choose to get on.

Thank you for listening. For more insights on Transitioning from an Executive to an NED role and for being an Effective Board member, please visit Playtopotential.com and look for the relevant playlists under the category of Transitions. You might also find segments of conversations with Ravi Venkatesan, Vinita Bali, Vedika Bhandarkar and Rama Bijapurkar thought provoking in this context. This is your host Deepak Jayaraman here. To know more about the Executive Coaching and the Transition Advisory work I do, please visit www.transitioninsight.com

End of nugget transcription

Nugget from Vinita Bali that is referenced: [Being an effective Board member.](#)

RELATED PLAYLISTS YOU MIGHT LIKE

Executive to NED: Leaders talk about how Senior Executives need to think about being effective in a Board context. This often involves a rewiring of their mindsets in terms of being clear around who they are accountable to and where their loyalties lie and a shift in the way they interact with a group of people to drive outcomes, something that can be hard for a lot of people. 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.

OP Bhatt - Nuggets

- 36.00 OP Bhatt - The Full Conversation
- 36.01 OP Bhatt - Transitioning to becoming a Board Member
- 36.02 OP Bhatt - Being an effective Chairperson
- 36.03 OP Bhatt - Making good Board decisions
- 36.04 OP Bhatt - Chairperson versus CEO - Leadership nuances
- 36.05 OP Bhatt - Ensuring Board members add value
- 36.06 OP Bhatt - Seeking and giving feedback
- 36.07 OP Bhatt - Attitudes that have driven career
- 36.08 OP Bhatt - 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.