Context to the nugget

Pramath talks about the portfolio of initiatives that has today. More importantly, he talks about the underlying principle behind how he has put this portfolio together. He gives us a peek into how he thinks about success using internal and external metrics.

Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): You wear multiple hats. If you had to talk about the pie-chart of the different things you do, give us an insight into what that looks like.

Dr Pramath Sinha (PS): So, at this point in my life, I think there are three, kind of, legs to what I do. One, is that I am an entrepreneur and I started something called 9.9 Media a few years ago. That takes up some of my time. And we continue to operate in the specialist media space where we have some very prominent brands like Digit, CIO & Leader, IT Next, CFO India. Our business is really focused around those four brands, so I continue to do that.

My second leg is some interesting consulting work that I continue to do, which lot of people here don't know about because my clients are generally multinationals. But I work with Madeleine Albright, former US secretary of state on a firm that she started, called the Albright Stonebridge Group, which advises multinationals on challenges that they face in international markets, and in our case, I lead their team in India. On the face of it, it is consulting but it's very different from the typical McKinsey consulting, where it's really at the intersection of politics, business, policy, and the social sector. So, the problems are very multi-dimensional and the solutions are not obvious. It requires multiple stakeholder management and a fairly holistic approach. There, we don't only advice, but we actually execute a potential way forward. So, that's something that takes up a chunk of my time.

Then, the final thing is the obvious higher education space where I spend time. There, it's really between two sets of things. One, is a philanthropic, more volunteer, set of things, which includes ISB and the two campuses, Ashoka, and something I started a couple of years ago, called the Vedica Scholars Programme. In addition to that, I am now starting to do stuff which is more in helping other people improve or build new institutions. That again is more project management mode, of literally going and doing a BOT or becoming a BOT partner for people who already own institutions or want to build institutions to say, 'Given my experience, let me do something for you which is really high quality, either to improve what you have or to build something new'.

DJ: You have a portfolio of different things, high-impact things, you do. How do you think about impact and success? Is there some sort of a yardstick you set for yourself, in the context of what you are doing?

PS: I think these things are all so different that it's hard to say that there is any one yardstick, but if I reflect on it, there's always an internal metric and an external metric. And there is a very personal metric, which I will come to. So, I think, on the external metric, my yardstick is really and a lot of this came out of the McKinsey experience that are the clients, are the people I am working with, are the customers or people I am catering to high-quality people with the right values and right intents, that I enjoy working with them and we have mutual respect for each other. I think, in all cases, there has to be high aspiration. So, I am not getting into those kinds of metrics: you have to be world class or you have to do something that impacts a lot of people. I think, those can vary and everybody would talk about them but for me the relationship and the quality of people in McKinsey, we used to say quality of client and quality of impact have to go together. So, I think that is a one big metric that I try to use. Sometimes, impact may be small, but they are good people and you want to help them out. So, I think, that's very much something that guides me as I look at what I do externally or who I engage with.

The second is that I also want to do things where I am able to attract good people. I think, in my kind of model, where I am doing multiple things, it's very dependent on having a high-quality set of people. Otherwise, you possibly can't do so many things. So, to be able to say that listen, am I doing things in a way or am I working on things and I'm doing it in a way that attracts high-quality people to me, who, on one hand, I can depend on and can leverage and on the other hand, I can be a mentor to and help them be successful at what they want to do. That, I think, together with the quality of people you are working with on the outside, gives me the measure for what I am doing and why am I doing it.

Then, finally, it all really comes down, I think, as you grow older in life, to what is the sense of satisfaction and sense of purpose that you draw from these things you do. On one hand, it may seem that I do bunch of unrelated things which have a myriad of very different outcomes, problems, and context. But underlying all of this, is that, for me, Pramath, and not for you or other people what seems fulfilling, satisfying, purposeful, taking into account some of the practical realities of life that I have to earn some money or take care of my future. That's really what determines success or what you want to do.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: The key takeaway for me here was the way Pramath articulated his yard stick both from an external and an internal lens. I find that often in India especially when you come out of the Indian competitive system (if I reflect back on my peers from IITM and IIMA), you are often driven by external metrics - Salary, Title and so on and suddenly when you hit mid-30s and beyond, I find several people not being able to articulate what their inner yard stick is. Having that clarity around what you are solving for, what gives you energy and what good looks like for you and only you can be immensely clarifying as one navigates options especially when you hit the mid-30s and beyond.

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End of nugget transcription

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Dr. Pramath Sinha - Nuggets

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- 14.02 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Consulting (McKinsey) as a career option
- 14.03 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Transitioning out of consulting (including views on entrepreneurship)
- 14.04 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Authentic leadership
- 14.05 Dr. Pramath Sinha - What consulting doesn't prepare you for
- 14.06 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Vedica Scholars Programme — Nurturing women leaders
- 14.07 Dr. Pramath Sinha - Educating ourselves (and link with leadership of the future)
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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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