



60 Seconds with...

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You come from a very successful international IT background, and you are excited about transitioning into leadership coaching. Can you tell me a little about what motivates you?

My very first work experience was in a very large steel company in India. I was chosen from a large cohort of graduate engineers to be the technical attaché to the President, and I was in that position for about a year. Being exposed to leadership at that level, I could see at first hand the pressure that senior leaders are under and the necessity of highly developed people leadership skills. At a leadership level, you achieve more through other people than you ever can by yourself.

With all my subsequent leadership/management positions, I've found it vital to find the right people to work with and to help them develop their potential. Coaching has been an integral part of my own leadership practice. Several of these people still call me up after more than a decade to discuss their possibilities. They've done very well in their careers, and I feel that their accomplishment has in a way become my accomplishment too.

How might leaders in IT benefit from coaching?

High-level technical knowledge doesn't necessarily bestow you with great people skills. Knowledge workers, IT or otherwise, will need to develop the skillsets to be an exceptional people person, if they want to maximise their potential. I hear a lot of talk about good leadership, but in reality there's often not a lot of attention to developing it. We need to walk the talk!

In the IT world specifically, I see at times a hierarchical and almost nepotistic culture. A manager will have protégés - 'my people', and will look after them, but it's often conditional on those same high performing people not getting ahead of the manager. I see this both in Australia and elsewhere. This needs to change.

What's the range of coaching that you do? It seems to me that your global and cross-cultural experience is so valuable.

There's so much opportunity for developing leadership potential, and it's often a movement from technology leadership to people leadership. Many people, who have fantastic expertise in their field, can enhance their careers through building social and relationship capital.

I'm passionate about exploring these uncharted personal and organisational territories as I feel very connected with people who have dreams and aspirations, yet feel constrained by known and unknown factors. I have a mission to help them get to where they want to go and beyond.

I think my range of coaching is defined more by purpose than by industry, although I obviously understand very well the 'nature of the beast' in IT!

What do you see as the dominant characteristics of Australian business?

I think there is significantly more acceptance of other cultures here than in any other country. There is a strong mateship here, and you are always welcome to be part of it, no matter where you are from. On the flipside for someone coming from another country, it can take a long time to find a job. I have also noticed that where in the USA, people buy from companies, here people buy from people. So, good relationships and personal authentic connections are vital.

Do you have any particular leadership role models?

I find Satya Nadella inspiring as the leader of Microsoft, definitely visionary and people-centred. I get inspiration from anyone who encourages others to back themselves and be their very best.

I noticed your interest in cosmology. So how did the universe start and where is it going?

It started with a big bang, and before that was quantum soup. It will slowly dissipate and stars will die. But there are multiple universes out there and no doubt billions of civilisations of different types. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.