

Host

Hi Abhijit, Welcome to Mrigashira. Thanks for taking time out to do this chat with me. I wanted to start off, you know about this entire focus on opting for generalists than specialists, you know, in our sector increasingly we are seeing this and specialization is not something that people prefer these days. So, I just wanted to ask you, what has changed? And is it something like a fad that is, that just goes away with time? Or is it something that's here to stay?

Abhijit Bhaduri

So thank you very much first of all, you know Radha for having me here, it's so nice of you to think of me, one of the things that I would like to really talk about is that we are going to live in a hybrid world and you will find that along the continuum, it's going to be a continuum. See you will never find that there is just one answer to a question that it's always going to be a year or somewhere on that spectrum. So, for example, if you think about work from home versus being in the office, which is better, which is where the world will be, you will find that it's going to be along the spectrum, some people will entirely switch to you know work from home, some will entirely move to back in the office and some will sort of you know have that in between. So this is also the place where in terms of the skill continuum, this is where you will see so specialists versus generalist, however, I think there are a couple of things to keep in mind. One is, what do you think about generalists, you are, you know, what is the advantage, which is that, you know, they are able to move from one element to the other. So, I guess, instead of looking at it from a specialist versus generalist lens, I would actually think about it from the lens of adaptability versus rigidity. And when you look at that, that also means that, you know, even if you are a specialist, the ability to work across many different contexts, really makes you really in demand in the market. So, if you are, let's say, if you're a, you're a marketing person or a PR person, having done a certain kind of work, you know, you understand digital, you also understand, you know, the brand management, then you understand analytics and it, how do you create all of that.

And you potentially also understand the implications of a certain kind of a marketing choice from the point of view of b2b, b2c, so you're really looking, so the field is really the same. So the way to think about if you take up more meta view, you're really looking at the generalist part of it. So you know, in general, you're a communications person, from a specialist lens, if you look at it, then you are looking at you know let's say, I'm a digital marketer, versus let's say on social media influencer, it's pretty much the same at a broader level, the context are different.

Host

Yeah. So, you know, you brought in this aspect of, you know, adaptability versus rigidity, right. So does that also, in, in a way make somebody not deeply focused, you know, somebody who is more like a Rolling Stone?

Abhijit Bhaduri

No, that's not true that, you know, you really have to have a deep skill. And the reason why I kind of always will be in favor of building that. Deep skill, which can be applied in multiple contexts is the way I would sort of look at it. So when you think about the context, that you got to keep changing, because that will be there, but you bring in a specialist kind of a lens to look at it. And in general, when the economy's you know, are slower that is when you are actually looking at, you know, having just a greater demand for specialists. I mean, if you really had to bring in one person who's

going to, you know, fix, let's say, a surgery, in the case where there is very little time like you, you are not going to go for somebody who can do dentistry as well as this and that I mean, you're really going to go for the one who really knows how to fix that particular problem. Then the bigger the crisis, you know, the more you are looking for a person to solve that kind of a problem. When there are opportunities which are galore, then you also are willing to take chances with other skills. So, it sort of moves along that spectrum.

Host

Yeah. So, you know, in our industry specifically, you know, for example, there was no social media as rampant as it is today, or social influencers, were not there a couple of years ago. So there's so many things that are evolving in this industry. So how do you develop deep skill in a quick point of time.

Abhijit Bhaduri

So, I think today, the ability to your build your skills in any of these areas, it becomes infinitely easier because you know, you're looking at people, you can learn from your three different models of learning. One is education, which is that you do a quick course, I mean, there are courses galore, which are available for free or paid ones, which are available online so you can just do that. The second is that, you know, sort of have exposure to multiple people and multiple schools of thought today even that is possible that you can actually look at many different people and follow their work, you can follow the person's work on different social platforms. So, whether it's Twitter, Instagram, blogs, YouTube, etc, I mean, you can really follow a person's journey through different things. So that is so that was first was education, then is exposure, and the third is experienced, then you can start your own platform, you can create your own blogs, you can run your own website, you can have your LinkedIn or Twitter following, all of that enables you to practice what you've picked up, so it's a combination of these three that makes it possible for people to pick up the skills, you know, early enough. And if you follow trends and signals, you will see yes, of course, there will be times when it will be something that will fade away, fritter away, you know, they are of course, fads. But by and large, if you have been following trends, you will follow a scenario where you know people, you come in prepared as the way that the acceptance of that particular model increases, you find yourself better prepared to respond to that.

Host

Yeah, so one of the things I think we also face in our industry Abhijit is you know, the last point you were talking about in terms of education, exposure and, and experience.

Abhijit Bhaduri -experience.

Host

Yeah, the last part of it sometimes, you know, when somebody wants to make this switch, let's say from being a corporate communication professional into a digital marketer, or a social media marketer, right, the switch becomes difficult, because, you know, the person is not getting hired, there's no prior experience. So, it sort of gets into some kind of a chicken and egg, kind of a situation, how does one come out of that?

Abhijit Bhaduri

So when you look at, you know, the meat, if there is one field, which is sort of undergone dramatic change, I would say it is the media, you know, you have multiple platforms, from social platforms to you know, there's print and you know, corporate communication and social media, b2b, b2c so

there, there are a number of nuanced views of, you know, the bigger umbrella if I were to look at it, the communication professionals. Yeah, so then those platforms have changed but at the same time, you know, if you look at it, I mean, social media has been there for, you know, blogging, I remember starting a blog, if I remember, right, I mean, the first blog I did was in 2005, you know, so between then and now, it's been 16 years so the situation is that when people, you know, drag their feet, when something is in the early stages, you, you know, you're missing out an opportunity to learn different things. Yes, it is quite possible that you know, what you are picking up may or may not sort of translate into the mainstream train. But then that's the whole point that, you know, you are building your adaptability to the different scenarios. So those who were able to, you know, ride the wave, from the early days, they also learn to make their mistakes and they build their skills and you know, at that point of time, it is a much smaller group that you are working with, and you're also it's that much easier to build your position in that particular platform because after all, nobody you know, before the digital medium happened, there was nothing called Digital Marketing. But as these different things have come in, you know, there are traditional marketing people or communications people who adapted to that over the years, so then it's become easier but then there is a very large set of You know, people, journalists, and communication professionals, who have been reluctant to sort of bring in those elements and for a variety of reasons, and sometimes rightly so. But they have been slower to adapt, and then there comes to a point of time when everybody looks for that particular skill. So then at that point of time, you know, as the market for that skill improves, the talent supply improves, then people are less, you know, ready to take chances with you, but in the early stages, people will take chances with you because there is nobody who's trained and skilled and qualified and certified. But today, there are enough people who can be made available, you know, through a certification. So, actually, I would argue that, if you have the experience, you know, getting that certification means you are again, once again, getting the best of both worlds, you know, you have your experience in the traditional media, and now you also sort of learning, you know, because once any change becomes mainstream, one sign of that is that you will get loads and loads of places where you can get certified, you know, certification programs, so, then that's a time then you're right means that there is enough supply, which is going to be there. So that's a warning sign, if you are not able to get that certification for yourself, then it could limit your possibilities.

Host

You know, one of the things, you know, in recent times that is seeing a significant change is the content industry, in, in the sense that people are increasingly using artificial intelligence, like, there is a book where one entire chapter is, I think, written by the AI, you know, tool as such, so, sometimes there is also the fear of, you know, getting pretty much like, becoming redundant, right, or becoming, you know, almost like robots replacing humans, right kind of a situation. So, how does one counter that, how do you protect yourself, because here, the churn is much faster, you know, in two years, three years' time, I guess, in the digital and online space, things are evolving and changing, newer technologies are coming and you know, newer things are coming.

Abhijit Bhaduri

Yeah, when you, you know, when you look at any of the fields, I mean, you know, anything which has automation, if you are sort of looking at it, things which are, let's say, you know, rule-based things, say if there is a predictable way of doing something, then automation is going to be ahead of human beings, any which way that you look at it. So, you know, one of the articles that I had written was called the citius, altius, fortius jobs are going to go so anything which is faster, higher, stronger, you know, machines are faster, they can sort of lift more than us so they can take something higher and stronger, obviously, in terms of, you know, what they can do. So, if, in anything, if it is you're

doing something with speed machines can do it, if it is a question of looking at 50,000 sources, and, you know, gathering a particular word and looking at that, machines are going to be better at doing that. However, if you sort of really find that, what is it that human beings have an inherent advantage is that human beings can understand the context, much better, you know, they are able to understand the human needs better, the exceptions to the rule. So, you know, for example, not everybody who stays in a particular Pin code code, or zip code, depending on what you use, speaks the same language, I mean, so, you know, the moment you understand that, the human beings have an advantage, but that's a place where machines have a disadvantage, because it's very hard to explain why, you know, something will not work out there, machines are good at doing things, which are, you know, broad scale, but mass scale everybody so if you had to do that kind of a mass communication, think about mail merge, you know mail merge actually uses the same format, the same content and makes itself you know, instead of my name, it will put your name and say, Radha, here is to inform you or whatever it is, yeah. But if, if you look at what do we value, we actually value the human ability to engage with us, the ability to create that relationship. So those are uniquely human skills and if you built that combination into your own workspace, whatever field that might be from human resources, to media communication journalism, whichever way you look at it, this is going to be at least for the visible future, two decades or three decades, certainly it is going to remain with us. So, yes, a certain kind of skill will go away. But then there is a vast area that has left. So, I guess this whole model of I did something, and now I'm going to become redundant, it only means that you have to be able to figure out a way to do upgrade yourself periodically, one way or the other. So, I don't think we have a choice in that aspect.

Host

I have one last question, which is around, you know, you have seen the sector from as close as it can get right, and what's your advice or suggestion to both the employers and employees, as you know, we are going through a lot of churn, particularly in the last one year, you know, on the media front, on the way the brands are communicating, you know, there's been a sea change to what's your advice or suggestion to both employers and employees?

Abhijit Bhaduri

So I think, you know, if it when you look at both the employers and the employees, you know, the ability to invest in growing the people is a tremendous, you know, investment to make, not necessarily because, you know, it's don't look at it as an act of charity, which is a great way to create new business models, after all, each of these new business models that have come up. And in the midst of every one of these changes, massive changes that you're thinking about, there have been, you know, businesses, which have been super successful. So, if you really look at that, being able to, you know, go out on a limb, make that investment, create that human talent, that really works well for both the employer and the employee. So I think when you see this whole thing of a business model becoming redundant, is bad for the employer. But it's also bad for the employee, because you know, then there is one less place for that person to be employed. Having said that, I think the whole notion of an individual requiring an organization to be the middle person, before you reach a consumer, or, you know, the person who's going to pay for your skills, that is becoming more, you know, redundant over a span of time, it will fade away. Again, as I said, it's not going to be a, it's not like organizations will disappear, they won't, they'll be there. But this whole notion that all of us are necessarily going to, you know, you finish your education and look for employment, I think that mindset is something that is going to change over time, because you will see more and more people reaching directly, which is, you know, you look at somebody like Substack, I mean, the number of journalists who moved away, who've taken their audience with them. And we're actually able to do

really well, from the point of view of, you know, earning revenues out of that can, in fact, many of them are doing better than what they were being paid, let's say as employees. So, the possibilities are there. Now, you know, it means investing in your brand, it means writing more consistently, it means connecting with people, there's a whole lot of human skill, it is not just about being invisible, that writing the very powerful piece on the newspaper one day, it is much more than that. It is about you know, writing is just one part of it, which as I said, can be, you know, taken over by the machine. But this whole business of connecting with the reader, being able to actually build the community, being able to sort of share ideas and receive those ideas, engage in a two-way communication. These are human skills. No machine is ever going to be able to do that. So, then this is the advantage that people have to work with. And then if you are doing that, I mean there are opportunities going to be there for you always.

Host

Cool. Thanks Abhijit. Thanks for making time and it's a great pleasure to have had you on Mrigashira.

Abhijit Bhaduri

Thank you so much for having me here Radha