

The Nomadic Mindset Leaders are not Superheroes, They are Human



TNM_Podcast Episode #007:

Ritu Mehrish

with Kevin Cottam

Transcription



Kevin Cottam 0:04

Welcome to the nomadic mindset season one. My name is Kevin Cottam, a global Nomad and the author of the leadership book. The nomadic mindset never settle for too long. Over the season, we will go on a journey to discover what is the nomadic mindset and how you can tap into that. For this I will be interviewing of a diverse group of cross cultural thought leaders from all walks of life.

Kevin Cottam 0:28

So let's get on with it. Let's go nomadic together.

Kevin Cottam 0:37

Welcome back to the nomadic mindset. And if you're tuning in for the first time today, welcome and enjoy the journeys we go on in each episode. In this episode, the nomadic mindset meets leaders are not heroes, they are humans to speak about this is executive coach reetou marish. I know Marie to and she is certainly a woman on a mission to To

Kevin Cottam 1:00

humanise leadership,

Kevin Cottam 1:01

there are many things I love about three, two, and one is that she provides a refreshing and unique perspective on leadership by talking about the challenges, dilemmas and blocks that leaders go through in their journey. She is the writer of the new leadership book leaders block. Let's find out from Rita and to start with what she means about humanising leadership. So Rito it's really wonderful to have you on as a guest to the nomadic mindset today, I'm just very, very excited. I mean, we have been on an interesting journey, similar paths in the last few years and I that's why I would like to understand a little bit more about you and also the leadership block but also what that has to also do with mindset and around the nomadic mindset and how it plays in. So I'm going to start off by first of all, I noticed something on your which I thought was very interesting on your profile and you talk about humanise leadership. So humanised leadership You mean by humanising leadership?

Ritu Mehrish 2:02

Okay, great. So firstly, thank you, Kevin, for having me on on your show. Very excited. And as you said, it's, you know, we've been on similar paths. So it's really nice to be doing this with you. So thanks once again. Now coming to your question about humanising leadership. So, basically, that is my inner theme, so to say, you know, that is a broader theme that I have, you know, as part of the work that I do, which is really about change, you know, kind of telling, telling of maybe creating more awareness around that leaders are not superheroes, they are humans and you know, therefore, they are going to have, you know, the usual thing that humans go through, they will fail they will feel demotivated at times, they will feel uninspired at times, they will not perform on top of the game all the time, and that's what makes them human. So so my bigger theme is humanising leadership to saying don't treat your leaders like Gimme gotta like superheroes.

Kevin Cottam 3:02

Yeah, demigods. Sometimes people do that. Right is treated as demagogue. And that also is a mindset actually that goes into people. Right is that's what they think because their perception or the perspective of, of leaders. And so if that's the case, in your you talked about this inner theme, what does that inner theme do for you now that you have this, this strength around humanising leadership? What does that done for you?

Ritu Mehrish 3:33

Yeah, that's a great question, Kevin. So what the inner theme or what this whole theme of humanising leadership, what that's done for me, in my area of work, is that this kind of a lonely compass, so to say, you know, so anything that I look at, whether it's through my coaching, whether it's through my speaking or running these master classes, the lens I wear is, how do we break, break whatever model or whatever thing we're talking about. Whatever problems or solutions in in a way that kind of relates at a human level which makes more human, you know, so for example, a very small example we talk about communication. Now, there are lots of models, different types, different frameworks, but when I look at them, look at all of those my key objective or my lens to that is, how is this communication? Helping humanise me? How is this making a leader look more feel more sound like like a human rather than, than a robot rather than somebody who's trained or who's, you know, trying to behave like this got everything together. So everything I look at now is is with this lens of, is it human? Is it real? Is it you know, is it how we feel so, so yeah, that's that's how this team has helped me look at all my work with the lens of putting the human element back into leadership.

Kevin Cottam 4:54

I like the way you talk about the lens and also I like the way you talk about, it sounds like your inner reflection. Do you ask this question, even as you approach either a speech or a client that you might have and to, and which then I would imagine starts to help you is to expand into their realm. Would that be so?

Ritu Mehrish 5:14

Absolutely because, you know, so for example, if you think of preparing for a speech or preparing for a keynote, the minute you start thinking, Oh, this is going to be my speech, this is what I'm going to share. This is what you know, people are gonna get out of it. That is one part of it, you need to do a little bit of it, but if you make that the entire part you miss, you know, you missed the key point. And that's where that's the point where I focus which is about Okay, so you know, these people are having this journey. They've had a tough time because you know, the company's gone through restructuring or transformation or change the dealing with so much of that. How do I empathise more with them? How do I connect with them more so that I can tell the stories that I'm telling that they can relate to and they can find comfort in that And they can learn something from them. So really kind of, you know, applying that lens, even when I'm preparing for for a keynote for them. And that's exactly what it what it's done for me, you know, is always to apply that lens as I said,

Kevin Cottam 6:13

I would if you would if leaders were to actually apply that lens. I mean, what would that do for the way they communicate or the way they empathise or the way they lead? Or the way they look at it? The whole sort of the business model that they have? I mean, what would that do for them if they stopped for a moment thought that way?

Ritu Mehrish 6:34

That's right. And Kevin, that kind of it's a nice segue into what I want to talk about is leaders flock, actually, when leaders start to look at themselves as humans, then there is more acceptance of their own failures or of their own challenges of their own blocks. You know, and acceptance of that, yeah, they don't have answers to everything, that they can also fail or that they can also not know something, right? So that is what when they apply the humanising leadership element, they look at themselves as human, our as any of the other team members in the team. You know, they're no different. And that's when the real magic starts happening of them accepting, acknowledging, and then reaching out and asking for help and building those bridges with their teams, or, you know, or with people outside of the organisation, but really reaching out and come up saying that, you know, I don't know it, and I need help.

Kevin Cottam 7:32

Yeah, it's that awareness that we all need to know. But that's a mindset as well. Right? And also, we have to get to that point and sometimes it's very difficult to get to that and but, you know, we this, I think what you're talking about flows beautifully into mindset as well. I mean, I love that what you're talking about accepting, acknowledging and reaching out, and it's really about being the mirror but it takes us certain mindset to be able to do that. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Ritu Mehrish 8:04

Sure. So you're right. He said, it does take a mindset to set something. But one of the ways I found is, you know, the way to develop the right mindset is when you look around when you start to think you are not alone in this. So I'll give you a little bit of a backstory, when I was working on my book leaders block and leaders block is about the challenges in the blocks that leaders go through in their leadership journey, and therefore the name leaders block comes from writer's block. So when I was interviewing leaders for the book, one of the things I found is that while you know they were okay to share their stories of, of struggle of failures of telomeres that they went through, there was still a sense of reluctance in taking these stories out, you know, because they felt they will be judged. They thought they're the only ones. They thought that how can they be leaders and not know this? But what happened was by the time I bought to my 20th or 30th interview When I started telling leaders that, you know, I've heard this kind of story before, or I've interviewed 30 leaders before you, and they've all said the same thing. There was that sense of relief, there was a sense of, Oh, I'm not alone in this. And the minute they got that, the, again, the mindset shift you're talking about comes in, because then you start thinking it's pretty normal. You know, this is not something that's happening only to me, or I'm not the only one. And therefore, then the acknowledgement of that becomes much more easier. And that's exactly what I try and do now in my coaching and in my speeches, is just this tell that, you know, tell the leaders that they're not alone in this, like everybody around them is going through it. And from there then starts the, the opening of

minds of saying, Yeah, this is quite normal. And therefore I can you know, I'm okay to acknowledge it. So it's like a slow mindset shift, but but it does come from the fact that they're not alone in this,

Kevin Cottam 9:56

huh. They're not alone. Sometimes I will say Do you really think that you're you Make the situation

Kevin Cottam 10:05

wake up.

Kevin Cottam 10:08

We all have these things. It's not the trailer to you. So yeah, but we get into that, as you say, the block. And the way I can relate that is through the work that I've done with a nomadic mindset is this narrowing and thinking pattern and becomes that narrow almost into a settler thinking is that we have these blocks, which really close us instead of expand that, that whole thinking pattern or or even our bodies are the whole entity of ourselves to to be able to accept, as you say, and acknowledge and then reach out. But if we the closing is a hard thing for them then to reach out because it's closed. And that's a mindset itself, right?

Ritu Mehrish 10:54

That's correct. That's correct. And in fact, you know, a great point that you made about narrowing down point of view is, uh, one of the, you know, one of the strategies to overcome a leaders block really starts with, with the big picture, you know, have the ability to step back and, you know, get a bigger perspective, zoom out, and, you know, look at things broadly. And that's where a lot of shifts start to happen when you pull yourself out from the issue that you're facing. And kind of, you know, look at the bigger picture, you know, the longer time period and suddenly things start to fall in in place and you get a different perspective so that's really about broadening your horizons or really broadening your outlook

Kevin Cottam 11:37

hmm yeah, I love the way you talk about that because as you say in the blog, I'm usually when clients come to us right as a coach, is they come in and more of a narrower state of mind because they're worried about something or blocked or or in stress or whichever which clinic closes the not only the physical being but the mind up and what is is the one of the coaches, mandates and actually what we're supposed to do is to be able to hold, hold them to that narrowness meet them in that world and then start pulling them out. But through the curiosity and questions, right, and so, so, one of the, you know, as you probably know, is when, which syncs beautifully into this wider picture is the wonderful quote that I got from big data in Mongolia was think vastly act narrowly. So it's really about that, in many ways is thinking that space and that vastness and then acting in a very quickly and focusing, you know, what you need to solve or the decision.

Ritu Mehrish 12:41

That's right, and that's a beautiful quote, you know, think past the act now. Yes. eautiful.

Kevin Cottam 12:47

Oh, can you share with us a little bit more about this journey in actual fact that you took to get to leadership block, how did you get there because I know that you have a very interesting story. yourself. And so I would like to just share with us that.

Ritu Mehrish 13:04

Okay, yes. So I'll give a little longer answer to this. Okay, so bear with me, Kevin, as you're aware, I do have a big, you know, huge, long corporate experience before I started doing what I do now. So I worked in the corporate world for 20 years. Then when I, you know, put that and I started coaching leaders, and I started speaking and meeting more and more leaders. I realised, you know, that there weren't, there wasn't any, there was like lots of material which told leaders, you know, how to be more effective, how to be more productive, how to be more successful, efficient, but actually, there wasn't enough material of very little material that talked about leaders challenges that talked about, you know, the dilemma that leaders go through in the leadership journey or go through in the day to day life. And I started to reflect back on my own journey that you know, I had gone through so many problems. grammes. But actually, a lot of times nobody really talks about the daily, you know, the daily challenges that I had when I was leading a big team of thousand people across eight countries and five continents, you know, nobody really talked about a lot of those challenges. So when I came on the other side of the table, one of my he objective was that I want to talk about stories, you know, I want to talk about stories that are that are told by leaders, you know, leader, which are not told too often. So therefore, I took this whole approach of, you know, in my book is really is has a lot of stories of the leaders are for the leaders by the leaders, you know, and and that's really the key message that I have in the book is that the stories of real leaders and I and as I was interviewing a lot of a lot of leaders for my book, it kind of I reflected and a lot of my own stories well came into mind. And in fact, one of one of the stories that I tell even in my keynotes, and in my In my book is about myself going through a leaders block, you know, I, I was a very good performer, you know, really high, really high, highly rated and was like, you know, quite a rock star. And then I went through this leaders block where I went from being, you know, Australia rock star to a flop star, like, you know, I went from my team fighting for my promotion to my team then asking to move out of my team. And as I reflected now, on that particular incident, I realised that was classic leaders block, you know, I was stuck with something in the situation there. Yeah, so all So that's just one one of my stories, but in the book, and in my keynote, I tell a lot of stories of all these other leaders, you know, and therefore, the audience is able to relate to them. And you know, as I tell them, the audience like I almost see all the time like audience nodding their head saying, yep, and that could be me, actually, or there's like part of me there. And that's the whole idea and that's the way to normalise leaders block

Kevin Cottam 15:59

y'all I like the way that you your story very much. And I know that you went through some challenges we all do. Yeah, again, we're not unique in this situation, right, as they say. But I think that what you said there is the flop star is that the flop star game gets into our system or into our genetics almost is to it takes us down. And that starts narrowing and narrowing as again and so that's that mindset that you know, we start believing in our our problems, right?

That we have these but but you know, what you're doing and normalising i think is fantastic. And because what is normal, right, and we it's different for everyone? Well, my question to you on this is, I know that you do an awful lot of work, not only with the leaders but you're also as a coach. But what is it that you do in a larger capacity Besides speaking, do you do workshops and do do other things like that? or?

Ritu Mehrish 17:04

Yeah. So what I do now, first run of, as you said, from apart from coaching and speaking, I've also built a master class around leaders blog. It's called transformative leadership. That's a two day programme, where leaders go through, you know, which is again, the whole idea is to build awareness about the possible challenges that come their way, or at least come their way. And then how do they deal with them, not only for themselves, but also for their teams, you know, because the leader could be in perfect shape. But if he doesn't have the ability to recognise the symptoms, or acknowledge these symptoms in the team, in his teens in his or her teens, then also there's a damage that's happening, because then it's kind of not enabling him to perform at hundred percent. So it's not only for himself, but also for, you know, his his or her teams, so it's relevant for both and then The second part of the programme is really about how to build sustainability. So that's called that I'm calling leadership staying power, like how do you play the long term game? You know, how do you avoid these blocks in terms of you know, the frequency and the intensity now that you know that they exist, and they will, they will come in your journey again. So how do you how do you minimise their impact? And therefore, how do you build that leadership thing power? So, data is more about practices, how to do that. And so, that's, that's what I do apart from speaking and coaching.

Kevin Cottam 18:35

Well, that's great. It sounds like a wonderful, transformative leadership journey really with that you're taking people on to humanise the leadership, as you say, right? And so, again, I think, even though we have this talk about the block, but there is this whole thing about today with 21st century organisations that they have to transform the business model into whole business model, and many of them are working on a 20th century, which is not the today. So how, and that can create a blog, because how to transition from one to the other. And again, it's about I see it, you know, not only a blog, but that blog has got to do with the mindset as to how, because the mindset is driving everything. The behaviours, the qualities, and whatever is happening with the blog is driving that. So how do we link then the mindset, such as you know, I've been talking about the nomadic mindset and it's also the builder mindset and settler mindset, how do we link those two, having that humanising leadership at that wholeness, so in other words, so that organisations can be this whole new business model?

Ritu Mehrish 19:51

Okay. And that is a tall order. Kevin, you know, I wish, you know, there was an easier solution to that. And there isn't the easiest thing. Because, you know, because we're dealing with humans and humans are complex beings. We all know that, you know, including ourselves there. So, so yeah, so I wish there was an easier thing, but there isn't. Having said that, as you rightly said, there is a huge mindset shift that's required to deal with challenges of 21st century. And, you know, and mindset of us, is at the centre of this, right. And as you as you talk about different mindsets, you know, the nomadic the builder and the settler, I think there's merit in

each of those mindsets. But it's also creating awareness in what situation do you leverage what mindset sometimes, you know, if you are doing something, you know, you've already you've come into a situation where something is already created, it's already built, you have to sustain it, then maybe a settler mindset will be helpful for the next 12 months, 18 months, whatever the time period, but if you've got into a situation where you're creating something from scratch or you're just building something or you, you know, or you're building a new business model or you're building a new structure, whatever it could be, then of course, the builder mindset is fine, because you know, you're, you're beginning to build. But if you're in the exploratory phase of any business of any notes, maybe or Korea or whatever, then the nomadic mindset is really good there because you're exploring, you're making the best out of different things. And then therefore, you're putting that in action. And now, the thing is, but of course, the nomadic mindset is helpful all the time. Because even as you as you're a settler, you don't want to settle for too long because then you become narrow, you know, and therefore, again, you need to go out and kind of, you know, explore look at other things, you know, experience different things and get it back to whatever you're doing. So to me, I think there's like a constant need to move different mindsets. You know, the three mindsets that you talk about, and also even even if you're a builder Tip or a similar mindset, you need to keep going back to being an American. That's the way I look at it.

Kevin Cottam 22:06

I think, you know, maybe you could promote my book for me in this particular way you have it all down pat. No. So very true, because it's very interesting. I have a story around that is that because I say that we have all three of those mindsets within us, we just have a dominance for more than more than another, right. And that may change at different times. However, we may need to access and call on it, as you say, at different times. And so for example, I was working on this project with an artist and she came to me and she said, I wanted to do an exhibition around the three mindsets and I said, Okay, that sounds very cool. I didn't think that a leadership book be during your art and anyway, but it's more about the conversation that I have with her. Is that yes, I'm a nomad and I have and I have a nomadic mindset dominance and associate Did she does it but it's extreme. And what happened was in conversations with me is that I felt myself moving into a builder mindset when I had the conversations because I was trying to track her down as to where to how do I structure this? How do I, what are the dates, what are all the sort of logistics and I was trying to get into that particular form. And, and there was like this out of out of body experience. Oh, what am I doing here? And, and thinking? Yes, and that is the whole malleability and the plasticity of our mind to be able to share,

Kevin Cottam 23:37

right?

Kevin Cottam 23:38

That's good. And so, how can then the blocking what is that doing to that malleability?

Ritu Mehrish 23:47

Yeah, so the block, you know, the block can, can be triggered by different things right. In this case, as you said, it was triggered by not being in control. You know, I just use it that very

mildly. But yeah, you know, so. So for even for the, for us to even look at a solution for a block or see what you have to look at what's causing that block. You know, in this case, what caused that block, right? Or what what was causing that block. And therefore then there's a solution. So you know, so for my, in the book I talked about five strategies to overcome block. And those are, again, depending on the triggers of the block, sometimes you need to apply more than one strategy sometimes could be one strategy, or sometimes it could be all strategy. So it just depends on what we're looking at. You know, sometimes when we're trying too much to be in control, I have a strategy that says let it pass, you know, sometimes you can't control what you can control. Because as leaders again we have bias for action, right? We always want to be in control, we want to take action. And sometimes the best thing to do is not take action for a bit or let the you know, let the tie take it on pause. So Depending on the triggers of law, look for a solution for that.

Kevin Cottam 25:05

Hmm, that's great. I love the way you're talking about control here is that and that's what happens, right? A lot of the time is that we control and therefore there's like this overarching power that comes even over our mindset to control something. And I love what you say about not taking action. Because so much time where it's like action action, we need to take action we need to go and sometimes it gets very weary. You know, it's very exhausting to just think we have to have to have to have to. And I don't know about in your coaching sometimes I get annoyed at the fact that we have to reach a goal at the very end, which is really locked. And I don't know if it you feel the same way, but I sometimes feel that why do we have to always take action? Why can't we just open it up and explore it and see what comes up?

Ritu Mehrish 25:57

Right. So I'm Kevin, one of the lines I try and work around that is that while I work with a goal in my coaching, but I also ask the leader select one thing, which a lot of time is not even communicated back to the to the sponsor, I asked him to select one area where he or she wants to work or explore further. So that's, that's an area where we don't put a, like put a very, you know, very specific goal. But we just say this scenario we exploring to that, and that's something we continue to work on. So it kind of provides a good balance of for the leader and for me to kind of say, Okay, this one that we are working towards, but the sponsors are, you know, would want to know how we are progressing, I'll be moving towards it. But then there's this one goal of your city exploring or one area that you that's close to you and be exploring that but that's how I strike that balance.

Kevin Cottam 26:46

That's great. Well, you share that with us. Oh, by the way, I just want to let everyone know that the this is a great book, the leadership book, I have read it and I felt really consumed by it, and she Rito has an incredible use of the great language and the storytelling. So, so grab it as you go along. But before we end this time, I would like to ask you one final thing and that is what do you what are three things that you feel that people should do in coaching? Or might want to explore and coaching is by who, around the leadership blog and the way we deal with it.

Ritu Mehrish 27:31

Um, so one of the one of the ways to get through leaders blog is highly recommend coaching, right, having a coach or a mentor. And through coaching very specifically, I would say is that, you know, one, maybe you're not going through a leaders block, it's fine. You still have a coach so coach is not for somebody, only when they are going through a leaders talk. You know, maybe maybe you're beginning to get you maybe a big need to feel something but maybe yet it's still not a leaders block. So that's, that's a clarification that it's not necessarily that you've got a coach only when you've got leaders block. But coaching is a great way to build awareness of, you know, of the signs, the symptoms, the triggers, of leaders block. And then also coaching helps you build that awareness for yourself and for your teams. And then of course, it's a great way to overcome leaders block because through coaching, you know, you get a sounding board, you get somebody who's, who's listening to you, you actually end up listening to yourself, and you start to come up with solutions. You start to see a bigger picture, you start to take some actions, which then help you overcome the leaders block that you're going through. So coaching, you're in leaders club or not yet, or, you know, or some, some of your team members, one of the team members, the leaders. It's a great way to address all those things.

Kevin Cottam 28:55

Thanks very much for that. That's really wonderful information for all of us. And to be able to Take forward reading. If there's one last thing that you would like to share with the our guests around leadership humanising leadership. What would that one thing be? Or maybe it's a quote that you love very much.

Ritu Mehrish 29:13

Yes, it's a it's a coat. I mean, I don't know if it's a good but yeah, it's it's one that I really love and I love to share. It's that. Remember, every leader stumbles the great ones learn how to recover. I think, you know, that's really my parting parting coach to the listeners. Just remember that.

Kevin Cottam 29:33

Can you repeat it again, because I think it's so great that you need to repeat it again for everyone.

Ritu Mehrish 29:39

The court is every leader stumbles. The Great Ones learn how to recover.

Kevin Cottam 29:44

Wow, well let us all recover. And notice all stumbling, stumbling, we need to recover. It's also very important. Well, I want to thank you very much for this beautiful time with you Rito and you have really helped not only me understand that Little bit more about what you're doing and leadership blog, but also you really introduce something to our guests, which I think is very valuable. And especially the leaders that we'll be talking about, actually, everyone's a leader, everybody goes through blog, right. So it's really for everyone. And so thank you very much. I appreciate it very much.

Ritu Mehrish 30:17

Thank you so much. Thank you so much, Kevin, for having me on your show, and I'm really excited to see you know how leaders respond to it. But all the best to you too, with all the other guests that you're going to bring on your show. Thank you so much for having great

Kevin Cottam 30:34

you've been listening to the nomadic mindset season one, my name is Kevin caught him and invite you to find out more about the nomadic mindset at the [nomadic mindset.com](http://nomadicmindset.com). Until next time, make it a point to go nomadic and start discovering your nomadic mindset.



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