

Siva Venkataraman Conneqt Business Solutions

M: So starting with our interview, could you just tell us a little about your journey with this company, your past experiences just for the starter, and then we take the conversation forward?

R: I have been with Connect for the past two years, so I'm driving their entire pan-India sales operations. We do a lot of digital IT sales. We are into digital transformation services, so I joined them two years ago to kickstart the entire sale. Earlier they had only one person. Now I am driving it up. We currently have about five people now. So five of us do the entire sales and revenue generation across the entire spectrum of digital transformation services. So this is what I've been doing with the connect.

M: OK, what's your overall experience been like?

R: In Correct?

M: Not just Connect, I mean your overall work experience.

R: Well, my overall experience I've got 30 years in sales, which I have 10 years has been in 10 years has been in the overseas markets. I spent a decade in countries like the Philippines, the Far Eastern markets, the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia.

M: Hmm.

R: That is the belt where I was primarily responsible for kickstarting operations for my Singaporean company. We were a company called Thakral Brothers, so I was starting their operation IT operations for them in all these areas.

M: OK.

R: So it was a journey where it was, go to a country, understand that the country understands what sells best then, and then start the operations and build it. And then hand it over. Build it, bring it to profitability. Hand it over to that next person. Train him and then move on to the next country.

M: OK, but I have a very typical HR question for you, like, how do you see your future now in terms of your professional life and your personal life?

R: I have only five more years of life left. I have only five more years of 5-6 more years of official professional life. So yeah, I'm, I'm already doing what I'm doing best, man.

M: OK, OK.

R: I've been a people person, so I always enjoy sales at the most. I continue to lead the teams. I continue to build the teams. That's my job, so I'll continue to do that. Maybe I will lead to a director or a VP role. That's the only thing I can go to now beyond that, and that's the top. After that, it's only the it's only the CEO.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: That's what I have as far as my role in Connect is concerned. But I'll continue to become a strategist because like I said I've been into consulting for a long time in the sense of IT consulting, so I've always been doing a lot of mentoring, and coaching myself. So probably 20 years now I have started training people, building their team, and teaching them the nuances of that perspective. Telling them what is the next role that they have in mind. How to grow them, etcetera. So I've been doing that for almost 20 years within each of my roles, probably except for the four years that I spent with Oracle. But otherwise, yeah, that's so I'll continue. To be in the strategy, management, and consulting and possibly becoming an independent consultant after I retire.

M: you mentioned you have only five or six more years to go before you retire and also you have been working for so many years. You have also been imparting your knowledge to others, but if I had to ask you personally at this stage of your career where you are now, what are the skill sets that you feel that you need to have because there's already so much learning that has happened over the years for you?

R: For my role, you are asking?

M: Yes, for your role, for you.

R: I don't know whether it is skill set, but one thing that yeah, that is the one thing which I will say I attitude is one thing which we need to have a sale is all about be having a positive attitude, being able to meet strangers comfortably, being able to confidently articulate whatever you're talking about. That confidence is very important. The resilience is important because for every 10 calls you're going to get 9 rejections. They are going to say no in your face. So, you should continue to be resilient and yes, you have to keep upskilling.

M: Yeah.

R: The problem that I am today facing is we claim to be in the digital world, I have been someone who's used to sitting across the table and talking to people. The personal connection is important.

M: Umm.

R: When you're sitting across the table, that matters a lot, because then I see the body language. I'm able to pick up a lot of things for the body language. Now I probably can see only your face. I don't know what your hands are doing.

M: Yeah.

R: I don't know what you like or are doing. I don't know whether what I'm seeing is relevant, irrelevant, not relevant, or whatever it is.

M:

R: So that is something which is, which is something that we have to pick up. But we are in the sales world, so we have to be good enough to learn and we have to keep learning every time.

M: Yeah, . .

R: Persistence, resilience, and communication. These are three things that you have to constantly keep upgrading yourself in this particular role of mine. Then, of course, the secondary skills are there. Being empathetic, AI, you need to be empathetic to your team and you need to be able to coach because each person's capability is different, So you cannot just, well, put everybody in the same bracket and say that you come to my this role, you have to sell it mean though, everybody sells everything in the company.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: For example, I have created a basis for my assessment. I have created specialists in my team because I found somebody good at something. Something somebody's good at doing BD. Somebody is good at doing marketing well. So there is no use putting that person in the field of sales and saying that you are not selling properly, So that is something which you need to assess pretty fast.

M: So taking the conversation forward. What comes to your mind when I say executive coaching programs? Does it ring a bell? What do you feel about those?

R: I've undergone that and I'm doing it myself. So yeah, see it is. It is just, In the third or any engagement or a conversation which either reaffirms that you are on the path, what you're doing is, or it gives you indicators and pointers to how you need to go about doing something.

M: Hmm.

R: That's all.

M: Hmm.

R: They're not going to teach you anything. It is only a reaffirmation of your core values or your identification of your key strength areas or, trying to identify why. Or why not? Why you can do something properly or why not you are you not able to do something properly? What is stopping you? That's all this executive coaching comes only into these aspects. There's nothing much you are going to do. It's not a course, it's it's an interaction.

M: Hmm.

R: And it's like typical like in our parallel, we will say it is like hiring a PWC, E &Y or Deloitte to to come and tell you what you already know. What they do is reaffirm certain facts for you. So then you can now get convinced that what you're doing is. That's all they are not finding anything new to us.

M: OK.

M: So in that case, if I had to ask you how important do you think such courses are for corporate professionals?

R: It is important because there is a day-to-day aspect where you do tend to lose a certain how do you say are you do tend to lose yourself or you do tend to forget certain things or you are so involved in the day-to-day that you don't see the big picture always because you are tuned to it. It's like in the operational stuff, your day-to-day becomes so pertinent it is occupying so much of your time that you are not able to take that one or two hours just to sit back and think about what are you doing, and whether it is effective. Where are your failures? Where are your strengths? How is it relevant to your organization whether it is relevant to your organization at all?

M: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

R: So all these things matter. So coaching is only going to point you in that direction.

M: Sure. Could you name a few courses that you are aware of or certain organizations like you did mention me in my and all? Would you remember the names of certain programs and organizations that have been? Yeah.

R: For executive coaching. No, I am executive coaching. I have done only one till now which is this CXO incubator which was very recent.

M: Huh. OK.

R: It's also based in Mumbai by a lady named Radhika Balakrishnan who's doing it and mentorship

there are quite a few people I see on LinkedIn or not. So who keeps offering mentorship again? Mentorship also is one thing you need to know what you're going to for which person. Now some people specialize in general. Radhika is more of a general one. She positions herself as a, trying to push you towards becoming a CXO. That is her goal. So what are the characteristics of a CXO? How you are to do so? What are the steps you have to take? That's what she does now. I have mentored people who have been in top positions in their respective organizations. Today again, it's only a correction because my specialty has been sales, so they sit with me and ask me questions like whether they are doing some activity, and why that particular activity has resulted or not resulted in the output that they are expecting.

R: it's it's very difficult to state an outcome here because I cannot for example, I can just say that if I'm running up an ad you are not sure how that ad is going to be pursued by people. There are ads which are which we think are extremely dumb, but they go on to become super hit, whereas there are some very relevant ads, and nobody even remembers them.

M: this particular course that you've done, which is the CXO incubator course versus some other courses that you mentioned, there are some mentorship courses as well that you have seen some posts of on LinkedIn.

R:,. They LinkedIn you keep. I keep looking at it again. They're all people who claim that they are mentors and coaches, so I again.

M: Got it. So how do you think these two are different? Like, how would you be if those were the mentorship courses, what do you think they are doing versus this particular course that you have done? How is it different?

R: Everybody claims to only assist you in understanding what you want, what you are. Possibly at that particular time earlier, I felt I was not ready for it. That's all. The reason I went into this CXO was I saw one of my colleagues, a slightly junior colleague with whom I had gone through the course and I saw that there was a lot more confidence in his post than in the weekly activity, which he did.

M: Hmm, OK.

R: And the way he was approaching things was different. So that's why I asked. And then I felt like, let me take a look at it myself, because they're not at that, maybe, maybe you see it is not a one-to-one. Coaching was still a group coaching to a large extent. There was a group of about 15 people of us.

M: OK.

R: while there are one-to-one components and during the weeks we can speak to her for about half an hour or 45 minutes etc. If you want to raise any queries or particular queries, you are welcome to

do so, but it was more of a group. The actual study session was for four hours on Saturdays which was common with all the fieldwork she gave some thoughts and asked you to do some activities and basis that she tried to cover and identify one or two parameters like which is your key strength area which is not your core area why should you give focus to something why you should not give focus and those things she will start identifying with individuals so she for some people no there is a fascination for money and power some people there's a fascination for teaching so all this she helps each person identified.

M: OK.

R: So I just went through that. I mean so because I saw these guy's improvement, I thought let me give it a shot maybe.

M: Can you tell us exactly what change did you see in this person that interested you that maybe I should also take up this course? Like, what does that drastic shift that you saw in him?

R: He started becoming more structured in his approach to what he was delivering. He was delivering one of my projects and I saw a change in the way he was approaching the customer a lot more confidence in his ability to go and meet senior people, and talk to them, and he started becoming articulate. He was he started bringing a lot of structure to his method. Whatever he was doing earlier, he would not go and meet the head of the project had the business heads, or the CFO, or the CEO used to call for those monthly review meetings, etcetera. Used to be there and He used to be very stressed out about what they were going to say. But I used to keep telling him. Forget what they are going to say you do. You tell what you have done. That is enough, And if there are challenges, let's sit and discuss the challenges. That's all. There is nothing to be, after all, they are all people. Maximum what is he going to say? He's going to say that you are bad. We will handle that. So I started seeing that. Changing him.

M: OK. Al. And so this course was a personal choice like you decided to take up. This is not through your company?

R: No, no, it was not through my company.

M: why did you feel the need to take up a course like this? I get that you had a good one.

R: I was doing a lot of things like I said some dots connect somewhere. I mean, it doesn't matter how many years of experience you have sometimes you can be, a swordsman, but there are times when you feel the weight of the sword. So I was feeling stuck. I was starting to think that maybe I was trying to do too much or I was not doing it in the manner, or why is it that I didn't see the outcomes that I predicted and why was it that my people were not able to understand what I wanted out of it in the same way? Why they were not able to be part of my vision? So I thought let me give it a shot maybe

something is wrong with me. I didn't know, so I thought let me give it a shot. I had some time. I was able to take out that nine weeks, So I said, let me give it a shot.

M: So what is the mindset with which you started this program like, were your expectations? What were you expecting to achieve out of a program like this? Hmm.

R: No, I didn't have any expectations because the moment I set an expectation, then I won't know what she's going to teach or I don't know what she's going to tell. I was only clear with her that end of the day, I expect a structure within me or identify the lack of structure That's all. So I just wanted to know if the process is ok even if the outcome is negative. The process happens if the structure has been done. See there are no yes or no or wrong answers for the 90% of things there are no or wrong. It is just trial and error. We sometimes experiment and then we get wins. Sometimes the experiment fails, but if you follow the process then you are sure the experiment is correct. So that was what I wanted, a reiteration, and yes, she did help me identify or reaffirm certain core values of mine, which came as a byproduct for me.

M: Hmm.

R: And yeah she put out a few things that she said that as a senior coach or as senior people, you are expected. Senior people across the globe have a certain set of mannerisms practices or steps which they do, and she tries to come and tell you those. If you do these 10 for four or five steps or 10 steps, it becomes muscle memory. So you have to incorporate or ingrain those things into yourselves, and so that it becomes a practice for yourself. That's all. So the more it becomes ingrained, you will unconsciously practice it. These are all traits of senior management, so you also practice them. Then you also become.

M: OK al. If I had to ask you, not just this program that you have taken but when it comes to these kinds of executive coaching programs, which are run for a certain level of people, who are at your CXO levels or your VP level people. What according to you is the purpose of these programs, why should one have these programs and what one should get out of these programs?

R: See, I can tell you an organizational perspective, that organization's perspective is to help them identify who are the possible leaders for them. We have already invested in these people. We have already come to a level of GM and AVP's and whatever it is. I may have 25 AVPs or 30 gms. Who can be promoted to VP level and direct level, who has that vision? Now many people don't have an opportunity to present a vision, but given time they may be able to do so

M: Yeah

R: but again, everybody cannot be successful in every role, just because I have been successful in one place doesn't mean that I can replicate the same level of success or do better in the next place,

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: so from an organizational perspective, it is to help identify for themselves who are the potential leaders And to give some level of thought process into them as to what you what is expected by the organization when you reach those levels, these are the things that you're going to do how to think much better on the feed again.

R: And as I said, I may be a very successful individual salesperson, but if I don't know how to manage a team, you cannot go and make me a director or a VP or of sales, Very simple, but then so from an organization perspective, uh, it is to help identify the next general leaders, especially those who are who can contribute for the next decade or so from an individual perspective this gives a confidence in him that he's his or her contribution within the organization is recognized and that the company is looking at them for a leadership role.

M: yeah.

R: So then it is not, it's not going to be a one-time. There are other things that you have to learn both on the job as well as possibly outside and so it gives them a reaffirmation that I should spend the next five years in this company and give my best. So it's a two-way street.

M: So in your thoughts, if you had to tell me, what would an ideal executive coaching program be like? How would it be structured? How would you want to describe that? If it's an ideal program.

R: I cannot state that because that depends on each organization's expectation from that program out of its people,

M: For something that is in your field, in the sales field, and particularly in the kind of company that you work for, how would you describe that for you?

R: And that's a tough question.

M: Some key things that you would want to have like if there is a program to be structured, some key aspects that should be taken care of.

R: see one thing is you're trying to create leaders. That's the objective, that the basic objective is to create a leader.

R: So first you have to figure out from the if you are the coaching uh organization, you have to figure out from the company what is their expectation from their leaders. What do they want their leaders to do? That's 1 now I'm again. I'm talking from an organizational perspective, not any individual basis,

R: 2nd is when they nominate, let's say 10 people or eight people out of 20 people for that program, you need to understand why those people were nominated. There has to be a reason, not because he or she has spent ten years in this company, but more because they see something in that individual and then we need to understand what is that something.

R: There is also what is the shortfall of that individual because there is going to be a shortfall. So if somebody in the organization comes and says I have a plan and I believe that this particular person who is a solution architect now is capable of taking me and becoming a CTO or a CIO of the organization, what else does he need to know? So ultimately it comes down to a few things.

R: One is most of us don't do things or we fail, or we do this one because there is a certain fear inside us. So the idea is to teach people, or at least articulate it. That failure is nothing it is not the end. All, so failure need not be feared. It should be viewed differently in the same manner success does not imply that you are great. Everything is reasonable,

R: 2nd is to bring into themselves a capability to think logically and for the organization because in their respective roles now because they are not in addition taking the role, they will always do whatever they want. What they feel is in their best interest, not the organization's best interest. ..
So now bring in that perception that you are working for the organization and the organization will take care of you when you succeed.

R: So that ability to teach them, to think for the organization and the decision making, how to do how they should come up to some decision taking because very few decisions are taken after great thought in 90% regions are gut feel you go about with it because you have to do something then and you when under pressure, how do you react, how to how to retain that sense of Logic even under pressure, that's all Coaching should teach about because you are not going to teach anything about the product or everything as well. Of course, how to take your people, how to build a team, how to be with your team, and how you should view them impartially, rather than having everybody's going to have favorites, no questions about that, but that that cannot become the sole dictating point in growing mean. Just because I grow, I grow. I cannot just promote my favorite and dump the rest of the team, so how to take your team along? How to bring together a joint vision and how to involve the teams together? How to make them believe that they are part of this growth and they're that whatever contribution, big or small, most of the job is mundane and routine? Look at sales. What is sales? What is sales there? Pick up a phone call. Talk to some person. Tell him that this is what I do. Sometimes they say yes. Sometimes they say no, then you more if they say yes, you can talk another five more minutes They say no, you're cut off. So it's a route, You have to do this 10 times a day, correct now.

So every job has the. Has got its boredom. Has and I haven't has got its own. How do you say strengths? It is up to you all.

So how to how within the individual you can help create how do you create thought and then that energy within themselves so that they can continuously keep themselves motivated and motivate the rest of the team.

M: coming back to the program that you took off, obviously you had a certain reason why know, thought that a program like this can probably help you., so it did fit into this thought that you had But there are so many programs being offered Like I understand that a subordinate of yours has had taken this program. You saw that there was a change in that person and you decided to take on this program yourself, but did he do any more research around it? Did you try checking any other programs?

R: Data I absolutely no. It just so happened, like I said, sometimes you have to make a gut feel decision. There is nothing. I saw him. Then I asked him. He happened to tell me that there was this, so I reached out and I asked what is it that you do? I grilled this fellow for about 30 to 45 minutes as to why he went through and how he changed etcetera.

M: So could you help us understand those specifics like, what kind of questions came to your mind like something as basic as the duration caused?

R: No, no, I never bothered with the cost. I mean, see, I'll tell you what executive level coaches range from ₹25,000 to ₹25,00,000 also, it is the, It's a perception there is no guarantee anybody is going to give you that just because they come to me, this is going to result in some exponential growth in your net value or your branding or your promotion or your job or your money. Nothing, So no one is going to give a guarantee. The only thing you're going to see if it's your comfort factor. Are you going to be comfortable talking to that person? If today I am not comfortable talking to each Vishalakshi; I will not talk to you, that's all period. If I'm comfortable talking to you, it doesn't matter if the other person comes back and tells me that I am ₹5000 cheaper. I will not go to that first. I'll stick on to you. So you need to feel that. They, the coach or the mentor, are capable of helping you identify what you want out of it. That's all it is. Your gut feels the same again. There, there is no wrong answer correct if that gut feeling is not there. Whatever you do is not going to work for me.

M: Yeah, so I get that you also mentioned that you wouldn't go into this program with a lot of expectations that this is what you want to derive out of it. But I'm sure you still have some thoughts. , like whatever we enter, whatever we start, there are certain things that we have on our mind that are OK. If I'm putting in so and so time of my life and I'm putting in some effort, there are certain expectations that we have. So what was that for you?

R: I wanted to bring a little more structure into what I was doing. That's all. So whether that structure was there, everything within my thought process was the structure correct? Was I thinking logically? That's all. Whether my result was about whether was I thinking logically, I wanted to bring a certain

structure to my thought process. Yeah, she then opened up about the idea. I'm saying that why are you slogging? There is something called a no. You need to leave your life also. , there are other things. Why are you giving prominence only to work, work, and work? That was a point at which I felt OK, well, she's asking you to live.

R: I'm in. Yeah. When I look back, I can always say that I didn't spend that much time with my family. Now a conscious effort, probably where I should have spent at least 10 hours. I was probably doing 2 today. I've improved it to 4 hours, that is what is there. And yeah, of course, family is looking at me very strangely as to why he's spending more time with us. That is a different story, but yeah, these are the things. So. These are the small things that came through.

R: Yeah, so creating the structure was what I was looking for. It was all chaotic I thrive in chaos, to be very honest. That's my strength. You bring chaos. I am very happy because I know that I can navigate my way through chaos, but I wanted to make sure that there is a structure to the navigation that I'm doing. That's all. So that, yeah, to some extent, I can say that she was able to do that.

M: while I'm getting what you're saying, it would be, really interesting if you could share an example, around this, it's.

R: Very difficult to say so, but I'll tell you one thing I didn't figure out for a long time why my resume was not getting shortlisted for many of the senior level Jobs

R: Then when I was talking to her, she came up and said, maybe because you don't have a management degree and senior level jobs today, everybody does look at the management. That set me thinking. Then I started calling out to some ten other HR people whom I know. I asked them very openly if I send my CV to you will look. And of course, a few of them were friends, so they were open enough to tell me yes or no. Within. For four weeks I saw what I felt was an interesting course for me, a senior management course run by IIM Ahmedabad. I spoke to them. What that course was all about, so it was equivalent, to an MBA, not an MBA. It was an equivalent. It was a certification program that doesn't give you an MBA degree, but it is for people with 20-plus years of experience only because there they were very clear that the same MBA curriculum is more or less the same as an MBA. But because we are all senior people and have got 20 plus years working and many things are written for us, we have done it in our lives so they need not go into nitty gritty. They just need to teach us how to look at something and understand, analyze, assimilate, and then take addition,

R: So I like the course, I have enrolled and I was lucky enough that I succeeded in my enrollment, so started the course.

M: Hmm, that's nice.

R: So yeah, that that kind of one or two things she was able to identify now possibly I might not have thought about it in that angle at all.

R: Similarly. She did come across and say that. She said. See, there are two ways of viewing the way I talk now. By default, I talk loudly. I can't help that my decibel level is above 100. My CEO says that if I whisper in Chennai, he can hear it in Bangalore that is my standard decibel level, And if I start getting upset and I can shout, you can hear me if I shout here, you can hear me in Mumbai. I'm telling you very clearly, I know that for a fact, So she did say that this kind of thing, it's a perception. Now, when I'm talking like this, uh, some people come back and said you scare me.

M: Umm. Hmm.

R: Correct. Now I never used to worry about why I scared them.

M: Hmm

R: And because they perceived that my loud voice means I'm trying to be tough with them, or I'm hard with them or I'm harsh with them.

M: Yeah.

R: Correct. But they also, I mean to expect them to understand that this is my natural tone and hence to be no, there is no need for them to be worried. I'm not upset with them. I am not angry with them. I can't expect it from them,

M: Yeah.

R: So now I have to tone down myself. Not succeeded till now. That's a different story, but at least she did point out and say to learn that you can, you will be perceived.

M: Yeah. Sure.

R: It's not like you can, she said you will be perceived as being someone who comes across very harsh, very, very, very hard.

M: Umm. Hmm. Hmm.

R: No, non-empathetically because of your tone and tenor.

M: Umm hmm.

R: So you should work on it now. She's not going to tell me what I should do to work on it.

M: Umm. Hmm.

R: She'll just say you should work on it, correct?

M: Umm.

R: But again, unfortunately, or fortunately, with No 30+ years' experience, you're also too egoistic. Let go of things like.

M: Yeah.

R: So those things you have, yeah, he'll find and say let this ego go.

M: Umm.

R: It's OK, that's all.

M: Hmm.

R: What sometimes you can't fit in a dog's tail? Don't try

M: Hmm, interesting. Yeah.

R: These things are going to affect your life, And ultimately, the only person who's going to be affected is you, not the others. They will complain. They will create a perception they'll spend the story.

M: Yeah.

R: They will go away. You will remain stuck in what people perceive so that those are things that are good enough. She was good enough to point out.

M: Yeah, Yeah, you mentioned that this is a group program that had happened who were others attending it?

R: Yeah. No.

M: Any idea where did they come from?

R: No, no, no. They're all people again.

M: Their organization.

R: No.

M: Have any interactions happening with each other?

R: Before.

M: No introduction, OK.

R: Not no, no, no. During the program, yes, once the program started, we started having interactions.

M: Hmm.

R: We started becoming good friends' etcetera, but not before the start of the program.

M:

R: Obviously, no.

M:

R: She has to get the team together.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: So only when so once she started some of the activities also had.

M: So, who were the others who were attending? Like what kind of people? What kind of organizations, where they coming from?

R: Although very if I can't all kind, there were there was a banker, there was an agile coach in from IT industry and there were a couple of people from the IT team who are in development. They were. There were two bankers, but looking at different roles within the banks, there were people from the manufacturing industry. There was a lawyer there were four of four of them who was who went overseas one was a fashion designer, another was a travel he had what he called a travel business, etcetera. So, and so it was a, it's a very diverse group.

M: OK. Yeah.

R: Each person came on board for different reasons.

M: Interesting. So you think this was an interesting mix to have people from such diverse

R: You don't choose them.

R: You don't choose them. You have to make do with what you have. Yeah, but I found it interesting for me again.

M: Yeah.

R: See I like one thing I like.

M: Hmm

R: For example, I'm OK with being in sales, I'm OK with meeting people of any type and I am I have something.

M: Hmm. Yeah, but didn't help you. Of course.

R: I found it very interesting.

M: Did you feel that it helped your course?

R: Yeah.

M: It helped the entire structure around it.

R: Yes. So each one of them came with different perspectives.

M: Hmm.

R: Each one of them comes with what I see is not what they see for each one of them came with different perspectives.

M: Hmm.

R: So when I make a statement and after and age groups also. So, uh, perceptions vary with age,

M: Yeah.

R: You what happened at your age of 30 and what happened? How you think the same thing at the age of 40 and 50 are very different, but the same situation,

M: Yeah.

R: So but yes, it was very interesting in the sense that you could see things like what you felt was, uh, not of relevance.

M: Hmm.

R: At greater relevance to many people.

M: Can you give me an example?

R: Money, for example, when many of see if you look at it, typically people above everybody see the ideas she's tried to coach you to act and think like a senior executive.

M: Hmm.

R: That's her. Focus now.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: So money, for example, once you cross a certain point in life, money is only.

M: Hmm.

R: that money is just going to be something that is going to help you do a few things.

M: Yeah.

R: Pays for my bills space for the education, pays my rent, my daily subsistence pace for the aging hospital. If any takes care, you can travel once in a while. You go enjoy a holiday, but at a younger age that same money is, he is very different.

M: Yep.

R: Even if the quantum is the same, no, there were people who with ten years' experience was who are earning 1- 1/2 lakhs and 20 years' experience earning 1- 1/2 lakhs and, but you can still see the way that 20-year-olds did not attach that much significance to money.

M: Umm. Yeah.

R: Because they know they because, during their course of life, they have learned that money is just a commodity.

M: Umm

R: It is for you to use it's not to let it control you, but at a younger age you think that is the only thing.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: So you could see them even if you ask what you want in life. They were guys, kids, the young

M: Yeah.

R: 40 people were like I want to buy a personal airplane. I want a Lamborghini car. I want a mansion, a six-bedroom mansion overlooking the beach. And I was like, telling them to come to Chennai.

M: Hmm.

R: Put it on the beach. We'll be in the water all the time.

M: Hmm.

R: Does that mansion make any sense to you at that time? If your mansion is going to be underwater six months in a year, what is the use of that mansion? Yeah.

M: Hmm.

R: So they see the perspectives are different, and again what men think and what women think are very different for the same thing. , women want certain things in the house when they ask what kind of room, we were all like.

M: Yeah.

R: I want one room 1, theatre 11, office working room, one bedroom.

M: Hmm. Yeah.

R: We never think about a kitchen as a necessity for us, but for the lady of the house, the kitchen is her. That's her sanctuary.

M: Hmm.

R: So how does she want to? So yeah, those things that so the perspective differs the more diverse the group, the more diverse the perspectives and it is again up to you to learn, understand and accept those perspectives whether you want, OK, accepting or rejecting is your prerogative.

M: Yeah. Sure.

R: But you should learn to agree. Accept the fact that there are different perceptions. What it doesn't mean is that just what you say is.

M: Sure. OK, so over 9 weeks how was the structure? Was this an online or an offline course?

R: Online only online of all of all of us are spread all across the country, and so it is an online course every Saturday.

M: How it was an online course. OK, And you mentioned it's a weekend. OK, it's a Saturday.

R: Yeah, Saturday 4 hours.

M: OK. Four hours. OK, al. And in terms of, the flexibility of the timing, the flexibility of the course.

R: No flexibility. She, 8 AM to 12 noon.

M: OK. Hmm.

R: You have to be there.

M: Yeah. OK.

R: Whether you, you can be traveling, you can be doing anything. See, that's one thing that she tells you irrespective of your situation.

M: Hmm. Yeah.

R: If you are, you are paying for this course, and you are praying to get some value for your life out of these interactions with me.

M: Yeah. Of course, of course.

R: If you are going to be committed to the course, then why did you waste her time and your time?

M: Yeah. Got it.

R: So yeah, if you make you there is so that flexibility was not there, and she gave a lot of activities to do every week.

M: And so. Uh. OK. What kind of activity is it?

R: It was both how you have to go connect with some strangers, connect with people all over, or talk to your team.

M: Hmm.

R: Talk to people whom you don't know about. What are their values? What are their curve perceptions? Try to talk to different types of people.

M: Hmm.

R: She encourages everyone to be more open and discuss things openly. So people with delivery backgrounds very rarely talk with customers, or they don't like to talk to people outside of their current circles.

R: Here she encouraged us to talk to people who are not even there. I got an opportunity to talk to film star Rajinikanth.

M: Thanks.

R: So I never thought about that. I would get it, it just saw.

M: Through this program, while you were doing this program.

R: As part of my activity I did it.

M: OH wow.

R: Yeah. So it is again up to you, so she pushes you to do things out of your comfort zone.

M: Yeah. So. Umm.

R: how to write, to not worry about what people. Think about you all the time.

M: Hmm.

R: Write your posts on LinkedIn on whatever topic of your interest.

M: Hmm.

R: He doesn't say on any specific topic, but whatever, if you think cooking is your passion about cooking, correct?

M: Hmm.

R: The idea is to reach out to the network. These are all aspects of methods in which you can do all these things.

M: But OK, and when did this happen? Like through the year. What time of the year did this course happen actually?

R: No, I thought we finished it just now. Would it? Two weeks or yeah, we finished it two or three weeks ago.

M: OK.

R: Uh, so. I think August.

M: OK, al. OK. Coming back to just to just assess this course a little better, if I had to ask you, what were the three highlights for you, of this entire course like 3 positive things, 3 highlights for you about this course, what would you say that you truly felt were like a value add to you?

R: Uh, the first thing is, the fact that she pushes you out of your comfort zone.

M: Hmm.

R: That in itself is a good thing, and that's why you need a Mentor.

M: OK.

R: She needs to give. She gives you. She pushes you out of your comfort zone, and she gives you the confidence that you don't worry about what or wrong with it.

M: OK.

R: Do it first. You do it so that confidence she gives.

M: OK, OK.

R: It gives it to you,

M: OK.

R: And now over the third one can be anything which you want because that is now up to you because she did tell you a lot of things now which and she uh she brings into you and she says that she that making for you to reach that level you have to do a lot of steps now if you don't define those steps today there is no way you are going to know what to do and hence you will not do it so she helps and attempts to help you create those steps.

M: Yeah.

R: Planned. She does follow up. So she is consistent in her follow, OK.

M: Umm.

R: And she does bring in a certain amount of discipline into this one like a

M: Hmm

R: Anyway, for me, it was OK because I'm normally used to it but being 5 minutes for. Uh, 10 minutes early. But every call, uh, like I am normally in by at least 5 to 6 minutes before uh.

M: Hmm.

R: It's my nature. I don't like to be late, but some people will log in only at 8:00 or even log in only at 8:01

M: Hmm

R: Because they want to show many of them want to show that they are busy.

M: Hmm.

R: I don't. And so when she did ask me, why is it that you can come on time? I said see if you have set aside the time for this, I better be there on time.

R: So I cannot afford to be busy before when there can be situations and all that's once in a while.

M: Umm. Yeah.

R: But not all nine weeks, huh?

M: Hmm.

R: So if I don't give the importance.

M: Umm.

R: To what I'm spending upon, then there is no need for the other person to feel and give you that importance in life,

M: Hmm.

R: So yeah, so those things she was very good and there were no structured ones.

M: OK, so these are more personal things, is what I'm understanding, uh, yeah.

R: Everything is personal. She doesn't get you and she's not. See, she is not an if you're expecting her to be a corporate coach, she does it differently.

M: OK.

R: Again, like I said for that. The studies like I told you. A corporation wants to understand who the people are nominated, and what their strength, is that there is a different structure altogether.

M: That is a very different structure together.

R: Yeah, there is nothing to do with this.

M: Got it, got it.

R: This is all of us are people who came out of our self-interest 1st and somebody or the other through

some means through their friends or acquaintances or some known contacts heard of her, spoke to her, and then they want to see join her.

M: Got it, got it. OK. Yeah.

R: That's all.

M: Sure. OK, what about disappointments? If I had to ask you to highlight them what, 3 disappointments, or whether you felt that the course lacked a bit,?

R: OK. No, I can't say that because I told you I didn't go with any expectations.

M: Hmm.

R: I just wanted her to create the structure.

M: Hmm.

R: So you cannot afford to be disappointed in this kind of approach.

M: Hmm.

R: You're doing it on yourself, now.

M: OK. Yeah.

R: I'll tell you if you ask me for my corporate if you're asking from a corporate perspective what will be the disappointment, I have noticed this because I have seen it in my earlier organizations etcetera that they organize two-day three-day leadership program within your company.

M: Umm.

R: Yeah, 15-20 of you are nominated and after that, for the next three to four months, you are forgotten.

M: Hmm.

R: Nobody follows up with you to understand whether you are applying any of the learnings in your day-to-day job.

M: Hmm yeah.

R: And after four months, trust me out of the 20, 19 of them have can't even recall what they did in those three days.

M: Hmm.

R: And the one person who recalls has resigned because he or she has learned and gone away somewhere else.

M: Umm.

R: Al, so that would be a disappointment if see, this is not a one-time activity, it's mentoring.

M: Yep.

R: now you need not have a third-party coach all the time.

M: Yeah.

R: I'm OK with that and I perfectly agree, but their HR, must do a follow-up to understand whether the people who were.

M: Yeah, yeah.

R: Assigned for that program, have learned, and whether they can practice it and whether that practice has resulted in any benefit for the organization.

M: Yeah.

R: It cannot be left that I will send you an email after three months. Please answer 5 questions. Are you practicing it? Yes, yes, yes. How much has impacted yes? Yeah. OK, I've increased my pipeline from 5 crores to 15 crores is not an answer.

M: Hmm.

R: I can increase my pipeline from 5 crores to 15 crores even without going through this course.

M: OK, sure.

R: So that it will be. That is what I am seeing as one of the biggest failures of most of the executive coaching that is happening across the country.

M: OK, al. I just have a few more questions. My next question we'll just quickly do is basically, have a few parameters with me and I wanted to give you a rating on a five-point scale from one to five.

M: Umm Alifya, do you have any questions?

M: No, I'm good.

M: OK. All.

R: Sorry, yeah.

M: So I'll just, uh, I'll just keep saying these parameters, and if you could just rate it from one to five, yeah. One being the lowest and five being the highest on this scale. So the first parameter would be a comprehensive curriculum. Did you feel that the curriculum or the program structure was comprehensive?

R: Then this is wrong. It's the wrong question because she is again, I think you are going more from a corporate perspective. So this question may be relevant there from a personal perspective, I don't think.

M: Ah so. There. OK, fine. You don't. You didn't look at it like a curriculum at all. It was Good?

R: I didn't look at it.

M: This structure was very

R: I didn't look at it later. Yes, correct.

M: Fine, fair enough. OK. Did you feel that this program was relevant to your professional growth? Like I get the personal growth bit, but was it also relevant to your professional growth like material or the core structure?

R: It will help. It will help. Yes, it will help, but it is not going to have a direct relationship.

M: OK, so for one to five, if you had to rate it?

R: I will still give it about 3 1/2 to 4 because it is. The activities will help you if you practice them, and they will have an impact on your professional life

M: OK. The next one would be practical learning.

R: Oh, that is very important for I will see you. I will go up to even 4 1/2.

M: So it was a higher for you through this.

R: Yes, she had a lot of this on this.

M: OK, al. What about theoretical explanations? Was it more theory-based?

R: And no, no.

M: No. OK al.

R: A theory was there, but no, I'll say neutral. Yeah, she introduced the concept, said this is what you need to do now you have to start applying it.

M: OK. Hmm.

R: How are you going to do that? That's all. So it is not very RELEVANT for me.

M: OK. What about the engagement? The interactions on an overall level it OK.

R: Very high, very high. Five, that is important.

M: CUSTOMIZATION as per your requirement because it was a group activity, I get that. I'm sure it was. There was a certain structure to it.

R: Again, no, because from an individual perspective.

M: Hmm.

R: You have to adapt to her structure. This from a corporate perspective, maybe it would have made a difference, but from an individual perspective, I will say no.

M: Hmm. OK, al. The last one is value for money. How much would you rate it?

R: That uh, I that question I should be able to answer you only after six months. I've just finished the course, and now it's the question is, how am I going to apply, and whether I should not be blaming her if I refuse to apply it in my life?

M: Yeah.

R: She has done her job, so yes, value for money is definitely important, but then I can't hold her liable for it,

M: Hmm, but did you feel that the cost was value for money?

R: So the good enough yes, as because I end of the day. Yeah, like I said.

M: Hmm. Hmm.

R: It is up to me to apply it if I have decided to pay X amount and take part, it is up to me to give it that value.

M: Yeah.

R: So while value for money is equally important.

M: Hmm.

R: If you go ask this to the same corporate guy, he will say well, if have money is 0 because he will claim he did not get anything out of the way because he will come with his role in perspective for that of corporate.

M: Umm. Yeah.

R: Whereas here I went to the individual so value for money is important. So I will give it four, but you cannot hold her responsible for my lack of willingness to practice it daily.

M: Yeah. OK, so I understand that you had to pay for this entire 9-week program together, Like it was, you had to pay.

M: It was not oddly or weekly basis, OK.

R: Uh, no, no, no. You pay for it. Afraid by the way, it's not just a nine-week course.

M: OK.

R: Nine weeks is what she mentors and gives it the structure now, after that, for the next year there are activities which you will keep coming up during the one year.

M: OK.

R: She does follow up, by the way, and she does try to figure out whether you are applying, and she tries to understand whether it is creating any value for you.

M:.,.

R: So for the next 12 months, I don't have to pay anything extra.

M: Hmm yeah.

R: I probably get about 15 to 20 hours with her in the next 12 months and she does a lot of other activities.

M: OK.

R: For example, umm in Mumbai last Saturday, that is December 9th, she had organized a future of India uh session.

M: Hmm

R: I couldn't personally go because of my IM classes but a lot of my Team, a lot of these members went to Bombay, and they met the earlier people who had been part of the course.

M: Hmm.

R: So they met more than 100 people in the last three to four years.

M: Hmm, well.

R: She has. She has mentored more than 100 people and then they were about apparently, there were more than 75 people who had enrolled for this for the next, not enrolled for the course, but the end.

M: Hmm.

R: So, for this session. So where is she?

M: Hmm.

R: She spoke to them it was a one-day session that she had organized in Bombay.

M: Hmm

R: She had called some good people, key people from various walks of life to give a talk about what is leadership etcetera. So she does a lot of these activities, and you are expected to participate.

M: OK, go ahead.

R: So it is not

M: Sure.

R: It's not like that. After nine weeks, he cuts off.

M: Hmm.

R: So for the next 12 months and I'm in touch almost at least every alternate week, I'm in touch with the rest of the group.

M: OK, al.

R: So that goes on.

M: Do you mind telling us how much you paid for this course?

R: I think one lakh

M: OK. And do you think that was like an amount to pay for a course like this or should it have been more or less? What do you feel about that?

R: I don't know. Honestly, I don't know now.

M: Hmm.

R: Luckily, somebody has decided what

M: Hmm.

R: See, she has to see if she does all these, for example, by the way, for this program, which she did last Saturday, the other people were charged some money to be part of it.

M: Hmm.

R: She didn't charge anything for our team. The only thing each person had to make was his arrangements to go to Bombay. That's all.

M: OK.

R: And those of you who are out of Bombay have to go on their own. Otherwise, they didn't charge, whereas the other delegates who are coming as participants for a charge, and she had gone in, uh, Pune, where the people in Mumbai and Pune were there and she went to short, she went.

M: So OK. Hmm.

R: So if you look at all that thing, she has to cover her costs and with just 15 people If she's going to get only 15,00,000.

M: Hmm.

R: So, but she does all this. So yeah, again, it's the perception, but I think it's a, it's a reasonable value.

M: Hmm. OK, so in case if OK, so if you do have to take up a course like this where you probably do have to pay by either the day or by hour, how much would you be willing to pay for it too? What do you think is, an apt amount to pay if you had to pay by the day or hour?

R: I yeah, I'll give you there is a company called Mentor CART.

R: Have you heard of them?

M: No

R: OK, then Ashish Vidyarthi that actor?

M: Yes

R: He's part of that mentor cart mentor cart.

M: OK.

R: Typically, claims to connect mentors and mentees from all walks of life.

M: Hmm.

R: Any person in requirement of a mentor can put it in the portal.

M: OK.

R: And if he or she and you as a mentor can state that, yes, I am willing to mentor you for this particular duration. So depending upon. What kind of mentoring that you do? what level of person you are going to mentor? Or is it like you said, again SCX for level mentoring the Chargers varies from ₹2500 per hour?

M: Umm.

R: So what I know is they also pay up even ₹25,000 per hour.

M: Well, OK.

R: OK, now it's a combination of who is going to come to you for mentoring and what they are expecting out of like.

M: Hmm.

R: I also do mentoring. there are times when uh, I have mentored a couple of people who are at the board level for mid-size companies. The 250 to 500 crore kind of companies spend about two to three hours in a month just for the three hours.

M: Umm.

R: Now some people have paid me 5000. Some people have paid me 50,000 for the same thing

M: Hmm

R: Hours again, it is their value perception out of what you can do now. All these LinkedIn professional LinkedIn people I see were people who keep saying that I'm an executive coach. I'm at this, coach. I charge anywhere from \$150.00 per hour, again going up to \$1000 per hour.

M: Hmm.

R: So this means if you look at that, this lady is OK because if I look at it nine weeks, she has done 40 hours.

M: Yeah. No. So my question would have been a little more in general. I'm not asking about this

particular course that you have done, but in general, a course like this, if someone had to charge by the hour or by the day, how?

R: I think by the hour only because you are going to see you are not going to spend more than one hour maximum 1 1/2 hours,

M: What is the ideal amount OK? Yeah. So what is the amount you think is the ideal amount to be paid for that?

R: Uh, if OK for people like me who doing it more of a side, I'm not.

M: Hmm.

R: This is not my sole profession. I think anywhere between 2500 to ₹5000 per hour is we feel OK because I'm not going to spend more than 3/4 hours in a month.

M: Hmm.

R: So the ₹20,000 or ₹10,000 is just going to go for some going taking the family out for dinner.

R: No, for it to the side, but for people who are full-time mentors.

M: Hmm.

R: Ah, for them, I think this would be because they cannot afford ₹10,000 per month, so they will expect to earn at least 2,00,000,

M: OK. Yeah.

R: So if 2,00,000 how much and how much can they mentor in a month or if they can spend no more than 30-40 hours they will be more in the region of 5000 to ₹10,000 per hour.

M: Hmm. OK, she can just one last question. While you have mentioned a few examples of this, how this course has helped you? Uh, and I know it has just gotten over for you and you may have not applied all your learnings, but on a professional front where do you think that this may help you? Or it has already helped you like. In what way in on your, a day to day, responsibilities or overall whatever?

R: See I can see. Like she brought out and said no, that didn't use that. No, the perception that people are going to face about you because you talked loudly, all those things. So definitely those things are going to help me improve my ability to interact with my team.

M: OK.

R: And there are other people within the organization so that is there.

M: Sure. Some growth point of view because you wanted to move to the next level.

R: Uh, yes, at least she has a given the confidence that. Then it is now up to you. You can grow now whether we are going to grow within the same organization or outside the organization.

M: Hmm.

R: The fact that now she has set up our and said yeah, this is what you want to be, let's say in the next 12 months in the next 24 months in the next 36 months, this is what you want to be and this is where you see yourself. Now that you have to work for it. Till now it was it. It used to happen by rote. We are not. You did not consciously Dr that now she's making it as a conscious effort from your side to drive it.

M: Hmm.

R: So yes, it will have a positive impact in enabling us to reach that temple.

M: Umm.

R: But today I know that I can go, and I mean I am.

M: He can.

R: I am comfortable with the fact that I'm seeing you even during this. I made a couple of presentations to my CEO, which I would not have done in the normal scheme of my job role, but because I saw something else happening within the organization, I went forward and gave my presentation.

M: Umm.

R: Now at that, see your decisions. Except it or not, it's not my problem. But the very fact that I was willing to sit in front of him, he also realized that this guy was not thinking about his role alone. He is willing to come and give feedback about something else. whether it takes it positively or negatively is not my problem. So in that way, I have at least made a statement and I see and I have seen this.

M: Yeah.

R: I was never a LinkedIn person in my life. I had not even changed my resume or whatever there as far as I know for the past eight years. for the first time in the last six weeks, I've written five or six articles.

M: Umm.

R: And I never wrote about professionals. I wrote about something related to attitude, life, etcetera, something which I never thought that I liked. I got feedback from many, including my classmates whom I touched base with after some 20-25 years like Siva you are writing this.

M: Umm. Umm, yeah, uh.

R: What happened to you? Because they have all seen me differently and now you are doing things that are completely blowing them away from the fact that they are. This is not as per expectations.

R: Uh, no. Based on some of those articles, I am willing to reach out more confidently to CXO today. Not that I wasn't doing it, but on LinkedIn. I never did it. I used to be a guy who can barge into any office and talk to anybody, but on LinkedIn, I will never connect with anybody. Today, I'm willing to do that as a poster and that will impact me professionally,

M: Umm.

R: When people see you connecting, people see that you have a following, and if you are posting something and LinkedIn gives you some analytics, it says that in the last week, you have created some 4500 impressions.

M: Yeah.

R: I never even knew what an impression was, but the fact that 4000 people that means are reading what you're writing and I don't have 4000 connections which mean that people outside my contact list are also reading

M: Yeah.

R: So those kinds of things definitely will enable me to reach my stated goal, which is to become a Chief Revenue officer.

M: Yeah. Umm.

R: I'm already heading Pan India sales but now I want to expand that to a bigger size Team.

M: Yeah.

R: Today I've done only four people, or five people. Tomorrow, I want that to become twenty people.

M: Yeah, . .

R: So that is what I want to achieve. I'm not, I have no interest in becoming a CEO. I told her one day, I was not cut out for a CEO.

M: Hmm.

R: I know that I'm not an empathetic person at all,

M: Umm

R: I do not have empathy. I'm unfortunately like that.

M: Hmm.

R: So I mean for me it is a transaction. I will tell you whether it is done or wrong. It is over for me. I don't carry that to my next transaction, even with the same person, So, but that cannot be the way the CEO behaves on the racks. So I know that for a fact, so I have no desire to become a CEO and I am not a discount guy, so I cannot become CEO..

M: Yeah. You don't.

R: I am someone who likes to move out and be in front of a customer, so I know my strengths, so that's what I enjoy. So I prefer to be in the sales world, so that way I'm happy it has.

R: It will add value again. I do practice a lot of things which she has told me. Even today, I keep count in terms of. If I slip out something, uh, if I do it consciously, then I know, OK, I did it purposely. So I cannot. I don't blame myself for not doing it, but there are times when you do slip on certain things, and you try to bring your slip back on track.

M: Yeah. Hmm.

R: That's all.

M: OK, cool. I think this helps. Thank you so much for giving us time for the lovely conversation.

R: I hope I've been of some help. I mean, I know minus been more from a personal side, not from a corporate view.

M: Yes, absolutely very much. No, we're just fine. I mean it's basis, your experience with the course you have taken. So that's OK. We appreciate you giving us time.

R: My pleasure.

M: So thank you so much.

R: My pleasure. All the very best.

M: Thank you, Alifiya.

R: So all of you, yeah.

M: I don't think she has any questions, but I think we're good, yeah.

R: That's OK, that's OK.

M: Thank you. So thank you so much.

R: Don't call me Sir. The queen has not yet knighted me. She didn't find time.

M: It's OK, but thank you for your time and your valuable insights Yeah.

R: OK. Take care, my pleasure.

M: Thank you.

R: I hope you are. It has been of some use and you are being able to derive more from whatever I have been able to give you all the very best.