



## Defining Moments of Leadership with Marsha Acker and Benjamin Carcich on Becoming Self Authored



Marsha Acker: Hi everyone. I'm Marsha Acker and this is Defining Moments of Leadership. Today we are talking about rejection. Think about a moment when you've been told that you've not been selected for something that you really wanted or you were asked to step out of a role that you were already serving in and move on to something else. In this conversation, we are going to cover everything from, are leaders made or born, why ethics should be considered in leadership, and what does it mean to become self-authored vs other authored. There is both breath and depth here.

So, before we get started, let me introduce you to my guest today, Ben Carcich. Ben studies leadership. He has a background in the U.S. Army and worked at Riot Games. Each experience provided a unique view of what leadership was. And now, he provides coaching, mentoring and consulting for companies and individuals related to leadership and game development through Valarin Inc. and also cohosts the Building Better Games podcast alongside Aaron Smith.

So, let's dive in. So, Ben, welcome to the podcast.

Ben Carcich: Thanks for having me. It's good to be here.

Marsha Acker: Yeah, gosh, I have had the pleasure of meeting you a number of years ago, and I know you to be someone who has, quite a bit of passion and does a lot of thinking, just even around this concept of leadership. So, I'm looking forward to diving into it with you today.

Ben Carcich: Likewise. Likewise.

Marsha Acker: Yeah. I'd love for you to get us started about, what would you say your earliest concept of leadership or where you first to begin to think about leadership?

Ben Carcich: Well, I was in the boy Scouts and so I remember thinking about leadership then but it was very much about positional authority. I also remember watching my brother, my brother has many natural leadership traits. and I think watching how people followed him and actually if I'm honest being like I'm jealous of that at the time. And it was, it was annoying too, because he followed me because I was his older brother. But then like when he went out, he had all these people and if, for whatever reason, the environments I was in, at church or other things besides the Boy Scouts, the only other people my age when I was a kid were tended to be girls, so I was like a boy and girls aren't following a boy like when you're eight years old, it's like, you don't want to touch each other or interact with each other. So, I think I started seeing hints of it then. And then for me, when I became an Eagle Scout and then I went into the military and was in ROTC. And I started seeing leaders like official leaders, adult, real leaders, you know, besides sort of teachers or pastors or police officers, would like the people that lead in environments when you're growing up, I started seeing like, oh, okay, now I'm an adult, I'm being led by adults and started going like, what's good and what's not good about how they're doing that. Like what's working for me and what's not. And initially, very selfishly, just like I have a style, what is good about how they relate to my style or not, and started seeing different types of leadership emerged as well. You have directive leaders, you have leaders, by example, you have leaders via coaching, of leaders via vision, and, some are able to handle multiple styles someone, but that and then being formally trained in military leadership was really when it was like, okay, this leadership thing, this is kind of a big deal in my life. And I started focusing on it sort of more and more as I kept growing and then it was in the military as an officer and left as a captain, and kind of that experience and relating to it. And then more recently working in, video gaming, and being a producer and having that very different experience.

Marsha Acker: I feel like there are phases of looking at leadership. I'm curious about, did you have any stereotypes maybe early on of what leadership is? You talk a little bit about good leadership or bad leadership, maybe from your lens, but did you have any initial stereotypes?

Ben Carcich: So as someone who's naturally very suspicious of leadership, I was like, leaders are the arrogant people who manage to convince other people they know what they're doing. There was this idea of like, why are you following him? And I remember, I just, I would ask that question all the time. I go, like why are you following that person? What do they know that you can't figure out, what's going on that makes you want to give up your agency and your critical thinking and just be like, I'll just do what this other person says.

- Marsha Acker: What I hear in that is that there's power and authority and leadership and, there's a dynamic of leader/follower and
- Ben Carcich: Yeah. Confidence often tripping into arrogance, I think is the thing. If I'm scared of leadership around a particular thing, it's confidence tripping into arrogance and yet still holding power and authority and that's actually still mostly true. It's just that there's a lot more nuance around what that might look like and not do you know, from 10-year-old me.
- Marsha Acker: Yeah. Well, I think it's so fascinating to reflect back to like our earliest moments of when we begin to sort out, you know, what does leadership mean? What does it look like? And I think contrasting, how we look at it now. So thinks it's just, it's helpful to hear a little bit of that. I'd love for listeners to know even a little bit more about your leadership journey. So maybe can you catch us up to date on like where you are in your leadership journey and maybe a little bit about how you got here.
- Ben Carcich: One of the things that I've realized is I am not a natural leader. There's a lot of people who described when they were kids being put in leadership positions and all these different things. it was never me. In fact, it was never something I was that interested in. I always kind of was alone on my own, like thinking through the world and puzzling things. And I was so focused in a positive way, like making myself better, changing who I was. But I compared to so many people who described their childhood experiences or their formative young adult experiences with leadership. It's like, I don't have those. They didn't look the same to me. I was mostly desperately trying to run away from all responsibility in life, as much as I could, because responsibility meant, you know, you could fail and all these different sorts of hang-ups I had. But there I was an army officer and then after that, a video game producer, clear leadership roles, and trained to do that and so it was like well, I got to figure it out. And I think now when I look at that, I'm thankful because the lack of that being intuitive to me meant that I went about it through a lot of observation, and then a lot of study and like reading and picking lessons out - what worked, what didn't, why. And seeing that over and over and over again, and then getting feedback from people that I interacted with. And so now if I were to describe what it is I do right now, that makes me valuable to a company or the world at large, it is leading. That's what I do the best of anything that I do. I actually don't believe in natural, like people might have traits that lean them towards being a natural leader, but I don't believe there's any such thing as a true, highly effective and good leader that just like popped out of the womb that way.
- Marsha Acker: Yeah. You're pointing to this, I think decades old debate that's had in many circles around are leaders made or born or, yeah. So where do you stand on that?

Ben Carcich:

My definition of leadership is influencing others towards a goal. And I developed that years ago when I was trying to like, figure out what, okay, wait, if I'm a leader, what does that actually mean? Like, what is Leadership? And I started looking at all these definitions and then I started coalescing. Okay, what are the common elements? And those three things emerged. It's influencing because it's not, you don't have to direct, you don't have to coach, you don't have to like but in some way you have to be influencing to lead others, because if there's not others involved, then you're not truly, leading. I mean, we can talk about self-leadership and that has some utility, but practically speaking, if you are a leader there's others involved and they're following. And so what I think about is that born or is it made? Well, you have to be someone who wants to move towards a goal in some way. And it's a goal that's large enough to the point where others need to come along with you. And then can you figure out how to influence them? And some people, I think, want that sort of, even from a very young age, you see that in kids and some are less inclined towards it. And there are people that when if you were to place them in a position to say, you have to lead and you see this in companies all the time. They're like, I don't want to lead. I just want to do my thing. I want to engage with my expertise and you can work on that person a lot but if they're not willing like good luck. Like it's not going to go well. And there are other people who just seem to love that. So being born with inclinations and certain like, charisma is helpful. Critical thinking is helpful. Some amount of empathy is really helpful, actually a lot of empathy. The ability to look at situations and understand how other people are thinking is so important, and some people develop that more when they're kids and others don't. But then there's the main argument. If I have that person who was had all the born traits, but never actually let anybody, would I prefer them leading or someone who had far fewer of those traits, but really wanted to do it and spent years and years studying and practicing and leading, I'd much take the prefer the person who was made than the person who was born a natural leader. Because there is so much to be gained from paying attention, from observation, from learning, that, an intuitive sense of what the right way is may or may not cover because you're the intuitive person, the person who operates in the world intuitively tends to be more vulnerable to the blind spots, to their own blind spots than the person who is open to the exploration of like, wait, how do other people do this. So, it's both, I would say more made than born.

Marsha Acker:

More made than born. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I also hear you pointing to a value of learning.

Ben Carcich:

Yeah. I'm the guy who goes and figures out if leadership is influencing others towards the goal cause I'm now gonna make it, but like what are the high values of leadership? I don't know if it's possible to overemphasize humility when you're talking about takes to make a truly good leader and I know many leaders that aren't that humble. Yes, and some of them are effective. When I say a good leader, I don't mean an effective leader in terms of like,

oh, they were able to solve a problem with a team. There's more to it than that. And actually, I think our society or corporate America whatever it is, struggles because we have conflated effective short-term leadership with good leadership and, there's a lot of negative that can come from that and poor incentive that that creates.

Marsha Acker: How would you define good leadership at least today?

Ben Carcich: So, if leadership is influencing others towards a goal, good leadership to include an ethical component as well as an effective component would be doing that in such a way that you can continue to do it with the group of people you have or changing group or completely new group, sustainably into the future. There's this idea of, as humans, we're constantly interacting in games with each other. And if I just want to win the next game and I don't care about anything after that, I might cheat and I win and you lose and I run away. But if I do that and I have to come back to you at some point in the future, and I say, hey, I want to play a game with you. You're like, I don't want to play a game with you because you cheat. By the way, I cheated at a time when I was like a really little kid at board games and I would win and then people realized I was cheating cause they were like, of course he's cute and innocent young. And I was like, oh yeah, no, I'm a little punk, that's what I am. And they discovered like, well, yeah, but if Ben wins it's because he's cheating and I was like, that's not okay. And I became an absolute rule slayer. After that, I was like, no, everybody has to follow all the exact rules and I'm tracking everything all the time to make sure nobody ever cheats so that when I win, it's because I'm better than anyway. I was seven, whatever. But we aren't going to want to play multiple games with each other if everybody's cutting and running using cheating or bad methods. When you see someone in an unethical way, take advantage of other people in order to achieve a short-term goal, even if they get away with it, they can't continue to do that with that same group of people, they will be rejected like the system will reject them. And so good leadership is leading in a way that allows you to continue to lead any group of people for a long period of time because you can continue to play the game because you're playing it squarely and honestly, and there's all sorts of psychology behind that like winning all the time is not the best strategy. And that's a tough thing in a society that I think is obsessed with winning, winning all the time is not the best strategy. It's better to lose and let other people. win. Sometimes because you're trying to win the infinite game, not just today.

Marsha Acker: I wish that pretty much every leadership team would sit down and have a conversation together about what you and I are talking about right now, which is how do we define leadership and what does good leadership look like here? Because I'm certain you've run across it too. I think there is a battle in corporate America these days around what does leadership look like? What are we reward? And, there's always this back and forth about what are the results that we're trying to achieve? Is someone making

progress or what does success look like? Is somebody leading something towards and where I watch leaders really struggle is, yeah, that was a really bad behavior but they're really producing something really valuable or there's some sort of caveat to the production or the effectiveness or just some narrow internal narrative that sits in the organization around why that's so important to keep that person around. So, really appreciate you bringing in the sustainability part of it. Right? Like we might play a game one time, but are we willing to come back and continue to play that game together? Or we really need to be in relationship with one another

**Ben Carcich:** And it's not just external too. I believe in people to think through their world view and understand what are my principles, what are my ethics, what do I consider moral and immoral behavior? And then integrity is I've seen many definitions of integrity. For me, it's actually just living that out in the world. But honestly think through what does it mean to live well, in the world from many angles.

**Marsha Acker:** Yeah. Lovely. Well, I'm curious about something that you would say as a defining moment in your own leadership. I would imagine there are many of them but is there one that stands out?

**Ben Carcich:** Yeah. So I was at a video game company some number of years ago and I was there about six months and I won't go into all the nitty gritty detail of it. I would say there was a meaningful difference in what it meant to lead and like what leader's job was and all these things. And the outcome of all of this was after those six months I was basically ejected from the team and it was at the time, it felt catastrophic, right. It felt like this absolute failure. I felt completely, I mean, demoralized doesn't even begin to cover it. And I, remember desperately trying to understand, like, what had happened, why this had happened, you know, had I failed, had the system failed? I was trying to figure out who to blame. And so if I were to like focus in on one, one story. I think it's just like, okay, what happened to me after I get kicked off this team and sort of experienced the first, and it wasn't firing, but it was this rejection of who I was and my effectiveness and whatever else, all the things I thought about myself felt like they were suddenly questioned.

**Marsha Acker:** Yeah. Well, I can imagine for anyone listening many of us have experienced those moments in various ways, right? Where we get told whether it's an interview or whether it's a team that we've been on. No, thank you. Or we don't see there's a fit. So yeah, so relatable. So, what happened?

**Ben Carcich:** So afterwards, I went into this desperate seeking of feedback and there was a recognition that eventually came that I don't know if I'm going to be able to really get an answer to this. I don't know if I'm going to ever understand exactly what happened, that was a very low point for many angles, for I questioned my own value, and perhaps appropriately. Right. I remember at

the time talking with different people who weren't closely involved but who I trusted and one person in particular, a guy named Richard Hensley, a great guy. He gave me some feedback that I'll never forget. He was these are people with families, house payments, careers and you walked in and said, you're not doing it right. And then you wrote it all down and then you made a big deal and then you said like, they shouldn't be there anymore and all these things. Like it was this interesting reframing of, you know, Ben, you could be obsessed with whether you were right or not in some absolute sense of that. But at some level, what I took away from what he said, was I'd forgotten that they were people too. And even though they were in charge of the project and they were leaders, and like why wasn't I serving them? All of what I was trying to do was out of this service to this large team, building, making this very important project, I was serving them, I was serving the company I was trying to serve the player, like all these things. But in some sense, I fell into a greatest good for the greatest number, which I think is a bad moral philosophy. And I ignored the fact that there were a couple of people there that I was not serving and I wasn't loving in a way that I think I should have. And in fact, I made them into an enemy, and they made me into an enemy and all those things, and we could go back and forth about again, whose fault is that. But in the end, I had lost their humanity in my quest for what is best and I air quoted around best there, you know cause it's really hard to know. So that, that struck me and this led me to what I consider one of the most key steps in the journey that I went through. I realized that I had placed my entire sense of self-worth as a professional on what the organization I was working at thought of me. And I had to held none of that to my own judgment. I had not, I had not said, hey, Ben, are you good at your job? The answer to that question was, well, what does the company think? And it was never like, I think I might be, yeah, Or I think I'm good in these things and I'm not good at these things. And so, by being thrown through the wall of my own naivete, I suddenly had to go like, wait a minute, maybe I can't trust this organization to always do the right thing all the time. And when I say that out loud, of course not, that's ridiculous. Nobody does the right thing, all the time. We try, hopefully, we try. But even many of us have different ideas of what the right thing might be. So how could I expect an entire organization to do what I thought was the right thing at every given moment. But then that means that how much should I trust them to evaluate my performance and my capability and my competency. And going through that process suddenly had me in some ways pulling a lot of that back towards myself. And I suddenly, it became more important what I intrinsically thought of my capability rather than what the organization did. And man, that is complex and nuance, like I mentioned, humility, I'll mentioned it again. If you do that without maintaining humility, you're gone because now you can let your pride and arrogance, you pull into yourself, you say, I'm the only person that gets to say if I'm good or not, and then there's a part of you, there's a dark part of all of us that wants to say I'm the best all the time. And it's always everybody else's fault. And so if you let that part take over, like you're in for a bad ride. You're going to start playing the

infinite game very badly. But if you can maintain humility in that, you can say like, actually I shouldn't give you all the power in evaluating who I am and whether I'm competent and whether I'm capable or not. I need to bring this, some of that back to myself. And that was a defining moment for me because suddenly it wasn't up to this organization, this other, it was up to me to a large extent, well, am I good at my job? Well, I don't know, Ben, do you think you're good at your job? Shoot. I'd never asked that question and man, I should've, you know, but I was so busy trying to make sure someone else was happy with me that I was not at all aware of like, well, am I happy with me and how I'm behaving and how I'm doing.

Marsha Acker:

There's so much to double-click on and any of us could probably identify with, you know, a moment in time where we've not been chosen or not been selected or been asked to leave a certain system and the dissonance that it creates. And I think it's really easy to step into that space of making, you know, wanting to be right, like our egos want to find what's right about what we did and find the other wrong. And, what I hear you talking about towards the end is looking at making a shift, like being willing to be in the muck for a long enough to look at the shift from being other authored to being self-authored, right. There's a value that what others think of us and how they experience us is really helpful to take in. But when it influences how we move about in the world or has us question our value, I think there's the nuance. There's still a humility in not looking, but gosh, to be able to say, actually I add value. We just might see things differently and we get to see things differently and we get to have different ways that we move about in the world and we get to have different models for how we do things. But yeah, just really appreciating the distinction that you were able to make at the very end of that.

Ben Carcich:

Yeah. And, it led to irony. It led to a fearlessness and a courage. It removed a fear. And that fear was that I'm not valuable, I don't have anything to add and my past results are all flukes. I'm an imposter. And it's finally been proven. You know, I finally got to this situation and it's all come out. And I was always worried that was going to happen. I was always, the classic. imposter syndrome. After that, the irony is that after I was kind of kicked in the teeth and ejected from a team and felt horrible and went down, you know, and said, you'd like to say the Campbell's cave and, you know, I had my horrible experience of having to confront myself. and all those things. I came up the other side and I was so much more confident. And because I suddenly, to your point, I was self authored. I was grounded. And it doesn't mean I don't listen to other people and what they think of me and all those things, but it does mean that I take that with a grain of salt and I have to run it through my lens. I don't just take your lens wholesale. Maybe think about every piece of, feedback you've ever given, but a lot of it is great. Some of it isn't.

Marsha Acker: I actually, can I just pause you for a moment. I love the metaphor that you just used because I'm imagining if I'm somebody listening to this right now, going I'm in this and I don't know how to get where you're at or even what the difference is. You just used the metaphor of lenses. And I love that idea of, like other authored is actually, I'm going to take my glasses off and put your glasses on like wholesale. I'm just, you handed them to me and I'm going to take every bit of it and then I maybe going to stew and the fact that I don't like the lenses that I'm looking through, but it feels dissonant. I just can't make sense of it versus somebody handing you the glasses and you look at them. I mean, they stay external to you for a little while before you, you decide which pieces of them you want to put on.

Ben Carcich: Oh yeah, there, it reminds me of a conversation I had with my mom, I think when I was 13 or 14 and it's the phrase, if the shoe fits wear it.

Marsha Acker: Yeah.

Ben Carcich: And I was so frustrated by that. and I retorted to my mother, I was a wonderfully behaved boy. What if I don't like the shoe? And to my mom's credit, she was like, that's a good point. And so, I think that's one of the things, when we look at all those different lenses. So, it's not like if the shoe fits wear it. Well, yes, but it's your shoe and it's your lens on the world. And I'm not saying it's not cohesive and doesn't fit together. But when I put it on the reality is that when I view the situation from a different pair of lenses or a different perspective, there are other conclusions to draw. And that man like freeing yourself from just accepting everybody else's lens for your life to saying like, hey, I should have my own lens I should have my own way of understanding if I'm succeeding.

Marsha Acker: You also, you made a comment, you lost your connection to humanity or there was something about losing humanity in that scenario.

Ben Carcich: Oh, yeah. I had a conversation with one of the people that was on the other side of this debate and he had his own rough journey around this whole thing and I remember talking to him after and feeling bad because I viewed this guy even as much as we disagreed about leadership and other things, he was a humble dude trying to do the right thing and we disagreed about how and we disagreed vehemently and add huge impacts to the project and things like that. And when you're in the debate about what's right, and what's truth, and what's the best course, and there's someone who you feel like is on the other side, you're going to start telling yourself things about them, and it's easier to think of them as a villain than to think of them as another very thoughtful, highly. Intelligent, compassionate, humble person. I was like, this is a good guy, but I disagree after that lunch I was really just struck by, he didn't view me as a monster and I didn't view him as a monster, but after that, I think we were both like there's a lot to respect

about you, even as much as we disagreed. And in the heat of battle, you forget that and they become the obstacle. I'd lost the fact that like, this is a human and they're as convinced of their own perspective as I am, and when we're trying to push against another group of people or an individual, one of the easiest shortcuts our brains can take is to dehumanize them. And I remember being in Afghanistan, I was a logistics officer. I didn't see a ton of combat or anything, but I interacted with some of the local Afghans and to see how armies talk about each other, it's almost an important part of war to not see the other person as a human because you don't want to think about that. You don't want to think about the fact that they have a wife and kids and a mother, who will never see them again, you know? And so you dehumanize, but in subtle ways, we do that all the time.

Marsha Acker: If somebody were listening and they find themselves going through something like this right now, what's a piece of advice you'd give them.

Ben Carcich: Don't give up your agency and don't give up your humility. Human beings are the most complex thing we are aware of in the universe. And if you're in one of these situations, there's probably a bunch of them involved and you will not be able to wrap your head around all of the nuance. There's politics, there's hierarchy, there's product goals, there's the processes we use, there's interpersonal relationships, there's cliques, and some of these things we put negative or positive spins on in our mind, they're all present. You don't know half of it and you never will. Don't kill yourself trying to figure it out. Instead maintain your humility, think about, well you could do better and what you will never know, and be, and try to come to terms with that. And also if you realize in this, that you have given other people the right to author you, think about if you want to do that. Self-authoring is not the absence of listening to feedback and it's not, no one else can tell me if I'm a good leader or a good whatever or not. It is, to some extent, keeping your own counsel around that. And it's an okay outcome to walk away going like, hey, I don't think I did anything horrifically wrong here but the system just didn't like what I did. Life is so nuanced and so complex that it's okay for a couple of things to be true. You bear some responsibility and simultaneously maybe there wasn't much you could have known to do differently.

Marsha Acker: Yeah. I love that. I'm curious how this informs how you show up today? Like, how you incorporate what feels like a pretty poignant moment.

Ben Carcich: I get to determine if I'm successful or not, and that means that if I want to stand up for the values, principles, ethics, morals that I believe in, and the company chooses to reject that, that's actually okay. And so, I became ironically really confident almost to the point where I was like really worried I was becoming arrogant or prideful or something. But I remember just showing up in rooms and being really comfortable giving my opinion. And if they accepted it, they did and if they didn't, they didn't. And in the

end, I had my responsibilities, I had my roles I was in and I was executing against those roles and the thing that became terrifying about that for me is I realized how differently people treated me once I was confident and bold and assertive. It was astonishing as a historically type B leader to suddenly engage with some type A characteristics and to move in confidence and to, move in power, right? Some people are naturally like this and if you don't maintain humility and you just walk around confidently, wow, people will just, yep, okay, cool, they'll accept it, they'll follow you. I was just like, no, every leader needs to go through some horrible event. So, I'd say that if you're going and you ask what's the advice if you're going through a horrible event, I hate to say this, good, you need one. You need at least one maybe more because you have to realize that they can happen and you have to build some humility through that. Because if you come out of the gate as a confident person, people will follow you,

Marsha Acker: You've talked a lot about confidence in this episode, and I think Brene Brown is the one who talks about this concept of grounded confidence, which really is resonating strongly for, I love the phrase grounded confidence, because I hear there's maybe a distinction around confident and having maybe some grounded confidence.

Ben Carcich: You're walking the road between two ditches and overconfidence might be on one side and self-deprecating overzealous humility, which isn't really true humility, might be on the other side. And so, I think, yeah, grounded confidence, that idea of walking the line between, I am humble, I'm open to being wrong, I'm open to other people and simultaneously I'm confident as I move forward and balancing that and staying on the road between those two things, that sounds like grounded confidence.

Marsha Acker: I'm curious if there's any one last thing that you want to say about this, a little bit of this part of the journey that you've been on.

Ben Carcich: Maybe if I were to double click on something it would be, the world is really nuanced. And, when I talked with you about bringing up this particular story, I'm hesitant because I think it's, it was a defining moment for me. And simultaneously it's really hard to talk about because you are trying to balance what seemed like contradictory things.

It's partially my fault. And simultaneously, I wasn't responsible for some. We need to maintain our humility, we need to be confident, and it's not that these things directly contradict, but so often in life, we're looking for simple answers. And after that experience, what I wanted was simple answers. Somebody tell me the thing I did wrong or somebody tell me I didn't do anything wrong; the system is. But give me a simple answer because I need that to go forward; real life is complicated, it is nuanced. You're much better off coming to terms with the unknowns and the chaos, than you are buying a

line that makes everything seem okay. Because it is simultaneously okay and not okay, all at once. Pretty much every moment of our lives.

Marsha Acker: I love that, don't need simple answers. Beautiful. I end every podcast with a speed round of questions where I just say something and you'd say the first thing that comes to mind, are you ready?

Ben Carcich: I'm ready.

Marsha Acker: Okay. So, the first is just sort of fill in the blank. So leadership is...

Ben Carcich: Influencing others towards a goal. You've heard that one before.

Marsha Acker: I have heard that one before. A piece of advice I'd give my younger self...

Ben Carcich: Focus on the principles, the values, the ethics and being good in the world more than pursuing what you want in the world.

Marsha Acker: The future I want to see is...

Ben Carcich: I want to see leaders being the force multipliers they could be rather than obstacles to achieving goals.

Marsha Acker: One thing people sometimes get wrong about me...

Ben Carcich: I think I have often been viewed as an abstract idealist. And there are elements of both of those things that are true, again, nuance. I go up to the abstract so I can come back down to the practical because that's sort of how I function. And the results that I've demonstrated over time, there's a lot of divine intervention involved for all my mistakes, but the results I've generated are such that when you go up to the abstract and then you come down to the practical, you can get really good results. So, and around idealism, same thing, right? Like start with an ideal.

Marsha Acker: Yeah.

Ben Carcich: Yes, but I don't see myself as an idealist or a purely abstract thinker. I'm so interested in what does it mean to practically live in the world? So that would be something I think people get.

Marsha Acker: Yeah. I love that. Something that brings me joy...

Ben Carcich: I had a daughter, Violet Marie a little over a month ago, and right now that's very present on my mind. It's why I can't keep track of conversations and forget a lot of words but because I'm tired. But she brings a lot of joy.

- Marsha Acker: Congratulations!
- Ben Carcich: Yeah. Oh, she's so cute.
- Marsha Acker: When you look forward to the future, what kind of leader do you want to be...
- Ben Carcich: More Christ-like, aiming, aiming at the highest possible good.
- Marsha Acker: Awesome, Ben. I have loved this conversation. Thank you so much for coming and sharing and gosh, and for your willingness to come and bring something that I hear really poignant, and potentially a little difficult to share, but I love that these stories are coming forward. My greatest hope is that they inspire others and help others in some moment where they might be in not feeling super great about it. And there's something to listen to in a path forward. So, thank you for being willing to do that very much.
- Ben Carcich: Thank you for exploring it with me. I hope it's helpful for some.
- Marsha Acker: Yeah. If people want to get in touch with you, what's the best way for them to do that.
- Ben Carcich: You can find me on LinkedIn, unlike my co-founder Aaron Smith, I do have a very unique name. Benjamin Carcich, last name is spelled C A R C I C H. You can probably find me just through the name. Also [ben@valarinconsulting.com](mailto:ben@valarinconsulting.com). That's V A L A R I N. Or you can go to Valarin Consulting .com the website, check us out there, shoot us a message And you can also find me I do a Building Better Games podcast, it's on Spotify and a lot of the other ones where we talk about leadership.
- Marsha Acker: Yeah, it's a great podcast. You should definitely check it out and we'll put links to all those in the show notes. So very good then. Ben, thank you so much. Take care.
- Ben Carcich: Have a good one, Marsha. Thank you.



### **Marsha's Closing Remarks and Takeaways:**

I hope you enjoyed the conversation with Ben. The story that he told about being in a conflict and ultimately being told to leave the team and the deep personal learning that emerged from that experience was so rich. Look, I have my own story that I could tell about being told to leave a system and I think in those moments it is so easy to make it all about the other where they were wrong, how I was right and I could go on and on just telling that story but I think one of the most pivotable moments certainly in my leadership but you also hear Ben talk about it too, is being able to stand in the muck long enough that you can get yourself to a place where you're remotely willing to consider another perspective or even better yet, what's the part you played when this situation unfolded. And, I think that is the doorway, it's certainly not the only doorway, but it is one of the doorways into tremendous personal growth. So, you heard in Ben's story, you know for Ben, growth was becoming more self-authored vs other authored. Bob Kegan talks about this concept in his theory of adult development - so if you want to check out more of that concept, you can Google him and look it up.

I also love this point that Ben makes about the key difference in making that transition from being self-authored and this line that he said "I was so busy trying to make sure someone else was happy with me that I was not at all aware of, well am I happy with me?" I see us as leaders do this all the time. Like, we get fixated on things around us and sometimes we sort of lose our way or forget to check in with ourselves. And you also hear Ben talk about the clarity and confidence - grounded confidence that comes from being really clear about what you are up to and what leadership looks like to you, how you want to lead. It's what we talk about all the time you hear me in every podcast reference, building your model for leadership. And, I think as you hear Ben talk, you'll hear the evidence of what the impact it can have for you and for others when you get really clear about what's in your model.

So, I just want to say thank you for being here. I really appreciate you. If you want to continue the conversation, come join me in the Facebook group called, Defining Moments of Leadership. Until next time, keep growing your leadership range and defining your own model for leadership and I'll see you soon.