



The Paradox of humility and control with Martin Aldergard

[00:00:00] **Martin:** So he shared from his own experience what humble meant to him, and gradually he convinced the executives in the room. That being humble is actually a sign of strength and it's a sign of courage. It's not a sign of weakness. And then they could find each other and they could kind of start them to talk more about what will regain from being more humble as leader.

[00:00:30] **Carolyn Swora:** Today's guest is Martin Algar. Martin is the co-founder of Second Crack Leadership and has over 25 years experience consulting large regional companies and multinationals across Asia. He focuses his work on teams and typically leads the people side of change in large corporate transformation, designing solutions to involve managers and employees more effectively.

[00:01:06] Martin and I met. Through LinkedIn actually, and, uh, we had a great conversation several weeks ago about leadership and teams. One of the things that we both acknowledged was the difficulty of paradox for leaders. So in our conversation today, you will hear us talk about a specific paradox between control and humility.

[00:01:36] I hope you enjoy our conversation.

[00:01:38] **Intro:** Welcome to Evolve a new era of leadership, a podcast for real leaders to join real conversations with business experts, practitioners thought leaders, and change makers who integrate head, heart, and body in all they do, who commit to compassion and curiosity, who commit to radical self-leadership in their quest to understand others better

[00:02:01] too.



[00:02:03] Because the only way to deliver real results is to understand what it takes to lead real human beings. This is a new era

[00:02:11] of leadership.

[00:02:18] I'm Carolyn Sora, and this is Evolve a new era of Leadership. Welcome. Welcome everybody to another episode of Evolve, a New Era in Leadership. My guest today is coming to us from a different time zone across the Atlantic Ocean and over into the beautiful country of Sweden, Martin Algar, thank you so much for joining us

[00:02:44] **Carolyn Swora:** today.

[00:02:45] **Martin:** Hi Caroline, and thank you for being on your show. Yes. So it's going to be so exciting to talking with you today. It is.

[00:02:52] I know that I met your business partner, so we had your business partner on here on another episode, but you know, there was just so much in our conversation when we first met that we had to have both of you on.

[00:03:03] Yes. And me and Garrett, we focus on these different aspects. Right? He normally talks more about individual leadership and I'm more into leading a team. Yeah. And

[00:03:15] **Carolyn Swora:** that's now you're, you're singing my song there. I love team dynamics. And so that's what we're gonna talk about a little bit today. We're gonna really leverage all your years of experience and you know, certainly it's very interesting times when we look at team dynamics in the workplace.

[00:03:31] What would you say Martin? Is one of the biggest changes you've seen over the past few years in terms of how leaders are impacting their teams and, and the impact on the team dynamics?



[00:03:45] **Martin:** Oh, it's a tough question. I'm thinking the biggest difference is today there is the complexity of change. You know, I've been working for 25 years as a management consultant, as a leadership developer in Asia.

[00:04:00] And the amount of complexity, the speed of change, the number of stakeholders that you need to involve as a leader of change is just increasing by the day. It is.

[00:04:11] **Carolyn Swora:** Could you give a, a specific example of what that looks like? Because I know, you know, we all kind of say that, but like, do you have a specific example?

[00:04:20] **Martin:** Yeah. For instance, when a large company need to transform, they might drive a total and new strategy. It might have to do with, uh, New customer and new market and new customer segments that are moving into, it might be digital transformation, it might be sustainability transformation. I think this then percolates throughout the organization, right?

[00:04:43] So the amount of change then that even a manager, a leader in the middle of the organization is experiencing then is of course increasing. And this puts a lot of demand on leaders to also up their skills and their abilities. To lead change in a smarter way than in the past. Right, right. In the past we had more time.

[00:05:05] Today we don't have time. We got to be more effective. We need to lead change in a smarter way. Yep.

[00:05:11] **Carolyn Swora:** Yep. And I know we were talking a little bit before we pressed record here, sort of two types of leaders that you've seen navigate through these change. And, and I know we're gonna simplify things a little bit here, but can you just share a little bit about, you know, that first type of leader navigating through this change?

[00:05:27] Yeah.



[00:05:28] **Martin:** Again, simplified. But we see these leaders, they are very smart, they're very fast, they're really good in their subjects. They're quick problem solvers. They can connect the dots so fast, right? And then they're quick to tell their teams what needs to be done and the team trust them and they can get stuff done very quickly.

[00:05:46] Right? And. At some point, sometime we see these leaders, they actually become the bottleneck then, right? Mm. Because the team depend on them. When the amount of change is increasing, when the complexity is increasing, perhaps they start to do a few mistakes. Team gets frustrated, stakeholders getting frustrated, and they are in trouble.

[00:06:08] They become the bottleneck, right?

[00:06:09] **Carolyn Swora:** Mm-hmm. Okay. Before we talk about leader number two, Can we unpack that a little bit? Because you and I both know that most leaders are there really doing the best that they can. Yeah. So that type of leader who is quick making those connections, the rest of the, like the team really comes to rely on those quick, fast connections, right?

[00:06:32] And so a dynamic gets set up that I think is a little bit unfair. To that leader, because as you said, when the complexity deepens or things get a little bit faster, that leader is now being expected to sort of carry things. So can you just comment a little bit on that?

[00:06:53] **Martin:** I really agree with you there. This is with the best of intentions of this leader as well, right?

[00:06:59] They want to carry this, they want to do this for their teams, and this is how they got promoted because of their smartness, right? And how quick they were. Right. And then they getting so frustrated and they're feeling, you know, I need to deal with everything. My time is running out. I don't have a great balance, work-life balance.

[00:07:17] They're getting burnout, et cetera. I think this is such a pity, and many times I've observed that when we listen to the team members that they are



saying, I wish my boss would let us in, involve us more as well. And the boss is saying, you know, there is not time to involve everybody. We gotta make quick decisions.

[00:07:39] I know how to do this. I need to stay on top of things. Right.

[00:07:44] **Carolyn Swora:** And so how do you work with that type of leader? What sort of things do you do with a team that is faced with that

[00:07:48] **Martin:** situation? I. In this case, I think we can help them with a few tools of how do we involve teams to make decisions, to come up with ideas together, and how can we help this leader to step out from the center of control and step out a little bit, being a little bit fly on the wall broader than be the guy in the middle that everything needs to go through this guy.

[00:08:13] Right.

[00:08:14] **Carolyn Swora:** Right. Yeah. So it's sort of helping them expand that bolus of control almost.

[00:08:23] **Martin:** Yeah, the end, it's mindset, right? If I'm as a leader thinking I'm the guy in charge, I need to deliver, it's my responsibility that there are no mistakes made, right? My team is here to support me in a way, that mindset put me in this awkward position.

[00:08:40] Yeah, when things, uh, getting tough,

[00:08:42] **Carolyn Swora:** I think it's mindset. I also think there are, well, not, I think, I know from my Enneagram training, there are certain patterns of the way we think and the way we feel that we can get really stuck in. And we really think we're doing the right thing. Yes. And especially when we're stressed and there's pressure on mm-hmm.

[00:09:03] We sort of doubled down on those patterns because we know that they have helped us in the past. Yes. So I, I agree with you a hundred percent on the mindset and how do we help them see those patterns so that they can step



out a little bit more. Mm-hmm. And it's so hard to do with so much change going on.

[00:09:18] **Martin:** Right. And, and there is so much pressure from a corporate culture many times where, Leaders sometimes needs to be seen as heroes. You've gotta copy with this. Yes. Right. And they put in more hours, et cetera. On the other side, I see organizations with leaders that work almost total opposite.

[00:09:40] **Carolyn Swora:** Hmm. So is this, are we going to leader number two now?

[00:09:43] **Martin:** Right. Are we okay with

[00:09:44] **Carolyn Swora:** that? Yeah. Let's go to the other sort of type of leader

[00:09:47] **Martin:** that you see and, and, and these are these guys that are really humble. They are almost like they are at the back of the room instead of at the front of the room. They are the one that putting the right team together that asks more questions than gives answers that is concerned about.

[00:10:06] The team having relationship, the team having the right conditions to create answers. And then they are the ones that makes the team the hero, that makes the team to think and come up with the solutions. Right. Right. And I've observed many times these leaders, they, they seem to be slow at the beginning.

[00:10:29] Because of course, it's a learning curve for a team to come together. Results sometime coming slow from these kind of teams. They might make initial mistakes, but that is part of getting everybody involved in the team, right? Mm-hmm. But then when the team learn to work together, when they learn to collaborate, when they start to feel successful, you can really see this accelerate this performance out of these teams.

[00:10:53] Mm-hmm. In some organization I had a fortune to see almost leader side by side is leader one and leader two side by side. Okay. And leader one is



very fast outta the blocks, but they, they become the bottleneck and leader number two is much slower outta the block with their teams, but they are just picking up the speed, right?

[00:11:17] And they will overtake.

[00:11:19] **Carolyn Swora:** So if Leader one sort of becomes a bottleneck, what can happen with Leader two that they might not be aware of, that might not have as positive an impact on the team dynamics as they would hope?

[00:11:34] **Martin:** There's always this perceived contradiction between being in control, giving direction, versus being humble.

[00:11:43] And not knowing what is the right thing to do. Mm-hmm. So I think this leader, number two, this more humble leader, this more team focused leader, they still have a very important role, right? They got to provide direction, purpose, they got to build a culture. The way of working together. How do you put a diverse team there?

[00:12:03] They need to be super strong. So they have a different, important role. And sometime if you get it mixed up, Meaning a humble leader is not a relaxed leader at all. It's a very confident leader, but their confidence is applied perhaps on the overall direction of the team, of the priorities mo how we work together rather than the problem solving.

[00:12:26] **Carolyn Swora:** There was a leadership book by Ed Chein called Humble Leadership. Have you read that?

[00:12:31] **Martin:** Yes. Yes. I love

[00:12:32] **Carolyn Swora:** that book. Yes. Yeah, he was, he just passed away recently. Did you know that? Yes. I, I was so on that we have so much to thank for, uh, him for, and in the work that we do around organizational culture, this whole notion of being humble and humility.



[00:12:47] What's your take on that? Sort of skillset as a leader, especially if you're a C E O or a senior vp, how are you seeing that humility or that humbleness show up these days? Yeah,

[00:13:00] **Martin:** this is so interesting when we are looking at role models that are really humble. And I have one guy that I'm thinking of in particular, he's the C, and he's the majority owner of the world's largest seafood company.

[00:13:15] They have almost 40,000 employees in Asia, Europe, north America. And he's a really, really humble guy. Hmm. And the interesting thing is, I've worked with this organization, uh, few years back and they had a crisis which triggered huge change. And they completely transformed their whole organization. And they have a very motivating purpose and mission to be the leading agent of change in the seafood industry to really contribute to a sustainable, uh, seafood industry.

[00:13:53] Mm-hmm. And being humble is one of their core values, and he is a role model of that, you know, in this business, I mean, Selling can. Tuna is a commodity. Yeah. Is a very tough business. How can you promote being humble as one of your core values? In this kind of business? You would be killed by competition.

[00:14:17] Yeah. You would think. Right. But to them, humble means that they need to learn fast. That is why they need to be humble. How can you be the leading agent of change? How can you keep on growing if you cannot learn? And in order to learn, you got to understand what's your limitation. Mm-hmm. You got to acknowledge mistakes.

[00:14:42] You have done opportunities for learning. And how can you do that? How can you learn if you don't ask more questions than giving answers? So for him, He's always about asking questions. He sees every meeting, every opportunity where he meets somebody, he sees it as a learning opportunity, so he always asks questions.

[00:15:09] He's like a sponge.



[00:15:11] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah. Well, and it sounds like he's asking questions to truly learn. Yeah. Versus asking questions to reinforce a hypothesis or a belief that one already has, and that is a very, very amazing skillset.

[00:15:27] **Martin:** I, yeah, I agree with you, you, that that is a really great observation. I just thought about it.

[00:15:33] His way of asking questions is very natural. Yeah. It's, it's very open. Very simple questions because, I think he doesn't have any hidden agenda, so to say. Right. Yeah. He's curiously interested. So for him asking questions is super simple it seems.

[00:15:50] **Carolyn Swora:** Mm-hmm. And he was able to influence an entire organization, you said 40,000 people?

[00:15:56] Yeah. With and a value of humility or a value of like being humble.

[00:16:01] **Martin:** Yeah, they have six core values. Of course, they have on one side, they have these core values of passion driving, results of innovation, always changing, like this more hardcore business values collaboration. On the other side, they have being responsible, being respectful, and being humble.

[00:16:23] Mm-hmm. So it's a very interesting blend. One of the. Meetings with executives in Europe or North America. He was questioned. He asked his executive leadership teams about, you know, we got to be humble. And in Europe and North America, being humble is not really seen as something an executive needs to be or should be.

[00:16:50] There was a lot of, uh, silence in the room. And he stood at the stage and he said, guys, I have worked in only a single company in my whole life because this is a family company. You have worked in many companies. You know this business more than me. I need your help. Secondly, we are standing in front of a lot of changes.

[00:17:17] What we have done in the past, a lot has been wrong. And we want to lead the change. We gotta be humble to that. And then he, so he shared from



his own experience what humble meant to him, and gradually he convinced then the executives in the room that being humble is actually a sign of strength and it's a sign of courage.

[00:17:42] It's not the sign of weakness. Yep. And then they could find each other and they could kind of start them to talk more about what are actually, what will be gained from being more humble as leaders. Hmm.

[00:17:56] **Carolyn Swora:** Wow. Sounds like he really, uh, shifted the mindset of the folks in the room.

[00:18:01] **Martin:** I think so. Gradually, gradually then of course, I think action speaks louder than words, but the trust that he has been able to build the momentum and change that he has been able to build.

[00:18:15] Not only within his organization, but also the trust that this company has built with other stakeholders. Is just growing. The momentum is, is moving so fast for them. Are you

[00:18:27] **Carolyn Swora:** able to share the impact on the organization, like from a productivity or profitability perspective? Like what has this view on humbleness brought to the organization from that perspective?

[00:18:39] **Martin:** They have six different core values, but they are all kind of interlinked, right? And being humble is one of those core leadership values that they're working on. Of course then, then the whole combination has really helped them to grow both business wise, but also even more importantly, they have been more and more and more recognized as a sustainability leader.

[00:19:05] Mm. In the seafood industry. And that then helps to provide a purpose for employees. Yep. A meaningful purpose for all employees to drive to wars. Mm-hmm.

[00:19:21] **Carolyn Swora:** Sounds like I'm a fabulous leader. Maybe we could get him on the show. Yes. Um, can, so let's bring, so we've talked about, you know, sort of leader one and leader two, and it sounds like what we're both



agreeing here on is that Leader two is the type of leader that is really going to create an environment for teams.

[00:19:44] That will help them navigate through today's business environment. Is that fair? Were we kind of agreeing on that?

[00:19:50] **Martin:** Yeah, I think so. Like you, you, you're driving collaboration, innovation, transformation, you're driving speed, resilience, all of these positive outcomes.

[00:20:00] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah. Now I'm gonna guess that leader one is trying to drive all those outcomes as well.

[00:20:05] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. What? Advice would you give to leaders to help them influence their team dynamic so that they can integrate this notion of humble, like they're not necessarily gonna be able to change the values per se, that are written on the wall for the organization, or written in their annual report, but how could leaders bring more humility into their team?

[00:20:31] Hmm.

[00:20:31] **Martin:** I think the first stepping stone starts with increased self-awareness. Do self-reflection, to be more aware of who am I as a leader, where are my strength and where are my limitation? What am I good at, and what am I not that good at? Hmm. And of gaining feedback on that because this helps me to be humble and asking for help where on those areas where I'm not the best guy, and I mean, do not need to be the best guy.

[00:21:04] Yeah. I think the second thing is, I'm thinking this about be observant on your own behavior. For instance, in team meetings, how much are you talking and how much are you listening? Be more self-aware of the ratio and try to increase the ratio of listening compared to talking. This is a sign of humbleness.

[00:21:29] And then to me, this leads to practicing empathy as a humble leader. And I think empathy is this nice word. It sounds almost esoteric, but in complex



change. That we are in today. We need to interact with so many stakeholders. We got to understand so many different stakeholders. We got to be better in being empathetic to other people's, other stakeholders point of view, being, seeing things from, from their point of view.

[00:22:02] Mm-hmm. And being empathetic with others. Of course, this helps to put my own ego in perspective, my needs as a leader in perspective. There is another thing I'm thinking of the CEO that I just spoke about. He's very good in lifting up the success of others in his team to share credit, to celebrate. I've seen him several times when he talks.

[00:22:30] About the results of other teams, but I never see him talk about the result of himself. Mm-hmm. So perhaps this is also something to help you be more humble, to show humility. The results are created by the teams. Yeah, absolutely. It needs, it needs a whole team.

[00:22:51] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah. Yeah. And I know you've been in this business for 25 years.

[00:22:56] How present has humility been through those 25 years?

[00:23:02] **Martin:** I think sometime it has not been expressed as explicitly as in this company that I've given the example, but working in Asia, humility and respect is more. A part of culture in Asia, I would say, than in Europe and North America. Again, with the risk of generalizing, but then the, the typical multinational type of company culture coming to Asia as well.

[00:23:32] Being humble is also not at the forefront. I'm really excited now when more and more companies talking about humble leadership and seeing this as a way forward, actually. I think also the new generation of leaders, they don't have a problem putting their own ego aside and putting their team upfront.

[00:23:56] **Carolyn Swora:** Right, right. I'm curious if you have any other anecdotes or stories that could maybe help Leader one, that example that we saw in Leader One, realize. The value of humility or humbleness or sort of



removing and finding ways earlier on to expand that bolus, cuz I, I truly believe that that type of leader does not have bad intention at all.

[00:24:25] Mm-hmm. It's just driven by some different personality types. Any suggestions on how that, you know, leader one could maybe see things faster?

[00:24:36] **Martin:** I think sometime when this leader one gets feedback, they become very defensive, right? Mm-hmm. And it's very difficult to take this feedback, so it will take time many time.

[00:24:50] Also, through Garrett's experience, this might be a coaching opportunity to help to unpack. This sometimes vicious circle and actually helping this person to lift this weight of his or her shoulders. Yes. And find a totally different approach because I agree with you. This is not with bad intention, this is with the best of intention.

[00:25:15] So I see it much as weight on the shoulder of this leader. I don't have a quick solution or a quick tip for this. I think it's also depend a lot on the culture. The environment. Mm-hmm. How is the more superior leaders, how do they drive the business forward? Yes. Is it like cutthroat competition? You got to show no weakness.

[00:25:40] Everybody got to be right. And in the meeting room, if you are proven to be wrong. That's a major mistake, right? Yeah. So everybody sitting there needing to be right, and in that environment, of course it's going to be difficult to change. So I'm not sure if I was able to answer your question in a good way.

[00:25:58] I think it's a real dilemma to get this started.

[00:26:02] **Carolyn Swora:** Well, I think you have answered the question, to be honest to me. You've said a few, two things that have really stood out. One is taking the weight off of their shoulders. So one, recognizing that that is a burden that they may have unintentionally put on their shoulders to carry for everybody.



[00:26:18] You know, you said self-awareness, and I'm with you. I think leaders in today's business environment, Absolutely need to put their own development at the forefront. And self-awareness is a piece of that. Mm-hmm. Like you said, understanding the environment within which they're in. There'll be an organizational culture of which they are a part of, and so being aware of what they are fully aligned with and perhaps where they might vary a little bit.

[00:26:45] And then also, yeah, like what are their patterns in having a coach like Garrett or yourself or myself and you know, the umpteen, numerous other coaches out there. Mm-hmm. I'm really good. Coaches. Mm. To help them navigate through this business environment. I mean, I think it's the hardest it's ever been to be a leader right now.

[00:27:03] Mm-hmm.

[00:27:04] **Martin:** And imagine then when you can get this support as a leader and you can use all your expertise and experience. But with so much more leverage through your team. Right, right. Imagine then how successful you can become.

[00:27:20] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah, absolutely. Martin, do you do any coaching with teams where you sit with the team or you work directly with the team as an entire unit?

[00:27:30] **Martin:** Yeah, that is a majority of my work. Doing the group facilitation and helping teams to charter, for instance, how are we going to live and apply, let's say, corporate values and principles in our team? How can we shape and create our way of working? And in the context of that, and of course, working with those leaders individually.

[00:27:56] What kind of leader do you want to be and how can you use your own personal values in alignment with the values that you, how you want to work as a team of leaders. Mm-hmm. So that is what we're doing. But personally, I don't do individual coaching. I only work with groups. That is where I feel most comfortable.



[00:28:17] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah. Yeah. Do you have any suggestions or sort of key practices that teams. Can start putting in place to bring this humility, to bring this effectiveness to work together and collaborate. In today's business, there

[00:28:33] **Martin:** are so many. One thing is just this practice of appreciation and gratitude. Mm. Start, for instance, by recognizing the contributions of each other.

[00:28:44] It could be informally or it could be formally even as part of a team meeting. I mean, this starts the mindset that we depend on each other and that everybody has a piece. Of the puzzle in to contribute to the solution, right? So showing appreciation, showing gratitude towards each other. I think that's a great starting point of being more humble towards each other.

[00:29:05] And I think another great thing is this practice of retrospectives where we looking backwards at our past projects or the past month of work and we'll reflect together on. What went well, what didn't go according to plan? What could we learn from this and what can we do moving forward? Mm-hmm. This increases the psychological safety of the team to the point and where we are also more open to give feedback to each other.

[00:29:34] You know, this little bit, not in a group setting, but more really the individual feedback that we need. To build stronger relation, be more humble towards each

[00:29:42] **Carolyn Swora:** other. Yeah. And that notion of, and I love those suggestions and, and I'm thinking back to some teams that I've led in the past, and I naturally would go there and I remember sometimes I get feedback that I wasn't assertive enough, that I didn't need to spend too much time and, you know, those light and fluffy things.

[00:30:00] But what it does is it just, it sets a mindset, it sets this commitment to not getting things perfect. And saying, okay, that's fine. What did we learn from that? And, and as a leader, making sure you allocate time to do that. So it's not



just a five minute, okay. What did you learn? What did you not learn? Okay, move on.

[00:30:19] In weekly standup meetings that we used to have is we would just say, okay, what, what happened last week that didn't go as planned? Mm-hmm. What did you learn from and what can you share with the group? And it really started to instill a different type of conversation.

[00:30:32] **Martin:** Yes, but did you also note it takes a while to get used to this?

[00:30:37] It takes a while. It does. To build it's kind of mechanic in the beginning, and then as we continue to practice the habit and we are showing that it is safe to speak, it is safe to show vulnerability, then the conversation becomes deeper and more meaningful.

[00:30:55] **Carolyn Swora:** Right. Yeah. Yep. And I think it's also important too, like you said, to acknowledge the contributions of others.

[00:31:03] Mm-hmm. And not to just gloss over that, not to see it as, we don't have time for this. I think especially with today's world the way it is, any chance we can get to. Recognize what each other does. Mm-hmm. Is really important. And not just in a, oh, thanks Martin. You were great. Mm-hmm. Yeah. Really like what you did by, and being very specific.

[00:31:25] You know, what you did there helped me do X, Y, Z, and now you know, the impact that it's had on me. It's, it's much more specific.

[00:31:34] **Martin:** And this is actually one of the small skills that we trained in the seafood company in order to express appreciation and gratitude. How do you do that? And we also had to train leaders.

[00:31:47] How do you receive, how do you receive positive? Appreciation because they also didn't know how to do that. We could have a separate episode on this only. Yeah,



[00:31:58] **Carolyn Swora:** what an excellent point though, cuz it is really hard to receive nice words, isn't it?

[00:32:03] **Martin:** Mm-hmm It is. And I struggled immensely still with that and I'm still just forgetting to just listen and not trying to explain it the way it is hard.

[00:32:14] Yeah. Yeah.

[00:32:15] **Carolyn Swora:** I've really worked on that as well. And where I've come to land is say thank you. And that is a great place to start. Yep. Thank you. You don't need to make any rationale. You don't need to say anything other than Thank you.

[00:32:29] **Martin:** Yeah,

[00:32:30] **Carolyn Swora:** that's, see, I'm so glad you brought that up and it's amazing. I. When you think about it, but, you know, training people to receive feedback, but it kind of breaks down the walls, right?

[00:32:39] It it allows us to be open to each other because our brain's always looking for threats, right? It's looking for things that are gonna go wrong. So it's sort of like, hey, you can let your guard down and, and take that compliment. Mm-hmm.

[00:32:50] **Martin:** And it, it builds this step by step when the team, the organization getting used to this, we're building this, this psychological safety, which, which everybody talks about this today, which is so important, right?

[00:33:03] And gradually then we can actually move, move it. Like having humble on the nice poster in the lobby to actually being something that is internalized into how people behave and, and what they really believe in. Right? Yeah.



[00:33:18] **Carolyn Swora:** So I mean, humble leadership turns into humble teams and teams that can navigate through complexity, I'm guessing with a little bit more ease and a little bit more success.

[00:33:30] **Martin:** Yeah. And I think it's a lot more ease and a lot more success. Mm-hmm. Yeah,

[00:33:35] **Carolyn Swora:** that's, I think that's a good place to sort of wrap up this conversation, not just a little bit success. It's a lot more success, so let's really work to bring more humility and and humbleness into our workplaces.

[00:33:48] **Martin:** Yeah. And perhaps today also, when the world is looking more and more crazy and there are so many layoffs and so much change.

[00:33:56] We need to maintain these beliefs that humbleness, humility will bring us forward and will be the right thing. Even if you feel the stress of every day. I think it's, especially in tough times, we gotta maintain this. Yeah.

[00:34:12] **Carolyn Swora:** Yeah, absolutely. Martin, where could our listeners get in touch with you or connect with you if they so desire?

[00:34:19] If they happen, happen to be going through Sweden or some part of Asia in the next, you know, a little while, yeah.

[00:34:24] **Martin:** They can connect with me through the second crack leadership, uh, webpage. Okay. And also connect with me on LinkedIn. Just search for Martin Elder Guard on LinkedIn. And I'm happy to connect with anybody that's interested in this conversation.

[00:34:41] **Carolyn Swora:** Fantastic. That's how we met was on LinkedIn. And I know that you and Garrett at Second Crack are big coffee enthusiasts. Hmm. Is there anything that you would like to share just in a fun way to about coffee and how that related to. The name of your business?



[00:35:00] **Martin:** Yeah, I mean, we thought about the name of Second Crack, and then we came up with this name because it's related to the coffee roasting process, right?

[00:35:08] Mm-hmm. And you need to really heat up the coffee beans in the roasting process to a much higher temperature to achieve this second crack where this real essence of the high quality coffee bean is actually coming to the surface and. We think this is such a great metaphor for leadership development.

[00:35:25] It's easy to come to the first crack of roasting, right? But you got to have heat. You gotta have mistakes, resistance. You got to go through this self-reflection phase to bring yourself as a leader to the second crack, metaphorically speaking.

[00:35:39] **Carolyn Swora:** So it's almost like we need the heat of leadership and the heat of this complexity to bring this humbleness out, to bring this humility out of us as

[00:35:48] **Martin:** leaders.

[00:35:49] That is also a beautiful way. I think perhaps this means in the beginning we are very confident. We're starting. Then later on we have the heat. We make our mistakes as leaders. That brings us to the humility that helps us to transform how we lead. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[00:36:06] **Carolyn Swora:** Beautiful point. Well, Martin, it's been an absolute pleasure to have you on the conversation.

[00:36:11] I know when I met both you and Garrett, there was just so much that we could talk about that we decided to do these separate episodes. And now to wrap up, you know, I ask the guests that come on three questions. Are you all set for your three questions? I

[00:36:25] **Martin:** think so. Yeah. All right. I do my



[00:36:27] **Carolyn Swora:** best. You're gonna be pretty prepared for this since we talked about self-awareness in this episode.

[00:36:32] So the first question is, can you share a moment that was really uncomfortable for you, but really shed a lot of insight and gave you a lot of awareness about

[00:36:42] **Martin:** yourself? Mm-hmm. Actually, I'm in that moment right now, and that was this big move after. Hesitating to moving back to Sweden. I worked for 24 years in Asia.

[00:36:56] Mm-hmm. And for quite a long time I had this inner kind of misalignment. I had a team, we built a company, we had clients, I have family in Asia, but inside myself, I knew I need to change something. Mm. And I couldn't bring myself to change until last year. And this is a really uncomfortable moment, and I'm still in it.

[00:37:24] I haven't really landed yet, but what I'm learning here is again, is this insight. You got to listen to what you have deep inside. It's unsustainable. To just keep pushing on. Right. You're talking a lot about trauma informed leadership. This is really my trauma that is still kind of ongoing because it's a really, really big change, but I'm slowly landing.

[00:37:48] But what I really learned from this, it's deep inside. It's the right thing to do. Yeah. I got to listen and act on what I know is. Deep inside.

[00:38:00] **Carolyn Swora:** I really appreciate what you said there too about you're still in it, right? Mm-hmm. Like self-awareness is, there's always something we can learn, and being able to pause and really honor what you're kind of feeling deep down that intuition almost.

[00:38:11] Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah. All right. Well second question. What is a practice or a ritual that helps keep you in a calm state or return you to a calm state? Uh,

[00:38:23] **Martin:** coffee.



[00:38:28] You know this, just putting your work aside, uh, going and make a cup of coffee. Mm. And now when I'm in Sweden, I'm so fortunate I living in a small town. In five minutes I can be out in the forest. I tell you a secret. Sometime when I close my zoom meeting, we'll go and cut some firewood. I take my coffee pot, I take some cooking coffee, and I go out with my small fire stove.

[00:38:55] I sit in the forest. I make a fire on my small stove. I cook a can of coffee on the fire, and I drink coffee in the forest. Then within 45 minutes, I'm back home in front of my laptop again. Wow. That is one of the reasons why I moved back to Sweden.

[00:39:15] **Carolyn Swora:** Wow. I love how it blends all these elements of nature, like fire and warmth and being

[00:39:24] **Martin:** silence, silence, silence.

[00:39:27] **Carolyn Swora:** It's if I ever come to Sweden, Martin, will you take me in, uh, into a fire? And I don't even drink coffee. Maybe I'll

[00:39:34] **Martin:** have a cup of coffee. We can, we can have a tea. We can have a tea. My sister-in-law, and she's a big tea fan, she hates coffee. So we make sure that we bring a dog, we bring some nice sandwiches, and we have a coffee and a tea, and we just listen to the piece of the forest.

[00:39:52] **Carolyn Swora:** Oh, all right. Well, if I come to Sweden, Martin, I'm, I'm holding you to that. I'm gonna come visit you. Okay, promised. All right. All right. Um, and then last but not least, what is a song or a genre of music that makes you feel connected to something bigger than yourself?

[00:40:08] **Martin:** There's two different, I'm a big fan.

[00:40:11] I'm playing Swedish Fox music on the fiddle, and that helps me to connect, right? Because I can connect with my fellow musicians, but I also connect backwards in time, right? When we are playing the songs and the dance



music from 150 years ago, right? It, it's a history of Sweden. When you play music for other people to dance to, right?

[00:40:33] And they're dancing in front of you, you connect. With the people are dancing, right? It's a really emotional something. But on the other side, I also love rock music. Right. Like Aerosmith or Metallica. Or In Flames. Yep. Where you have a large audience with that type of energy. Yeah. Yeah. But those are my quick takes on your great question.

[00:40:57] Oh, that's

[00:40:58] **Carolyn Swora:** beautiful. I love the balls between, you know, both those different types of music. Well, Martin, I really need to get over to Sweden this, this conversation. I've thoroughly enjoyed it and have really appreciate your time coming on. I

[00:41:10] **Martin:** appreciate you as well and your curiosity and openness, and we found a thread in our conversation here that also has taught me a lot.

[00:41:21] I have a lot of things that I take away from today. Great. I really appreciate it. Thank you. All

[00:41:26] **Carolyn Swora:** right, well thank you listeners for tuning into the second part of the second crack team here, and thanks again for listening. Oh, I just so enjoyed that conversation with Martin. I love talking about team dynamics and, and one thing I'm really, really reflecting on here is.

[00:41:45] When leaders can see themselves as a moving dynamic element of a team, it opens the door for them to explore the impact intended and unintended on the team dynamic. You know, really in essence, we're all leaders. Every single one of us that does work for an organization, we are leading change. We are leading for result.

[00:42:17] And it's unfortunate that we have only labeled leadership for those who have direct reports. Closing off this conversation really reminded that we are all leaders. We all contribute to a team dynamic, and the more aware we can

EVOLVE

A NEW ERA OF LEADERSHIP



TRANSCRIPT

be of our impact intended and unintended, the more humble, the more humility we can bring into that team.

[00:42:45] Environment, and that's what brings the ultimate success personally and for the organization. Thanks for listening, and as always, please check out the show notes and if you'd like to get in touch with me personally, you can find me@carolynsora.com.