Bill Murphy: All right.

Beth Boucher: All right.

Bill Murphy: So I think we just... Oh, looks like we just started recording. So, Beth, I want to welcome you to the show today.

Beth Boucher: Thank you. Pleasure to be here.

Bill Murphy: So it took us a little while to get together-

Beth Boucher: Yeah.

Bill Murphy: ... but, I'm excited. I'm really excited. I like talking to uber successful, award-winning CIOs. So, this is a lot of fun.

Beth Boucher: Thank you.

Bill Murphy: So, let's talk about, so people really learn about you. How did you get to where you are today? Maybe [00:00:30] we can just talk a little bit about your trajectory. I'm assuming that you came up through a traditional track, you went IT in college, right through MBA, and right into this magical position. And you magically appeared years down the road. [crosstalk 00:00:45], who you are.

Beth Boucher: Well, that's the second chapter of the story. But actually there is a first chapter, maybe, would be good to share.

Bill Murphy: I love it, love to hear it.

Beth Boucher: My story, I think, is a little bit unique perhaps. But really, I think my [00:01:00] career, where I am today in my career, actually started long before I started in professional life. And the story here is, I funded my own education, as a lot of people do. Supporting myself, working full time while taking classes on the side. And it took me a good, almost 10 years, to really finally complete my engineering degree.

Now, during that time, in order to pay my rent and fund my education, I took on a lot of different jobs. Everything from building submarines, to [00:01:30] painting houses, to cleaning banks, to working restaurants. And that journey itself actually turned out to be the best foundation that I could have had, bringing me into the next phase of my existence.

Bill Murphy: Hold on. We got to pause the tape a little bit, right now. So, I heard submarines and I hear... Okay. So, first of all, it took 10 years staying with it to get an engineering degree.

Beth Boucher: Yes.

Bill Murphy: That's like, a dog and a bone. That's a lot of stick-to-it-ive-ness, you [00:02:00] must have had a significant reason why you... Why did you want your degree so badly? And why were you willing to put up, to stay with it for 10 years?

Beth Boucher: I think it was because I loved the opportunity to learn, and in working through those jobs, I understood the power of higher education. I knew that I would have choices and I loved learning, and I really wanted to be able to continue to grow and have a career. And so, I was uniquely motivated, but I enjoyed it. And I think [00:02:30] that's really the thing that kept me, and helped me persevere.

Bill Murphy: So, you're in the Connecticut area, right?

Beth Boucher: I'm in New York City, but I also spend time in Connecticut.

Bill Murphy: Because you mentioned submarines, and I'm thinking, "God, hold on. There's a submarine base on the way up-"

Beth Boucher: That's right.

Bill Murphy: I'm from Boston. So, you travel up through that area-

Beth Boucher: That's right.

Bill Murphy: ... and then I'm like, "Is Groton?" And there's, submarine, a lot of submarine stuff going on in [crosstalk 00:02:51].

Beth Boucher: Exactly. There's the General Dynamics run thing, very large submarine base there, which is how I came to be employed there.

Bill Murphy: Really? Okay.

Beth Boucher: Yeah. One of my first [00:03:00] jobs, actually. Right out of high school.

Bill Murphy: So, have you ever gone down in a submarine?

Beth Boucher: No.

Bill Murphy: Okay.

Beth Boucher: Nope. Only in, what we call the dry dock, where they're building them or repairing them.

Bill Murphy: So, what's your fondest memory, of being around and on submarines?

Beth Boucher: Well, this is easy, because this is another part of my story. That's actually where I met my husband of 30-odd years. So, that's my favorite story. Who would have thought, all these years later? But it just turned out to be one of those magic days.

Bill Murphy: [00:03:30] Oh, that's fantastic. That's really great. That's really great. Well, I don't want to just stick with the submarine story. I'm sure that you have some other fun ones to tell.

Beth Boucher: Yeah.

Bill Murphy: But basically you had, this 10 years for you, is really important for setting the foundation for really who you are and how you grew up. As it is for a lot of us, but those first 10 years out of high school. But, I'm curious. What were some of [00:04:00] the things you learned in that 10 years, that you think were really foundational, other than your degree that you got with engineering? What were some of the other experiences that you found have really helped you out in a big way, later on in your career?

Beth Boucher: Yeah, there are a couple of things. And I didn't know this at the time, right? This is the wisdom of X number of years later. And it really took me a long time to put these pieces together. But let me explain a few examples.

For several years, [00:04:30] I worked in the restaurant business. And so, at the time I thought, "Well, I'm just making money, wanting to get tips, to pay my rent." But actually, in hindsight, what I was really learning was, I was learning how to sell. I was learning about the quality of products, of food, of wine. I learned about the differentiation of service. And I learned about working with many, many different types of people. I learned about time management and conflict management. And who would have thought that, [00:05:00] from being a bartender or a waitress?

But actually, they're all there. And I use them, we all use them. Right? Every day now. And it took me a while to reflect that, those were the nuggets that I was unintentionally gaining along the way, that I use today. And as I said earlier, the other nugget was, I realized that, the key for me was going to be to continue my higher education. And I had a thirst for that because I was working very hard to have that privilege. So the privilege, the very privilege [00:05:30] of education made it even more of a passion for me.

Bill Murphy: Yeah. It's interesting. There's some nights coming home, after closing the bar at 2:00 in the morning, going to Denny's, for the Eggs Over My Hammy, the eggs over, at Denny's. But some of the things that, some of the powerful lessons you can learn in the restaurant environment. I was talking to my kids about that. Holy moly, my first mentor in the technology business, was a very successful entrepreneur. [00:06:00] He said, "What I learned was, I learned to keep everybody's glasses full of water, before they even asked." And I thought, "What a service, what a service mentality he learned, [crosstalk 00:06:12]-"

Beth Boucher: Exactly. That's right.

So you don't realize it, and I think that actually ties to another really important concept, for me. Actually just, some papers came out on this, which is, the notion of intentional learning. And so the idea being that in every day, the [00:06:30] course of every day, there is some nugget, there is something to learn and take and apply to your life and your profession. And I think that's just an example of that, coming to life for me.

Bill Murphy: Yeah. You were commenting before we got started about the Davos paper, about how the biggest impact... Maybe you can share that. Why did that impact you so much, about that Davos paper?

Beth Boucher: Because they touched on this, this is a reference to a McKinsey report, which was on [00:07:00] the Davos agenda just recently. And they talked about intentional learning as being the most critical skill to acquire and thrive, in the digital age. And that just got my attention. But what really got my attention about it is, intentional learning is really nothing more, and I'm paraphrasing here, but really nothing more than having a natural curiosity and wanting to grow. And I just love that. Throughout my career, the transitions that I've made have always been for that reason. Because I'm like, "I [00:07:30] want to go over there. I don't know much about that, but I want to figure that out." And so, that's what struck me about it. And I think, closely related to this also on the Davos agenda was, the global emergency that we have around upskilling.

And I know that's a very familiar topic, but again, that comes back to learning. And having the ability to learn. And I think this is something we have to do better, collectively as a global community. So, [00:08:00] that's why it resonated for me.

Bill Murphy: Would you [crosstalk 00:08:03]-

Beth Boucher: I have this great quote, I would like to share with you.

Bill Murphy: Sure.

Beth Boucher: And then, I'll leave it. But, "When you learn a little, you feel you know a lot. But when you learn a lot, you realize you know very little." And that's a quote from Dr. Daniel Amen, who is a psychiatrist and an author, who specializes in brain health. And I think that's true.

Bill Murphy: Yeah. The neuropathy, I know Dr. Amen's work a lot, and he promotes a lot with MRI brain scans [00:08:30] and really the brain health, for sure. And I think it's important, because we are going to be needing to work a lot longer than previous generations, and we have to keep ourselves super healthy for longer periods of time. And our attitudes and perceptions about learning and retirement, have to shift as well.

Beth Boucher: Yeah. And I think at the same time, when we think about this next decade of this revolution that we're in, we also have to think more flexibly. You think about, the merging of technologies [00:09:00] and the merging of business, and the level of disruption. You have to have that intellectual agility to be able to thrive in that environment. Or certainly, some resilience I think, too.

Bill Murphy: Has it made it up to, in your organization, to a board level yet, Beth? Or is this something you're percolating and getting ready for the board to ask you these types of questions moving forward?

Beth Boucher: It's a good question. It's made it to the board in the sense of, I'm going through a massive transformation for my team. And so, I put on the board agenda, a goal, [00:09:30] for us to upscale 50% of our workforce. So, it has made it to the board agenda, and the devil's in the details, right? It's one thing to say that, but then you've really got to roll up your sleeves. That's... How do you do that? Because, I think we also have to think about the nature of skills, and how you recruit skills and maybe, challenge some of the assumptions some of us have been dragging around for years. That you need that four year college degree, or you need to be a specialist in technology.

So, it's definitely on the agenda. I think [00:10:00] it's a really, kind of gnarly problem to solve, though. Because, it's got to be a combination of education, skills and thinking about human talent differently.

Bill Murphy: On my board is, she runs a university down in South Carolina, and she was the former CIO of Johnson and Johnson. So she was the CIO of 40 CIOs-

Beth Boucher: Yeah.

Bill Murphy: 40, multi-billion dollar companies under [00:10:30] Johnson [crosstalk 00:10:30]-

Beth Boucher: That's a big job.

Bill Murphy: It's really... She's a lot of fun. And, I think the best way for universities to change... I'm going to, I haven't shared this with her yet. But I think, I was in a conference last week, and it sparked... Schools should not be selling us four year degrees, they should be selling us lifetime degrees. And I think that the schools of the future, you're going to sign up for a lifelong learning track, that we'll be able to [00:11:00] engage with variety of learning modes of VR, the Zoom type models, physical. And I think that, that's going to be the future of college education.

Beth Boucher: Yeah. I completely agree with you. And I think that's a whole industry ripe for disruption, as well. I think it will be a combination, of that. I also think that, you see it now already, there's a lot of free cost-ware out there, there's just so much more access to it. And I think different partnerships, [00:11:30] between educational institutions and businesses are also something that has to really strengthen. Well beyond the interns, or things like that. I think we have to have much more sophisticated, integrated models between educational institutions and businesses.

Bill Murphy: Speaking of Dr. Amen, have you looked at VR, yet?

Beth Boucher: Yes, we actually, we literally are just toying around. But we have the Oculus and we're [00:12:00] exploring. Very interesting, very intriguing.

Bill Murphy: I have my Oculus on the ground, over there. I was just at an event last week where we were in Oculus, in a 3D model that had been created for this event. And then there's also, we were experimenting with this event, it was essentially a deeper, it wasn't quite as immersive as the Oculus, but it was a bridge point. I would call it a bridge between-

Beth Boucher: Okay.

Bill Murphy: ... because now, Facebook's shipping those Ray- [00:12:30] Bans where you basically can have the computer screen on the inside of your glasses. And I think that that immersive experience, but from a neuroscience perspective, the ability for your brain to light up is just so huge. And, I think we're at the cutting edge of that. I think we're right where the internet was in 1995, when Gates and Netscape Andreessen were fighting over the browser. I think we're right at that point with VR, right now.

Beth Boucher: Oh, I love that. I love that analogy. I think [00:13:00] you're absolutely right.

Bill Murphy: So, that's really neat. So, this upskilling is big, and it sort of hits at your ethos of how you learned, kind of a lifelong learning and multidimensional learning, through your career.

Beth Boucher: Definitely. I think it's essential.

Bill Murphy: What about mentorship? How have you pursued, or your mentors that are your models for you? And then, how do you mentor [00:13:30] your team in your organization?

Beth Boucher: Yeah, I've been very, very fortunate to have outstanding mentors. People that I could trust, that would give me the hard talk, and really be my consultation, but also pick me up and push me on when I needed to. And you need that combination, as a mentor. So I've been very, very fortunate.

One of the things that I try to do, is really go deep into the organization and mentor at the [00:14:00] entry level. And, maybe one level above. And I do that, for a couple of reasons. Some of these individuals think it's a great favor, but what they don't realize is, the favor is mine. They're doing me a favor, because by doing that, I can understand and learn from what the future pipeline of talent of the organization needs. If I can have an impact, that's where I could probably have the biggest impact. That's number one.

And number two, the double-down impact [00:14:30] of that is, I can also understand how well are they getting leadership and guidance, from my leadership team? And so, the second benefit to that is, I know where I can go in and further develop my leaders to be better leaders and managers. So, I get a lot of value and insight out of going deeper in the organization. And I think as we all try to flatten our organizations, it becomes less of a point. But I think, I will always do that, because it's paid off in so many ways.

Bill Murphy: [00:15:00] That's interesting, there's a great, Team of Rivals the book that, I forgot who wrote it, but it was about Abraham Lincoln. And how he, when he formed his Cabinet, he formed basically this Cabinet with all of his rivals, from the president... From the race. But then, that wasn't really as interesting as the fact that, during the battles he was going down to the front lines. He was getting so much disinformation from his commander, that he had the courage to actually drive himself... And, I guess they didn't drive then. But, he took a boat down [00:15:30] to the front lines, multiple times, to get from the troops' level. And I thought, I remembered that.

And that takes courage because, well, let me ask you. I think courage and risk is one of the things that you and I had talked about. And I think one of the things that, looking at your trajectory, is taking courage and having risk. Is it risky, you've got to go deep into your organization, but to get that... Really coach people and mentor them, at that level?

Beth Boucher: It can be risky. There's [00:16:00] no question about it, because first of all, you don't want to have an inference that there's some people worth spending time with, and there are others that aren't. And you can't do that. So there's the obvious risk, around that. There's also a risk that they will tell you things, that you actually can't fix. So then, what do you do? So, there are definitely risks.

But if we abstracted beyond this particular scenario, I think risk is a really important part of managing your career. [00:16:30] I don't think I... All of the growth that I've had in my career is because I had the courage or the impetus and the support to take a risk.

Bill Murphy: Sure.

Beth Boucher: And I think, if you're not taking risks, then you're probably not reaching your full potential. And I'm not a risk taker by nature. But what makes me get more comfortable with doing that is learning to manage them. It doesn't all have to be a big blow out. There's calculated risks, there's [00:17:00] your tolerance. And so that's what I think, that's how I approach risk.

Bill Murphy: That could be the second quote after Amen's quote, but this is the Beth quote. “If you're not taking risks, you're probably not reaching your full potential.”

Beth Boucher: [crosstalk 00:17:14].

Bill Murphy: There's no truer words, have been spoken. And, it's interesting too, because now... One other winner that's been on my podcast recently, she is out of the DC area. And she said [00:17:30] that, she's used the Corona timeframe to reach... You can get a lot done in 10 minutes. But she will literally call down into her organization on Zoom, deep into the organization. And just have 10 minute calls with people. It's super practical. You don't have to be roped into long conversations with people. It's just, you can have, well, 10 minutes. You can have six conversations an hour. You can cover a lot of ground.

Beth Boucher: That's great.

Bill Murphy: It's a really interesting capability, of reaching deep into the organization to sort of get intel on what's happening.

Beth Boucher: And that [00:18:00] creates a channel of communication, that creates a communication loop. First of all, you're not just calling people and they're like, "Uh-oh, what happened?" And then, secondly, you're opening it up. So that they might feel like, "Hey, I'm just going to pop over and call up so-and-so." And I think that's the sort of, one of the fundamentals to a healthy culture. Is that, you can, people are accessible. They can talk to you.

Bill Murphy: Totally. And that's, knocking down those doors and just creating those lines of communication, is what you've done.

[00:18:30] Well, that's good. That's great. So what, tell me, we've covered a lot of ground here, and I want to make sure that I cover some of the important precepts that you have. And I know you've had a couple of principles that you and I talked about prior to recording. And I'd love for you to spend a couple of minutes, because I think they're impactful, for you to talk about them. Would you mind talking about those? Those three key principles?

Beth Boucher: Yeah. The three principles, I think [00:19:00] that, they're the things that motivated me. And in reflection, there are things that I think can be helpful to others, perhaps.

And so the first one is, what I talked about a little earlier. Which is, adopt that learning mindset. Really be open, more than just open, be aggressive around wanting to learn new things. And it's really never been easier. I have three or four podcasts. I'm going to the grocery store. I got 10 minutes. I can learn something new in 10 minutes. Now, granted it's only 10 minutes’ worth. But if I really love it, I'm going to go [00:19:30] get the hour version or the two hour version.

So, have a curiosity. And you can pick what it is. It could non-work-related, and a lot of the things that I do explore and try to learn or gain new skills on are not immediately directly related to my job, but they tend to loop back. So, I think the first principle is be curious. Be passionate about learning new things and understanding new things because that can lead to places you just didn't even see coming. Like my restaurant example. So, that's [00:20:00] the first one.

And I think, the second thing is, don't... And this is hard. It took me a while to learn this. Don't chase a role. Don't chase a spot on the org chart. Chase a passion, follow your curiosity and do it because you do want to learn new skills. Or you want to understand a different perspective, or a different experience. Because the reality is, roles are very different and they're fleeting. But if you're chasing down what you love to do or what you're [00:20:30] interested in, that's going to lead to good places. You're going to land in a good spot, because it's been proven. Happy people are very productive. And if you're learning and you're happy, you're going to be productive, you're going to be successful.

And then the last thing was the risk dimension that we talked about already. It has to come with some risk.

Bill Murphy: Yeah. I love that. Well, this is great. Is there anything in particular that you were hoping to want to cover, that I didn't ask you about today, Beth?

Beth Boucher: I don't think so. I just really appreciate the opportunity, and I love your podcast. [00:21:00] Back to my 10 minute, 30 minute, 40 minute example. I'm learning a lot still, every day, and I really enjoy having the opportunity, and to meet with the rest of this group as well, so thank you for taking the time.

Bill Murphy: You're welcome. You're welcome. There's a lot of nuggets of wisdom that get shared. We just talked about many, here today. So, it's my job to carve this up and make sure we serve this out for people to digest, because I think we can all learn from each other. It's part of our own reskilling, [00:21:30] in many respects-

Beth Boucher: Thank you.

Bill Murphy: ... learning in the future. So, thank you for your time, Beth.

Beth Boucher: My pleasure, and same to you. Thank you.

Bill Murphy: Have a great day.

Beth Boucher: Bye-bye.