



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Colleen Birch & Suzanne Trout
	SVP, Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas
	CMO, Foxwoods Resort Casino
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Tino Magnatta: And, welcome to another edition of GT Radio. I hope you're all doing well tonight. I'm very excited. Very, very, excited. I have two amazing women on the show. They are the leaders in the industry, they are examples of great leadership, and I'm glad to have them on the show, welcome Suzanne and Colleen. How are you tonight?

Colleen Birch: Hey, Tino.

Suzanne Trout: Hi, great tonight. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good. So, you're both incredible people at the top of your game. Tell us a little bit how you both have achieved this type of success. What are the ingredients?

Colleen Birch: Suzanne, you want it first?

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, sure. I really think I had a good number of people help me along the way. So, bosses or mentors, friends or associates. I think some helped me with opportunities, some with candid feedback. I think there's always those people who believe in you and give you encouragement. I think a lot of it is learning things from colleagues. And I think, along the way, conflict and some people who really challenge you to be better. I think at some point I finally realized the degree to which you can be open for help, and be willing to learn from other people, and be willing to take a step back or sideways or forward if you need to, in your career.

I think those are things that really sort of changed my direction and created the journey that led me to where I am today. So, I think, when I think about that, I really think less about what I've done and more about what other people inspired me to do.

Tino Magnatta: Good. Colleen?

Colleen Birch: So, much like Suzanne, I too had, and still ... I say had, but I have incredible people that have given me advice and helped me think about my career. And so my, I started as a front desk agent at Caesar's Palace, 20 plus years ago, while I was a student at UNLV. And I am so blessed and grateful for a mentor that I have, who at the time was the VP of the hotel there, George Markantonis. And so, listening to some advice, I didn't really understand in 10 years time that I would be focusing on the revenue management discipline.

I actually spent my first nine years in that building doing operational roles, so housekeeping and reservations and then back to the front office, in a larger capacity. But those were movements around the hotel that were very much suggested and guided by somebody who I very much trusted. And so, again, just having people in your space that help you frame up and opportunity, certainly I had to prove myself in each one of those areas. And then because of that, then

there becomes the next opportunity, and those presented themselves because of the hard work and demonstrating the ability in each of those stops along the way.

Tino Magnatta: Do you guys think personality has a lot to do with it? Does our business attract a certain type of personality, and to get to the top, do you even need another gear? Is that the right kind of idea?

Colleen Birch: Well there's all sorts of personalities in our industry, I don't know which you're referring to at the moment. Suzanne, I don't know, is it, it's funny. When I first met Suzanne in 2005, as Caesar's and Harrah's came together to form one company, I felt a real bond with her immediately, just because we are strong, independent women. I didn't know it at the time, but I soon would be a single mother, and she too was in that position. So, strong minded women who are willing to take new things on and not be nervous, or intimidated, I think that's the gear you need. Or, it's the gear we have.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I don't think it's for the faint of heart.

Tino Magnatta: Right, it's a 24 hour business. Go, go, go. Always something going on. What are the things that women need to know about working in an industry that is predominantly male?

Suzanne Trout: Well, I think both women and men ... and I don't think that it's just predominantly male, I think we need to acknowledge, which it's interesting to me that a lot of companies still don't ... that we need acknowledge that this is a business, like many businesses, that are predominantly run by white males. And that's, you go from the Boards of these companies to the boardrooms of properties. To senior leadership and directors, and it is predominantly white male. And when I look back at this, I think, "Did that lack of diversity impact the business, how it is today?"

Because you've got this homogenous viewpoint of how these properties and businesses evolved and were run. And I think that lack of diversity, the lack of willingness to embrace it, be it women or minorities or age or different viewpoints, I do think that that has been a deterrent to our business thinking progressively. And I would, the way I have tried to think about it now is, if you don't want to do it because you think it's the right thing, then maybe you do it because it's good for business.

Because you know, I have found when you can create these team where you have these varieties of viewpoints ... you know, male, female, age, gender, background, that we have better outcomes. We think differently, we challenge each other. And we have more variety in our viewpoint. So, I just, would hope that people acknowledge it and we don't treat it as if it's not something that each of our businesses do. They do. So, the emphasis should be on, how do we do it differently?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, diversity's important. Colleen?

Colleen Birch: You know, so, getting back to the original question. What do women need to know about this industry, I think all too often, unfortunately women are asked to prove themselves before the promotion comes along. That promotion with the greater title, and additional salary. And sometimes that is very different for a male, males in our business, or the industry. You know, "Here's the promotion, and now you have new responsibility." And so, I would encourage women to challenge that, and know their worth. And not be okay, in a time period of having to prove before you get what you deserve, taking on additional responsibilities. Earning a wage that is commensurate with your duties performed.

Tino Magnatta: Right, you're saying there's different standards?

Colleen Birch: I've seen it, surely.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Yeah. There's different standards. What do you think some of the solutions are? What needs to happen?

Colleen Birch: Well, I think you need strong women that aren't afraid to not help the next generation know that, and then how to craft the art of negotiation. They didn't teach a class at UNLV for it, maybe I'll go to the Dean and suggest that I teach one. Although, I don't know that I'm perfect. But, I really believe that women need a voice. And we need to take a stand in that fashion.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I think that's an excellent point. And I actually am thinking about situations where I have sat with female colleagues and we've actually written out, what is the scenario of how they need to be able to say, "I've been offered a job elsewhere, but I might want to stay. But, here's, you need to promote me."

And it is not an innate skill for women to be able to speak candidly and help to find their self worth. And it's often an uncomfortable conversation, if you're having that with a superior. So, it is, I think, a more difficult, unnatural feeling conversation, oftentimes, when women do that. And I think, how to do it, and do it effectively, is an art.

Tino Magnatta: Yes. It definitely is. And I think that like you said, Colleen, there's no course taught about that, right? There's no way you can learn something like that.

Colleen Birch: Yeah, so I don't know how traditionally, men do it better. But we're coming for you, men.

Tino Magnatta: If you both had to start over again, what are some of the things you would do differently?

Suzanne Trout: I think Colleen just expressed that really well, and I second her thought on that, is that we're often really uncomfortable being our own champions. I think I would have been more expressive ... if that is possible ... and been less passive in the process of my career. I think that I often let companies define what was my next role, or what was best for me. And that I was a fairly, in hindsight, passive participant in that process.

Today, I think I might have said, "Hey, wait a minute, that's very similar to what I've done before. How do we think about this opportunity differently?" I think that I would have ... I'm not sure that the outcomes would have been any different, but I think I would have felt differently. Honestly, there was probably a point in my life where I didn't even think, "Gosh, I need to take control of this." You sort of let the company guide your experience. And I do not think I would do that again, today.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Right. Colleen?

Colleen Birch: Yeah, I echo everything that Suzanne just said. There were a couple of moves that happened in my career where I just, took the package that was presented. And, you know, it was okay, it was more than I was making in my last job. It didn't mean that there still wasn't opportunity to negotiate. I was, the word Suzanne used is passive. That, too.

I think just another thing that I would have done differently, in hindsight, I don't know that it really would have changed the path that I went on, but when I was finishing school at UNLV, I remember having a conversation with somebody about the gaming side of our business. And I said, "I don't really want to focus on gaming, because at some point I'm not going to live in Las Vegas, and then that skill won't come, won't be transferrable."

This was, again, nearly 20 years ago when gaming wasn't as prevalent as it is elsewhere in the country. So, in hindsight, I might have put a stop in a gaming operation type role, on my resume.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Yeah, it's definitely a process. There has always been a disconnect between marketing and operations. And we know this, because there's so many different departments, too. What are the issues here, and how do we improve this relationship?

Suzanne Trout: Colleen and I worked together as marketing and operations, and I think that was a great example of us coming together. I think of it this way, and yes, oftentimes there are challenges where operations thinks marketing's not doing enough. And marketing thinks that operations isn't pulling their weight.

But I really think the whole basic is aligning your goals. And that's one of the things that Colleen and I did, when we worked together, is we really aligned our goals, upfront. And so, the expectations were really clear.

We would constantly ask, "Who's the primary audience for this, who are we talking to? What are we trying to achieve? What do we want the customer to do? What are the KPIs? How are we measuring this?" So I think when you've got that alignment, up front, rarely do you just see that disconnect. And I think we had some solid success, on the basis of making this very clear, every project we did, every day. We talked about goals.

Colleen Birch: Yeah, and the-

Tino Magnatta: Right.

Colleen Birch: ... one of the major goals tends to be, "How can we make more money," right? And so, I need Suzanne's help to do that, as a marketer. Today I work with a guy named Tom, who's great, and a good partner as well. And I've really been fortunate to have strong marketing people, as partners.

But if we are not talking, and talking on a really consistent basis, there could be time when marketing is going out and doing an initiative, that either, is a futile exercise because guess what? We don't have the need. And then we're driving people to our website or we're telling them about an offer that really, when they get there, isn't going to be available.

And then on the flip side, there could be periods of time where we absolutely need some help to stimulate demand, and that's when coming together and understanding what the goals are, and then working together to achieve that.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, there's gotta be a synergy. Everything works a lot better when you're marketing something, the operations part of it goes smoothly. How do you develop a marketing strategy around your brand? What are those conversations like?

Suzanne Trout: Well, I think The Cosmo has a really admirable brand, I know Colleen was part of that whole team that worked so hard to establish it and-

Colleen Birch: Yeah, Cosmopolitan, Suzanne. Cosmopolitan. Not The Cosmo. I don't know what you're talking [crosstalk 00:16:13].

Suzanne Trout: I abbreviate. You set your brand standards.

Colleen Birch: Yes.

Suzanne Trout: But you guys did, really I think, come up with a great filter where you really process things through that and spent the time, and the money up front. I think, when I think about defining your brand and creating a voice, and a research, I think is very important, to think about what the white space is.

You know, what do we own? What do customers think about your brand? What are the gaps, between what you want to be and what customers see you at? And I [inaudible 00:16:52] this is really hard work. Particularly for places like Foxwoods, where you have 27 years of legacy, and a lot of transformation in creating new things. So, we're, in that whole process of updating and making it.

I think the things that I think about, or always important, is to be authentic in your strategy. Customers are pretty savvy to say, if you're saying something about your brand, "That's not true." So, to be honest. And I think oftentimes in gaming, particularly for properties that are more gaming-centric, which is a lot of the properties across the US, it's really hard. The brands tend to be very transactional, and not very emotional. They tend to look a lot alike, because the experience of gaming is a lot alike.

So I think the hard work people can do is to really try to drill down more, to talk about, "Well, what are the specific whys?" Not just the whats, but the whys, to why should people choose you. And that's the hard work of coming up with that brand strategy.

Tino Magnatta: And Colleen, you guys have done such a great job, and have such a powerful brand. How did that all come about, and what is, what are some of those conversations like, that you guys used to have [crosstalk 00:18:49]?

Colleen Birch: Yeah now, and I remember the conversation 10 years ago, as we were preparing to come to market. And, you know, really trying to understand what already existed here.

At that time, Las Vegas had 150,000 hotel rooms already, so 3,000 more coming online in 2010, when things were still pretty hard, was kind of the last thing this city needed. But we knew we were going to open, and we needed to open with something that had an offer that wasn't in town. A spirit of a property that made you feel a little bit different than our next door neighbors.

And so, delivering an independent, spirited hotel that wasn't themed, and is very accessible. A little bit cheeky, from time to time. Flirty, if you will, but not overtly tacky or in your face. And so, we did that through design elements in the building. We did that with the choices of the food and beverage outlets that are in the building. New to market chefs, we have a great affinity toward art, and the way that that shows up through the property.

But really, every decision that is made, still to this day, about The Cosmopolitan, "Is this who we are? Is it true to who we said we were 10 years ago?" And, I'm happy to say that in most cases, it absolutely is. We're still very fresh, just three weeks ago had an opening of a new venue on property that is just as cool as things that were part of our property when we opened 10 years ago.

Tino Magnatta: Wow, that's amazing. Good stuff.

Suzanne Trout: What a great filter, like you described, Colleen, right? It's really the, every decision has to get put through that brand filter.

Colleen Birch: Yeah. Otherwise, you have a bunch of crazy shit happening. Oh, sorry. No, can't say that.

Tino Magnatta: That's okay.

Colleen Birch: Do you beep that out, or what happens there?

Tino Magnatta: I think we're live, but, we'll beep it out on the [crosstalk 00:21:04]-

Colleen Birch: Okay.

Tino Magnatta: ... it's okay, I think you'll be fine.

Colleen Birch: All right, sorry.

Tino Magnatta: Tell us what it takes to stay ahead of your competitors. You're both in very competitive marketplaces. What does it take?

Suzanne Trout: Boy, I'll say. I think that it's, we have to stay really interested in refreshing everything and staying relevant. You know, customers want variety of games, new games. They have an expectation that things be, you know, all things being equal, you really have to continue to try to find that variety of experiences for them. And I think one of the things that we spend a lot of time talking about is to really try to stay focused on customer experiences. To understand them, and then, really try to improve them. And not walk away from reinvestment in both the property and people. And really, just keep trying to refresh that customer experience.

Tino Magnatta: Colleen?

Colleen Birch: Yeah. And so, I'd say, so today, our industry is in a different space than it was 10 years ago. So not only are we concerned about our competition, but now there is such prevalence of gaming throughout the country that they too are competitors to properties here in Las Vegas. So, giving people a reason to continue to make three or four trips a year, back to your property, obviously we don't have the luxury of opening something every quarter.

But delivering an experience that is very consistent, from the gaming sense, standpoint. Having a casino marketing team that is, with really top notch hosts, who have great relationships with their customers? Obviously that is incredibly competitive. And so, wanting to make sure that our customers are well taken care of, here, and that we anticipate their needs. And help them understand about some of those things that are, whether they're entertainment

opportunities that are upcoming. Giving people a reason to make a trip to us, versus a competitor.

Tino Magnatta: There are times in business, and in your personal life, when we have setbacks. How do you cope with that?

Colleen Birch: You drink a lot. Although I go on the wagon pretty frequently, I'll go like two months without drinking, and then it just all comes apart. So, I am slightly joking. But only partially joking.

I think for me, when things hit the rails, having peers, whether they're people that you'd call friends, or just somebody in the building that you can trust, that you can talk through those situations. And there are plenty of times where I call somebody, and I know that it's a safe space. There's gonna be no judgment. And at some point, I just need to talk through.

I mean, my mom is one of those people for me, and she doesn't know a lot about what I do at work every day. And so, sometimes she'll ask just a really simple, basic question and it just makes it all kind of okay. Like, it just evens it all out. And it's pretty calming, for me.

Tino Magnatta: Suzanne?

Colleen Birch: I don't know if you have a trick?

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I second that. I think a network of these supportive friends and colleagues is really how we all get through the bad days. I think another thing, when I think about it, that has been helpful to me both ... probably learned it more personally, and tried to apply it more professionally ... is to sort of let go of the notion that I have to fix everything, and that I can fix everything. And that, the goal is that things will be perfect. So your kids will be perfect and work will be perfect and your home will be perfect. And I think that oftentimes, women particularly in business, tend to be women who are, you know, we're people that like to fix things. And we like a challenge. So, but I think it's, you drive yourself a little crazy that way.

So to really be able to separate things, and say, "Here's the things I can control and change. And here's the things that I can't." And to let those go is, as the saying is, "The strength to fix what you can, and let go of what you can't." So, I think that has been a really good process for me, that I unfortunately probably didn't learn until I was older, but ... and wiser, but ... helpful, in figuring out how to cope.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, that's, pick yourself back up and get back into it.

Suzanne Trout: Yep.

Tino Magnatta: Yep. How important is work, life balance? And how do you maintain it?

Colleen Birch: So, it's required. And I can tell you that early in my career, I didn't maintain it. And that, there are many things that I wish I could get back. The, you know, leave work for an hour and go to the concert recital. I missed plenty of those, because I had a big job and I felt that I could be judged for being the mom that had to pull away for a bit. So I don't, I won't ever be that again. My kids are a little bit older but they still have things that they need me at, or want me at, and I want to be there.

And so, it's required, and I think working and surrounding yourself with a supportive team. And then, having a leader that knows that your work is gonna get done at the end of the day, but isn't gonna give you a hard time for needing to start your day with your kids.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I think it's true-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah [crosstalk 00:27:33]-

Colleen Birch: Or go to the beach with girlfriends, when you need a mental health week.

Suzanne Trout: ... Yep. I think that's-

Tino Magnatta: Yes.

Suzanne Trout: ... really interesting, I had a colleague point out one time, that one big difference is that men oftentimes won't say, "Gosh, I need to leave now, because I need to go see my kid's recital." They'll just schedule it, and leave.

Tino Magnatta: Right.

Suzanne Trout: And women, we really apologize and explain, and try to compensate for having to do those things. So, to Colleen's point, I think she has really mastered saying, "There's no apologies for this, this is part of what I do, and this is a decision I'm making, and how I use my time." I hate to warn Colleen that when her kids are out and in college, she may work more again.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, right.

Colleen Birch: Ah, Suzanne, you've ruined my night.

Tino Magnatta: It might swing back.

Suzanne Trout: Sorry, but it is-

Tino Magnatta: It might swing back.

Suzanne Trout: ... Yeah, I certainly have. But I also find that's kind of freeing as well, right? Because a lot of what we do at our business is really fun, cool work, right? So, I'm not gonna complain too much [crosstalk 00:28:53]-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Suzanne Trout: ... having to be present at entertainment, and make sure I'm there with events, and-

Tino Magnatta: Yep-

Suzanne Trout: ... they're fun-

Tino Magnatta: ... All the fine stuff that you have access to. Yeah, it's amazing.

Suzanne Trout: ... [inaudible 00:29:05] and, but, yes. I think finding that balance is important, and I think another thing that Colleen, I know, does really well and I have aspired to, is to make sure that we carve out some time for others, as well. And I had a number of years where I would be on the Boards of animal shelters, but also, make sure that every Friday night, I was a volunteer, a hands-on volunteer. For many, many years, or fostered animals. Currently we do a project where, we'd like to do it more frequently, but we're about once a month now, where we're working with a food pantry.

So I think again, those are the kind of things that, even though it sounds like you're doing something in the interest of others, those are things that really help recharge you, by making sure that you're staying connected and engaged in your community.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, which leads us into the next question. What do you both love about our business?

Colleen Birch: I love that no two days are really ever the same. I mean, I typically look at my calendar before I leave my house in the morning, and I think I know what today looks like. And you know, some days the calendar keeps its form, and other days, an audible is called, and I'm down in the lobby, helping a crowd on a big, heavy check in day. And so, I love the scale of our business. 3,000 room hotels are not prevalent in many other parts of the country. And so, I can't imagine not getting to work in this type of environment.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I-

Tino Magnatta: It's a fun business.

Suzanne Trout: ... The pace, you know, it's sometimes a bit exhausting. But I think it's hard to break away from, once you experience that pace. I think the breadth of things that we get to work on. You know, oftentimes in marketing, you're a channel

manager or you have one product. And especially in some of these large companies and large resorts, you're working on development projects, you're marketing resort hotels. Food and beverage, you're doing loyalty programs. You're doing service programs. So, just the scope is really interesting and often, hard to replicate I think, in other businesses. Which makes it so much more interesting.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's a fun business to say the least. Well, this has been fantastic. Should we take some calls? We have a lot of calls, here.

Colleen Birch: Sure.

Tino Magnatta: Let's see what we got going. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Colleen or Suzanne, or both?

Hady: And, it's [Hady 00:32:33] speaking, can you hear me?

Colleen Birch: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Yes we can, how are you?

Hady: Awesome, how are you? How are you ladies, you've been entertaining me, and I have to keep looking at your LinkedIn profiles, to see whether, is Colleen a marketing girl, or is she the revenue lady? Because I have never had anybody on this program curse and admit to drinking, before.

Colleen Birch: I love to [crosstalk 00:33:01]-

Hady: Normally if they do, they don't come from revenue optimization, they come from marketing. But anyway, awesome. I love your authenticity. So, I recently presented at [NIGA 00:33:14] and my topic was, "How can we elevate," elevate with E-L-L-E, "the woman in gaming brand." And I'm interested to know from both Suzanne and Colleen, how do you think we could go about doing that?

Colleen Birch: Hey, Hady, so-

Hady: Are you there?

Suzanne Trout: ... Yes. Is the question for the women in gaming organization, or just women in gaming, in general?

Hady: Oh, women in gaming in general, I don't belong to an organization. I'm a speaker. So, I spoke about, my topic was, "How can we elevate the woman in gaming brand." Because as you so said, it's prevalently, it's men up at the top.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I totally agree, and I mentioned the organization because I sit on some of the committees of, AGA has a subgroup here for women in gaming. And, part of

what we have done with that organization is to really focus on a couple of elements.

One is, educational, an educational series that takes place in different parts of the country. And women can apply, and there's different levels of it, but it basically explores leadership. And some of those soft skills that Colleen spoke about, you know, we all lack oftentimes, coming into the business. They'll really explore a lot of those, so, more effective communication strategies. Exploring what their personal leadership style is. And it's often taught by senior women in the business.

So, I think that educational element is key. And the problem is, it's not very accessible, right? Because we only do it in a few-

Hady: Right.

Suzanne Trout: ... places across the country. So for companies to think, it has to be embraced more by different gaming organizations, and companies, to actually offer that skill set to their own leaders, and emerging leaders, those are important. I think the education's critical.

I think that networking opportunities are also very important, they also have done a Lean In Circle-

Hady: Right, right.

Suzanne Trout: ... which I think is very interesting, but I also think there has to be some way to try to institutionalize it, past that, because it's sort of restrictive. So, how Colleen and I know each other is because we, there isn't many women in gaming. And let me tell you something, we all know each other. We network on a regular basis, and how to pass that along, and further that, you know, that's something that I've remained very committed to in every organization I've been in-

Hady: Right, right.

Suzanne Trout: ... [crosstalk 00:36:18] how do we move that along?

Hady: Suzanne, did you want to answer that question, because I also had another one for you. If I may, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely.

Colleen Birch: That's Colleen.

Hady: Oh, that was-

Colleen Birch: That was Suzanne.

Hady: ... I thought you said, Colleen.

Colleen Birch: Well, I would say that I agree with everything Suzanne mentioned, and one of the things that is really easy for me to do, in Las Vegas, because we've got the hotel college at UNLV in our backyard, so to speak. Is being involved and going ... and, I'm a graduate from the program ... so, going back to classes there, and sharing my career story. And whether those were, kind of the path of how I got to where I was. Knowing that I sat there, and they're sitting in their same classroom. Actually, I can't say that anymore, because they have a beautiful new hotel college building.

But, you know, going back to campus and letting not specifically, probably not an all female classroom, right? But I am very partial to seeking out strong women who are considering a career in gaming and hospitality. And doing what I can to encourage them. But that is an area that is, you know, it's been an amazing career for me and it could be for them, too. I'm, been, creating relationships there, I'm part of the mentor program that exists through the university. And over the past couple of years, I've had some of the most remarkable young women who I am so proud to be associated with. I learn from them, they tell me they learn from me. I hope that's true. But it's very much a two way street.

Hady: Right. And then, I wanted to ask you as well, in terms of moving up the ladder with both of you is, what have you seen that you can say are ... maybe even, you can just say one ... of the top mistakes that women make, going, wanting to get to the executive table? And how would you avoid it?

Colleen Birch: A mistake would be, not being true to yourself. And changing anything about your style because that was your goal, right? So I think being very genuine and having strong partnerships in your operation, and at the end of the day, just being a good person and working hard, has the potential to get you where you need to go. There are no games involved, it's not, it doesn't have to be politics. You really can get there with good old fashioned hard work. And being kind, and a good partner.

Hady: Right, fine.

Suzanne Trout: I think Colleen and I touched on this earlier, too, but I think part of it is to know when to ask. I think that again, that's not a skill we're often taught, but. To really lay out for bosses what your expectation is. Like, "Here's my goal, and here's my ultimate goal." And ask for help. "How do you see," you know, "what is a path I can take to get there?"

I think when you have the courage to lay it out there, you're including folks, and it's not a mystery. They don't have to guess that that's your path. And I think, to

what we spoke about earlier, it's to not let someone else be defining what your path is. State very clearly what you think your path is-

Hady: Right.

Suzanne Trout: ... and keep telling it to everybody you meet. I mean, and that needs to not just be your boss but other people who you think can help further you in that effort. Have them [crosstalk 00:40:10]-

Hady: I love it.

Suzanne Trout: ... give you really solid, honest, sometimes it will be painful, feedback to say-

Hady: Right, right.

Suzanne Trout: ... "How do I get to that goal? Tell me what you see that I need to do."

Hady: I love that. I have a saying that goes, "If you don't get a seat at the table, just bring a folding chair."

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, yep.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Hady: One last one, Tino, if I can ask this [crosstalk 00:40:38]-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, sure, go ahead.

Hady: ... If there is one thing that you would attribute your success to, what would that one thing be?

Colleen Birch: So, I assume that that's a question for us ladies, and not Tino.

Hady: Oh, yes.

Colleen Birch: [crosstalk 00:40:57].

Hady: I know Tino's success trait is, he's a fabulous networker. He is.

Colleen Birch: I was praying for Tino to share. So I would say, my willingness to rotate in some positions that really gave me the structure and the understanding of this business. And so, kind of diversifying my skill set is what I think had a lot to do with where I am, today.

Hady: I love that.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, I think tenacity, certainly, in this business. I know when I first started in the business, right out of college, I remember applying at HR and they threw away my resume.

Hady: Oh, gosh.

Suzanne Trout: They said, "Fill out this application." And, I desperately wanted, it was in the hotel, and I desperately wanted to get into marketing. And I probably applied for six positions before I got into marketing. So, it just, you know, could have easily said, "Yeah, maybe this is a sign I need to stay in the hotel, and not get into marketing," but-

Hady: Right, right.

Suzanne Trout: ... you know, to just sort of keep at-

Hady: You persevered.

Suzanne Trout: ... Keep at it, yep.

Hady: Wonderful, thank you, you're both wonderful, and keep doing what you're doing, Colleen and Suzanne, and we will chat soon. Thank you Tino, have a good evening.

Colleen Birch: Thanks, Hady.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you Hady, have a good evening, great questions. Those, great questions. Really, really good questions. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Colleen or Suzanne?

Speaker 6: Yes, Tino, thank you. As always, a great show. Ladies, I can honestly tell you, as the father of a smart 12 year old daughter, I hope she will encounter strong female leaders as yourselves and encourage you to keep up the great work. Because sooner or later, she will enter this crazy hotel casino world and people like you, ladies like you, are really great examples for young ladies.

Colleen Birch: Well, thanks.

Suzanne Trout: Thank you.

Speaker 6: With that said, it is appreciated. Especially from a daddy, too. Because you have all those boys out there. One thing I've always, with one, I mean, boys like me. One thing I've always told female employees of mine over the years, whether it's right or wrong, but there are different standards applied to women versus men. And they have to understand they're on and off clock actions will be judged differently from men.

You know, we've all been in the business long enough to see that one guy wearing the lampshade at the Christmas party, and everybody thinks it's hysterical. But if it's a female wearing the lampshade, she's judged differently. And if the men are talking about their children at work, versus the women talking about their children at work, I don't know, sometimes I think they're looked at differently. Would you agree with that, or do you think I'm nuts?

Suzanne Trout: I totally agree with it, but I think here's the position that I always feel like is, we're telling our girls the expectation, but we're not telling our boys to stop helping create that expectation. So, you know-

Speaker 6: I understand.

Suzanne Trout: ... and I feel like I did that with my girls, too. Like, I said to my girls, "Oh, and this is what people are gonna do," and it hit a point where they were a certain age, where it really occurred to me, you know, it needs to be really important to say to them, "But that's not your fault," right?

Speaker 6: Sure.

Suzanne Trout: Or, you know, "Because that happens to you, you can expect that it may happen to you, but how you behave with that," you know, "if somebody thinks what you're wearing is suggestive, and you don't feel it is, that's not your fault. That's their perception."

Speaker 6: Right.

Suzanne Trout: It doesn't make them behave a particular way, they behave that way because they behave that way. So I think that, that's, you have to be honest with your kids about what they're gonna expect as they go into the business world. But I think the great news is that many of us are raising a generation of kids who may look at this differently. Like, they may actually say, "But you can change that." Right? Like, how you deal with that and how you treat each other, can be a different experience.

Speaker 6: Sure. And in keeping, we talked about the freshness of customer experiences, so that your crazy ... and I think you used the word crazy stuff, which is what I heard ... [inaudible 00:46:09], and so you don't have to drink a lot of bottled water, and those type of things. How do you best capture feedback from your current clientele? You touched on casino hosts, your past clientele you always want to come back. And then the future clientele, from whether it's a branding perspective or a passive customer experience. What type of interactions, surveys, things like that would you recommend, or do you currently do or utilize, that you find effective?

Colleen Birch: Well, so here, we certainly have the traditional surveys that go out. One of the places that we exchange with customers a lot is on the social media platforms.

And so, whether those are on an Instagram, actual public post, or through DMs or on our Facebook, but really understanding what our customers are telling us, we use a lot of user generated content. And we know the areas around the property that are the most Instagram spots. And so, we turn around and use that content. And any person who's active in the social space loves when that happens, and so that's kind of our, it's a medium that we engage with, and it really is successful.

I think for us, another thing that we spend a lot of time on when we get our survey scores back, rather than looking at the grade across the board, the score that most of us look at most closely, is the intent to recommend. So, are we leaving people with a feeling that they tell their friends about, and then they become advocates for our building. And I think that's probably one of the strongest measures of performance.

Speaker 6: Very interesting, do you break out the survey results by demographic? Male, female, gamblers, non gamblers, that type of stuff? Or, keep it more broad based?

Colleen Birch: It can be done, it can be sliced that way. I don't, it's not something that, I don't slice it that way. I understand where our scores are and what the teams, who are front facing, work on. And they do a great job of that. We can dive down as deep as we need to, but sometimes you get into some small number issues, and for a data person, I try to help our team remember that we've gotta be, we've gotta have the right sample size to call it a trend.

Speaker 6: Okay. Well, I appreciate all your input and thoughts and advice. And thank you very much, to both you ladies.

Suzanne Trout: Thank you.

Colleen Birch: Good luck to you and your 12 year old. I have a 13 year old, and I need all the luck I can get.

Speaker 6: Oh, Lord, they're crazy, aren't they?

Colleen Birch: Oh, my gosh.

Suzanne Trout: Good luck.

Tino Magnatta: Have a good night, thank you for calling in. Yeah, they can be hard to deal with sometimes. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, I have Colleen and Suzanne on the phone, do you , have a question for them?

Luigi: Hi Suzanne and Colleen, this is Luigi at [Fromevery 00:49:19]. How are you guys?

Colleen Birch: Hey Luigi.

Suzanne Trout: Hey Luigi, how are you?

Luigi: Very good, thank you. It's a very good conversation tonight, from a woman's perspective, I'm really enjoying it very much. So, I also like your properties in a very unique way, from my perspective. I mean, we work with so many casinos around the country and the world, like over a thousand of them. And by far, you guys have a really great operations, and I've visited them many times, I just want to compliment you both, you're doing a great job. So-

Colleen Birch: Thank you.

Luigi: ... I do have ... you're welcome. I do have a question for Suzanne first, and I'd like you both to answer it, I have two questions. But they're pretty easy, but they're pretty, they're. When you think about your life, and you've been talking about your careers, and balancing your life and your work, you're obviously, you know, it's a demanding and challenging day, every day. Every hour on the day, I know that.

But, you have to learn the art of the deal, the art of the delegation, staying connected to your family during the time you're working at the office. I mean, I work with a lot of women as well, and you know, most of our office happens to be, in my area, is more women. So I'm very observant of these things. And I've come to appreciate it more. You also have to draw a line between home and work, and you guys have talked about that. How do you carve out the time, Suzanne, for you, for yourself? And then, what do you do for your peace and quiet, for, even if it's an hour out of your life? In a month. I'm just curious.

Suzanne Trout: I'm such the wrong person to ask that, right now. But-

Luigi: [crosstalk 00:51:07].

Tino Magnatta: Well, you guys are going on vacation, right?

Suzanne Trout: 9:21 PM on the East Coast right now, and I am on the phone with [crosstalk 00:51:23].

Luigi: You're on a radio show, exactly.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, so that's-

Luigi: Until midnight.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you Suzanne, we appreciate it. We really appreciate it, we want you to know.

Suzanne Trout: ... my answer. But, no, actually, I will tell you that I have a couple of passions, and one is I've worked with rescues and things, so I, while I'm not actively doing

that right now, I have [crosstalk 00:51:41] having a small farm worth of rejected animals from other people, so that's crazy time consuming and, I deal with that when I'm not here. But I think, you know, as we talked about before, while it sounds generous to do things for charity and other things, I find that that's really a great recharge. So to the degree that I can, make sure that I get someplace and do something for somebody else, I think that really makes me feel like I'm back engaged with something that is more important, necessarily, than casino revenue.

Luigi: Right.

Suzanne Trout: But you know what? I feel so lucky, because I love [inaudible 00:52:33]. I love the pace, I'm at a great time in my life where my kids are in college, and I have the freedom, and as you said, we're, Colleen and I are both at resorts that have so much to do. And so many exciting things going on that I really can't complain. I like being here.

Tino Magnatta: It's a fun business, yeah.

Luigi: How often are you able to enjoy that peace in your life, the equilibrium?

Suzanne Trout: Sometime after 8:00 PM.

Luigi: Okay. All right, I was just curious.

Tino Magnatta: Not tonight.

Suzanne Trout: Friday and Sunday.

Luigi: Not tonight.

Tino Magnatta: Tonight it will be after 10:30. Yeah, 10:30, 11:00. Yeah, just the one-

Luigi: And what about Colleen?

Tino Magnatta: Luigi, did you have another ... yeah, Colleen, go ahead.

Colleen Birch: So, unlike Suzanne, I've got my purse in my hand and when we get done in five minutes, I'm going to dinner. No, I'm just kidding. No, I'm not kidding, I am, that is serious. I try to-

Luigi: Good.

Colleen Birch: ... So what I do is, I just spend time with friends and if I'm alone, I find that watching super brainless TV is one of the things that puts me at most ease because I can literally turn off the thinking for the day, and just-

Luigi: Right.

Colleen Birch: ... laugh at ridiculousness.

Luigi: It's always great to unplug, right Colleen?

Tino Magnatta: Yep.

Colleen Birch: Yep, absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Law and Order.

Colleen Birch: And I try to get on an airplane once a month, and put my eyes on something new.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, right. That's a good one.

Luigi: Okay, and this is a really easy question. But, you might have to search, and maybe you know if off the top of your head, and it might be real simple and quick, but. Out of all the women that you know in our business, who is like, one, two and three or number one on your list that you admire, for leadership and overall accomplishments, et cetera. Who would that be?

Colleen Birch: So I-

Suzanne Trout: Colleen Birch.

Colleen Birch: ... And I was going to say, Suzanne Trout.

Luigi: Okay, Colleen.

Tino Magnatta: Well, there you go.

Luigi: And then, Suzanne.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah. Easy answer.

Tino Magnatta: You asked for it.

Suzanne Trout: Thanks, Luigi.

Luigi: No seriously, I'm curious, as to who was your, like, a mentor, a woman mentor in your life? Your career?

Suzanne Trout: I was really, she's long retired, but I was very fortunate, I had a woman early in my career, Pam [Pappalarski 00:55:04], who was the Director of Marketing at

the Tropicana way back when. And moved up to be the General Manager of that property for many years, before [crosstalk 00:55:16]-

Luigi: Wow.

Suzanne Trout: ... And she started as Assistant to the President, at opening, and moved her way up to be the GM. And she was really who, I think, took the troops along, on her career journey as to identify young people and really ... oftentimes, I think back and think, "Why would somebody give me that job?" Like, I didn't, have [crosstalk 00:55:42] so young, and I'm not sure I really knew what I was doing. But they appreciate, I think, your energy and your spirit, and she was a great mentor for that.

And then got, just been a whole lot of people that either worked directly with, or admired, Virginia McDowell came out of that same camp-

Tino Magnatta: Yep.

Suzanne Trout: ... who went on to be a CEO of Isle of Capri.

Luigi: Yep, that's a great one. Yep.

Suzanne Trout: Yeah, there was lots of women who came out of that property. Mary Tindall is VP of Marketing for Resorts, that was there. Sherry Amos is CMO for a food chain. You know, just again, I think a lot of really positive experiences. Eileen [Duffin 00:56:31] is VP of Marketing out west, so, it was great to work with a group of very young women, where we all got to support each other and see each other and really, we've been happily rooting for each other's career success for 30 years. So, it's very nice.

Luigi: Very good. Thank you for that. Colleen, did you have any? Anybody in mind?

Colleen Birch: Yeah, I have a couple, yeah, I have a couple. My first female boss at Caesar's Palace is a woman named [Pia Rose 00:57:08], and she's a beautiful African American woman. And she started from a front line position in that building. By the time I reported to her, I was taking over as the Reservation's Manager, and she was elevated into an Assistant Vice President position. And she was-

Luigi: Wow.

Colleen Birch: ... somebody that just demonstrated this work hard and just be a good person, and then, the rest will follow. I haven't been in touch with her for many years. I think about her quite often, and I really do owe it to her, to try to find her. And let her know that she certainly mattered to my career.

And then I, in all seriousness, my time working with Suzanne and some really other strong women at Harrah's, but our opening CEO here at The Cosmopolitan

is a woman named Lisa Marchese who has become a good friend of mine, as well.

I think I learned so much through the marketing lens, as we were opening The Cosmopolitan. Of the choices that we made, and the conversations that we had, and they were, you know, every choice was so purposeful and had a meaning and a story behind it. And I, that was an experience that I'm so glad that I was able to be on that pre-opening team, and learn from her.

Luigi: Very nice, very, they were big influences in your lives. Well thank you for that-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Luigi: ... I really appreciate it. Continued success to both of you, love your work and keep up the great work.

Suzanne Trout: Thanks, Luigi.

Luigi: [crosstalk 00:58:37].

Tino Magnatta: Thanks, Luigi, have a good night.

Luigi: You're welcome, good night guys.

Tino Magnatta: Oh, no problem, you have a good night Luigi. Bye-bye.

Well, that was fantastic, a lot of great questions and a lot of great answers. And I thank both of you for being on the show. It's been incredible, you've both been on the show separately, now together, and every time it's an incredible show. And thank you so much.

Suzanne Trout: Thank you Tino, thank you Colleen.

Colleen Birch: Thanks, guys, have a nice night.

Tino Magnatta: And have a good trip.

Colleen Birch: We will, don't you worry. We'll send you a picture.

Tino Magnatta: Great. We'll see you guys later, take care.

Colleen Birch: Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye.

Well, it was fantastic. Colleen and Suzanne are really something else, great people. Monday we have another duo, Carter Pavey, who's the GM at Gun Lake

Casino and Lauren Westerfield, who's the VP of Marketing at The Palms. And they both worked together at Stations for about 10 years, back in the day. And you'll hear a lot of stories about them collaborating and rising up through the ranks and just having a great time.

Remember, everybody's got a story to tell, you just have to have time to listen. Have a good evening, and we'll see you on Monday.

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