



---

## Conversations w/Tino

Guest	Travis O'Neil
	General Manager
	Angel of the Winds Casino Resort
Airdate	Thursday, January 31, 2019

Tino Magnatta: Hello everyone. How are you tonight? I hope you're doing well. I know there's a freeze across the country. In California, it's raining hard. Here we are with another great episode of GT Radio, and tonight I have a very good friend and an incredible woman.

Welcome, Christine Gabaldon. How are you?

Christine Gabaldon: Good evening. I am doing fabulous. Thank you for having me on this evening.

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good. I hear you guys have some snow there.

Christine Gabaldon: We've had quite a bit of snow and quite a bit of cold weather, and it looks like it's coming back this weekend. We can use the moisture. I just wish the cold ... Right.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Hey, listen, talk to me a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up, what kind of influence your parents had on you.

Christine Gabaldon: I was actually born in northern Colorado on a horse and cattle ranch. My father was an incredibly hard working man. He instilled in me the ethics that I have. It was a great experience until we moved into town, and I had some constraints that I wasn't used to having when I lived on the ranch. All in all, all of those experiences helped me get to where I am today, so I am grateful for them.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. Now, what was it like working on the ranch?

Christine Gabaldon: There was a lot more freedom. There were a lot of responsibilities, but a lot of freedom. You didn't have a fenced in area that you had to play in the backyard. When we moved to town, it was quite a change, it was quite a change, because I could wear jeans and cowboy boots and a T-shirt, and I could play in the water in the river outside. Then when we moved to town, I was actually told by one of my teachers that little girls wear dresses, and I was not happy to hear that.

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little bit about your dad, because I know he was a great role model for you. What are some of those qualities and those teachings that follow you through your [inaudible 00:02:30]?

Christine Gabaldon: He's a very good man, very hard working. When we were on the ranch, he actually broke his back, and therefore we moved to town. He went and got his mechanical engineering degree while supporting the family working and healing from a broken back. He was always just a fortitude of positive, of ethics, of morals. He worked incredibly hard. I do believe he put in more hours than he should've, and that's probably where I get it from. But he was always there when I needed him. He got it right.

Tino Magnatta: That's good, to have a role model. You went to school in Colorado, right?

Christine Gabaldon: I did.

Tino Magnatta: Tell us a little bit about those years.

Christine Gabaldon: Well, like I said, when we moved to town, it was different. Actually, we lived in Fort Collins, beautiful, beautiful town. I really enjoyed it. I actually went to ... Well, it was a part of CSU back at the time. It was a travel, trade, part of the university. At that time, I wanted to be in the travel industry. Well, that didn't exactly work out for me. But I learned a lot, which has actually helped me with what I'm doing now. It was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun.

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the things you learned that are helping you now?

Christine Gabaldon: Actually, I learned that, I was working three jobs and going to school, and I probably didn't choose the wisest jobs at that time. I worked as a cocktail waitress, I worked at Dave Cook Sporting Goods, and I worked as a ski instructor, and I had a lot of fun, but didn't make a lot of money, didn't have a lot of extra time for homework. You have to realign your priorities, and I learned that pretty quickly.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you didn't set out to be in the gaming business, you were on a different path. Talk to us a little bit about where you went and what you did in the beginning?

Christine Gabaldon: I actually was in the banking industry, and I've been in it for a number of years. I learned a lot. I also learned that it was very ... it wasn't as exciting guess.

I didn't really realize that until I had the opportunity to go to work for the Pueblo [inaudible 00:05:01] Gaming Commission. I learned compliance and regulatory. The minute I started that, I realized that yeah, banking is not for me.

Banking is great, it's a great industry, a great career, but I need excitement, action, and I need no two days to be alike, and that's what gaming's done for me.

Tino Magnatta: How did you fall into the business?

Christine Gabaldon: I actually just had, I saw that the position was open. I read the job description, and it felt like it was just perfect for me. At that time, my husband told me that no wife of his would have anything to do with a casino, so I took the job.

Tino Magnatta: Great. What was that like when you first started? What kind of difficulties did you have?

Christine Gabaldon: It was great. It was actually, it was really interesting. I had some really good mentors. The GM at that time, there were some ... I had some mentors from some of the other regulatory and compliance agencies that were more than

helpful. I learned, I learned about the regulatory part, I learned about the slot machines, I learned about licensing employees, about licensing vendors. It was just, it was like somebody had opened my eyes. It was amazing.

Then one day, the general manager came over and convinced me to go to work for the operations side. It just kind of blossomed from there.

Tino Magnatta: How did that happen? I mean, you were in a completely different department, right? You were in the regulatory environment.

Christine Gabaldon: I was.

Tino Magnatta: How did that come about?

Christine Gabaldon: I was actually at the casino often, because we had to set up those slot machines. We had investigations and whatever, so I was at the casino often. I interacted with the GM at that time often, and he felt that I had the right personality. He wanted me on the operations side. He was very convincing.

Tino Magnatta: What do you think that he saw in you?

Christine Gabaldon: I think he saw that I enjoyed what I did-

Tino Magnatta: That made him push you.

Christine Gabaldon: I think that it was that he saw that I enjoyed what I did. I was happy every day. I loved going to work, I loved interacting with people. I loved problem solving. It was just a joy to go to work every day.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You were telling me that you really liked to interact with people, right? I think that's one of the keys to our business, is to-

Christine Gabaldon: I do.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Like you said, you were dealing with all the departments, right, all the time?

Christine Gabaldon: Right. I was actually hired as basically the GM's assistant, but he transitioned me very quickly into a shift manager where you just learn all of the different departments, so I learned about slots, I learned about tables, I learned about security, about surveillance, about housekeeping, about accounting, about PBX. It was a phenomenal experience. I was just like a sponge. My mind and heart just wanted to absorb it all.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you were probably one of the only women working in those areas at that time. What was that like? Your experience is a little different, right?

Christine Gabaldon: It was actually great, because I was so close to my father, the way I was raised. It was actually, it was very comfortable. I fit right in. Everyone just treated me just like I was one of the team and I'd always been one of the team.

Tino Magnatta: Interesting. Why do you think that that was the case with you, and sometimes it's not the case with many other women? That you were able to integrate like that so well.

Christine Gabaldon: Maybe I didn't know that there was a difference at that time either. I believe that I'm just not very thin skinned. I just wanted to succeed. I think that so many of my peers and colleagues just saw that drive in me and they wanted to help me succeed. Honestly, everyone just treated me so well. Everyone treated me so well and they were so welcoming. Everyone went out of their way to teach me and help me anytime I asked for it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You had a lot of great mentors, right?

Christine Gabaldon: A lot, a lot. Director of slots, director of surveillance, the general managers, the directory of gaming. Of course, vice president of marketing at one of the other properties I worked at was an incredible mentor and just opened up my eyes to the technology part and the innovative ways that you can market to our guests.

Tino Magnatta: You spent some time in operations. Tell us a little bit about some of the things that you loved doing and some of the things that, for you, might have been a little bit of a challenge in terms of more work for you.

Christine Gabaldon: I loved the slot department and table games and surveillance. I actually loved those. They were very interesting to me. I was not a big fan of the accounting side. I think it reminded me a little bit of my days back in the banking industry. Slots and even the slot master files, the analysis, it was just intriguing to me.

Tino Magnatta: You loved all that? What were some of the things you found challenging?

Christine Gabaldon: I found it challenging because I wanted to learn about everything, and there were not enough hours in the day to actually learn everything I wanted to learn. I believe there were challenges to ... well, there were challenges when we opened up the property that I'm at now, just because we had our original property.

When we opened it up, it was an entirely new experience to me. It was great, I loved it. But there was the purchasing aspect that I had not really spent a lot of time on. There were the warehouse aspects that I'd not spent a lot of time on. Then we actually created our own call center and player development departments.

I don't know if I'd say it was challenging. It was interesting, but I just wanted to make sure that I got it right. I think I put a lot of pressure on myself.

Tino Magnatta: Right, right. Maybe extended yourself a little bit. Talking about that, let's talk a little bit about ... the casino business is a 24 hour business, it's not a 9-5 business. Everybody has their own ways of balancing personal and their business. What do you say to that? How do you deal with ... because the long hours, you're very driven like you said, you want to absorb so much. How do you deal with the long hours that you have to put in there?

Christine Gabaldon: I'll be honest, it's been a challenge over the years. There've been many years where I put in far too many hours. In the last year or two, I have realized that I'm much more productive when I am rested and I do have personal time. I just recently acquired an adorable little bulldog puppy which helps me-

Tino Magnatta: Ooh, nice.

Christine Gabaldon: Get out at a much earlier time.

Tino Magnatta: That'll do it to you.

Christine Gabaldon: Oh, yes. It does. She's not very happy when I'm on the phone at home, so my conversations are much briefer.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. Fantastic. Congratulations.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: You're welcome. You talked a little bit before about thick skin, not being thin skinned. I've heard quite a few women on our show talk about this. What does that entail, exactly? What is that? What does that entail?

Christine Gabaldon: In my mind, it's not saying, well, I'm a woman, I'm frail, I can't do that, I'm not as strong as you. That's the way I look at it, is you just have to, you just have to do what you have to do to accomplish your goals. You just try not to be too sensitive, but you also have to take into consideration other people's feelings, especially team members, coworkers, your guests definitely. You just try not to let it affect you on a personal level.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Yeah. You don't let it get under your skin basically.

Christine Gabaldon: Right. You go home to your puppy, you go for a run, and then you're all good.

Tino Magnatta: You're all good. Yeah.

Now, you went to Thunder Valley and you spent four years ago, and you had a pretty well all female team there. For you, it was kind of like an experience that set you off in a ... sort of blossoming in a way. Tell us about that experience and what it meant to your career?

Christine Gabaldon: Well, as soon as I got there, I knew that it was the right move for me. Everyone was welcoming. It was just like the position fit like a glove. The team members were so welcoming, and they wanted to learn. The leadership was amazing. I honestly learned so much. I was given the opportunity to try and to learn new avenues that I really had not been exposed to previously.

I was given the opportunity to try ... if it failed, it failed, we would try to course correct it, and very rarely did it fail. I'm not even sure I would say it failed, maybe it was just not as successful as I hoped it would've been, but it was an amazing opportunity.

It also gave me the opportunity to realize that I had taken many things for granted here when I was at Buffalo Thunder previously. It opened up my eyes. Both places, I've always been a big fan here, I'm very, very gracious and appreciative for everything they've done for me, but I may not have appreciated it as much if I had not gone to California.

Tino Magnatta: Right, right. What are some of the major things that you think you learned when you were there?

Christine Gabaldon: Diversity. California is so much more diverse. You have to approach the marketing aspects in a much more diverse strategy. It was a very exciting place. It was open 24 hours a day, there was always something going on, I always had team members on the clock. I had not experienced that before I had gone to Thunder Valley and it was an adrenaline rush. It was like, okay, now, you know, you're kicking it up to the next level.

Then, the leadership was always there to back you up and they were so appreciative and they would thank you for your hard work. It was a great experience and it just brought me back to where I needed to be.

Tino Magnatta: You came back to where you are now, how were you different in terms of your knowledge? What were some of the things you were better at, and what were some of the things that you were appreciative of when you came back?

Christine Gabaldon: I was very appreciative of how welcome I was when I came back, and team members that I had previously worked with were so happy to see me, and that was a great feeling. When the CEO asked me to come back, that was a great feeling. I remember the phone call, he called me and asked me why I wasn't in his office, and I remember saying to myself, "That's because I'm in California," and then he hung the phone and I had to call back. That was a great experience.

I learned so much more of the technical, more about the analytics, about the digital marketing side when I was in California. I mean, I remember looking at the players club pin number, I can't even remember what it was called, instructional pamphlet, and it was in seven different languages. That was

something I had not experienced. I came back here and we have it in English and Spanish.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. What does it take to run a casino? What are the priorities that you have that make you succeed and stay on top in this 24/7 business?

Christine Gabaldon: Honestly, it's my amazing team. It's the support system that I have. They go above and beyond for me. They keep me in the loop, they make solid decisions. They come to me if they have any questions. They are just such good, honest people, that I couldn't do it without them. It takes an entire team to make any company succeed, let alone a casino, because it is open, the resort is open 24 hours a day, every holiday, every weekend, every anniversary, every child's birthday, you're usually scheduled at work.

The way the team just steps up and just works together, they're so good at sharing knowledge and they're so good at helping each other. It just makes you want to do even more for them.

You want to make sure that you do succeed, that you do the absolute best you can, that you generate as much revenue as you can to put back into the tribe and to help assist with the team members and the benefits that they are so generously offered there.

Tino Magnatta: That's amazing. Tell us a little bit about the challenges we have today with new technologies, and also the fact that there is so much expansion and building growth in our business. What's going on there?

Christine Gabaldon: I think technology is just the way of life. That's what's making the world turn a little bit faster, and it's helping us communicate in ways that we've never even imagined. I know that some mindsets are, well, the older demographic is not interested in the social media platforms, the digital. Well, I'm finding that that's not the case. We have many diverse age groups that are all participating in Facebook and email and text messaging. I do believe that the expansion of all of the casinos is making each and every other casino step up their game, just because I believe that we are the leader of the pack, we are the industry leader. In order to do that, you have to stay on top of that, and you have to stay above and ahead of what your competitors are doing.

Tino Magnatta: What are some things that you find that are tough in the casino business?

Christine Gabaldon: I'm very blessed with my staffing levels. Occasionally, the generation now has a different mindset than I'm used to dealing with, and the work ethic is different. You have to approach and react to these team members in a different manner than historically we've done.



Tino Magnatta: You said you had a lot of great mentors, and I'm sure that some of them stand out more than others. What were some of the things that the ones that stood out, stay with you in your head, what did they teach you?

Christine Gabaldon: Positivity, support, graciousness. They give you the opportunity to learn and expand. They're willing to share their knowledge with you, and they're willing to let you experiment. And they're willing to listen to your suggestions. Even if you have a suggestion that may not work out the way you believe it is, they listen to you and explain why.

Or they'll say, "Well, I've tried this in the past and we didn't have the results that you're expecting, but this is what we got. Why don't you come back to me and let me know how you believe we can make this more productive, more profitable, or actually make your suggestion work?" That just lights a spark that makes my mind go crazy.

Tino Magnatta: That's fantastic. There's so much competition coming in everywhere. How do you guys deal with that?

Christine Gabaldon: We have amazing customer service. We strive for excellent customer service. The gaming industry is different than retail or any other industry where you walk in, you spend a set dollar amount and walk out with an item. It's all about the experience and the entertainment value. You need to make sure your promotions are good, that you have the best team that does acknowledge the guests and make them feel that they are welcome and that they are appreciative. At the same time, you need to make their experience exciting and give them a reason to choose your property over the others.

Tino Magnatta: What is the advice that you would give people coming up the ranks? Especially women. What are some of the things that you think are really important?

Christine Gabaldon: First of all, don't think of yourself as a woman or a man. Just think of yourself as an individual, as a marketing intern that you are going to be a marketing director someday and you're not going to fail, you're not going to let anybody knock you down or tell you that you can't do it. And learn and listen. When somebody does tell you something that you don't agree with, try to figure out why. Just be open to any and all suggestions, comments, criticisms.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Again, don't have a thin skin and just deal with whatever you have to deal with.

Christine Gabaldon: Yes. Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: When you hire someone, because, hiring in the team is so important and putting the right team together that gels. When you hire someone, what are the qualities that you look for?

Christine Gabaldon: I hire for attitude and train for technical as often as I can. You know of course there are a few positions that you just have to have the technical. I look for a positive attitude, so when I do interview someone, the first words out of my mouth are, "I have a few rules."

The rules are, the first one is don't ever lie to me. Don't cheat or steal. Treat everyone with respect. If you can follow those rules, I can help you keep your job.

Tino Magnatta: It's as simple as that?

Christine Gabaldon: It basically is. Come to work, be positive, be a team player, be respectful, do what's asked of you, ask questions if you don't understand. You're going to be great.

Tino Magnatta: How do you feel working at a tribal casino? What kind of satisfaction does that give you? What are some of the things that you're proud of in your environment?

Christine Gabaldon: It's actually amazing. The tribes that I work for, they're such good people. It's really great when we have a meeting and there's some function or some thing that I can be a part of to help give back to the tribe, because the tribe is the reason that I am where I am at now. It's an amazing feeling. It's nice when they come and they ask, "Do you have any suggestions," or, "How can you help us execute this event?" It's just a great feeling, and it's made the entire experience come to a full circle.

There's the gaming side, there's the tribal side, there's the employee side, and there's the community side. They all tie together. If you can do the best that you can to be successful in all of those areas and make sure that each and every one of those areas help each other, it's an amazing feeling.

It's almost as [crosstalk 00:24:49] ... Go ahead.

Tino Magnatta: No, no. Go ahead.

Christine Gabaldon: It's almost, it's a feeling almost as good as when you see your child become the successful adult that they've become.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Yeah, because it's like, you're growing the business, you're growing the community, that money's being spent on things that are essential for people's lives. It's a great feeling.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Native gaming's just exploding, but we always, when we're in the middle of this renaissance and things are going really well, do you see any headwinds that we have to keep our heads up and look out for in the future with native gaming?

Christine Gabaldon: I think that it's important that if you are in the gaming industry that you make sure that you're working for an ethical company and that the company is for the betterment of the tribe or the organization or the community, and they're not out just to line their pockets. If gaming is not handled respectfully, it can upset many people's lives, and it's a shame.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. It can, it absolutely can. Do you think that the markets now are being oversaturated in the United States? Do you think that that could be a headwind for some of the tribal gaming?

Christine Gabaldon: I think it's challenging in some areas. I think in other areas, and I actually just, I was speaking to a couple of colleagues across the country in the last couple of days, and I do believe that the industry is becoming saturated, and almost oversaturated.

We're also learning that there are some of the establishments that are not today, or maybe not as ethical as some of the others, that are not doing as well as some of the properties that really have the right morals and ethics behind them, and the technology and the leadership to make sure that they're strong and they're making wise and logical decisions.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. They have to look out for the future, because we don't really know if it's going to be sustainable for the next 25 years. How do you do that? How do you look out into the future and build so that you're sustainable?

Christine Gabaldon: I believe a lot of it is keeping up with technology. One of the biggest factors is knowing what your guests want, knowing the changing demographic, knowing who's going to be walking through your door next, and how you can give them the experience that they need just like the guests that's been coming for five years.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You're right. Knowing your guests is very important. And also seeing the evolution of the guests.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely. Absolutely. And keeping up with technology and ...

Tino Magnatta: Go ahead.

Christine Gabaldon: Just keeping up with technology and what people want and game choices, promotions. You just need to make sure that you know what your guests want. Sometimes they might not even realize what they want until you offer it, but you have to listen to how they're reacting to what you are offering.

Tino Magnatta: Exactly. Now, we know that there's a lot of different ways that you can approach the customer service. People always say, "We have great customer service." What distinguishes one casino from another for their customer service? What are some of the key things?

Christine Gabaldon: Knowing your regular guests by name, knowing what's going on, welcoming them, not being shy. Actually, I think a lot of it too is making sure that your team members are informed so that they're confident in their interactions with guests.

I remember when I was on the casino floor, one of the hardest, hardest issues was when a guest knew about a promotion or knew about something taking place before I knew about it. It was really hard to address that.

That's something that I strive for, to try to make sure that the team members know what's going on, and that they have the information to answer questions and to actually just relay the information to the guests.

I believe the more confident the team members are, the better the customer service is.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. This has been fantastic, Christine. Should we take some calls?

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: We've got quite a few here.

This is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Christine?

Mike: Aloha, Christine. How are you young lady?

Christine Gabaldon: I'm doing very well. I was just asking about you.

Tino Magnatta: We were just talking about you, yeah.

Mike: I don't know if that's good or bad-

Tino Magnatta: And there you are.

Mike: [crosstalk 00:29:50] up here in Washington. How is everybody?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good. Good to hear you, Mike.

Christine Gabaldon: Very well. How are you?

Mike: Christine, I'm glad to hear you're on the show. Obviously, you and I have had the opportunity to work with one another, and still completely respect your work

ethic and how hard you do things. Some of those things that I think are a benefit on the show are talking about the challenges we face in our careers. We know we've all had ups and downs.

Can you give an example of something where you really had to learn from that opportunity that didn't go the way you wanted it, or maybe had gone completely awry, and what you did to learn from it and incorporate that going forward?

Christine Gabaldon: Actually, I do. I went to my boss and told him that I wanted to hire this specific person for this position that I believe this person would be amazing at. This person asked for a little bit more than the salary level the cap was at. I went and I explained that I believe this person could generate the revenue, that this person deserves the X amount of dollars.

I did not make one of my better choices. Three months later, I had to make the difficult decision and do what was right for the property and go to my boss and say, "I made a mistake."

It taught me that there were some questions that perhaps I failed to ask. There were probably some avenues that I did not look down deep enough. I also learned that, it reminded me that I need to follow my gut. If there's any question in it before you make a decision, you need to make sure that you're absolutely correct, and you're not trying to make something fit that is not going to fit.

Mike: That's a great point. I'm a big firm believer in the gut check, but you also want to data validate as much as you can in that. If your gut's telling you to look into it, obviously you want to do a little bit more history and background check on those individuals.

What's your favorite thing about the business so far? What keeps you driven each time you go to work?

Christine Gabaldon: The people. It's the people. It's the people. It's interacting, it's being able to share knowledge, watch people expand their horizon, and to see the joy in their face when they see that they are learning and that they can enjoy the industry as much as I enjoy it.

Speaking of data validation, you are the one that taught me about that and reminded me of it, and I use it every day. Thank you, Mike.

Mike: My pleasure.

Tino Magnatta: Good job, Mike.

Mike: I think we all learn from each other, right? Chris just has an amazing talent about generating the support from her teams, and I think you can see that and can hear that in her tone. Definitely you see that in the people that she works with. I think that's amazing.

One more, Chris, if you don't mind.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mike: Where do you feel that the next opportunity is going to come? Maybe specifically for your market, but just as a general whole, either one. Where do you think that next big opportunity is?

Christine Gabaldon: I think slot product is always going to be incredibly important, but I'm really interested to see where sports betting is going to take us.

Mike: Good point. Good point. Certainly it's going to be a big horizon and affecting our business for a while. Great answers. Always a pleasure, Chris. You are fantastic. I'll say it every day. I hope you have a great show.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you. It was great to hear your voice.

Mike: You too, Chris.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, buddy. I'll talk to you soon. Bye-bye.

Mike: Aloha.

Tino Magnatta: Always good to hear from Mike. He's a good guy.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Let's move on to the next one here. I'll check.

Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. You have a question for Christine?

Speaker 4: Hey. Hi, Chris. How has technology changed or impacted how you market to your customers?

Christine Gabaldon: When I first started, email was very limited, social media was very limited, text messaging. It's just so cost effective, and you can reach so many more people at the drop of a hat. If I decide that I need to make a change on a Monday morning, by Monday afternoon we can have 50000 people aware of what that change is and drive them to the property.

Tino Magnatta: Amazing stuff. Let's go on to the next person here.

Hello. This is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Christine?

Vince: Hi, Christine. Hi, Tino. It's Vince.

Tino Magnatta: Hey, Vince. How are you?

Vince: I'm very well, thank you very much. I'm enjoying this conversation very much. Especially your previous caller talking about technology. I was thinking about asking some questions around the same thing. I've been thinking a lot about the [inaudible 00:35:20] and what's available technologically to us as casino marketers.

How important is that to you today? You mentioned email specifically. Is there any other initiatives that you can perhaps mention?

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely. I'm a big fan of social media. We do Facebook Lives quite often. The minute you do a Facebook Live, it notifies every one of your followers that you are live. We do informative Facebook Lives, we do promotional Facebook Lives. We drive people to the social platforms in order to win tickets to events, meals, et cetera, to drive additional trips to the property. I learned that Facebook and Instagram, they're just amazing ways to reach a variety of demographics. It can be from the 21 year old all the way to the 86 year old.

Vince: Right. I remember a couple years back I was working with a casino in a very remote location, and I had the same opinion that was always being told to me, that people past 50 don't use social media. It's completely false. I'm past 50 myself.

Now I want to ask you the difficult part of the question, something that I've been struggling right now, and especially with some of the things we've been hearing about social media and privacy.

Christine Gabaldon: Right.

Vince: There are so many companies right now that promise steal marketing that'll help you find people that are similar to your own players by understanding where they're spending their money, what they're spending their money on, where they're traveling to, like, big brother is watching all the time. I understand how valuable that can be, but I just wonder about the privacy issue. I was wondering if you had any thoughts on that?

Christine Gabaldon: I actually, I have similar concerns as you do. I've been trying to learn a lot more about the artificial intelligence. So you walk by and your phone is tagged and it will show that you buy Snickers every Monday or coffee every Wednesday. I believe that at some point, once they've perfected it, that that is going to be the future.

It also does scare me. Because there are so many people that have found ways to abuse technology, even just look at all the scams on Facebook, I think it needs to be incredibly ... you need to be incredibly careful with it. I do know in the community that I'm in now, privacy is incredibly important.

If someone feels that their privacy is no longer private, you are not going to be on their list when they choose a place to go. Does that make sense?

Vince: I think that makes a ton of sense. I love Facebook because it's connected me with family and 50 years of friends and everything else. I see these contests that people participate in where it's asking you to, you know, tell us what you've done and what you haven't done and what you don't like. It's just so blatant, it's amazing that people even respond to that kind of stuff.

Christine Gabaldon: Right. Well, I actually-

Vince: Anyway, I actually enjoy listening to you.

Christine Gabaldon: Just so that you know, I actually ran across a scam the other day too where they were asking people to post pictures of their children, and people were doing it, and it was just a horrible, it was horribly offensive that you could tell immediately that it was a scam. I wish there was some way that once we ran across it that we could notify all of the other marketeers in the country so that they could get the word out. If you ever do run across something like that, please let me know.

Vince: I certainly will. That's a good point. Regulation will help, but the secret is going to be to not overregulate, just to protect some of the basic privacies that I think we're entitled to.

Christine Gabaldon: I completely agree. Thank you so much. I enjoyed speaking with you.

Vince: Likewise. Have a great day. Thanks you guys.

Christine Gabaldon: You as well.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks, Vince.

Vince: Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye-bye. That was some great questions. Let me see what else we got here.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Christine?

Linda Gordon: Hi, Tino. This is Linda Gordon.



Tino Magnatta: Hey, Linda. How are you?

Linda Gordon: I'm good. Hi, Christine.

Christine Gabaldon: Good evening. How are you?

Linda Gordon: I'm good. Good evening to you. I've been enjoying this so much, and there's been some great questions and great answers. I'm actually amazed at everything you've done, frankly.

Christine Gabaldon: Well, thank you.

Linda Gordon: Some of us come to the business from different places and end up being in gaming at no fault of our own, and we make the best of it, right? You've made the best of it amazingly. I just have a few questions for you.

Christine Gabaldon: Sure.

Linda Gordon: I've been in this business a long time, and I'm very impressed with what you've been able to accomplish. I'm very impressed with your ability to communicate your excitement about the business, your willingness to learn, your willingness to try new things, whether they work, whether they don't work. I just have a few questions on how you manage that a little bit.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely.

Linda Gordon: Okay. How do you go about mentoring others? I know that you said that your mentors have been very important to you? How do you go about doing that with staff and with people around you in general?

Christine Gabaldon: I am big on leading by example, getting in the trenches. I believe that team members try to emulate your behavior. I don't believe that I should be sitting up in the tower while they're down face-to-face when we've run out of gifts on a gift day.

I believe that I should be there with them, showing them how ... I am sorry that we did run out just for your future knowledge, it might be best that you try to get here earlier the next time, and just show them that you're willing to take it too, but show them how you can turn into a positive. You can't always, but as long as you keep it positive.

I think one of the most important points that I try to tell them is the person that you're dealing with right now may not be nice, but the next person you're going to deal with does not deserve anything less than your best, because it's not their fault that that person was not nice.

Your guests deserve the best of you, every single one of them. Yes, it can be difficult, but don't take it personally, because to be quite honest, most of them will not even remember what they said to you next week.

Linda Gordon: True. That's very true. That's a great answer. I agree completely. I do have a couple other questions for you. You talked about the diversity of marketing and the diversity of the employee pool that you have, and how it's changing with regard to hiring and how you manage that. I've noticed that that is very, there's a different work ethic depending on the demographic that you're hiring for. How do you manage that? How do you place a person in the right place at the right time in your positions?

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely. I think because I've had the opportunity to work in so many of the different departments, when I am speaking with someone, I can tell if it looks like it's going to be a right fit or not. If it doesn't, I try to explain to them the benefits, that once you get into the gaming industry, the sky is the limit, literally. Especially when you start at the players club, you get to interact with slots, with security, with tables, with everybody, and so you get to learn about the other departments.

I want you to understand that if this is something that you are willing to put some time in and learn the basics, because let's be honest, the players club, you're going to learn all about the loyalty program, you're going to learn basically about the casino, but you're going to be able to have information to take two other departments that they've never been able to experience. We have moved quite a few team members to other departments, which I'm very proud of, but it helps us all to become one team.

Then when you run across the ones that you don't believe are a good fit, I try to keep it positive and try to explain to them, you know, I have several other candidates, I'd like to give them the same courtesy that I've given you, I'm going to interview them, and then when I do call, I try to let them know, "You know, it was a very tough decision, however I did choose someone that had a little more experience or a little more of this. I just wanted to give you some unsolicited advice. Have you ever considered perhaps this?"

To be honest, I've had some very positive feedback, and I actually referred someone to the golf course, and she called me several years later and said, "Thank you. That was the best move I'd ever made."

Linda Gordon: Great. That's great. I wanted to mention your rules, I love the rules, they're very simple.

Christine Gabaldon: They're very simple but powerful. Don't lie to me, don't steal, do your job. I mean, they're simple, but they're so powerful.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Linda Gordon: Yeah. I imagine that you find that they're easily managed and they're easily measured, right?

Christine Gabaldon: They are, and it's very easy to remind them that that was basically the first words out of mouth, that remember, this is what I stated when we first talked, and yes.

Linda Gordon: I'm going to ask you a question that's kind of interesting I think, and feel free to say I don't know or whatever.

Christine Gabaldon: Okay.

Linda Gordon: Where do you see yourself going from here? You've done so many different things. Are you in marketing directly? Are you still in other departments? Do you see yourself ... what are you doing?

Christine Gabaldon: I have a very unique opportunity. I am in marketing. I oversee several other departments that are now under marketing and become part of marketing. To be quite honest with you, I would love to see all of the departments actually at some point become some part of marketing, because I believe that each and every department really does have a say in the marketing decisions and execution, and at some point it'd be nice to have everyone just have a dotted line reporting function to marketing.

Linda Gordon: Wonderful. I think that's a wonderful idea. I also think it helps with ... I think it answers many questions and many problems. I think everybody is a marketer and they just don't know it, right?

Tino Magnatta: Yes.

Christine Gabaldon: I agree, but I also believe that there are so many marketers out there that do not realize that they're marketers, but they're not given the opportunity because they voice a suggestion or a thought or an idea, and they're shot down. I think that's a shame, just because they're not in marketing or they don't have the experience.

Our guests are not in marketing. They don't have the experience, but they know what they want.

Linda Gordon: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Very true. Very true. Well, thank you for your time. Goodnight. It's been wonderful talking with you and listening to you. Thank you, Tino. Thank you, Christine.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you so much-

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, Linda. Thank you so much. You have a great evening.

Christine Gabaldon: You have a wonderful evening.

Linda Gordon: Thank you. You too.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Bye-bye. Yeah, Linda's great, isn't she? Great person.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: She's been around a long time.

Christine Gabaldon: Yeah. Yeah. I'm enjoying this. Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: No problem. We're enjoying having you on.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you, sir.

Tino Magnatta: Hello. This is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Christine?

Speaker 7: Hello, Tino. Hi, Christine. How are y'all?

Tino Magnatta: Good. Good. Good. How about yourself?

Christine Gabaldon: Very well. How are you?

Speaker 7: I'm doing fantastic. I'm loving the show. We talked about Facebook, and when using Facebook Live, how much impromptu engagement, impromptu of course is in air quotes as marketing people will use, do you do with your guests? Everything's impromptu, even though we thought it out months in advance, right?

Christine Gabaldon: Right.

Tino Magnatta: Yes.

Speaker 7: How much impromptu engagement do you do with your guests? Do you use publicity releases in advance? What is your thoughts on that? If you're going to scan the crowd here at the Super Bowl party, or excuse me, big game party, because Super Bowl parties don't exist-

Christine Gabaldon: Very good, very good.

Speaker 7: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Christine Gabaldon: I do.

Speaker 7: What I'm saying is, if you're going to go Facebook Live for a drawing, win the car, what have you, how much in advance do you have to do publicity releases? How much would you recommend? That type of scenario.

Christine Gabaldon: Actually, what we do is we post, we post ... I'm trying to remember the verbiage. We actually post signage anytime that we do this dating, if you are in this area, you are giving us authorization for your image, your voice, your whatever to be replicated, to be used for advertising, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But we do know exactly that someone's going on, we try to get a release.

Many of our Facebook Lives are my team just telling the audience basically what's going on, and answer this question, go to our website, learn this. We have a lot of scavenger hunts to try to drive visitation to Instagram, to our website, check emails.

We have a lot of cross marketing there just to try to increase our engagement. My team members will say, "I've got two tickets for this event. You have to answer this question. In order to answer that, you have to go to this site, this site, this site."

Then when they do answer, when they are communicating via Facebook Live, they are giving us authorization to use their name because they've already opened it up. At least from what I have learned, we're okay with that. Before we actually can use their image, we do need to have it posted very clearly and make sure everyone's aware of it. We also many times will just make an announcement right before we go live, before we do vehicle giveaways stating you know, we are going to go live on Facebook, just want to make sure everyone's aware of that-

Speaker 7: So if you're not supposed to be here, you better hide.

Christine Gabaldon: Absolutely! If your wife is expecting you 20 minutes ago, you should leave.

Speaker 7: With utilization of Facebook, are there any limitations you've run into so far with ... I understand you're promoting a concert, you're promoting an event, a drawing, what have you. From a win this or win that ... are there any limitations? Can you say win, I don't know, a car, win free play, win cash, via directly linking it through a Facebook-specific contest? I haven't had any luck with that. Have you?

Christine Gabaldon: I'll be honest with you. I'm very leery of that. We have not really gone into that type of utilization of Facebook. I'm very leery of it, I'll be honest with you. There are so many false profiles out there. I'm very leery. I'm okay giving away some tickets or maybe dinner, but I'm very leery about including anything else in that, just because ... you just never know. You just never know. You don't know what you don't know, so you don't know what technologies are being used out there.

Speaker 7: Better to be safe than sorry, huh?

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely.

Christine Gabaldon: Most of the time, that's my philosophy.

Speaker 7: Sure. My final question, thank you so much for all this time, from a player database grouping perspective, and I had this argument so many different times, although all groups are important, how do you prioritize the importance of new guests versus maintaining the current guests, and reactivating inactive guests?

Christine Gabaldon: That's a very good question. It takes some strategies. I have our loyal locals database, I have our new signups, I have our declining guests, and then I have what we call accelerating guests. I utilize my, I have a brand new analyst who's amazing, and I'm using his talents. I also use player development and the player's club. I also have another amazing tool in my toolbox. I have a call center.

We have the ability to reach out of course with print, with digital, but I also have some amazing team members that can just pick up a phone and be incredibly amazing. I prioritize of course the highest end with player development.

I also use the player's club and the call center, because let's be honest, they interact with these guests just about as often as the hosts do, because even though the host are, their priority is to get them on property, to make sure that they are coming back and they are taken care of, when they're on property, let's say it's right before a drawing and they've forgotten their card. Well, they're going to the player's club. Or let's say they're up in their room and they want some extra towels. They're going to call the call center. Or they need to know what time the doors are going to open for the big viewing party.

I utilize all of them. It's actually working quite well.

Speaker 7: Okay. Okay.

Tino Magnatta: That's great.

Speaker 7: I appreciate both of you guys, and thank you, and have a wonderful evening.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks for the great questions.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you. You have a wonderful evening as well.

Tino Magnatta: You have a great evening. Thank you so much. Great questions.

Christine Gabaldon: Yes. This has been very interesting.

Tino Magnatta: It is. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. You have a question for Christine?

Mark Brett: Hi. This is Mark.

Tino Magnatta: Hello?

Mark Brett: Hello.

Tino Magnatta: Mark. How are you? Tino Magnatta here, I have Christine Gabaldondon-

Mark Brett: Yes, how are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good. Thank you for calling.

Mark Brett: Hi, Christine. My name is Mark Brett. Christine, I am a producer of two national touring concert shows that celebrate the music of The Carpenters. Christine, we play at properties all over the country. We know that putting on a really good show of course is what you're looking for, but what things could I do as the producer of the show to add value to your event, there on your property? I'd like to bring more to the table if possible, you know?

Christine Gabaldon: Okay. A couple of promoters that I work with, they work with me in regards to any type of pre-event interviews, social media post sharing, go-lives-

Mark Brett: Yeah.

Christine Gabaldon: That's very big. But it's also very important to me that when I'm working with someone, that they alleviate some of my paperwork. If they have everything set ahead of time, we have the flight itinerary, we have the transportation itinerary, we have the rooming lists, we have backline, we have everything set up with production.

That's actually huge for me because I do wear so many hats. I don't want to have to take 20 minutes finding out that three of them are going to fly in at 4:05 and two of them are going to fly in at 7:02. That's big.

Also, the cross promoting and making sure that the group that's coming, because I'm a big fan of tribute bands, but I need to make sure that they're quality tribute bands.

Mark Brett: Absolutely. You do wear a number of hats under the marketing umbrella there.

Christine Gabaldon: I do, I do, and I love every one of them.

Mark Brett: That is so great. As far as putting on shows for your players, what drives that opportunity for the players? How do you arrive at, gee, we're going on a

Christmas show, or we're going to put on a show at Valentines with Valentines Day coming up? What drives that for you?

Tino Magnatta: How do you make that decision for what you're going to do?

Christine Gabaldon: It takes some investigating, it takes some leg work, and it just takes some thoughts, but it also takes some brainstorming with my team. I don't just make these decisions myself. I get the entire team together and we sit down and I ask them their thoughts.

I have an incredibly diverse team, I have younger team members, I have more experienced team members, I have multiethnic team members, and I want them all to be a part of it. They all have family members, many of them their family members are gamers or they know somebody that is.

I think that it's incredibly important to take the team as a whole and ask them, and ask other people on the property, "What do you think about this? What do you think?"

I think a show will be fantastic, and I'll get 7 out of 10 people telling me, "No, I don't think it'll fly here," so I have to go back to the drawing board and go, "Wait, was I really looking at this the way I should've been looking at it?"

Mark Brett: It's so nice and refreshing how you allow that to happen. So many situations, the ceiling is very low. It sounds like the ceiling is very high there at Buffalo Thunder Resort & Casino. It's very refreshing to hear that.

Christine Gabaldon: Well, good. I'm glad you feel that. Thank you.

Mark Brett: Hopefully we get a chance to meet you at some point, Christine. And Tino, I'd love to meet you as well.

Tino Magnatta: No problem. Yes, of course. And thank you for calling in. We really appreciate it. You have a good evening.

Mark Brett: Christine, thank you very much for your time.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you. Have a nice evening.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Have a great evening. Bye-bye.

Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Christine?

Shane: Hey, Tino. Shane from Oklahoma. Hi, Christine.

Tino Magnatta: How are you doing, Shane?



Shane: I'm good, I'm good. I work for a Native American tribe here in Oklahoma, and I work in finance. We have a lot of struggles in Indian country with casinos that aren't experienced in the Vegas market because of trust land. If we want to finance an expansion, we have to use our FF&E. We can't use our bricks and mortar, and it's kind of locked, whatever investment we put in place, because of federal policies, it's really difficult to do financing. Could you talk a little bit about your experience of your casino and how you've dealt with struggles with regard to Indian country that may not be experienced with other casinos?

Christine Gabaldon: I have to be honest with you. All of my experience is with Native American casinos. I don't know that I could even answer your question. I'm sorry. I don't really have anything to compare it to. The casinos I've worked for both have been tribal and they've had some incredible economic development teams and they've made the right decisions. I honestly have not been privy to all of it, nor should I be. I'm sorry.

Tino Magnatta: It's okay. Shane, maybe another way to phrase the question is, Christine, what have you found in terms of them putting all these expansions and these constructions, I mean, you've been a part of some growth. How has that all come together for them? What has been the driving factor to put that all together?

Christine Gabaldon: Honestly, I think it was strategic planning. I think that it was leadership and tribal leadership working together and doing some fact seeking before they made the decisions, and then the decisions they've made, they did it ethically and morally, and they did what they felt was right for the entire community as well as the tribe or the pueblo, rather than just jumping saying, "Well, this is an opportunity. We have to do this before somebody else does." I think that they just think it through and make strategic decisions based on facts and investigative work.

Tino Magnatta: That's great.

Shane: Very good. Yeah. I appreciate that. We always struggle in Indian country because of the laws around financing. We end up having really large banks that will come in, but they put all kinds of very restricted covenants on the lending that we do that makes it difficult for us to grow and expand, often simply because of the financing rules that we have to navigate in order to try to do any kind of gaming expansion. I was just curious if you had a similar experience there in New Mexico.

Christine Gabaldon: Yeah. I'm sorry. I haven't really been a part of that aspect of the business, but it sounds like it could be challenging.

Shane: It really is. I've enjoyed it and I've learned a lot about marketing. I was just curious of your experience in that arena. Thank you, Tino. I've enjoyed the

show. This is my first time to listen, but I'm definitely going to be dialing back in and learning about other elements of casinos in Indian country.

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely. Don't forget, all the shows are on our site and also on the Blog Talk Radio. If you get our emails, you can just go and choose whoever you want to listen to. Christine's show will be on our site on Monday.

Shane: Awesome. Thanks, Tino. Christine, it was nice talking to you.

Tino Magnatta: Shane, thanks a lot for calling. We really appreciate it.

Shane: Thank you, sir.

Christine Gabaldon: Have a wonderful evening. Thank you.

Shane: You too.

Tino Magnatta: Christine, it's been absolutely fantastic. Thank you so much for being on the show. We definitely want to have you back on in the future sometime. You've been absolutely incredible.

Christine Gabaldon: Thank you, sir. I really enjoyed it, and I really enjoyed all the conversations. This was amazing. I look forward to the next time. You have a wonderful evening, sir.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much. Goodnight.

Christine Gabaldon: Goodnight.

Tino Magnatta: Stay warm!

Christine Gabaldon: Yes, sir!

Tino Magnatta: Sorry, I cut you off, what was that last thing? Yes, sir what?

Christine Gabaldon: I will try to stay warm.

Tino Magnatta: Okay, take care. Snuggle up with the little, is it a bull dog?

Christine Gabaldon: It is. Her name is Xena.

Tino Magnatta: She's going to be loving it. You have a good night. Take care of yourself.

Christine Gabaldon: You too. Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Bye-bye.

Christine Gabaldon: Bye.

Tino Magnatta:

Okay, that was great. Christine is always amazing. I've known her for a number of years.

February 7th, I have a fantastic show. Carter Pavey and Lauren Westerfield, they worked together back in the old days of stations. Well, not that old, but back in the day. They have some interesting stories. They've both been on our show, but now they'll be on our show together. You've got to tune in. When we get these two people on the air, it's pretty amazing.

Anyways, remember, everybody's got a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen. God bless, and have a good evening.