



Conversations w/Tino

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Airdate	Monday, January 21, 2019

Tino Magnatta: Welcome to another episode of GT Radio. We're having an incredible January. We've had some amazing guests on, and then we have a incredible lineup coming up, but this guy, today, that we have on the show, he's a good friend. He's a great person, and he also has some amazing stories. He's worked with incredible people, and he's done some incredible things, Mr. Scott Eldredge. How are you, Scott?

Scott Eldredge: I'm doing great. Thank you for having me.

Tino Magnatta: No problem. Now, you had a pretty amazing upbringing. I know that your dad was a big influence on your life. Talk a little bit about where you grew up, your parents, the influences, all that stuff.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. Thanks for asking. I was born and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico and blessed to have two strong, amazing parents that I attribute a lot of what I've been able to accomplish and how I've lived my life to them. It was a fairly strict home, but one with a lot of love and a lot of encouragement that, if you put your mind to it and you work hard enough, you can accomplish anything. I'll always be very, very grateful for the upbringing I had. My father, I think I told you, was the best man in my wedding because he's the best man I know, best man I've ever known.

Tino Magnatta: That's great.

Scott Eldredge: I was just very, very blessed to have a wonderful family.

Tino Magnatta: I love that. What was it like where you grew up in New Mexico? Explain to us the landscape, what your dad did, what you aspired to be.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, my dad-

Tino Magnatta: I know it was big on sports, right?

Scott Eldredge: Yes. Yeah, yeah, and my parents always encouraged but never pressured, but yeah, I did everything. I was the consummate jock. I like to say I was a very big fish in a very small pond, but yeah, I did it all, football, basketball, track, swimming, the whole deal, and I was blessed to have some success with that. Like I said, my parents supported but never pushed, so that was cool, and I think a lot of the things I learned in sports prepared me well for a life in the hospitality and guest service business.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you got a scholarship to play football, right?

Scott Eldredge: I did. I did. I was blessed. I went to Saint Pius High School in Albuquerque and played all the sports there and then was fortunate to get a full-ride football scholarship to a small school in northern New Mexico, New Mexico Highlands University. I was blessed to play four years there and had some success, both

team and individual, so it was ... Yeah, it was pretty cool. It was just a awesome experience. Like I said, I think sports, the discipline and the commitment and, probably more importantly, the teamwork that you have to learn, especially at the collegiate level, it taught me a lot and prepared me well for the business world.

Tino Magnatta: Talk a little bit more about that because I know that a lot of the guests that we have on the show, they talk about how important the team is. Talk a little bit about the team and ...

Scott Eldredge: Sure. It's a cliché, right? Oh, we want to be part of a team. We need to work together as a team, but at the end of the day on any successful sports team, any successful championship team, the guys didn't always like each other. They didn't always hang out together. In some cases, they couldn't stand each other, but they worked together as a team and complemented each other. I know, even right now, Bill Belichick's, "Just do your job." I think that's what you learn on a team is that, if I do my job and I do it to the best of my ability and encourage my teammates and help my teammates to do the same, then overall we're going to have more success.

I think that translates very well into the hospitality business for sure. It's people understanding what their job is, and just do your job to the best of your ability. Try not to get distracted by what other departments are doing or your coworkers are doing. Just do your job to the best of your ability and be a good team mate. Be a good coworker. The employees at all the properties I've been fortunate to be a GM at, we don't have employees. We have team members because we are all part of a team. It just kind of helps create that culture of being part of a team. I grew up in that environment. I loved it, and I think it translates well to our world.

We're all part of a team. We all have the same goals. Whatever those business goals and objectives are for the year, we're all trying to do the same thing, and I think some of that is, if you explain to your team what their role on the team is, it's a ... If you translate it to sports, in basketball, you have your defensive specialists, or your three-point shooter, or the guy who defends the rim, or the guy who gets the assists and sets up players to score, or the scorer. Whatever it is, everybody has a different role, and our business is very similar to that. I think, again, I was blessed to play a lot and have a lot of success in sports. I think it's translated well to take that same kind of mentality into the casino world.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You said something that's correct, which I find is a constant in anything is that, whatever job you have, even if it's to give water to the players, do it well because that ... You're supporting a whole team not just yourself, so if everybody does their job, it'll work out.

Scott Eldredge: Absolutely, and that everything is important. I had a boss very early on, a gentleman named Michael [Scarcelli 00:05:50], I hope he's listening, but with the Maloof family. Michael said, "I don't care if we're just serving hot dogs.

We're going to serve the best hot dog on a fresh, quality bun. We're going to serve it with a smile. We're going to serve it quickly, and so it doesn't matter what your job is or what we're doing. Let's do it to the best of our abilities." I've remembered that through my whole career.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. That's so important. Tell us a little bit of how you got into the business. What was that-

Scott Eldredge: Wow, man. I can spend at-

Tino Magnatta: How did that happen?

Scott Eldredge: I've been in this business almost 30 years, and I can sum it up by saying I've always just been blessed to be in the right place at the right time, and my start was no different. No, really, really, it is.

Tino Magnatta: I know, yeah.

Scott Eldredge: You and I have talked about that. You know, but-

Tino Magnatta: I know.

Scott Eldredge: Your listeners will say, "Man, this guy fell under a lucky star." I graduated from school and was looking ... I was always intrigued by the hotel, restaurant, bar industry when I was really young. High school, college, I thought, "Hey, man, wouldn't it be cool? I want to own my own bar." Cheers was very popular, the show, at that time, and I thought, "Wouldn't that be cool to just have a bar where everybody knows everybody, and they come in, and you make a little bit of money, but it's more about just having a great time and having a successful business with people that you get to know and cultivate relationships with?" I've kind of always had that thought.

I graduated from school. A buddy of mine was already in the Maloof family, which I'm sure many of your listeners are familiar with, the Fiesta, the Palms.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah.

Scott Eldredge: They own the Sacramento Kings. Way back when, they owned the Houston Rockets for a while, very prominent family. Well, they're also from New Mexico and, at the time, they weren't in the casino business yet, but they were in the hotel business among a lot of other things, but they had a hotel management trainee program, and a buddy of mine had joined it about six months ... He'd graduated before me and got involved. He'd been in it for about six months, and he said, "Hey, I think I might be able to get you an interview. Would you be interested?" I said, "Oh, yeah. Heck, yeah. That's right up my alley."

I always use this as a story to tell, real quick if you don't mind, of how I learned, literally from day one, about the hospitality business and that it's 24/7 and that, when everybody else is off, we're busy. My buddy called and said, "Hey, you're going to get a call from George Maloof." I said, "The owner, George Maloof?"

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Scott Eldredge: "Why is he calling me? Isn't there somebody else to call me?" He said, "No. That's just the way he does business. He's going to call you."

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Scott Eldredge: I said, "Okay, great." I had graduated in December, so this was late December. I get a phone call, and it's George Maloof himself. I didn't have a secretary call and say, "Hey, can you hold a minute?" It was George Maloof.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's amazing.

Scott Eldredge: We talked for a few minutes, and he said, "Would you like to come in for an interview?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "Okay. Come in tomorrow around 4:00." I said, "Yes, sir, but tomorrow is Christmas Eve." He said, "Do you want the interview or not?" I said, "I'll see you at 4:00 tomorrow."

Tino Magnatta: I love it. I love it.

Scott Eldredge: I go to the interview.

Tino Magnatta: I love it.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. I go to the interview. It goes well. He said, "Hey, we're going to start you at the Classic, which was their big hotel in Albuquerque, so I was going to get to stay in my hometown, so I was excited. He said, "You'll start next Friday or whatever it is at 3:00. Go see Mr. so-and-so, and we'll get you started." I said, "Well, thank you very much. I really appreciate that, but you realize next Friday," or whatever the day was, "that's New Year's Eve." He looked at me, and he said, "Do you want the job or not?" Yeah. I'm not saying that ... Listen, I hold George Maloof in very, very [crosstalk 00:09:28]-

Tino Magnatta: No, [crosstalk 00:09:27]. I love this. I love this. A legend.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. I hold him in very high regard, but I learned-

Tino Magnatta: I'm delighted. George Maloof is a legend.

Scott Eldredge: I learned more from him at ... I was with him for eight years. I hold him in very high regard. I don't say that to be disparaging at all. That's-

Tino Magnatta: No, and he's a legend. He's a legend.

Scott Eldredge: I learned from day one, literally, our business is when there's holidays and when other people are off, that's when we're busy, and that's when we need to work. I literally learned that from day one, so I'll always be very grateful for my time with the Maloofs. I spent eight years with them and just learned a tremendous amount, went from New Mexico to Colorado and then finally out to Vegas with them and helped open the Fiesta and just an awesome, awesome learning experience. Couldn't have asked for a better way to start my career because I got exposed at a very young age to everything. I mean I got to sit in marketing meetings with George Maloof and just hear how he thinks, and how the business works, and how to market to people. It was just a awesome, awesome start to my career.

Tino Magnatta: What made him so special? What was it about George that he had the magic touch? What was it about him?

Scott Eldredge: Well, I tell you what, I mean there's a lot of smart people out there. There's a lot of people, especially at that time, that had a lot more gaming experience than George, but he was relentless. Again, I say that as a positive with all due respect and hold him in high regard. He was relentless. He and his brothers could have been hanging out on the Strip or on a yacht in the Bahamas. They could have been enjoying the good life, and they had a stronger and harder work ethic than anybody that worked for them, and so that made it ... Although they were very demanding, it made it easier to tolerate because they never asked anybody to work harder than they did.

I remember I was both on the hotel and the marketing side, and you might get a call Sunday night at 9:00 saying, "Hey, what's going on with bingo? There's a poster with an out date," or whatever it may be, and it's because he's sitting in the bingo room at 9:00 trying to figure out how to make his business better. A lot of people say, "Oh, what was the success of the Fiesta?" because that original Fiesta on Rancho was truly a little goldmine. The reason it was a success is because George Maloof was on that floor six, seven days a week, long hours, day, nights, early, late, asking his team what we could do to get better, asking our guests what we could do to get better. He was relentless in a very, very good way.

Again, I think a lesson I learned very, very early, if you want to know how to improve your business, talk to your team and talk to your guests because they'll tell you. We all, unfortunately, sometimes get stuck behind our desk or behind that computer or that phone, and that's not the business we're in. If you want to know how to improve your business, get down on that floor and talk to your team and your guests because they'll tell you how to get better.

Tino Magnatta: Scott, what year was that when you worked for Maloof? What year was that when you started with him?

Scott Eldredge: You're going to have me age myself, aren't you? Yeah, no, that was early ... I started with them ... I graduated college in 1990 and got on right with them and worked for eight years, so that had been kind of '91 to '98, '99 kind of timeframe, and a fun time. We went out to Vegas.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, so that was in the early days of expansion and all that.

Scott Eldredge: Oh, yeah. I got out. I remember I got out. In fact, my first night in Las Vegas, I'll never forget this, I stayed at Arizona Charlie's, and it was the night of that incredible windstorm that knocked down the Hilton sign.

Tino Magnatta: Oh, wow.

Scott Eldredge: It knocked out all the power. Look, this was the early '90s before a lot of the places had the big, cool generators they have now, right?

Tino Magnatta: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Scott Eldredge: I'm sitting in the pitch dark with no power at Arizona Charlie's in a windstorm of a generation thinking, "What in the world did I just get myself into? Where am I?" It was the beginning of an awesome, awesome time in Vegas. I've spent total of 12 years in Vegas and really loved every minute of it and learned a lot.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. It's amazing. Yeah, the Maloofs were incredible, and they just led by example, right? I mean they were working it hard.

Scott Eldredge: Oh, absolutely. Again, I grew up in Albuquerque, so I'm familiar with the family. They got that work ethic from their father, but yeah, all of them just hard workers and not just walking around ordering people around. If a delivery truck was coming dropping off boxes and they weren't getting unloaded quick enough, they'd jump in and unload boxes. They'd get change. That was back in the day when we had people running around with change purses all over the place. They'd run change. They'd run drinks. They'd pick up glasses. I mean just hard, hard working guys. They demanded that from their team, but it was because they did it themselves. Like I said, it made it a little easier to handle how hard they pushed everybody because they were pushing themselves just as hard.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. That's amazing stuff. Now, they also had an amazing program for recruiting people, right? Explain a little bit about that program because that was kind of like your trial, if you could handle it, right, traveling around-

Scott Eldredge: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Tell us a little bit about that. Yeah.

Scott Eldredge: I'm sorry. I jumped ahead a little bit.

Tino Magnatta: No, that's okay, no problem.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, I went to a management training program. It was awesome because you had to sign a commitment that you would be available to move. At that time, they had nine hotel properties throughout New Mexico and Arizona, and you had to sign a deal agreeing to be available on 24 hours notice that they would ship you to the property where whatever the need was. You may spend a couple weeks as a housekeeping manager at a Days Inn in southern New Mexico and then get the call and say, "Hey, we need you in northern New Mexico, and you're going to be the food and beverage manager." That person just quit or that person's going on vacation or whatever it may be.

I spent a year learning literally ... I mean I literally did everything. I made beds. I checked people in to the front desk. I waited tables. You did every ... because these were small properties. You didn't have huge staffs, and so you kind of went in as the assistant general manager or whatever position you needed to fill at that time, and you bounced around, and not only did you do different jobs, but you did them at different hotel properties, different franchises that had different rules, different systems, things of that nature, so you just got exposed to everything. That was a year long of that.

Typically, when you'd finish that, they'd then place you at one of their properties, so you'd be an AGM at a larger property or you'd get to go be a GM at one of their small properties. Well, like I said, right place at right time. As I was completing the program, they were about to get into the casino business. They had bought a limited-stakes casino in Central City, Colorado just north of Denver, and they did the same thing. They took a group of, I don't know, about 8 or 10 of us and said, "Okay, come on. We're going to go learn the casino business." They already had the land and the plan for the Fiesta in Vegas, but they knew that their company didn't know much about gaming, and so they said, "We're going to go learn the business."

Same thing, man. I was so fortunate. I worked behind the cage. I poured drinks. I dealt cards. I worked on slot machines, not very well. That was one of my weaker ... That was when you actually physically fixed ... They weren't computers. They were actually worked on comparators and things of that nature. Drove the shuttle bus back and forth to Denver. I mean I got to do it all, so just was exposed to so much of how the business works.

Tino Magnatta: Wow, amazing.

Scott Eldredge: Again, I credit the Maloofs for being so smart to do that because then they were able to take a small crew of their people, quote, unquote, right?

Tino Magnatta: Yep.

Scott Eldredge: People that they know that understood how the Maloofs want to do business, and they said, "Okay, now we're going to Vegas," and they took us out to North Las Vegas, and we had the awesome experience of opening the Fiesta.

Tino Magnatta: Amazing. Scott, you were at the right place and the right time for your next move because you worked with another legend, Blake Sartini of PT's, right? Tell us a little bit about that and how it happened.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. Blake Sartini had just taken over PT, started his company, Golden Gaming, and they were really in their infant stages, and they were looking for a marketing guy. I had known a couple of those guys, Steve Arcana and a couple of those guys just from the business with Stations and Fiesta, and so interviewed and was fortunate enough to get the job, and what an amazing ... I spent two years with Golden Gaming, and what a whirlwind or awesome experiences because we ... PT's, I think my numbers may not be exact, but I think we had 23 or 24 locations at the time I joined the company and no casinos, and in just two years, when I left, we had more than doubled that. We had 50 taverns and 4 casinos. It was just an amazing ... As high as I hold George Maloof in regard, I put Blake Sartini right up with him in terms of a leader and a marketer and just understanding the business.

It was a small company at that time. Golden Gaming is much larger now and extremely successful, but I had a seat at the table of virtually all the decisions that were being made, and I got to listen to how Rod [Atemium 00:18:48] and Blake Sartini and Steve Arcana and these brilliant gaming minds, how they were looking at sites that they wanted to acquire, what brand of PT's or what casino would fit there, look at different ... they had all kinds of opportunities, analyzing those opportunities and figuring out which would be best for their company portfolio, and then just the awesome experience of opening all those properties.

We built some from brand new. We acquired some and remodeled them, both in Vegas and in Reno, then we acquired casinos in Colorado, so I kind of went back to my Colorado days. Just an incredible whirlwind of two years of acquiring, opening, reopening, remodeling gaming taverns and casinos. It was just an incredible experience, and I was blessed to be a fly on the wall and learn from some really, really awesome operators.

Tino Magnatta: Now, what was he like? Because he was different than Maloof. I know that he was a food fanatic. He had to have the best food in his ...

Scott Eldredge: Oh, yeah.

Tino Magnatta: In his pubs, right?

Scott Eldredge: I mean if any of your listeners are from Vegas, they know that PT's was always known for good food, and I think Blake and his company took it to another level

with the PT's Gold and the Sierra Gold and those things, but again, similar to Maloof in that he tasted everything. I mean we went ... I joked I put 25 pounds on in about a year because he wanted to make sure everything tasted great.

Again, the PT's menu is not a fancy menu. It's burgers, and sandwiches, and French fries, and chicken wings, but he wanted the best, and they better be high quality. I don't care if somebody's just ordering a beer and an order of wings. That beer better be cold and fresh, and those wings better be dynamite. The way he ensured that happened is we tasted everything. Any time there was any new item on the menu, we tasted it, and we tasted it multiple times. I learned, again, there's no shortcuts. If you want something to be great, you got to work hard at it, and you got to test it, and hold people accountable to it, and make sure it's great.

He took what I'm sure some people thought was a very unusual step early on when he just had 23 bars, basically, PT's Pubs, and he hired a dynamite, incredible executive chef right off the Strip. Joe Romano was his name, just a fantastic, fantastic guy, but an even better chef. Hired an executive chef to build his pub menus and make them fantastic.

Tino Magnatta: Amazing.

Scott Eldredge: Again, committing resources-

Tino Magnatta: That was ahead of its time.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, that many people wouldn't do. This is chicken wings and French fries. What do you need an executive chef for, right?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Scott Eldredge: We took it to another level. If you look at the pub and bar and gaming tavern scene in Las Vegas now, it's completely transformed, and the expectation is the food's got to be great. I credit Blake Sartini for that and Steve Arcana and the crew. I got to be a part of that. It was pretty cool experience.

Tino Magnatta: A few minutes before the show, we talked a little bit about how businesses is so amazing and it doesn't look like there's anything coming up in terms of headwinds, but that's what we also thought that the ... We also talked about how we thought the casino business was recession proof, and then we got hit with a recession. When you look out, do you see anything at all that could create a headwind in this business?

Scott Eldredge: Well, yeah. I think you're right. I think 10, 11 years ago we believed we were recession proof and learned a tremendous amount. I think, from big companies to small in our industry, we're a lot better prepared, heaven forbid, should something like that happen. I think we've learned how to manage our business

better. We're a lot more efficient, so I think we have insulated ourselves better than we were in '08, but yeah, I mean these are tumultuous times in our own government as well as around the world, but the economy, I believe, is still strong. I know some people out there say gaming is getting saturated. I'm not one of those people. I think you look around, there's still strong demand, and most of the properties are just doing so well.

I've been in the Native American world now for going on 14 years, and some of the properties that have been built and are being operated are just incredible that you never thought would have been possible 10 or 15 years ago. They're just world-class operations. I think, sure, could the economy really have some challenges or could there be some dangers out there in the world that impact our business? Of course that could happen, but I think the fundamentals, if you will, are much stronger than they were in '08, and I think we've gotten a lot smarter, as an industry, on how to protect ourselves, heaven forbid, something like that should happen.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's true. You never know, but I mean, if you're prepared, and the way the casinos are diversifying and stockpiling cash, I think it's going to be all right. Scott, we touched a little bit about how we went into the recession. Talk a little bit about how Vegas reinvented itself after the recession and how that affected the rest of gaming in our country and the world.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. I mean I think there was kind of several evolutions at a big level, and I had already left Vegas by the time the '08 recession hit, but they tried the family angle for a little bit. Some of them had success with that. Most didn't, and they've kind of evolved out of that.

I think one of the wonderful evolutions in Vegas that the rest of the world, really it's the rest of the country has followed, is the evolutions on the food and beverage side. Again, you talk about what Sartini did at the gaming tavern side, I think, and then in the casinos that he acquired, I think the same thing happened where they started bringing in these celebrity chefs and started really ... It used to be it was home of the 99-cent shrimp cocktail and the 2.99 steak, and neither one of them were that good, but they were such a great deal you just got people in the doors, and the big, crazy, obnoxious buffets to drive traffic. Everybody lost their you-know-what in food and beverage and didn't care because it was driving so much revenue.

Well, I think, when the recession hit and the gaming revenues weren't there, Vegas had to find other sources of revenue, and so the non-gaming revenue, the hotel, the retail, the food and beverage all took off, and I think, in the last couple years, has exceeded gaming revenue now, at least in Vegas, the non-gaming revenue. I think that was the more successful reinvention is let's find other ways to run our business and other things that can drive revenue and that and then all the amazing Cirque shows, and these incredible restaurants, and these incredible malls, and all that evolved.

I think you see Native American country taking a page out of that, of just getting some really great non-gaming amenities at their properties that are not only revenue-generating on their own and profitable on their own, but they're also ... You create that experience that extends the trip for the gamer as well. I think Vegas taught us that, of that almost everything ... Of course, gaming's still the core business and it centers around that, but everything you do, it should complement gaming, but it can also be profitable on its own. Pretty nice evolution that I think many of us have followed even after we left Vegas.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. It's incredible how they did that and how it affected the rest of the country. What advice can you give the younger people coming up in the ranks?

Scott Eldredge: Gosh, you're going to make me sound like an old man again, but I think part of it is I was blessed that I got exposed to an awful lot at a very young age and things that someone of my age experience should not have been exposed to, but I can also say I was not paid at that level either, and that was okay because I was learning so much. I think the younger generations, there's kind of ... and it's not their fault, but we have this instant gratification society now where everything is at your fingertips in seconds, and if you can't get it in the matter of a minute, then you move on.

I think I would encourage everyone, excuse me, that wants to get involved in this business is take the time to learn the business from the ground up and trying not to be so specialized. I know that happens, especially with the big corporations sometimes, and I understand why, but try not to get pigeonholed into one discipline, whether it's finance, or marketing, or slots, or tables, or retail, or whatever, hotel, whatever it may be. Try to learn as much as you can about the whole business.

I've had a couple different bosses tell me this early on. Do the job and then get worried about getting paid for the job. I think, so many times, people say, "Well, I'll do that, but am I going to get paid more or am I going to ..." Take on those extra assignments, put in the extra time, take advantage of the old geezers like me and learn the business, and it'll pay big dividends down the line. Don't have that instant gratification mindset of, "I need to be a director by this time or a GM by this time." Just put the time in and learn the business.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You have to be there to take on any task and responsibility whenever you're asked to do it.

Scott Eldredge: Look, eventually, it'll pay off one way or the other. The reality of our business is people move around a lot, and so it's either going to pay off at that company or another one, but the key is that you've gotten that skillset, that experience, and that knowledge before you ask for the title or the pay. Do the job, learn the job, and it'll pay off.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Now, you have an interesting solution to moving around. You don't move your family, right?

Scott Eldredge: No. That was a decision made early on when we left Vegas and left the first-

Tino Magnatta: Which I think is great.

Scott Eldredge: I appreciate you saying that. We left for personal reasons to come back home. I loved working. I was at Golden Gaming at the time. I loved every minute of it. It probably is still one of my very favorite jobs because of the people I worked with and what we were doing.

Tino Magnatta: Sure, yeah, yeah.

Scott Eldredge: Had two young kids at the time, very young, and decided we wanted to raise our kids in a little slower-paced environment, and so started looking at Native American gaming in New Mexico. At least, at that time, it solidified and was starting to grow, and so started looking for opportunities and got, again, very fortunate to work for a listener and a multi-time guest on your show. Got a opportunity to go work for Conrad Granito at the Santa Ana Star.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. That's right.

Scott Eldredge: Right outside of-

Tino Magnatta: Actually, he was the one ... yeah, he was the one who helped you make the transition to the GM, right?

Scott Eldredge: Absolutely, yeah. I was just, again, so blessed. I know I sound like a broken record, but right place at right time and-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. No, you are, man.

Scott Eldredge: Almost-

Tino Magnatta: You are. Conrad's a great guy.

Scott Eldredge: Almost-

Tino Magnatta: I mean you couldn't have landed with a better guy.

Scott Eldredge: No, [crosstalk 00:30:13]-

Tino Magnatta: I mean he's amazing.

Scott Eldredge: Conrad is [crosstalk 00:30:15]. He's a great guy.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, and he's a great guy to work for.

Scott Eldredge: I'd come over there as the director of marketing and absolutely went on, came on as the director of marketing. He was the GM at the time, but Conrad was destined for bigger and better things. We did a lot of awesome things at Santa Ana, but he was ready for more. To his credit, he was transparent with that and worked with the tribe. Really, I was blessed that he groomed me to be his replacement. For over a year, I got to sit in on meetings I probably shouldn't have been in and have conversations with him that he didn't need to share with me, but I was blessed that he did. Then he set the plate for me, and I was able to get my first GM job thanks to Conrad Granito, so I'll always be grateful to him for that.

Tino Magnatta: Let's talk a little bit about him because he's also a very good friend of mine, and he's never worked in commercial gaming. His career has just been in the Native gaming. What are the qualities that make him so exceptional?

Scott Eldredge: Well, one, he's very bright. He's a sharp guy. I know there's a lot of smart guys out there, but Conrad's one of them. He's a smart guy, and I think that helps.

I think his personality is such that he works very well in Native American country because he's just got a very calm personality about him. He's a big guy. He walks into a room, he owns the room, but he does it in a way ... His presence is a calming presence, and so I learned that from him too. Especially at a early age, I was young, full of piss and vinegar and running 100 miles an hour, and Conrad taught me to slow it down a little bit and calm down. I'd be sitting in rooms with him with our tribal board or our tribal council. He just had a very calming, reassuring presence about him. He understood the business, of course, but he was able to explain it in a calm manner that, really, almost anybody could understand, and break our business down in a way that everybody understood it, and did it in just such a calm fashion. It was cool. It was fun to work with him.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. He has a way about him which brings out the best in people. There's no question about it. There's absolutely no question about it.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, and people are-

Tino Magnatta: How many years were you there?

Scott Eldredge: A little over five years at Santa Ana, a little over five years, and I loved it.

Tino Magnatta: You guys opened it, right?

Scott Eldredge: No, no. Conrad got there a couple years ahead of me, but no, he didn't open it, but he transformed it. I tell you what, it was very small, and we did multiple expansions and had a lot of fun, made the tribe a lot of money. I mean that was a fun, exciting time. Conrad, we had a great slot guy, Steve [Simon 00:33:04],

and Conrad gave us just enough rope to let us go out and have a lot of fun, and try some things, and make a lot of money, so it was a fun five years.

Tino Magnatta: That's amazing, amazing stuff. Should we take some calls?

Scott Eldredge: Sure.

Tino Magnatta: Let's do it. Okay. I'm not sure what's going on, but we're having a little bit of a technical glitch here, sometimes happens with blog talk radio.

Scott Eldredge: No, no problem. That'll give me chance to ... quick chance, if you don't mind, to give a shout out to my current employer, which is the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, absolutely. Go ahead.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Go ahead.

Scott Eldredge: No, so-

Tino Magnatta: Talk a little bit about them. What are you guys up to?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, so I spent ... Yeah. I spent about, oh, my gosh, almost 10 years in New Mexico at a couple different properties, but I had an opportunity to come out, been here two years now as the GM of the Kickapoo Lucky Eagle Casino in Eagle Pass, Texas. We're down south of San Antonio, literally right on the border, so we're a border town. It's [inaudible 00:34:11] 3,500 slots and 250 hotel rooms, tons of restaurants and bars, live poker, live bingo, just an awesome, awesome ... does tremendous volume and the tribe is just ... The place has grown by leaps and bounds over the last 10 years. The tribe's been super supportive and very proactive in helping us grow our business, and it's just been a awesome two years, but we're just getting started. We're remodeling all our restaurants this year, and we hope to expand again in the next couple of years. It's fun to be part of an organization that's doing this well that's supported so strongly by a tribal council. It's pretty great.

Tino Magnatta: Great. All right, let's ... We're still having a issue here, but let me try [inaudible 00:34:59]. Let me see here.

Steve Neely: Can you hear me?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Is that you, Steve?

Steve Neely: That's me. How are you doing?

Tino Magnatta: Wow, you're on. Perfect. Okay, good. I thought ... For some reason, it doesn't show up that you're on on my panel here. How are you tonight?

Steve Neely: Doing great. Just wanted to jump on and say hello to Scott, someone I've known for a long time, and one of the good guys in the business.

Scott Eldredge: Well, thank you very much. I'm sorry. We are having a little technical difficulties. I didn't hear who's on the line. Who is this?

Steve Neely: It's Steve [Neely 00:35:39].

Tino Magnatta: Steve Neely.

Scott Eldredge: Oh. Hey, Steve. How are you, my friend?

Steve Neely: Doing great. Yeah, it's been fun watching you progress up through the ranks and kind of blazing a path for us marketing folks as you hit that GM spot.

Scott Eldredge: Well, yeah. Our worlds have been kind of intertwined for the last decade, I think. We've kind of moved in and out of the same areas, even the same properties. Congratulations on your GM job. Yeah, it's about time they give us marketing guys a shot at running the whole show, right, Steve? Congratulations to you too, my friend.

Steve Neely: I agree. I think that the next 10 years it's going to be even more of the marketing people taking over that top spot as the challenges are uniquely marketing challenges that so many people are facing these days. One of the things that I always am interested in hearing from and one of the things I always try to share with other people, so whenever you got that first GM gig, what was the area of focus for you? What was different for you when you made that transition over from your regular day?

Scott Eldredge: I think it's a great question, and I think I was ... It was a blessing and a curse that I got that first GM job at a property I had already been at for a couple of years, so I knew everything. I knew the ins and outs. I knew who was who, so to speak, and that was a big plus, but I think just the sheer math of having that many team members and the responses, so I think time management and making sure that you ... It was easy for me to just kind of fall back to marketing when I got overwhelmed or got busy or wasn't sure what to do, "Oh, I'll just go hang out in marketing." I think forcing yourself to go learn the things you don't know and get exposed to the things you're not as comfortable with, I think that was the biggest adjustment for me is trying to pay ... I understand the marketing side of it. Let me go learn the rest of this business and kind of forcing yourself out of your comfort zone.

Steve Neely: Yeah. What was it like following Conrad? That had to have been pretty overwhelming.

Scott Eldredge: It was a nightmare. It was a nightmare, I assure you. Two years I [crosstalk 00:38:03]-

Tino Magnatta: Talk about a guy that can work. Talk about a guy that can work. Oh, my God.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. Well, Conrad [crosstalk 00:38:09]-

Tino Magnatta: No, he never stops.

Scott Eldredge: Well, when Conrad was here ... No, Conrad was a great guy, and he really set me up beyond belief, but yeah, no, that's a challenge too. Again, that was, again, the blessing and the curse of being there is I knew how great Conrad was and the success he had had and how much everybody liked him, and so to try to not change too much because don't fix it if it's not broken, but also try to blaze your own path. Listen, made a lot of mistakes early on, for sure, but yeah, trying to find that own path without reinventing the wheel.

Steve Neely: Yeah. Well, listen, it's great talking to you. Congratulations on all your success. I know you got other people wanting to talk to you, so I just wanted to pop on real quick and give you my best. It's good listening to you, and I appreciate, Tino, all that you and Golly do to make these things happen.

Tino Magnatta: Let's go to the next ... Hey, thanks, Steve. Take care.

Steve Neely: All right.

Tino Magnatta: Hello? I think we lost him.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. No, I think he got off.

Tino Magnatta: All right.

Scott Eldredge: Yep.

Tino Magnatta: He got off. Yeah, we lost him. Okay. All right. We're going to the next caller.

Vince Manfredi: Hi. Can you hear me?

Tino Magnatta: Hello? Hello.

Vince Manfredi: Hi. Can you hear me?

Tino Magnatta: This is Tino Magnatta. I have a ... Yeah, we sure can. I have Scott Eldredge. How are you?

Vince Manfredi: Oh, hey. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good.

Vince Manfredi: You said that he keeps making you feel old. Well, I just am now to make you feel young. It's Vince [Manfredi 00:39:40], and I've really been enjoying your take on the development, your career development in the industry. One of the things that I related to was the idea of being in a small property and doing everything from selling the rooms to making [inaudible 00:39:54] in guests and waiting on tables, et cetera. I had a very similar initiation into the industry, and I'm just wondering do those opportunities even exist anymore?

Scott Eldredge: Gosh, Vince, that's a great point and, wow, it's good to hear you. This is like an episode of This is Your Life. It's great to hear from you, my friend.

Tino Magnatta: Did you guys work together?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, not at the property level, but I think you were part of some companies that did a lot of business with us in Vegas and beyond, but yeah, I've known Vince for a long time.

Tino Magnatta: That's great.

Scott Eldredge: One of the truly, truly good guys in this business.

Tino Magnatta: Vince is great. He's fantastic.

Scott Eldredge: Vince, it's a great question. I'm not sure if those opportunities do exist anymore or not as ... certainly not as much as when you and I were coming up. I think one of the things that we've had some success with, it's obviously on a little bit of a smaller level, but we've done some tribal mentor programs where we've identified high potential tribal members and set them up into mentoring programs anywhere from six months to three years, depending on the position, and allowed them to truly learn the business from the ground up.

Obviously, one of the primary objectives of most tribes is to be self-sustaining and eventually have their community members managing and running their properties, and I think I've had some success at the last couple properties of creating programs where we identify multiple tribal members and get them into programs like that trying to teach them from the ground up and not let them get pigeonholed into one discipline but, "Hey, let's learn this business. Go spend six weeks in marketing and then spend six weeks on the floor, then spend six weeks in the kitchen and truly begin to understand this business." It's just a little bit in my own little world, but I think companies would serve themselves well to have those type of programs set up because the more people you have that understand the whole picture of the business, the better your business is going to be.

Vince Manfredi: Yeah. I tend to agree with that. It's funny. We didn't have programs like that. It was necessity, you know?

Scott Eldredge: Yes, sir.

Vince Manfredi: I would book a banquet. I would go to the banquet room, and nobody had set the tables, and there was nobody to set the tables, so I wasn't in a program.

Scott Eldredge: No, that's exactly right. Well, and look, my early days with the Maloofs, there was a framework of a program, but it was out of necessity too. "Hey, the catering manager just quit. You're going to Farmington, and you're now the catering manager. Go figure it out until we hire somebody." Baptism by fire, right? I think that's sometimes the best way to learn.

Vince Manfredi: In my case, it prepared me for the diverse career that I've had being on the vendor side and the operating side, back and forth for 38 years now. It's crazy.

Another comment that you made that I think is huge and I think is missing is this idea of team building and taking it beyond lip service. Can you share with us maybe one or two of the techniques that you have used successfully to build a team?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah, a great question because you're right. Everybody, quote, unquote, pays lip service to it, and I think that part of it is we have a tendency, as an industry, I think, or as individual properties, that we get these silos built up. Everybody wants job security and wants to protect their world, and it becomes a little territorial, and we get these silos. Food and beverage doesn't talk to marketing who doesn't talk to slots who doesn't talk to facilities.

I think what I've tried to foster at the leadership level, at the director's level, is regular meetings but just forcing that communication and letting people know that it's okay to share information and that that's how we get better. I think the technique I use, honestly, is just trying to lead by example. I'll bring people into a meeting, and the first couple times, it's like, "Well, why is Vince in this meeting? This has nothing to do with Vince," but I'll engage Vince and get Vince to talk about how this does impact his world.

IT is the perfect example of that. We have all these meetings of all this great stuff we're going to do, and nobody tells IT til the minute we plug it in. Then it's like, "Hey, this doesn't work." I've tried to always make sure, hey, let's get IT involved in every meeting. In the beginning, a couple of my IT directors are like, "What are you doing? Why am I in this meeting?" I'm like, "Just listen, please. Hang in there with me." Then it evolves into, "Hey, when's the next meeting on this subject? I can help or that's information I need to know."

I wish there was a awesome whizzbang answer for you, but I think it's just communication, and it's, in the beginning, forcing that communication and

getting everybody involved, giving everybody a seat at the table because, at the end of the day, whatever project or plan you're working on, it's going to touch virtually everybody, and so get them involved in the beginning. It creates their buy-in a little bit and, more importantly, it helps things from slipping through the cracks. Like I said, at some point, it's going to touch IT anyway, so let's have them in at the beginning, and they'll probably save us some time and some money.

Vince Manfredi: Yeah. It think it's really important-

Tino Magnatta: Great.

Vince Manfredi: ... to share the big picture of the vision too so people understand how their [inaudible 00:45:32] impacts what the overall goal is and what have you. I think this is critical.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. I think sometimes we get caught up in everything has to be confidential and proprietary, and we got ... Of course that's important. I'm not saying it's not, but I think sometimes we lose sight of that the more we communicate, and I'm talking about even down to the lower level to the ... all the way through the organization. The more that they understand the big picture, and what the plans are, and where we're headed for the future, the more excited they're going to be, the more buy-in they're going to have, the more they're going to understand because you know they're all sitting around walking on the floor saying, "Why are they doing that? Why did those guys upstairs do that?" all the time, so the more they know about why we're doing what we're doing, I call it explaining the why.

The more you can explain the why throughout the entire organization ... Maybe they don't need all the details or they don't need the financials involved in that project or that plan, but if they understand what you're doing and, more importantly to me, why you're doing it, then you're going to get a lot more buy-in and a lot more support, and they can say, "Oh, yeah. We heard about this. They're going to remodel this restaurant. It opens next month. Isn't that cool?" They have buy-in, and so it's amazing how [crosstalk 00:46:49]-

Tino Magnatta: All right, great.

Scott Eldredge: ... critical step gets lost. It just blows me away sometimes, but ... You know?

Vince Manfredi: Yes, sir.

Tino Magnatta: Vince, thanks so much-

Scott Eldredge: It's great to hear-

Tino Magnatta: Thanks so much for calling in.

Vince Manfredi: Can I have 30 seconds, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: We got a lot of callers to get to. Sure, absolutely.

Vince Manfredi: Give me 30 seconds.

Tino Magnatta: Sure.

Vince Manfredi: I just want to tell you guys that, in 1993, I got a call from Hilton. They were opening up a casino in New Orleans. In those days, the proliferation of gaming was just at the beginning. Unbelievably, February 7th is the 25th anniversary since we opened the Hilton, the Flamingo Hilton in New Orleans.

Tino Magnatta: Wow, unbelievable.

Vince Manfredi: The management team is getting together on ... Yeah. We're getting together on Sunday, February 7th, and it's-

Tino Magnatta: Oh, that's great.

Vince Manfredi: Yeah, it's just going to be a blast. I'm looking forward to it.

Tino Magnatta: That's fantastic.

Vince Manfredi: Anyway, that's it.

Scott Eldredge: Very cool.

Vince Manfredi: Thanks, you guys.

Tino Magnatta: Happy 25th. Thank you, Vince. Thanks for calling in.

Vince Manfredi: Thanks.

Tino Magnatta: Appreciate it.

Vince Manfredi: Take care. Take care, Scott. Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Take care, buddy. Okay. I hear we have a special caller. Let's bring him on.

Scott Eldredge: Uh-oh.

Tino Magnatta: Is the special caller on?

Conrad Granito: I don't know if I'm special, but I'm a caller.

Tino Magnatta: Do you know who it is, Scott?

Conrad Granito: Is this the Scott Eldredge show?

Tino Magnatta: It sure is. No, you see, he called in because he wants you to repeat what you said about him because he's checking it out if it's all good.

Conrad Granito: No. Hell, no. No. Scott, it's Conrad. How you doing, buddy?

Tino Magnatta: Because he wasn't listening to the show. How you doing, Conrad?

Conrad Granito: Good.

Tino Magnatta: Good. Can you hear us?

Scott Eldredge: It's good to hear your voice, sir.

Conrad Granito: Yeah. It's good to hear your voice and that you're doing well down in ... right across the border. How much Spanish you speaking now?

Scott Eldredge: Not enough, but I'm learning.

Tino Magnatta: Nada, nada, [Spanish 00:48:44], [Spanish 00:48:45].

Scott Eldredge: Thankfully, the team is very patient with me. Yeah, [Spanish 00:48:48].

Conrad Granito: Yeah, [Spanish 00:48:48]. That's all you need.

Scott Eldredge: That's right. That's right.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. The two words he knows is [Spanish 00:48:53], [Spanish 00:48:55]. Come on, let's go, get moving. I don't know.

Conrad Granito: [crosstalk 00:49:00]

Tino Magnatta: All he does is run around and say [Spanish 00:49:03]. I think he wants us to make more money.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. That's right.

Conrad Granito: Well, of course. That's right.

Tino Magnatta: You guys worked together. Tell me ... Sorry. Go ahead. Go ahead, Conrad.

Conrad Granito: No, no, no. Go ahead, Tino.

Tino Magnatta: What I want to know from you guys is you guys worked together pretty closely for four or five years, and it's not easy to make that transition from whatever

position you're in to the GM. Conrad, what qualities did you see in Scott coming up through the ropes?

Conrad Granito: Well, Scott and I worked ... He started, came in as the marketing director there at Santa Ana, and I think the things that I saw are the thing that you're hearing about him talk about now, the building of teams, the taking care of the front line, and answering questions, and the communication aspect. I mean, particularly in marketing, that's always the biggest challenge. Marketing comes up with a great idea, and nobody ever knows about it until you get all ... disseminate that information. Then Scott and his team, and he had a great team, as we all hopefully do in the successes we have, and Scott most certainly had a great team, but that's huge. I think also the ability to be hands-on. You can't be hands-on all the time, but you got to be willing to walk the floor, do the things, talk to the guests, talk to the front-line staff, and then see where things are going. I think Scott exemplified that time and time again.

Tino Magnatta: There you go. That's great.

Scott Eldredge: I had a good teacher.

Tino Magnatta: You had a question for ... Yeah, you did. Conrad, you had a question for Scott, right?

Conrad Granito: No. Well, the only question is how is it going down there? I'm hearing good things.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. No, it's going really well, Conrad. We're blessed. We have a lot of support from the board and tribal council. It's going well. A lot of the things that we did at Santa Ana still work over here, so tried and true measures, and it's good. We've had some good growth the last two years, and I think we're setting ourselves up for more. It's an exciting time to be down here. You're doing really well up in the Pacific Northwest, I hear, so congrats to you too.

Conrad Granito: Well, thank you. Yeah, we're doing well. Have you guys started the next hotel expansion yet or not?

Scott Eldredge: Not yet. This year, we're focused on we're remodeling all of our food and beverage, which is a little overdue, and so that's where the focus is this year but we've got plans for more, so it's an exciting time.

Conrad Granito: Well, good for you. Yeah, we're in the same boat. We're starting renovation, actually adding on to an event center and then, eventually, a hotel, hopefully starting up later this year. No, I was down to your property probably a couple years back, so was very impressed. Not easy to get to, but very impressed.

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. No, thank you. Yeah, the tribe's done a really good job.

Tino Magnatta: You guys-

Scott Eldredge: They built a beautiful property, and they built it to expand, so great long-term potential.

Conrad Granito: Good, so now do we owe, do I owe-

Tino Magnatta: Conrad-

Conrad Granito: Do I owe Scott 50 bucks for what he said about me, or is it 20?

Scott Eldredge: I thought it was 100.

Tino Magnatta: I think you owe him a couple of grand, dude. He put you on a pedestal.

Conrad Granito: Damn.

Tino Magnatta: He couldn't stop talking about you. I had to cut him off or we would go over time.

Conrad Granito: Oh, shit.

Tino Magnatta: No, he did really well. I was very impressed. We got this recorded, so there's no disputing the evidence.

Conrad Granito: Oh, cool.

Tino Magnatta: Conrad, I've never met anybody that said anything bad about you. I mean you're like the life of the party, and that's what we need. We need that kind of character to push things forward because we're in a 24/7 business and we work our asses off, so your character lends a lot to getting a lot of this stuff done.

Conrad Granito: Well, thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Although I hear you're hard to keep up with. That's what Scott told me. You're very hard to keep up with.

Conrad Granito: Hell, yeah. Well, that's very nice, Scott. Thank you for the kind words. The check's in the mail, buddy. Hey, [crosstalk 00:53:22]-

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:53:22]. Oh, so everybody's getting checks, huh? Everybody's getting checks.

Conrad Granito: [crosstalk 00:53:25]. All right, guys.

Tino Magnatta: I didn't know that. Okay.

Conrad Granito: Hey, Scott.

Tino Magnatta: We'll just pay each other.

Conrad Granito: Scott ... You got it. Scott, congratulations, buddy. We'll talk soon.

Scott Eldredge: Thank you, Conrad. Take care.

Tino Magnatta: Okay. Take care, Conrad. Thanks so much.

Conrad Granito: You got it, Tino. Bye-bye.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Okay, take care. All right. A lot of old friends, right, Scott?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. This is awesome.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Hello?

Hadey: It's [Hadey 00:53:55], Tino. Can you hear me?

Tino Magnatta: I sure can, Hadey. How are you tonight?

Hadey: I'm great, and it's wonderful to be listening to Scott and Conrad. You guys are very entertaining.

Scott Eldredge: Thanks.

Hadey: I recently read an article about your great mission and your goal at your casino to ... the introduction of your MAD program, M-A-D, which I just thought is such an initiative and great idea, and it's all around how to make a difference with great guest service, right?

Scott Eldredge: Yes. We just started it, but we're very proud of it.

Hadey: I love it. I can see that you're very much into self-development for your teams, and my question here is ... because I'm passionate about making [inaudible 00:54:48] guest experiences. My question is how would your teams or how do your teams make a different great guest service experience to maybe another casino down the road? I don't think there are many in Texas anyway. There's two of you, right?

Scott Eldredge: Correct. Yeah. Yeah, there's two, one in Livingston just outside of Houston, and then ourselves. I think the Make A Difference program ... and I appreciate your giving it a little plug. I'll give Raving Consulting a plug because they came out and helped us create and implement this program.

It's just really whatever the name is, whatever the acronym you want to come with. We came up with MAD, Make A Difference, with the goal to make a difference in our guests' lives or their experience here at each and every encounter. How can we make a difference in that guest's experience? I think it's really just about, whatever the program is, whatever the acronym is, it's really about drawing attention to the fact is with all the bells and whistles, and all the fancy food, and all the new slot machines, or table games, or fancy hotels rooms, whatever it is, at the end of the day we have to remember that we're in the guest service business. Everything we do in every way, we should make sure that we're doing everything we can to create a positive guest experience. Of course that's what we want to do, right?

Hadey: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Scott Eldredge: Actually living that each and every day, that's the hardest part, right?

Hadey: Sure.

Scott Eldredge: And getting 1,000 team members to buy into why it's important. Listen, in the beginning ... and we're still working this out. In the beginning, we even had team members say, "Well, it's not in my job description that we have to provide great guest service," so guess what we did?

Hadey: What?

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Scott Eldredge: We put it in all the job descriptions.

Hadey: I love it. I love it.

Scott Eldredge: We made the decision that we're going to focus on the positive, and the others will weed themselves out one way or the other. They're either going to get on board with the initiative or we're going to make them so uncomfortable because we're so relentless, that I learned from Mr. Maloof, about our guest service efforts that they'll move on on their own because we're so obnoxious about being MAD, and so we literally ...

I think the other key, Hadey, that we put in is that I think it's important with that that the problem with a lot of these programs is they become a poster on the wall and, after three months, you have your rah, rah, see you, and then they fall apart. We made the point to incorporate this. Listen, we're still doing it. It's less than a year old, and we still have challenges, and it's still not where we want it to be, but we made the point early on that this is going to be ingrained in everything we do, so it's in our new hire as part of the new hire assessment that people take before they even join the team. It's part of the evaluations, both

the 90-day evaluation and the annual evaluation that our teams get. It's in the job description. Excuse me. It's literally in everything that we do.

We created a MAD league made up of people from all different departments and different levels of the department too. I think that's the other key. This can't be a program, either way, right?

Hadey: Right.

Scott Eldredge: That's made up of the team members that's not supported by the executives or it's made up by the executives with no involvement from the team members. You have to involve and engage with people at all levels of the organization for it to be successful, and I think we're blessed that so far, so good. We're heading in the right direction with it. I don't think there's one simple answer to your question. I think it's got to be involved, every level of the organization, and make sure that you ingrain into everything you do. It's not an HR program. It's not a marketing program. It's the company's culture.

Hadey: Absolutely.

Scott Eldredge: It should be ingrained in everything that you do.

Hadey: What you've done is you were talking about your big why earlier on, and this is, in my mind, the why, why they're doing anything that they do on a day-to-day basis, to make a difference with great guest service, right?

Scott Eldredge: Absolutely. In fact, that's part of the program is that we had everybody, every team member build out a little questionnaire, and we asked that question, "What is your why? Why are you coming to work?" People had a variety of different answers, right?

Hadey: Yeah.

Scott Eldredge: They were saving money for a house, they were providing for their kids, they were ... whatever their why was, right?

Hadey: Sure.

Scott Eldredge: Then make the connection that, hey, your guests have why too. Why are they here? They're here for a great experience. They're here for a great meal.

Hadey: Awesome.

Scott Eldredge: They're here for a social environment, whatever it may be, right?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Hadey: Yeah. Thank you.

Scott Eldredge: As you can tell, I'm pretty excited about it. Thank you for asking about it, Hadey.

Hadey: Thank you. Thank you so much and-

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, Hadey. Thank you so much. Have a good night. Okay. I think we got couple more, time for a couple more. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta.

Nick Boffee: Hi, Tino. Nick [Boffee 00:59:49] here. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: You have a question for Scott? Nick, how are you?

Nick Boffee: Doing great, great. Hi, Scott. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good.

Scott Eldredge: Hey. Good, Nick. How are you?

Nick Boffee: Doing good. Yeah, doing great. I'm going to focus on something you've heard of or you've been talking about so far. I've watched you change the culture of your current property over the last year, everything from the change you're doing with food and beverage to managers on duty to casino host programs. I wondered if you could, because I don't see behind the scenes of a lot the decisions you make, if you could kind of extrapolate on some of the things you've done in your past, and what goes into decisions you make, and how you really approach setting a culture for your team?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate the question, yeah, and it think it's a little bit of all of that. I've learned a lot from some great mentors. I can tell you I've made a ton of mistakes, all right, but I've learned from all that, and it's kind of shaped, I believe, who I am and then how I think a company should be led, but I think it starts with understanding what the tribe wants, that's where I am now, but whoever the ownership group is. In this case, it's the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas. What's important to them? Of course, being profitable and providing money for their services and programs on the tribe, of course, and employing tribal members, those are givens, but what's important to them and what's important cultural as a company? There's the culture of the tribe, and then there's the culture of the company, and so it starts with that. Let's understand ownership's why. What's important to them? How do they want their company perceived? How do they want their company ran?

I'm a collaborative person by nature. Again, I know it's corny, the whole team aspect, but it's crucial. At least for me to be successful, I have to surround myself with great people and listen to them, and so it starts with getting the leadership team in the room and saying, "Okay. The goals and the objectives of the tribe are A, B, and C. How do we, as an organization, want to embody that

and get there?" Again, it's not just financial goals. It's other goals of how the ... What should the culture of the company be? All those department heads to engage in that conversation and understand, again, this is not a marketing program or a directive from the board.

This is who we are, so let's get in the room and understand, "Okay, we've defined who we are. Okay, slots, what does that mean in your world? Okay, facilities, what does that mean in your world?" Because, too often, again, these people in their silos and think, "Oh, that has nothing to do with me. That's a mission statement or a marketing tagline," but when you bring it into their world and understand, "Hey, what does this mean to you in your world? How can you embody this in your world?" it creates that buy-in and, once they understand the why ... I know I've repeated that a couple times, but it's because it's so important.

What's the why? Let's understand it, and then how do we get there, and how does that why relate to your specific world of housekeeping, or facilities, or the kitchen, or the bar, whatever it may be, the slot floor? If you create that collaborative effort ... Look, you're never going to have 100% buy-in, and that's okay. It's not Utopia where everybody's going to agree all the time, and that's okay, but if they have a seat at the table then they can at least ... I'd say you get them to neutral. You have the buy-in.

Then it also, on the not-as-fun-and-exciting part of our business, it also helps you hold people accountable because you've explained the why. You've explained why it's important. You've explained what you're trying to accomplish, and they've helped you determine how their department's going to do that, and then it helps you hold them accountable. "Hey, we talked about this. You understand the why. You understand the tribe's objectives this year or in this five-year plan, and now you're not participating in that or choosing not to engage in that." That's the other side of it as well is you get the buy-in most of the time because it's a collaborative effort, but if you don't get the buy-in, you've clarified the expectations, and it's a lot easier to move on from there once you've done that.

Nick Boffee: Great, great.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, great, great answer.

Nick Boffee: You definitely made a difference at your current property.

Scott Eldredge: I didn't hear that last thing.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks, Nick, really appreciate it.

Nick Boffee: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: He said you really made a difference at the property.

Scott Eldredge: Oh, I appreciate that. We have a great, great team and, again, wonderful support from the board and tribal council, so that obviously makes it easier, but I was blessed. I inherited a fantastic team. We've just got an awesome leadership team, so that makes my life easy.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Thanks so much, Nick, appreciate it. Say hi to your wife for me. All right. I think we got time for one more. Let's see. Hello?

Michael: Hello, Tino. Hello, Mr. Eldredge. How are you guys?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, good. Who's this?

Michael: My name's Michael. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good, good, Michael. How's it going, buddy?

Michael: Good, good, good. Scott, I have a question for you. What do you think is the biggest misunderstanding people who do not live in Las Vegas have about Las Vegas casinos and vice versa, people who live in Las Vegas misunderstand about Indian gaming casinos? I've been fortunate enough to work in Las Vegas and in Indian gaming and just wanted to know your thoughts on what are the biggest misunderstandings people have about ... if you live in Vegas, about Indian casinos, and if you live outside of Vegas, Vegas casinos?

Tino Magnatta: Scott, did you hear that?

Scott Eldredge: Yeah. I'm sorry. I heard the question. I apologize. Michael, thank you very much. I've been gone from Vegas for about 15 years, so I may have a slightly different perspective, but I know when I was there that the people, the outsiders had a misconception of Vegas, that all Vegas was was the Strip and these big, beautiful properties on the Strip, but they didn't understand there was a whole nother, literally, world of the local casino environment, which I was fortunate enough to work in for more than a decade, and just how powerful of an industry, if you will, that was.

Of course, the Strip is beautiful and gets all the attention, but that the local gaming markets just continue to just grow, grow, grow, grow, grow, and that that's where, I believe, again maybe a biased opinion because I was in the middle of it, but I think that's where a lot of the innovation in our industry came from because the competition was so fierce. You had Stations, and you had Maloof, and you had the Gaughan family, and you had the Arizona Charlie's. It was just a battle every day for market share, and you had better be at the top of your game, and you had better be innovating and finding ways to drive play and to take care of players. I was kind of raised in that environment, and so, again, I

have an affection for it, but I think that one of the misconceptions of Vegas, that it's all about the Strip when it's not.

On the flip side, I think, unfortunately, and this is beginning to change but, certainly, there's a little bit from Vegas, a little bit of underestimating I guess would be the nice way to put it, underestimating the Native American country and tribal gaming. I can tell you, from firsthand experience there, there are some world-class properties that are being operated very, very well that you could drop in the middle of Las Vegas, and they would compete for sure, and so I think there's a little bit of a ... Some of that, to be candid, is that a lot of good people from Vegas have branched out now and helped these tribes, but a lot of these tribes have done a lot of incredible things and are educating themselves and their community members in our business and are just doing some really, really great things from a development standpoint, from a reinvestment standpoint. There's just some world-class operations in tribal country right now, and I'm not sure they get the credit they deserve, to be honest with you.

Michael: Scott, is Texas close to having gaming throughout the state? I thought it did not, and listening to this great conversation, I didn't know that Texas had gaming casinos.

Scott Eldredge: The state of Texas does not have legalized gaming. We are a federally recognized tribe and are federally recognized for gaming. The state legislator talks about it often. It's ongoing right now. At some point, I imagine gaming would be legalized at the state level in the state of Texas, but right now it's not, and so everything we do is from a federal standpoint. For example, we do not have a state compact with the state like many tribes do. Our agreements are all left at federal levels.

Tino Magnatta: Interesting stuff. Great. Thank you so much for calling in.

Michael: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate your time.

Tino Magnatta: Have a good night.

Scott Eldredge: Okay.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Thanks. Well, Scott, it's been amazing. What a great show. You had a lot of friends call in, and I'm sure it brought back some memories but-

Scott Eldredge: That was pretty special, Tino. Yeah, a pretty special night so, and Tino, I want to thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, no problem. Thank you, Scott, and we'll talk to you soon. You have a great evening.

Scott Eldredge: Take care. You too. Thank you. Bye-bye.

Tino Magnatta:

Take care, buddy. Bye-bye. All right. That was fantastic, people calling in partaking and talking about some of those operators, the Maloofs, and Conrad, and all those guys, just great people.

On Thursday, I have Travis O'Neil, good friend. He's going to talk about how he grew up on the res before becoming GM and what that was like and before they had gaming, so it should be interesting. I want you all to tune in on Thursday and, I guess, remember everybody has a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen to it. You guys have a good night, and we'll talk to you soon. God bless.

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