



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Rojelio Rubio
	Director of Marketing
	Dakota Magic Casino
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Tino Magnatta: Welcome to another episode of GT Radio. I'm Tino Magnatta. Today, I have ... this evening, actually, I have a good friend of mine, Rojelio Rubio. Rojelio's a pretty amazing guy. He's Native American, grew up on the rez. Rojelio, let's recap a little bit about your life because you grew up on the rez, right? And at the time when you grew up, things weren't that great economically. They were pretty down low. Explain to us a little bit about your transition, going to university and all that stuff.

Rojelio Rubio: Sure. Good evening. Yeah, you're right. Well, at first we, for most of my childhood, we moved around. I was born in ... I don't know if everyone from the Arizona area knows where Sierra Vista's at. Born about, going to say a couple of hours south of Tucson, close to the Mexico border in Sierra Vista. I have a lot of family in Arizona so we constantly moved around between Sierra Vista, Tucson, and then where my tribe's from, Camp Verde, Arizona, which is about an hour north of Phoenix. Yeah, north of Phoenix. Sits between Flagstaff in a nice little valley, right next to Sedona.

Moved there, moved all the way up to Lake Tahoe area, Carson City. We have plenty of family up there in Nevada. And for most of my childhood life, we moved around quite a bit. And then, God, I don't know what year that was. Right until about the casino started negotiating the compact and started coming around. My family and my mother, who's a tribal member of the Yavapai-Apache Nation there in Camp Verde, we all decided to plant ourselves there. And she started her career in gaming.

She was on board of directors. She's been on council for a very long time. But before the casinos were made, yeah, we lived on the rez with my family members. I do remember some of the old buildings. We didn't have very good structures back then. If she's listening now, she's going to kill me because I don't remember what the building was, but it was basically made out of stucco and mud. I forgot what it was for. I believe that was the old administration building, but it was in pretty bad shape back then. Of course they didn't have a lot of capital. They didn't have a lot of revenue coming in. The casino wasn't there. So it was interesting to see that or reflect back on those days and then look at where the tribe is now, and where the whole gaming industry is now.

I'm fortunate enough to remember those old days.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I remember you telling me, when you got off the rez and you went to Arizona State, right?

Rojelio Rubio: I went to Tucson, to Arizona.

Tino Magnatta: Tucson, yeah, yeah.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: What was that like? I mean, you went through a pretty amazing transition there from the rez to the university. Describe for us the first week when you left the rez.

Rojelio Rubio: Okay. Well, when I was living on the reservation I did work at the casino for maybe three, four years, and then went through a management program there. About that same time, I decided I should go out and get my education. I moved to Tucson, I started in the community college there but even there in a city like Tucson, I think it reached about a million in population there, where Camp Verde is maybe 3000. That was a big difference, that was kind of a cultural shock just seeing all these people in classes and not knowing where to go, not knowing who to meet, didn't know anybody. It was just, you know, an eye opening of wow, I knew this small little town of Camp Verde, and now here I am in a big city.

It was quite shocking for the first few months there. Just a different lifestyle, I guess.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You were in a place where it was completely different than something you had ever seen before, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Correct.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. It was.

Rojelio Rubio: Pretty amazing stuff, yeah.

Tino Magnatta: How important was those experiences to you, being exposed to new things and having new experiences? Just leaving the rez and being exposed to the world. Because I know that's a big thing in Native nations, is people getting outside of their shell. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah. I think it goes deeper than just me. My thoughts at least. Like I said, it was eye opening to be able to go get my education, go to a big city, get out of ... There's nothing wrong with getting out of your comfort zone, right? I mean even now, as managers and directors, you need to be challenged, get out of your comfort zone. Back then, as a youth and as a young adult, and I stress this a lot to younger tribal members. It's okay to love home, and it's okay to know where your home is. But go out, branch experience in new things, get your education.

I think it helps, or I know it helps, to see different things, experience different aspects of life, and get knowledgeable of the big world around you and not just the reservation and not just a small town. Sure, you can have those values and bring them with you, but I definitely would stress out to the younger people to get out and experience life, learn new things.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. It's good to venture out of your comfort zone and see the world, and you were able to do that, and definitely made a big impact on you. Tell us a little bit about some of your first gig in the casino world after you got out of the university, and how that impacted you.

Rojelio Rubio: I started off in the casinos when I was 18. I was a slot rep. Did a management program, which took us and trained us to be front line employees all the way up, and worked with the manager. So I worked in various departments, blackjack, slots, front of the house, back of the house, and then I ended up in marketing. Did marketing for a little bit, decided to go get my education at that point, so I left. Took a break from casinos, I worked in sales, I worked just different jobs that would relate to marketing because I really liked marketing. I even worked in a telemarketing job. I did it because I know it sounds funny, and I know most people don't like it, but I wanted to find a value in that job, and it was speaking on the phone. Speaking to strangers, selling yourself over the phone, being confident.

I think every position I had while I was going to school helped me create who I am now as far as a marketer, as far as my career goes. So stayed out of the casino business for maybe another three or four years, until I decided to come back to Cliff Castle. When I got back out of the university, I knew what I wanted, I knew what I wanted to do. And then I went straight to accounting. That was my first job back, there was no marketing positions open.

Did some accounting, worked for about a year, and then slowly involved back into marketing as a data analyst, and just worked my way up the ladder there until I became the director of marketing at that property. And that's the beginning of the story.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. And since then you've done some great things. What are some of the key elements that have made you move forward like this, and propel yourself into different aspects of the casino business? What do you think it is about you?

Rojelio Rubio: First, it would be the passion of the job. I like the gratification I get when I'm faced with a challenge or when there's a project at hand or a goal or objective that needs to be completed and I complete it. Sure, there's going to be some failures in there, but I get my satisfaction from the achievements. I think that's one of the key elements that's helped me get to where I am. Probably the most one. Other ones would probably be learning, I love to learn. I know I don't know everything, but I'll pick up ... If I have the opportunity to learn something new I'll jump at it. Whether it's in the marketing field or not. I think knowledge is power, right? You can get a lot from knowledge.

Look at PD for example. What's the number one thing they train in PD? You know, you don't have to know everything, just know a little bit about a lot, right? And you can hold a conversation down, you can learn more that way too.

Another key element is probably, you know, I'm just competitive. I like to ...

Tino Magnatta:

Yeah.

Rojelio Rubio:

I like to get out there and just compete. I see people moving up in positions and I'm like, "Hey, I can be that guy."

Tino Magnatta:

Right, right. Yeah, and then aspiring to that, right?

Rojelio Rubio:

Yep, absolutely.

Tino Magnatta:

Yeah. What are some of the key elements that younger people, what do they need to do to keep moving up and transitioning from one position to another?

Rojelio Rubio:

Don't be scared. Again, you know. Everyone's said it on this show, be patient. I think another one is don't be afraid. You need to take risk, right. You need to get out of your comfort zone, you need to ... You know. You need to push yourself, and that's how people become successful. Look at some of the businesses out there, look at from the dawn of time. All these tribes were taking a risk when they started casinos. And now look how successful we are. If you don't take that risk and get out of your comfort zone, how do you plan on being successful?

Tino Magnatta:

Right.

Rojelio Rubio:

So whether for young adults, if that's going to get your education, your GED, or I know a lot of our tribes battle with drug and alcohol. Whether it's getting help. You've got to be able to take that risk and reap the glory from it. That's what would my advice be.

Tino Magnatta:

Right. Yeah, you've got to be able to reap the rewards, but also work hard. One of the constants that I always find is hard work. You know, nothing replaces hard work, right?

Rojelio Rubio:

Right. Right, absolutely. No, you're right. There isn't, and you've got to put the hard work in. It won't pay off 100% of the time, you probably won't get what you expected, but you will see an outcome. And it'll be a good one once you start putting some hard work into what you believe you want to do. Or just that's ... That's how it comes, right, that's life.

Tino Magnatta:

Yeah. Yeah, that's the way it is. So tell us a little bit about what you're doing now.

Rojelio Rubio:

Well, I moved out, moved from Arizona. I'd never left Arizona. Came to this frozen tundra, as everyone calls it, North Dakota. About a little over two, two and a half years ago. Got a call about a job opportunity out here, they were expanding and renovating their 35 square feet casino. So came onboard about

halfway through that project, and helped them with rebranding, marketing, you name it, right. Just building a whole new marketing department.

We just finished the project, oh let's see. Probably a year ago. So we're still kind of in that honeymoon phase of a brand new property, and we're talking restaurants, the whole floor. Everything got a facelift besides the hotel, convention center and our golf course. So moved out here, helped them with that. And just, freezing. I've never been in this type of cold before until I moved here, and I kid you not, last year I think we hit negative 35 without windchill for three days straight. And that was just, oh man, I was buried in snow as well.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. That's crazy. When you got to Dakota Magic, though, the casino was very different, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: I mean you've been there two years now. When you got there, tell me a little bit about what it was like. Because there's been a lot of changes.

Rojelio Rubio: Sure. Yeah, nothing to ...

Tino Magnatta: What was it like when you got there?

Rojelio Rubio: Absolutely. Nothing to our predecessor or anybody that's been there before, but when you walked in you could tell the building was tired. I believe it was one of their original ... It was the original original building, but I believe that the building that sat there was well over 15, 20 years old. So it was tired. The carpets were tired, everything was just, you could tell it had had its days.

So besides that, the marketing team was small. There was only a few people in there. It was a lot of okay, here we go, we've got to bunker down and we've got to build a marketing plan. Get our goals in line, get our strategies in line, our tactics. Get everything in line to what we want to do, who we're going to be. We had to rebrand the whole property. Focus on all markets, dive into the data, which we haven't done before at that property.

At the same time, going through the complete renovation and expansion. So it was a lot of work. It was crunch time, because we knew we were going to open. When I got there, we had about another ... Less than a year before everything would open. So there was a lot of footwork to do. Our major market is Fargo, which sits about 60 miles north of us. And again, nothing to prior management or anything, but there was little brand awareness of the casino in our major market.

So that was one of our biggest objectives. We needed to increase our awareness in the Fargo market, which is our number one revenue source. That was probably the biggest challenge and the biggest item we had, the biggest goal we

had to go after. I would proudly say we did our job. We're doing great in that market. We've increased numbers. We've done a lot. It's kind of fulfilling to see where it was back even just a year, a year and a half ago, two years ago, to what it is now. People love it. We get great comments from our guests. And we moved the milestone quite a bit. We're obviously not done, but we've accomplished a lot in the last two years.

Tino Magnatta: What did you and your team bring to the table to make the changes in the last two years, and how have you grown from the experiences that you had making these changes? Because this show is about that evolution. Because you've changed a lot.

Rojelio Rubio: I would say leadership, teaching. I'm the type of person that won't keep ideas or my knowledge to myself. When I have my team, and it may not even be the marketing department, because marketing as everyone knows branches off to all the other departments.

I think ... Well, it's more of, why are we going to do something, how do we do it, and then measure it, right? Here's our goal. So there was a lot of goal setting. Here's our objectives, and this is how we're going to do it. Not only for the marketing department but for all the other managers, because the idea is brand awareness, customer service, our promise, how do we get this out there? And pushing the needle that way.

Sure, the little objectives like promotions and stuff like that, direct mailer can all come from marketing, but you can see with our management team that it starts with marketing, and it starts with the front line. I believe we have to be the front runner in a casino, because everyone's going to look at us. Once marketing can be that light, and that teacher, then we can start bringing in other managers and other departments and really start accomplishing goals.

I think that's what I like my team to bring. That's what we did, was a lot of goal setting and accomplishment. That's kind of ... I think that's any business, right? That's business 101 right there.

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the ... You were talking to me about the weather, how does that affect ... Because you have some really really bad weather, right? So how does it affect your business?

Rojelio Rubio: It does, it affects it a lot.

Tino Magnatta: I mean, tell us the kind of weather, people don't even realize. Dakota has some of the worst weather in the country, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Like I said, I think when it was negative 33, the windchills of upward to 30 miles an hour, and it got down to negative 55. I mean it's bone chilling. It hurts. I know some managers that move away and some other executives that move away

and they're like, "Yeah, I'd rather this 12 feet of snow than that bone chilling wind in North Dakota." And it's true, it's cold.

I think last year you couldn't be advised not to be outside more than 10 minutes. But it affects business, right? The blizzards are terrible, you can't see two feet in front of you, if you're lucky. People don't want to go out in that. We're very close to Fargo, we're about 45 minutes out. People don't mind, it's flat land, it's all country land, or sorry, farming land. So very flat, very straight. So it doesn't take a long time to travel from one end to the other. And people are willing to do that for a good time.

But boy, when it snows and there's a blizzard, or it's cold, they ain't moving. So the casino then is not even worried about that anymore. It's worried about its employees. Who's stuck at the casino, guests and employees, how many rooms do we have, who's going to stay where, right? Because we're not closing doors, we're 24/7. So then it becomes more of a contingency plan for all our employees, than it does guests.

So we have to take that into consideration. I think we got our first snowfall about a week ago, and here we go. We're already checking on hotel rooms for employees. You know, making sure everyone's safe. It affects it pretty bad. So you've got to work around those, as far as planning. Seasonality is definitely an issue here.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. How do you work around that?

Rojelio Rubio: Just plan ahead. We know we're going into our winter months here. One of the things that I've learned is given, I know this kind of goes against some of the blueprints and marketing and getting some of the guests to come when you want them to come. But in an area like this, you're going to have to give a little and work with your players. Not that this is a promotion, let's just give an example. If you're doing a promotion on a Monday-Wednesday, and these are the only times you can come, or this is the only bonus feature you're going to get on those days. Or I'm only giving a truck away on Wednesday. You're going to have to plan for a blizzard.

That's really what we've done this summer, was okay, we're going to have to plan our events. We're going to have to plan everything as far as not just a solid date anymore. A weather date. If it doesn't happen here, it's going to happen on this date. Or you can come three out of the five days now. So you really got to weather watch. You know, we know the bad months, but you've got to be able to work around it. You know, without getting too much more detail, just planning. You've got to plan for it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah.

Rojelio Rubio: You know, you've got to plan. Yeah, I think the first New Year's I was here, we planned a big promotion on New Year's. And guess what? A cold front came. No one came, right? Okay, my mistake my first year here. The second year, we decided to separate the parties and the promotions and other events throughout the week. That way we know if we do get hit on one night, we have all the other nights to kind of be supportive dates and help us through the winter months. So that's kind of what we've done for ... And they last long here. I think last year it was still snowing in April. So you've got to plan that from December to April sometimes.

Tino Magnatta: Got it. What are the things that you struggle with the most, working in a casino? The things that you don't necessarily look forward to doing?

Rojelio Rubio: The one thing that I don't look forward to doing-

Tino Magnatta: Or the few things. Is it organizational or ...

Rojelio Rubio: You know, that's tough. That's a tough one to answer. I guess it depends on the property. When I was at Cliff Castle there was ... You know, we had some maybe, I don't know if they were communication errors. And other casinos do this, I'm sure they have some problems like this. Not all of them, but some. You know, getting your front line to understand what promotion is going on, or ... Just small tedious things like that, even though you put it in front of them.

Here, we deal with, I don't know how to put this. We have a much much much older employees here, and learning new technology, learning new methods, this is the way it's always been kind of attitude, right. And I'm sure everyone kind of knows that saying, in their industry. And changing their minds of accepting change, and why is it good to change, because they're going to fight you over any type of change. Well, it wasn't broken, why are we changing it kind of thing.

So you've got to be able to teach them while you're doing it, how it's going to help them, how it's going to help us. I don't necessarily hate doing that, because again I'm teaching. I just can see that it could be nerve-racking sometimes, where you get that resistance. I think that's probably the biggest one.

Tino Magnatta: Right. Right. Just dealing with that whole attitude thing, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah. I mean you're going to get some resistance, but you'll have some employees, you guys know who your star employees are. Work with them, and maybe they can help you get those bad apples on another side.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. What do you think is the state of gaming in Dakota right now? Do you think it's growing, do you think it's flat lining? What do you think is going on?

Rojelio Rubio: I think it's growing. I think it's growing a lot here. Well, it has grown, in North Dakota at least. North Dakota is unique. For instance, they have a law here that

allows bars, hotels, any kind of place of business to have table games, like blackjack, and not be in a casino, for charitable giving. So it has to go to a charity. You can go to a Holiday Inn down the street and they have about four blackjack tables. They have a big wheel there.

They just passed last year, electronic pull tabs. So instead of the pull tabs you buy at a little machine, these are actually full electronic pull tabs. I believe South Dakota has them. They look actually like a slot machine. You sit down, you hit a button, but they're pull tabs, so electronic pull tabs.

So you have gaming everywhere. You may not have the slot machine, and [inaudible 00:29:11], we have craps and roulette here. You may not have those in the bars and hotels, but you do have some sort of gaming. I don't see anything wrong with it. You have a lot of young adults. You're 21, so you're millennials out there gambling at these areas. They're playing blackjack, they're playing big wheel, they're out there, they're getting used to gambling. So I think it is growing here.

The compact in North Dakota is unique. They have, whenever they negotiated their compact, they did allow sports betting here, so it is legal here already. We are actually ... I would say from 1 to 100, we're about 60-70% sure that we're going to get sports betting here in the next year. We've just got to push some things, we're looking at partners already. And that's going to be a big thing, right. So we're walking down that path now.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Sports betting is huge, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, sports betting would be good for us. It'd just be another ...

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, especially with the weather.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, with the mobile sitting at home, they'll just be sitting at home sports betting. Everyone does it here now. You have all these [inaudible 00:30:35] apps out there right now, and everyone does it here already. I can't talk to one person, and they're already on their phone sports betting already. I know some critics out there don't want it for them, but I'm just talking about this specific area. I think this will be a good move on this state.

Tino Magnatta: Interesting. What do you see as the future for gaming in Dakota?

Rojelio Rubio: Really, I think Fargo's growing. The last time I did a marketing planner study about the area, Fargo has grown. It's slowed down a little but the city is still growing. There's a bunch of small towns here that is growing. I do see gaming growing in this area. Maybe not to the magnitude of other casinos out there, but I think it's a steady growth, at least for the next few years. Especially with the sports betting, there may not be a whole lot. But I think it's going to go up, I think it has a nice little bright future for itself.

Of course I'm always going to go back to the cold. It does shoo away a lot of people during the winter months. You know, I see a lot of people in Florida, Arizona and whatnot. But I do see some growth and potential in this area. You know, depending on how the other casinos do too as well.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you were telling me that they have table games there in hotels, and in areas that generally speaking you wouldn't have them in other states, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Right.

Tino Magnatta: Can you tell us a little bit about that? Because most of our listeners don't even realize there's table games and where they are. So explain that a little bit, and where the money goes.

Rojelio Rubio: All right, so it has to go to a charity. For example, one of these restaurants down the road will have a blackjack table, you can go. I think the minimum is a dollar bet, max is probably ... I don't know, I think it's five or ten. It's not a whole lot. But all the proceeds has to go to a charity. So whether it's, who knows. Some school in Fargo or some ... Any kind of charitable giving. That's where all the profits go. I know that when they passed that bill in North Dakota, because I just read this for sports betting as well. They're allowed to move on sports betting as well. If a charity wanted to do it, they can move on sports betting. It is legal in North Dakota, so they can do that as well here.

I don't see a lot of businesses doing sports betting, just because of the upfront cost. But yes, they do have blackjack, they do have the big wheel. What else do they have? The electronic pull tabs. Again, I think that all has to go to a charity as well. I think that's about it. I think that's all they have here. Outside of the casino, on tribal land.

And everyone has them. It's not like it's only here and there. You can have three restaurants ...

Tino Magnatta: I think Rojelio dropped out, so ... Rojelio, are you there? I don't see him here on the ... I don't see him here on the list here. Let me see. One second. I think he'll call back in, let me try him right now, see if we can get him back on. Hang on one second. Rojelio. Oh, okay. He's calling back in. Okay, great.

So just a little blip here. We lost Rojelio, he just fell out, but he's going to call back in, if we can get him back online that'll be great. Fantastic. Yeah, his story is really really cool. You can see a real transition from him on the rez, and then him coming into the casino and the casino world, and then going to university. That whole transition has been pretty remarkable. Let me see here if he's come back on. Don't see him on here. Let me see. 928, I think that's him right here.

Rojelio Rubio: There you are.

Tino Magnatta: Are you there?

Rojelio Rubio: [inaudible 00:36:24]

Tino Magnatta: There you are, we lost you. That's okay, you were saying? You were saying?

Rojelio Rubio: Oh, just about the charitable giving items, but that's ...

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

Rojelio Rubio: No, that's about it. Just blackjack, the big wheel, and electronic pull tabs, that's the only items they have off the casino property that has to go to a charity.

Tino Magnatta: Got it. Okay, I see. And they can have them in lobbies, and any places that there's ... they have them in Holiday Inns and places like that, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Right. Right, yep, they have them in hotel rooms ... Not hotel rooms, they have them in the hotel lobby. They have them in various restaurants in the area. They're really everywhere. They are everywhere. There's quite a few of them around. I can probably name less restaurants and hotels that doesn't have them than the ones that do.

Tino Magnatta: They're all over the place, right?

Rojelio Rubio: Yep. Yep, they're all over the place.

Tino Magnatta: Yep. What are the future plans? Up there for you guys? What have you got planned?

Rojelio Rubio: Right now I think we're just moving on the whole sports betting thing. That and probably our golf course. We want to do some more planning, some more tournaments, big state tournaments, championship tournaments for ... push our golf course. We're rebranding that right now. So I think if I had to put two things on the hot list it would be sports betting and our golf course.

The floors and the restaurants are doing fine. I would have to say those two items are coming first, for 2020.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. That's great, and are you going to be ... Do you think you'll be adding any casino space, or slot machines, or anything like that?

Rojelio Rubio: No, from the expansion and renovation we went from 900 machines to about 1200. We're looking to stay about around that area. So nothing major as far as additional gaming space. Nothing of yet.

Tino Magnatta: Got it. What do you think the future is up there, do you think it's going to keep expanding?

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, we obviously ... We have a shortage of hotel rooms. I think if our property built another tower or got additional rooms, that would help bring in more revenue. A lot of people here love to go out and do things, whether it's summer, winter when there's not a blizzard. They like going and doing things. They'll ice fish, they'll summer fish, they'll ride snowmobiles, they'll ice skate, they'll go out on the lakes when it's summer, they'll hunt.

So they're very active. What I've noticed about this area, if you give them something to go out for, they'll go out and do it. So I would like to see more hotels for us. That would probably drive a nice increase of revenue for us.

Tino Magnatta: What is your advice to Native nations, to prosper within the next 20, 30, 40, 50 years?

Rojelio Rubio: Just keep innovating, keep going on customer experience. Right, that's what everyone comes out for. For the excitement, for the show. Let's just keep innovating, let's keep going. As far as the casino industry. And on the other hand, let's not forget why we're doing this, to help our tribes. You know, to help the people out there. You know, in your sovereign communities. Let's get more done.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. You've just got to keep moving forward, that's the main thing. How about the people that are still on the rez, what do you say to them?

Rojelio Rubio: Find your passion. Know what you want to do and go out there and do it. I've always told everyone, I eventually will make it back home. Whether it's tomorrow or 20 years or 30 years from now. But I hope I can bring all my experience and my education and what I've learned and what I've done back home to help my tribe. So to all the people back there, to all the people anywhere else, go out. Be successful, challenge yourself, again like we talked about during the interview process here. Just go out there and ... You know, make yourself a better person, and then you can always come back home to help your tribe if you want.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Okay, let's take some calls. Hang on one sec. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Rojelio?

Mike Savino: Hey, good evening gentlemen, it's Mike [Savino 00:42:12] from New York, how are we doing tonight?

Tino Magnatta: Good, Michael, how are you buddy?

Rojelio Rubio: Good.

Mike Savino: Very good. Love listening to this interview. I've got so many questions, I don't want to monopolize, but just a couple of quickies. Tell me what one of your favorite marketing strategies is, without giving away the store of course, and

then let's start with telling me one of your favorite non-marketing departments that you like working with.

Rojelio Rubio: My favorite strategy would have to be using the data, again because of here, messing with the seasons. Example, when I worked in northern Arizona, when we looked at the data and just followed everything, we can see this huge dip with the tourist market, or we can see an increase during the summer seasons, right? Everyone's getting out of Phoenix, the data's telling you they're getting out of Phoenix. So the major campaign was there. It sounds original, you know, beat the heat kind of thing, but we used different marketing channels to keep reinforcing that line and that marketing strategy, and getting them out of Phoenix and coming to northern Arizona, where it's much cooler.

Kind of the same thing here. We're starting to get more involved in the seasons. We didn't copy this, because I'm sure it's copyrighted, winter is coming. So you're getting prepared. People, getting them out more before winter gets here. So a lot of strategy comes with, where are the people coming from, during what time of the year, and messing with that. I think that's probably, that's what I get really jazzed about.

Mike Savino: Sure, yeah. Data really has shaped marketing.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah.

Mike Savino: There used to be one data point, you know, what's the bottom line? But now we have so much data we'll lose the trail, won't we?

Rojelio Rubio: Right, yeah, no. Absolutely. It's awesome. It really is. And what was your second question, Mike, I missed that one.

Mike Savino: Tell me one of the non-marketing divisions, departments, that you enjoy working with. Obviously you enjoy working with all of them-

Rojelio Rubio: Right.

Mike Savino: But the one department that you especially enjoy working with, and why.

Rojelio Rubio: I guess this time around it's golf. I never ... This might sound funny, because I know everyone kind of golfs, but I had never golfed in my life until I took it up this past summer. We got a new golf pro manager, and he's kind of been my trainer this past summer in golf, and I'm getting to know it a little better. I'm getting better at my swing. But he's really jazzed. He came from Arizona actually, that's pretty funny. But he's jazzed to start moving the brand, getting the brand better, making more awareness with the golf course, and you can see his passion in it.

So I think our Dakota Winds golf course is my favorite right now. I shouldn't play favorites but yeah, it's great. It's good. We're going to be doing some good stuff.

Mike Savino: You know, seeing where you guys are on the map, that can't be a long golf season.

Rojelio Rubio: No, no it isn't, and I think that's why everyone just kind of floods the area. There's a golf course here every township, it's amazing how much golf area, as much as they can golf, you know. It's nuts.

Mike Savino: Yeah.

Rojelio Rubio: When it's golf season, it's golf season. But I've got to give it to them, there's people out here that's golfing in 30 degree, 20 degree weather. I'm like, holy cow, how do you guys do that. That's nuts. I mean, if there's a will there's a way right? That's crazy.

Mike Savino: Yeah, I guess. Tino, how long would you last at that temperature?

Tino Magnatta: Not very long. Not very long, yeah. At all.

Mike Savino: Maybe once upon a time, but not now.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah, back in the day. I'm used to the same temperature every day. California today was what, 90 degrees? And usually we're between 70 and 80, so yeah. It's a different world, there's no question about it. And you know, California has perfect weather, so I'm kind of spoiled.

Mike Savino: Yeah.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: I'm kind of spoiled.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah. Vegas is kind of cool, it has kind of cool weather.

Mike Savino: Well we have-

Tino Magnatta: Thank you Mike.

Mike Savino: Thank you guys, appreciate it. Have a great rest of the show.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, thanks Mike, thanks a lot, good seeing you too in Vegas. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have any questions for Rojelio?

Speaker 4: Yes, I do. Rojelio, and I hope I'm saying your name correctly. What have been some of the biggest hurdles you've overcome from your journey from the beginning, up until now?

Rojelio Rubio: Biggest hurdles would probably be ... being patient. Waiting for my time. I had no problem learning. I'm a quick learner. Probably being patient, and let's see. Let's see, that's a good one. I guess it would have to be more operational, right, more than a personal trait. More operational, getting to know your different markets. Especially how drastic I went from Arizona to here.

Speaker 4: Yeah.

Rojelio Rubio: And then just taking my time, and not letting failures get to me and items like that. Go ahead.

Speaker 4: You know, you said earlier that you took some time off and then you went back to school, is that correct?

Rojelio Rubio: I left the casino and went to school, and then after school I didn't go straight into casino work again. I did some sales jobs, telemarketing jobs, only because I felt those jobs, even though they weren't glamorous, I wanted to take pieces of those individual jobs because I knew it had some value in it, and bring it to my marketing career, yeah.

Speaker 4: Right. And then what were your studies, what were you studying at that time when you did go back?

Rojelio Rubio: It was business marketing.

Speaker 4: Okay. Good. And it's definitely helped you, am I correct?

Rojelio Rubio: Absolutely, yeah. Yeah. I actually was, it's kind of funny because up until last month I was like, I'm not going back to school. I'm just kind of over it. I'm going to put my laundry out there, I did re-enroll to finish up my Master's, so I kind of got in the hot seat again.

Speaker 4: Right. I've got another question for you. Who are some of the people that inspired you, and why?

Rojelio Rubio: I was kind of seeing if I can avoid this question, because we did ... I don't know if there's a lot of people that know him, but we did recently lose one of my good mentors in the past few months, his name was [Gene Stachowski 00:50:35]. He worked for Buffalo Thunder, I think he left Soboba not too long ago.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I know Gene.

Rojelio Rubio: Yep, yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Did Gene pass?

Rojelio Rubio: Gene did pass, Gene Stachowski did pass.

Tino Magnatta: Holy smokes. I didn't know that. He was at Soboba.

Speaker 4: Wow.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah. Yep, he was.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. Wow.

Rojelio Rubio: He was a good mentor of mine at Cliff. He was my boss there for a couple of years. But he was a great guy. I mean, he taught me so much, and I owe a lot to him. There was a couple of GMs, yeah, there's a couple of GMs. One is Arizona, and the other one is in Michigan, that helped me along as well. I don't want to put other names out there, but those two also helped me along the way. So there's been a few.

Speaker 4: That's nice.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, that groomed me to be this type of leader I am. It's great.

Speaker 4: Mentors are important, very much.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah.

Speaker 4: That's really great. Well, thank you very much. It's been really a great conversation, and to hear your process in the casino, gaming industry. Thank you.

Rojelio Rubio: Sure. Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Great stuff. I didn't know that Gene passed, so.

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, yeah.

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:52:02]

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah, that was not too long ago.

Tino Magnatta: That's tough. Tough stuff. Wow. Comes as a shocker. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have question for Rojelio?

Speaker 5: Oh yes, good evening. Great show so far guys.

Rojelio Rubio: Thank you.

Speaker 5: I have a question, can you hear me?

Rojelio Rubio: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, we can, loud and clear.

Speaker 5: Yeah, yeah. Given your challenges, I know the weather and on the property level, all the changes. How do you go about sustaining growth at a casino?

Rojelio Rubio: Again, I think ... it's in the data, it's in the numbers. I can look up what we did last year or last month, what we're going to do next month. Compare years to years, months over months. And strategize from there, just kind of figure out what we did and what we can do different, or what we can improve on year over year, and month over month.

Again, planning on the season. I gave an example of New Year's, right, where the first New Year's we kind of put all our eggs in one basket, and last year we spread our events and promotions and attractions across the whole week. So I think taking that kind of mentality and plotting out through our season is going to help us maintain that growth.

Speaker 5: Great. Can I ask another question?

Rojelio Rubio: Sure, sure.

Speaker 5: Okay, great. When you're looking to make a transition in your career and move up, how do you do that?

Rojelio Rubio: I think you have to be ... Well, when I did it, confident. Sure you're going to be nervous, but then again as we mentioned earlier, being able to take that risk and challenge yourself. When I was getting promoted, sure I was nervous, but I was confident enough I knew what I was doing. And of course there's always that dark spot in your mind of failure, but it comes with the turf I think, and you've got to be able to critique yourself and get past that and learn from it. So I would say those are the major traits that you're going to have to have if you're going to move up.

Speaker 5: Okay great. Thanks for taking my call.

Tino Magnatta: Let me see what else we've got here. I think we've got time for one more. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Rojelio?

Speaker 6: Yes I do. Rojelio, great show so far. My quick question for you is, can you talk a little bit more about what tribes are doing for diversification?

Rojelio Rubio: Say that again? What ...

Speaker 6: What are tribes doing for diversification? A lot of the casinos are expanding into clubs and into shows. What are tribes doing to kind of diversify their portfolio?

Rojelio Rubio: That's another good one. I think it's going to have to depend on the area and the market you're in. Again, my only example here is sports betting. But the answer to that, I think it comes with the turf you're in. Sure, sports betting may not be sound for other properties now, whether it's because of legal reasons or the cost or the extra ... if there is revenue in it or not. But I think that's for the casino side.

For tribal side, I know the tribe here has a nice variety of amenities. They have their own grocery store here, they have their own school and college here. So they have really ... Not that those are revenue producing besides the grocery store. Amenities and other businesses. But I think as far as the tribe and the casino, you've got to look at your area. Jeez, I know back home in Arizona, they have their RVs, they have a bowling lane.

You know, I can't speak too much of all the other tribes and all the other casinos in various locations, but the gentleman that was here on the show last week, or actually this week, spoke about ... His restaurants, and everything that they're doing at that property. I think if it fits your area, it fits your market, do it. One of the items here we joked about, and someone mentioned that our golf season's really short. Fargo does have a golf simulator. You know, it's all indoors, they go in there, they can play a round of golf. We kind of joked around about that.

We're just trying to find different things that we can bring people in. I think that's about it.

Speaker 6: That's great. Good stuff.

Rojelio Rubio: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Okay. I think we're good. Thank you so much for calling in, and Rojelio, thanks for coming on the show. You're always fantastic, you're doing great working, and looking forward to having you on the show again, brother.

Rojelio Rubio: All right. Well, I appreciate it. Thank you again for the opportunity.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. It's been a great show. Thank you so much, man. I really appreciate it.

Rojelio Rubio: All right. Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye.

All right, next guest is Monday, November 4th, with Michael Bender, who is the director of casino marketing at JACK Entertainment, and that's going to be a great show. Mr. Bender has quite a unique business over there, and he'll be a

great guest. Remember, everybody's got a story to tell, you just have to have time to listen. I'm Tino Magnatta, and you have a great, great evening and a great weekend. Thank you very much and God bless.