



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Matthew Bruce
	Director of Marketing
	Spotlight 29 Casino and Tortoise Rock Casino
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Tino Magnatta: (music) Welcome to another episode of GT radio. Tino Magnatta here and I have a very interesting gentleman with us tonight, Mr. Matthew Bruce. How are you Matthew?

Matthew Bruce: I'm good. How are you doing?

Tino Magnatta: I'm doing great. And we were having a few chuckles just before this, [crosstalk 00:00:41] telling some stories back and forth and getting to know each other, it was pretty funny.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little bit about your background, where you're from and your family. Tell me your roots.

Matthew Bruce: Sure. I was originally born in Burlington, Vermont at the age of six months old. My Dad was in the air force and he was transferred to the Elmendorf Air Force Base at the end of the Vietnam War, the very end of the Vietnam War. They were still accepting wounded over in the Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska. We moved all the way to Anchorage and, obviously the Vietnam War ended that year or the next year, I can't remember, '72, '73.

Then about the age of four, my parents divorced and my mom and my two other brothers and I, ended up moving to Juneau, Alaska. Where I spent the majority of my youth and I graduated from high school, Juneau-Douglas High School in Juneau, Alaska.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. What was it like living up there?

Matthew Bruce: Juneau is a wonderful town, small town of about 27, 30,000 people, very family oriented, amazing education system. I actually had amazing opportunities. My mom did everything she could for us, put us in sports and we were all three in gifted and talented programs. I was in swimming and diving and musical theater, choir [crosstalk 00:02:17] and actually did a lot there. I was actually a springboard diver and the very end, the last three years of high school, I was a springboard diver and ended up diving in college as well. That was really fun.

Tino Magnatta: That's amazing. You were raised-

Matthew Bruce: I can do about two and a half and off to one meter [crosstalk 00:02:38] I don't know if anyone out there could do about two and a half off the one meter.

Tino Magnatta: Talking about it's just a stress reliever, you know. Okay, I'm going to do a couple of dives here, but it does reduce [crosstalk 00:02:54] it does, doesn't it?

Matthew Bruce: It really takes a lot of internal strength and you have to believe that you can do it. You have to believe that even though you've flatted 10,000 times trying to

perfect the dive, you have to go for it. And you have to continue to get up there every time and go for the dive. It's a really great [crosstalk 00:03:14] for self esteem and self esteem building.

Tino Magnatta: It's a pretty good metaphor for life too, right?

Matthew Bruce: Yes, absolutely. Get up on the board and keep trying and trying again. I busted my eardrum, I hit my head on the board, I hit my leg on the board.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Matthew Bruce: You've got to get up and go do it again.

Tino Magnatta: I know your mom was the biggest one, so you were raised by a single mother and you told me some great stuff about her. She's got to be an amazing woman. Can you tell us a little bit about her?

Matthew Bruce: Yes. Yeah. My mom was a little bit of a hippie, but she did everything she could to make sure that the three of us were taken care of, that we had everything that we needed. She worked two jobs often, she ran around town after work, running us to sports events and here and back and forth and everywhere. Always making sure that we were able to keep involved in sporting activities, after school activities. Making sure we were all getting good grades, I mean, she did everything for us and taught us everything that we know about life and how to be good people.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. And when we were talking, you said that you really got a lot of strength from her, you know, like the diving when you do the belly flops [crosstalk 00:04:34] head talking.

Matthew Bruce: You know, every teenager has issues that they go through and she was there for every single one of them. She helped me through the really worst spots of growing up and when push comes to shove, she made sure that I had the help that I needed. To figure out who I was as a person, and that has made me the person that I am today. She made sure that I knew who I was and that I knew and believed in myself. I mean [crosstalk 00:05:13] I think that's what every parent's goal is.

Tino Magnatta: Now you wanted to be a doctor.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah, I really did. My dad is still a doctor, he's a pathologist and my mom was a nurse. Her mother was a nurse, her sister's a nurse you know, medical runs in my family. And at a very young age I was exposed to the medical field. Obviously spending time with my dad in his labs and watching him do his work. And I thought that that's what I wanted to do, but when it got to college, I was like, "Oh my God, biochem and calculus II and all these classes. I just was like so overwhelmed with it.

And I was failing them, I wasn't doing well with them. And obviously being a young adult at that time, I just kind of gave up and decided to try other things. Eventually focusing on musical theater, but I really wish now that I would have stuck with it, because I think that I would have been a really great doctor. But you know, no regrets, [crosstalk 00:06:23] it is what it is.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I mean at least you had those aspirations but life ended in a different direction. Now, you started outside of the casino business, you actually started it at the Pittsburgh Opera, right?

Matthew Bruce: Yes, I did. After college I ended up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and, I worked temp jobs and that kind of a thing. Then ended up being connected with the arts world, having a degree in musical theater. I ended up, I was actually performing for the Pittsburgh Opera and the Pittsburgh Opera chorus, so I can sing too.

Tino Magnatta: Wow. Wow, that's [crosstalk 00:07:06].

Matthew Bruce: And so, I ended up getting a job in the public relations arm of the Pittsburgh Opera. And I became director of public relations for the Pittsburgh Opera in the late 90s. That was an amazing experience. They did four productions a year, I got to meet amazing performers. One of the guys from [Il Divo 00:07:29] was in the Pittsburgh Opera Center at Duquesne. Coming up being a young performing artists at the time when I was there, so I've met some really amazing people and artists.

Sandra [inaudible 00:07:39] performs at the metropolitan opera is one of the stable met singers right now. She performed at the Pittsburgh Opera, I got to meet some incredible artist and conductors while I was there, that was an amazing experience.

Tino Magnatta: You said to me when we talked before, you said that you have to get people to believe in you. What did you mean by that?

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. It's good if you're good, right? Everyone wants to have someone who's good, but good sometimes isn't good enough. I mean, you want to always be good, but in order to get people to believe in you, you have to prove yourself. In order to prove yourself, you have to provide ideas and suggestions and actually improve the business. Or make a suggestion or an idea or come up with ideas and suggestions that cause the business to move forward. And in order for people to believe in you, you have to do that consistently.

You can't just have one great idea and then stop. You have to constantly be coming up with good ideas, and coming up with them and getting people to believe in them. Convincing people that they're good and whether they're successful or not, the ideas are good. Everyone knows that not everything's going to work obviously all the time. But if the majority of the things that you

come up with actually end up either improving operations or improving the customer experience or ...

Obviously moving the dial on the bottom line, then that's how people end up believing in you.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Yeah. You have to make more of a concerted effort, right?

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely. It's not just enough to sit on your laurels and just keep moving, you know coming in and doing your business rote day to day. You've got to study, listen, pay attention, and [crosstalk 00:09:44] ask questions.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, you went to the Pittsburgh Opera and then into Agua [crosstalk 00:09:52], what were some of the things that you had to overcome? I know you'd mentioned to me before that transition.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. Yeah, it was very interesting. From the Pittsburgh Opera I ended up, it was the height of the high tech business, before 2000, '99, '98, 2000 2001, 2, time period where the tech businesses was going crazy. And everyone was making so much money in the tech business and all the talks and all of that. I ended up in LA at a high tech PR agency, and I was in LA for a couple of years, two or three years. In LA, we really realized that we wouldn't be able to afford to own our own house. So we decided to move out to the desert and into the Palm Springs area.

And I knew that there was only a few real opportunities, well, there was more than just a few that I was interested in. In the desert hospitality industry there's a lot of hotels, really wonderful five star hotels in the desert and in this casino industry. So, I started camping again and ended up at the Spa Resort Casino doing the tour and travel business for the buses that come in. And then I ended up working my way up and transferring over to the [inaudible 00:11:14] Casino.

From advertising coordinator to executive assistant to the general manager at player's club manager, Special Events Manager, Casino Marketing Manager. So I kind of came through and worked my way up at least until Agua. There was a huge difference between the casino industry in gaming obviously than the corporate world that I had been in for the past five years. And before that obviously in profit arts, which operates very much like the corporate industries. The difference is the culture. It was very, very different for me to get into the casino industry.

Tino Magnatta: What were some of the things he had to overcome?

Matthew Bruce: Some of the things that I had to overcome were like I said, the culture, like I said before, being good consistently that I could ... I'm a guy who has goals and I wanted to reach my goals. My goal was to become a director of marketing. I decided within about a year or two that that was my goal. And in order for me

to reach that goal, I had to convince a lot of people that I had skills. And like I said before, you know, to convince people [crosstalk 00:12:48] these skills, you got to earn it.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, you've got to earn it.

Matthew Bruce: And I just my nose to the grindstone and went out there every day and came in to add value, that was my goal. And when I come into the office every day when I was, even now, I say, "What value can I add today that's going to improve something right now or today or for the future of the business?"

Tino Magnatta: How did you end up getting the job that you're at now?

Matthew Bruce: Then, I was at Agua Caliente for eight years and I had only had one casino experience. I knew that in order for me to become a good applicant for a director position, which they're hard to get, it's hard to become a director. I knew that I needed to get a second casino experience, and I saw an opportunity at Spotlight 29 Casino, and so I applied for it. It was a very difficult decision to make because I really did really love working for Agua Caliente Casino.

Then when I came on board, I was the marketing manager and I was doing new things that I hadn't done at Agua. So I got to do a lot, I got to do database and advertising and media buying. That made me a much more well rounded director and unfortunately, I was hired by a gentleman named Adam [Sack 00:14:20], who was the director of marketing at the time. I don't think we covered this when we were speaking before, but Adam, became ill and came down with stage four cancer ...

Tino Magnatta: Oh man. Sorry to hear that.

Matthew Bruce: And he ended up passing very rapidly, so we knew that he had stage four cancer, and then it was literally six months before he ended up passing.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Matthew Bruce: It was a really horrific experience to go through.

Tino Magnatta: I can imagine, my God. For everybody.

Matthew Bruce: To have, for everybody in the department and the entire casino obviously. He was beloved here, he did an excellent job. And, I applied for the position after it became available and was lucky enough to get the job.

Tino Magnatta: Good stuff. And I'm sure that he looked over every day. [crosstalk 00:15:24].

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely. My department, we still use some of his phrases, we honor him to this day. He had some really funky phrases that he would say and you know, his

mannerisms and stuff, we still have Adam hour every once in a while we call it so.

Tino Magnatta: How sweet.

Matthew Bruce: He's honored to this very day.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. What is your message to the younger generation going up through the ranks?

Matthew Bruce: So, you know, people talk about millennials a lot, right? And they think they're all lazy. I found that to be both true and not true. I think that it just depends on the person, depends on the drive and determination of the young person coming up. In general the millennials do think that they should have things handed to them and I do find that to be more or less true, but again, depending on the person. I would say that even more so than my generation, the millennials need to really, pay attention, ask questions, don't be lazy, show up and want to work and learn and to ask a question, that's all.

That's what I did. I studied under, at this one, I can't even count anymore, but when I first started working here, it was like 15 directors of marketing and executive directors of marketing that I studied with and worked with. And got to know a different sides of the marketing business from and the aspects of it and database marketing, and all of the different facets of marketing itself. And that's the key, is to ask the questions, keep asking, find out why, why are we doing this? Why? Why do you think this is the way that it should be done?

Why are we sending this offer? Why do we have this promotion? What are we trying to accomplish? And, that's how I think that the younger generations, need to face, especially those who want to move up. One of the things that I've seen is that they don't really know what they want when they arrive. I started in the entry level position, but I kind of knew I was a little bit more maybe had a different drive level or knew more what I wanted. Many of them don't know what they want.

But I've seen some people come in who do know what they want, and those who do know what they want, those are easy people to coach. If they say, "Hey, Matthew, I really want to be a host one day." I'm like, "Really? Okay, great. Let's go." But they just sit there [crosstalk 00:18:16] and they don't show any interest, if they don't show any interest what they want to do. And then just come in, I mean even if they're great employees, if they don't tell me what they want or don't show any interest in advancing in their careers, then maybe I won't spend as much time with the develop ...

If they show interest in development, then they're going to get developed.

Tino Magnatta: Exactly.

Matthew Bruce: That's another ...

Tino Magnatta: It's about desire sort of it's about.

Matthew Bruce: Exactly.

Tino Magnatta: Where are we now in the casino business, particularly native casinos [inaudible 00:18:53] of gaming happen?

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. Well, where we're lucky enough here in the Coachella valley that we don't think that there will be ... well, let me rephrase that. The Agua Caliente casinos are putting in a third casino, but it will be a small casino and it's in their area. It's not close to us and we don't really think that it will impact our business. But for the most part, we're pretty much locked in the area that we're in. There probably won't be any more casinos coming in, I don't think. So for us, we're a local's casino, we count on the locals, we love our locals.

We do everything we can to support our locals and to keep them coming in. So the proliferation of Indian gaming really won't be affecting us, I don't believe in anytime in the near future.

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the things that you love about our business and what are some of the things that you don't really like? We've got to get both.

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely. Obviously we talked about the technology, the technology of the casino industry is amazing and it's on fire. The advancements are happening so quickly, it's almost hard to keep up and almost mind numbing, how quickly and how many things are available in all the systems. And the manufacturers and kiosk designs and promotions. Even now you have cashless till on the horizon, you have all of these amazing technologies that are the [inaudible 00:20:54] beverage system that's brand new pretty much and being implemented.

Where you can order drinks from your slot machine. It's just amazing how many new technologies there are, and I love that because that can really expand your business and not easily, but it makes your job as a casino marketer easier. But it's hard to obviously implement, but once it's implemented, it makes it easier. And you know more about your customers than ever before. We have many new technologies and advancements in digital marketing that are amazing.

I call it digital stocking really, but it's not really, but it is geo fencing and geo targeting and now address targeting. It's just amazing how far we've come. I know that you know that because of your business and what you do for your business. That is what I think is the most exciting thing about being in the marketing side of the casino industry.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's pretty remarkable.

Matthew Bruce: The bad side, yeah, so I mean you can't predict whole percentages or how much you're going to hold. No, you never know what's going to be ahead and not a hit. Sometimes you do have to take risks. I like taking risks, but I like to take measured risks that I know will more than likely be successful. Or I have a very, very, very, very, very strong inkling or high percentage will be successful. But you still do have to take risks, and sometimes they don't work and sometimes you have to go back to the drawing board.

The other thing is, is it's always risky to make changes in the casino industry. Guests are very, I mean, let me rephrase that. Guests don't like change at your casino. They hate it. And so, when you make changes, it's going to be difficult and sometimes you have to stay the course and believe that it will come along. And I've even seen that happen where we've made a change and the guests complain a little bit and grumble and grumble and grumble, but then they actually end up loving it, the change that you've made.

I've also seen the opposite, and then you have to know, okay, well this didn't work, the guests are complaining. It didn't work. We made a mistake, we need to fix this and go back to the drawing board, get a plan together and get it changed and back. And then tell them, "Hey, you know what? We heard you, we believe that you were right. We're here for you, you were right. We're putting it back to the way you want it." Or, "We're doing this better than the way that you thought we ever could."

Those are some of the things I really don't like is, when you make a mistake or when you take a risk and it doesn't work,

Tino Magnatta: How do you balance work and life in our 24 hour business? It's a hard thing to do.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah, it is. I'm always pretty much thinking about work. I just think I'm born that way. It really never gets turned off. But what I've learned over the years in the industry is that even though I have that work light on in my brain, I don't have to focus on it. I don't have to pay attention to it as much. And so I can unplug when I get home, and I know that my phone will go off and tell me if there's something that I need to pay attention to. Or on the weekends I'll spend a dedicated certain amount of time to ... because I think about work all the time.

I'll write all my notes down from the thinking of what I've been thinking about all weekend and get it on paper or email myself, what I've been thinking about, so that it's off of my brain and so I can stop thinking about it and let myself have time off. I think that's how I've developed a good work life balance and when I go home, I cook myself a nice meal and watch some TV and I unplug. And I don't worry about it until the next morning.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Just try tune it out as much as you can.

Matthew Bruce: Try to tune it out. Yeah. Because I mean, you know, you're always thinking about it, you know it's always going to be there.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Absolutely. [crosstalk 00:25:40] it's like any other business.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah 24/7 you really can't turn it off, but you can try, you can teach yourself how to turn it off successfully by allowing yourself to unplug.

Tino Magnatta: Casinos and [inaudible 00:25:58] 24/7. I mean I can't think of [crosstalk 00:26:04] can you?

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely. No.

Tino Magnatta: Seven days a week and not even Christmas and New Year's, I mean, 7/11 and casinos you know?

Matthew Bruce: That's pretty much it. You're right.

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:26:15] I mean that's it. I was thinking about that theory it's wild.

Matthew Bruce: It's true.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it is. It is. What things should casino operators and marketers do more of?

Matthew Bruce: I really think that a lot of casinos don't get involved in the community as much as we should. I know that we all taught to try to involve the community even in our promotions and our large retail promotions. Excuse me. But getting the ... Excuse me.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, no problem. Take your time.

Matthew Bruce: Let me take a drink of water here.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, yeah. Go for it.

Matthew Bruce: The ...

Tino Magnatta: Take your time.

Matthew Bruce: Again, the advancements in technology are allowing us to take our business into the community and to involve the community. Not only from a charitable donations perspective, but also from a gaming perspective. Being able to comp off property for example, or to work with retailers or restaurants in the local community. And getting them to allow you to have your guests use their comp points for example, or at the gas station if you have one. Those are new methods that I think are going to be great for the community.

Tino Magnatta: Go ahead, have another drink of water. Yeah, take your time.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Don't worry about it. Yeah, yeah.

Matthew Bruce: Sorry about that.

Tino Magnatta: No, no problem at all. What are some of the defining moments of your career?

Matthew Bruce: Well, obviously becoming director of marketing was a pretty defining moment. I think I cried honestly. It had been a goal of mine as I mentioned since basically I started in the casino industry, not in front of anybody of course. I've done some big boogie promotions that I'm really proud of, we've expanded business here in the last year in a very successful way that I'm very proud of under my watch. I also got to, for a year a dabble in the entertainment industry. We had lost our entertainment director and that was nearly shortly after I became director.

The director of marketing was no longer here, and so I was tasked to take over the entertainment department even though I'm not an entertainment specialist. And so that was a huge challenge. I have to say that I booked some pretty cool shows that did some really good stuff, so that was really fun and one of my grounding accomplishments. Even though we now have a new director of entertainment which I'm very happy for, because it's not my specialty and it's very hard.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I can imagine.

Matthew Bruce: But I would say, yeah, those couple of things have been really amazing.

Tino Magnatta: Everybody says that about entertainment, no matter who I talk to. [crosstalk 00:29:56] It's just so difficult, so many moving parts. Then you have to [crosstalk 00:30:03].

Matthew Bruce: [crosstalk 00:30:05] pro formas, and all the writers, production, it's just really difficult to do right.

Tino Magnatta: After the end of the show and packing up and you're so exhausted you need the weekend to recover.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Right?

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: You feel like [crosstalk 00:30:24] the gig.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: I'm telling [crosstalk 00:30:28]-

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. You're done when it's over man, you're just toast.

Tino Magnatta: You're done. Yeah. Let me see here.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Should we take some calls?

Matthew Bruce: Hey, absolutely. Sure.

Tino Magnatta: All right.

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely.

Tino Magnatta: Let me see what we've got on here. I'm sure there's a few surprises in here somewhere.

Matthew Bruce: Pardon?

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:30:45] great stuff.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Great stuff. Great interview. Yeah. Yeah, [inaudible 00:30:51] pretty amazing.

Matthew Bruce: I appreciate the opportunity.

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

Rogelio: Hello, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Do you have a question for Matthew Bruce? Yes.

Rogelio: Yeah. It's [Rohelio 00:31:05]. How's it going, Matthew?

Matthew Bruce: Hi Rogelio?

Rogelio: Good. Hi.

Matthew Bruce: How's it going?

Rogelio: Good. It's going good.

Matthew Bruce: Good. Good.

Rogelio: [crosstalk 00:31:15] has finally come to North Dakota so it's good.

Matthew Bruce: Fargo yeah, Fargo.

Rogelio: I know you can finally see the road. [crosstalk 00:31:28]. Yeah. Hey Matthew, interesting story about your experience in the performing arts and I want to throw you a little curve ball here.

Matthew Bruce: Okay.

Rogelio: The casino businesses is basically in entertainment, it's under entertainment umbrella.

Matthew Bruce: Sure.

Rogelio: Not talking strictly concert, although that's part of it, but we're there to entertain our guests were there to socialize the place for them. What would you say, excuse me, now I have something in [inaudible 00:32:03]. What would you say is a common factor or similarity between, or is there one between your history in performing arts and that entertainment and entertaining your guests at your casino? Is there something that you can-

Matthew Bruce: Yeah.

Rogelio: ... Something you can say, "Hey, you know, this is something similar even though it's two different environments."

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. That's a great question actually. I actually have gotten that question quite a bit, because when I tell people that I have a bachelor of fine arts in musical theater, they're like, "What?"

Rogelio: Yeah, right?

Matthew Bruce: Obviously I'm not afraid to be on stage so I have no problem. I was tasked with running large retail promotions on the casino floor, being on the overhead speaker system, no problem. And a lot of people have issues with being on the overhead speaker system or making a show out of a large retail promotion or any event really, or special events if you will. And also being able to be confident and to speak in front of people, that's obviously the other thing. Then I think that the acting skill I have obviously gained a lot of acting skills.

And so that can be very helpful, especially when you need to act in front of guests and you're not in a good mood and you feel really like screaming at them and you can't, so you have to act. [crosstalk 00:33:49] And so I've really counted on my acting skills, especially in front of very difficult guests. And obviously

being in front of guests and putting on huge events and speaking on the overhead system. I mean literally hundreds of people sitting in front of you. Let me put it this way. When I was at Agua Caliente caisson we had a dual property promotion giving away \$150,000, and it was \$75,000 per property.

And there was this huge problem with the technology, through the software provider, which I will not name, but I was on stage in our showroom and everyone was in there. We had food and beverage and seats everywhere, and I was on a stage with all these graphics behind me and it was all big buggy. And we drew a name and 45 minutes later, the name finally appeared.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Matthew Bruce: So I had to [crosstalk 00:34:58] in front of this audience for 45 minutes, and my acting skills kicked in hardcore for that.

Rogelio: I hope you weren't [crosstalk 00:35:12].

Matthew Bruce: No.

Rogelio: Oh man. You sound, I mean obviously you can take it over the top, how do you get your ... I know and I'm sure other directors have a similar, they may be a similar issue or they could have faced it once or twice. How do you get your team members involved? How do you get your team involved in that? Maybe you have one that's not so outgoing, how'd you get that person involved?

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. Every single person that works for you has a different personality and a different methodology and a different way of showing their strength. And for the most part, every single person that works for me, I know their capabilities and strengths and their weaknesses. And I think that my objective, when I see someone who is not performing to the level that I know that they can perform at is to dig it out of them. I will assign them tasks and responsibilities that will stretch them and take them out of their comfort zone. That's how I break down those molds.

Rogelio: Nice.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Thanks Rogelio, thanks for calling. I really appreciate it.

Matthew Bruce: Thanks for the call, I appreciate it.

Rogelio: Thanks Mathew, thank you.

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:36:29] Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Mathew Bruce?

Thomas: Hello Tino, this is Thomas. Can you hear me? Hello, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Yes, [crosstalk 00:36:44] we can Thomas, how are you? Yes.

Thomas: Hi, good evening.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, [crosstalk 00:36:49]? Good evening.

Thomas: Hi Matthew. Thank you for sharing, I appreciate it [crosstalk 00:36:52].

Matthew Bruce: Hi, nice to meet you.

Thomas: Great. Matthew, because you've been in the desert for a while, one thing that always interested me because you know, Spotlight was always location challenged. And then over the years with the Coachella music festival, all of a sudden Coachella is almost world famous. How did that change your marketing approach? Because now wherever you go, everybody knows about the Coachella music festival. They have no idea where it is, but they know about it.

Matthew Bruce: Yes. Yeah, that's a really great question, and a lot of people think that because all of these people are coming out here to the desert to experience Coachella fest, that we're going to make tons of money, right? And everyone thinks, "How can I get money from these people that are coming out to the deserts to these festivals? Well, you can't. And so, that's basically the truth. I have tried everything that I can, both here at Spotlight which is obviously a location in challenge as you mentioned.

But also at Agua Caliente I did everything from, "Bring us your ticket we'll give you \$150 in free play," to room discounts at Agua Caliente, to special events here at Spotlight. I mean we've really tried everything. We even had a shuttle service to and from the Coachella festival that you could come and park here and go to the Coachella fest. And we made some beverage or food and beverage revenue from that, but not much. Getting gaming revenue from the people that are going to the Coachella festival is really, really, really not ...

They're here to experience the three days of the festival. They get up in the morning, they go to the festival to spend all of their time and money there. They drink, they eat, they do everything there. And then they go to their hotel or wherever they're staying, which by the way, everything is marked up 500 to 1000% in the desert for housing. And then they get up the next morning and they do it all over again, and then when they're done at the end of the festival, they leave. [crosstalk 00:39:11].

It does bring, does bring obviously local revenue to our grocery stores and the local community really benefits from the people that are coming to the Coachella festival and stage coach. But from the casino industry, we just have not been able to get any significant dollars.

Thomas: They're not gamblers, yeah [crosstalk 00:39:44].

Matthew Bruce: They're not interested in gambling. They're there to experience the festival and all the music and party and the young people have a great time.

Thomas: Yeah. If I may [crosstalk 00:39:58] follow up question because I was very impressed when you said improving the customer's experience is the key to gain trust. Of course that is such an essential aspect. Looking at the different players, how do you differentiate between because you call it hospitality customers, but hospitality customers and players are two different breeds, aren't they? And how do you distinguish in your service aspect, how you treat casino players versus hospitality customers or guests? Or do you not see it as [crosstalk 00:40:39]?

Matthew Bruce: Well, we don't have a hotel at Spotlight so unfortunately, I'm not able to speak about that from our perspective here. When I was at Agua obviously I was there when they launched their brand new resort in 2008 and launched that. The Coachella Festival has grown quite rapidly and then ended up with two weeks in the past couple of years, so they're still growing. But when I was in Agua, the hospitality again, you are able to get room nights and get basically whatever you wanted to charge for them to stay in the hotel.

But not really from a gaming perspective. They just weren't interested. Does that answer your question?

Thomas: Well, maybe let me rephrase it a little bit because what I'm trying is to find a distinction. Because some of the casinos, or most of the casinos don't make a distinction between hospitality customers and players, and there's a different dynamic. Because for the players, we don't have anything tangible. What do you think is the compelling story? Because that's always the decor of marketing. What's the compelling story at Spotlights 29 that kind of shows the culture and it creates a uniqueness with which you can work?

Because that's got to be behind your marketing efforts.

Matthew Bruce: Sure, absolutely. For us we have a lot of highly frequent players and we are relying on customer service and our smart program, our customer service program. And we create an environment where every single person that comes in here gets treated extremely well. It's like we want to be the cheers if you will, of the desert so that you come in and everybody knows you. And that's what we've been able to develop here at Spotlight and why we've been successful.

Especially in the past year or two, we've really stepped up the mark on our customer service program. Obviously we've grown our technology quite a bit, but we also offer experiences and events and concerts for our local communities. So that they know that we're the place to go for Latin entertainment, if you will. Because we're obviously in a highly Hispanic market place, so we've developed a very strong Latin entertainment program that has

worked very well to develop a core business within the Latin community, which is our bread and butter right here in the Coachella valley.

Thomas: Okay. And that also drives then your gaming revenues.

Matthew Bruce: Absolutely.

Thomas: [inaudible 00:43:39] Right. Well thank you Matthew. I appreciate it and nice to get to know you.

Matthew Bruce: No problem. Thank you.

Thomas: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, Thomas. have a good evening.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you.

Thomas: Yeah. Thanks.

Matthew Bruce: Some great questions.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. That was a tough one.

Matthew Bruce: That was a tough one. Could I say also that-

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

Vince: Hello, can you hear me?

Tino Magnatta: Hello. Yes, we can.

Vince: Hello. Hey, how have you been? How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good. How are you? Good.

Vince: I'm doing well, just a little bit of a delay.

Tino Magnatta: Hello?

Vince: You know it's funny ... Can you hear me okay?

Matthew Bruce: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. We hear you great.

Vince: I think at the moment there are three frustrated actors on the radio station here between the three of us [crosstalk 00:44:27]-

Tino Magnatta: Hey, I wouldn't want to be a director, count me out and I'm not an actor.

Matthew Bruce: I wanted to be a Broadway star.

Tino Magnatta: [crosstalk 00:44:40] neurotic.

Vince: Absolutely. I found that my educational background serves me very well at the casino over these years, and I had a bunch of questions about that that have already been covered. I was looking at some of your promotions and I think you have one where the guests is actually [inaudible 00:45:05].

Matthew Bruce: Yes.

Vince: And I was wondering how that's working out for you and if there are some insight into that. Sort of like when you say the guests don't always like the new technology, I think that's a relatively new thing to be doing. I'm just wondering if you could share any of your thoughts on that.

Matthew Bruce: You know it's worked out extremely well for us. We have obviously just purchased a bunch of new technology and are able to provide a retail promotion at the game. Instead of having calling names or doing what they can actually automatically get a chance to win up to \$500 in free play, write them there themselves at the game. It's the EBS modules from ACAC, from scientific games.

Vince: Right. [crosstalk 00:45:51].

Matthew Bruce: So it's great. There has been a little bit of ... they kind of fill the required points, they feel it. And then if they don't win something that they think is worthwhile, then they might, you know like, [inaudible 00:46:14]. But the people who win more than they ever thought that they should, that they thought that they would, are really, really pleased. So overall it has done very well for us. I'm going to be playing with the EBS suite, there's many of them. There's many modules in the EBS suite.

It's one of the things that I'm really excited about with like I said with messaging, but the technology. Our next one that we're going to be doing in June is going to be power winners. There'll be random jackpots every half hour, and I think the guests are going to maybe probably like that more than this one. Because it'll feel more like a hot seat promotion than having to earn the spin, as it is currently. But it's working great and we're very pleased.

Vince: That's great. Great. I wish you luck that it sounds like you were wrapping up with it as well. Just a quick comment. I know there's a lot of other callers. Do

you rely on research and all to sort of get a headstart on what your customer, how they might react to a specific change or a promotion or a retail offering or whatever. Do you ever do anything like that?

Matthew Bruce: We have not here, I have done that at other properties but not here. That's why always I'm trying to keep my pulse on what the casino players are saying. I constantly meet with my host staff and with the team on the floor and the slot department, and even the cage to find out what the guests are saying and what their comments are. And that's the research that I do. I'm constantly trying to feel out what's happening anytime we make a change like that, that's how I figure it out.

Plus, I'm close with several of the players and they tell me straight up so ...

Vince: That's great. Well, I would like to propose that you and I do some sort of a duet.

Matthew Bruce: Okay.

Vince: I think we should produce [crosstalk 00:48:26]. Thank you so much.

Matthew Bruce: It's not a day on [inaudible 00:48:35] I sing a song at some point so ...

Vince: All right. I mean you have to sing us one before the end of the show, come on. That'll be okay.

Matthew Bruce: No, no. Not live.

Vince: Absolutely.

Matthew Bruce: Not live. [crosstalk 00:48:47]. I have to get warmed up.

Vince: I'll sing [crosstalk 00:48:58].

Matthew Bruce: Thanks Vince.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much.

Matthew Bruce: You're funny.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. He's hilarious. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Matthew?

Michael: Hey Tino, it's Michael out in Oklahoma. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, how are you Michael?

Michael: Hey, good man. Matthew, I hate to continue the barrage of entertainment questions-

Tino Magnatta: Hey.

Michael: ... But-

Matthew Bruce: No problem.

Michael: You know, it's obviously something that marketers are thinking about all the time in entertainment. I've often called the \$100,000 maybe, because you never really know what's going to happen. And not so much for Spotlight 29, but for the industry as a whole, do you think we're going to continue to provide comfortable retirement for the 70s and 80s and 90s rock stars? Or do you see the entertainment business moving more towards lifestyle specific or demographic specific type of entertainment that the options out there are kind of changing for us now?

Matthew Bruce: I agree with you completely on the latter. The staples that began drawing customers to show rooms are waning. They're not going to be around that much longer. I mean, Sara Frankie Valli is still performing, but how for how much longer and how many people are still going to go see him? And many of them are in my opinion are getting old for the customers. They're tired of seeing the same acts. But if you find the right, like for example, if you find the right performer ... we have had [Poquito El Barrio 00:50:46].

I don't know if you know who she is, but she's just frankly from the hood. She's extremely famous in Mexico, she's still on and relevant in the Hispanic community and all over there. They're like E-entertainment network for the Hispanic community on the TV. And she stepped in-

Michael: [crosstalk 00:51:06].

Matthew Bruce: Univision, yeah exactly. [crosstalk 00:51:09] I think is the name of this show, the famous one. She sells out every year and we've had her every year and, but she's amazing and everybody still wants to come and see her. But on the same hand we're trying new things, we've tried bio lase, we're doing a rap jam this summer. We're going to try a Spanish comedy jam this summer. We're trying new things that are more genre specific, like you're saying more targeted.

We're also doing a Pop 2000 tour this this summer. But then we're also bringing back [inaudible 00:51:56] always going to sell out shows. Let me also put it this way. We tried some countries, we thought country would do really well here because in season country has done really, really well and sold out. And/or even if it didn't sell out we made a lot of money on the casino floor for the country thought. So we thought, "Oh, even if it doesn't sell out, we're going to make a boatload on the floor."

And so when I was over entertainment we purposely tried to book some new up and coming country stars. It didn't work. They didn't sell and we didn't make the money on the casino floor. That tells me that you have to know who your audience is, and maybe try to balance a little bit and give them a little bit of something for everybody, but know who your audience really loves the most.

Michael: All right. Do you find that it's harder to convince the GMs and the budget people in the world to try something different? I see different properties doing things like, I don't know, tattoo festivals or game shows or having a Game of Thrones star show up and hang out with your VIPs. Is that harder to do for you than it is for the [crosstalk 00:53:20] come out?

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. Let me put it this way, previously my GM was in a little more risk adverse, so convincing him to do more risky things was a little bit more difficult. I'm lucky enough now that with the right reasoning, the right strategy, the right concept and knowing our demographic and who our audience is. It's a little more easy to paper it for him and to convince him that it'll work. We are going to try a game show this fall, we haven't done one in a long time.

Yeah, it's difficult. They want to know that it's ... because they don't want to take risks. They don't want to lose money. It's like performing is critical obviously in the entertainment business knowing how much your production costs are going to be and how much the act is going to be. And we've stopped even using gaming revenue in our performance.

Michael: Wow.

Matthew Bruce: If it it doesn't paper without gaming revenue, we're not going to do it.

Michael: Wow. All right that's [crosstalk 00:54:35]. Yeah, Thanks for sharing your story. It's been very interesting. [crosstalk 00:54:39]-

Matthew Bruce: You're welcome.

Michael: You guys have a great show.

Matthew Bruce: No problem. You too, thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Michael, thank you for calling in. [inaudible 00:54:46] Hello, Tina Magnatta, do you have a question for Matthew?

Rob Watson: I do. Hi Tino. How are you?

Tino Magnatta: Good. Good. How about yourself?

Rob Watson: Good. Good, thanks. Hey, Matthew. A great show.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you. Hi, how are you?

Rob Watson: Good, thank you. This is Rob Watson. You know, you talked about a game show, it's funny, I did a game show at a casino. I was [inaudible 00:55:13] Barker and the prize was right. And we had a huge turnout for it.

Tino Magnatta: Good. Yeah.

Rob Watson: They thought I was Bob Barker, not Rob Barker but [crosstalk 00:55:23].

Matthew Bruce: See? Acting skills right there.

Rob Watson: I have a couple of quick questions. What was the best Latin entertainer that you said that you booked down there?

Matthew Bruce: You know what, my brain can't remember, let me look at that. Hang on one second. It was last year we had booked ... Jeez, my brain. I can't remember his name off the top of my head.

Rob Watson: Sorry. We'll circle back around to that one.

Matthew Bruce: Sure. While you're asking the next one I'll find it.

Rob Watson: Okay.

Tino Magnatta: He's operating.

Rob Watson: Yeah. And multitasking.

Matthew Bruce: Yes.

Rob Watson: I was looking at a study and said 80% of millennials were willing to give up like 77% coffee, 73% alcohol to travel and for unique experiences. With, I guess your properties are with gaming in general, how do you think that we can offer maybe unique experiences to customers or the millennials, to get them to game or try the property. You know, such as flaming desserts or, you kind of have different action things where you can't go everywhere and be served a flaming dessert. They don't do the whole show.

Or you hit a jackpot and you know, waterfalls going off or something's happening at that machine. But what's your thoughts on, I may be taking some of that gaming and also some of the amenities on property where it's not just a restaurant. But it's just such a unique experience that it might attract the millennials who are willing to give up all those things if we provided that type of unique experience for them.

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. No, I've seen that research and I've studied that as well. And a lot of marketers from what I know, casino contractors and architects are beginning to involve, and/or reconstruct or rebuild or put in place these new concepts where it's experience based. Obviously Las Vegas is the prime example, right? That's what they're all about, they're all about the experience. And that's how they get all of their, you know, it's all about beverage and food and beverage revenue out there these days and concert revenue.

In the Indian gaming casino industry it's a little more difficult. I think that if you're a huge large casino like Pachanga or one of the large casinos, maybe you have more discretionary funds that you can allocate to that. But casinos like ours, you really have to be careful about where you put your money. And we are looking at doing experience-based experiences like the experience based, probably food and beverage outlets is more along the lines of where we would end up going.

I think that they, from a non gaming perspective, that once they were here and they had that experience, they may be willing to go on the casino floor. I don't know about at the game, but that's what we're for sure thinking. I think that we all should be looking at that actually.

Rob Watson: Cool.

Tino Magnatta: Great.

Rob Watson: Good stuff.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you buddy. I really appreciate you calling in.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you for the question.

Rob Watson: You bet. Thank you, Matthew. Thank you, Tino.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you.

Rob Watson: Bye-Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Well the end of the show and it's been fantastic. A lot of good questions. Thank you for coming on [crosstalk 00:59:19]-

Matthew Bruce: Yeah. Really great questions.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. [crosstalk 00:59:23]-

Matthew Bruce: I had the time of my life Tino.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. Good. Thank you buddy. I appreciate you coming down-

Matthew Bruce: I really had a good time. I really appreciate it.

Tino Magnatta: And we want you to come back on sometime.

Matthew Bruce: I hope it was useful.

Tino Magnatta: Very. Thank you so much. Have a good evening.

Matthew Bruce: Thank you very much. You have to take care and take care of yourself. All right?

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Matthew Bruce: All right. Bye-bye.

Tino Magnatta: Well that was great. I mean, he is a very, very interesting guy and got a lot to say. Next week Monday I have Danny Gutierrez and Bob Brooker. These guys are old time biggest guys. They go back to the 50s, so it can be very, very interesting listening to some of their stories. I'm talking the days where people use take suitcases out of the cage, just like a casino. Remember, everybody's got a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen, have a good evening, and God bless. (music)