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## Conversations w/Tino

Guest	Wendy Carter
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**Tino Magnatta:** Welcome to another episode of GT Radio. Tonight, I have a great friend and an incredible person. She's been in the business a long time, and been around hospitality a long time. She's a bullet, that's all I can say. Wendy Carter, welcome to the show.

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Hi. Thank you for having me today.

**[Tino Magnatta:](#)** Thank you for being on. So, tell us a little bit about growing up, and the kind of environment it was and what your parents taught you. Because I know you were in an Army family, right?

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Well, yeah, to a certain degree. I grew up in rural Kansas and my dad spent a good deal of time in the Army, and my mom was a homemaker. We were a blended family. So I have 10, total, brothers and sisters. And so, a very large family. My mom later remarried to farmer, a local farmer. And so I was raised the second part of my childhood on a farm.

**[Tino Magnatta:](#)** Yeah, that's incredible. Yeah. So, what did you learn about ... I guess you had a pretty good work ethic on the farm, right?

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Well, yeah, of course. I mean, that's kind of sun up to sun down work for, basically ... if it's a farming family, then that's a job for the whole family. Honestly my husband's background is fairly similar to that, too. So, yeah. When it's harvest time or time to plant, everybody's working.

**[Tino Magnatta:](#)** Yeah, there's no ... Mother Nature decides when you work, you don't have your own choices, correct?

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Absolutely.

**[Tino Magnatta:](#)** Yep, yep. So you started working in the hospitality business pretty well right from the get go. You worked for the Darden Group ... and for those of you who don't know, the Darden Group, they're a pretty major restaurant chain, group. They have all of the Red Lobster and the Yard House ... and you went into their training program, right? Tell us a little bit about that experience.

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Well, before even, so the Darden restaurants, I worked at a local café as a kid. So I mentioned my large family, so we learned pretty early that if you wanted absolutely anything, you had to work. So I started actually working in a kitchen of a local café when I was 11 years old. Baking biscuits and washing dishes.

**[Tino Magnatta:](#)** Wow, that's amazing.

**[Wendt Carter:](#)** Yeah, and I find it pertinent to mention that, because the owner of that little café allowed me to come in and cut my teeth and learn what even having a job and working was about. And I was with them for almost the full 10 years before I moved on to different areas. So, but yeah, I left my small little town of Stafford

in Kansas and moved to Hutchinson, Kansas, where I went to work for Darden Restaurants. Specifically, my area was Red Lobster, but they do own the Olive Garden as well.

And I was so amazed when I went there, because I had to first pass a personality profile test to even get a job, you know, just serving or hostessing or anything, ground level job, in there. So you, at the application time, you took a test and they faxed it into corporate and then, within a few hours or whatever they would get an answer, and say, "Yes, this person's personality fits our organization," which I found strongly intriguing.

But I did enter their training program and that, the one for like a server, whatever, was just seven full days. And so, you were in a classroom setting, you learned recipes. You learned wine profiling, you learned guest service, you just learned everything about the organization and their values. And then after that, you would actually shadow a worker for three days, and then a worker would shadow you for three more days, after.

So it was very thought out and designed to ensure that there was consistency across the organization. And I was so intrigued by the training program, I said like my first week, that I wanted to be a trainer. And so, kind of set my goal on that, and actually did achieve that while I was with them. And that gave me the ability to take their program and bring it to life with their other new hires at various locations.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

That's incredible, now, they taught you a lot of stuff. Even like, recipes and upselling and stuff like that, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Yeah.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

I mean, it wasn't just how to do the job. It was also how to sell the products, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Yeah, they did, so I mean when you think about it, you're young and really all you're trying to do is wait tables or bartend or something and make some cash. And meanwhile, they're teaching you what menu items they would prefer you sell first, because the margins, and the return to the company.

And they're teaching you how to, you know, you taste every single menu item. So you can describe the flavor profile. You go to a beverage section where they're pairing literally all their signature beverages with their menu items, so then you can do suggestive selling. You know, they're known for their Lobster Rita, and just different things, the Bahama Breeze, things like that. And so, they teach you all about that.

So when a guest comes in, you immediately have in your mind what you're suggesting, for an appetizer, signature drink or a dessert as well, at the end of dinner. So, yeah, very, very informative.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, so you're not only waiting tables and doing all that stuff, but you're also kind of almost like designing the menu for them, because they're going to be asking you, "So, what do you think, blah, blah, blah," right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Yeah, you're definitely guiding the guest experience, because you are so ingrained in the menu and those chains, those menus change so very often, about every quarter, they're doing new features and things. And that's what intrigued me, and really got me thinking down a marketing path, is I was able to see how their creative would position specific menu items that were intended to sell. And they were teaching me the why, behind that. And so, yeah, very good experience with Darden.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, they're a major brand, and getting into it at a young age like that was huge for you, because you built a good foundation to start and I'm sure it helped you immensely in the future, with any restaurant decisions or stuff like that, that you were involved with.

Now, you didn't, you never really aspired to be in the casino business, you just kind of fell into it, right? Because you relocated, and there was, Darden didn't have a restaurant there. Tell us the story about that because, you had a hard time getting a call back too, right, from that?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

You know what? I did, and I laugh, even to this day with this person I'm about to tell you a story about. Because it's the funniest thing.

I had been in, like I said, restaurants for nearly 10 years before I joined the Darden Group, and I was with them a good while. And so, because of a family situation, my husband's grandparents were aging and somewhat ill, and they didn't have what we felt was enough support near them. We decided to move up north to Iowa. To be near them. The rural community that they lived in, the closest Darden restaurant where I could transfer to was over an hour away, over an hour commute. And yet, there was a casino about 15 minutes from where we were moving.

And, so I decided not to take a transfer with Darden, because I had small children at the time. I had two boys, two little boys. And one was six months old, and I just couldn't see that commute making sense for my life and so it thought, "For sure I can just get on in one of these many restaurants in this casino, no problem. I'll just do that."

And so I applied, several times, and I did not get a call back from the F and B department. So I went in there one day to try to find out why ... I couldn't, I wasn't getting the answers I was pleased with from HR. I didn't feel like I was

getting strong consideration, so I went to one of the restaurants and had lunch. And when the server asked me how my experience was, I said it was fantastic but I would still like to talk with her manager, was her manager there? And she said, "Well, that's unique, are you sure everything's okay?" And I said, "Yes, it's great, I'd just really like to meet your manager if she has 15 minutes to talk."

And so she called Linda Kay Smith who I worked for, for a long time, and now she's a dear friend, and Linda Kay came to the table, and I said, "I don't have any problem with my experience, but I have tried and tried to go to work for you, for a month or better, and you have postings all the time. And I can't get a call back." And she said that she had never seen my application, or at least, it had been overlooked. And in fact she had a opening in her steakhouse that she would love to put me to work that day, or shortly thereafter. And so, she hired me, right then and there. And so I got my gaming license and went to work in their steakhouse.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) And that's how you got into the casino business.

[Wendt Carter:](#) And that's how ... I often joke with my friends in the industry that we don't pick it, it picks us. And I believe that wholeheartedly.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Very few of us set out as young and sprightly 18 or 21 year olds and say, "We're gonna work in casinos." Our lives send us down that path.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Tell me a little bit about what you learned there, when you went to the casino.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Oh, at Lakeside?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Because that was a different, different environment, right? Than you were used to at the restaurants, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#) Oh, for sure, incredibly different when you think in terms of restaurants as an amenity, who are not free standing and hanging their hats on all the sales and service that happen just for a restaurant.

It keeps me always thinking in casinos, about how we could master running our businesses that aren't gaming to that same degree of efficiency and commitment. Because unfortunately I think we'd all agree that in some casinos, our F and B and even our spas, our hotels, our non gaming entities don't necessarily take center stage, whenever we're mapping out our business plans and when we're focused on the very finite details that come with running a casino restaurant.

And so, I think that a lot of those principles that were in place for those standalone restaurants could greatly benefit any restaurant or non gaming entity within a casino, with laser focus, if that makes sense.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, that totally makes sense. And, were you able to make some, make a difference there? Were you able to share your vast experience, that you had?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

I don't, you know, I was able to make a difference ... there's no, I would be lying if I said I was able to take these casino restaurants to Darden level focus and efficiency in my time there. But I would say that that experience, and what I was able to apply within a casino environment certainly set me apart. Because I was able to work my way up from literally, a part time server just trying to get my foot in the door, to first a lead, then a supervisor, then a manager.

And I moved on to Group Sales. So, first Banquets, because I think I did well in detail and this big picture mentality about detail. So I did, I executed banquets and then I was later asked to be the property's first Group Sales Executive. So, we had plenty of convention space, and we wanted to start a bus program. And the company looked directly to me and said, "You know, I think that you've got just the right unique experience that you may be able to do this really well."

And so, I did do that job and I enjoyed it very much, but later on as the company grew, the marketing department had a need for some leadership within that area. And somehow, those worlds collided in that, the GM at the time and the Marketing Director at the time came to me and said, "You know, we need more leadership in here and you've done well in Sales, and we'd like you to join the marketing team."

And I'll forever be blessed, forever grateful to Damon Butler and [Tammy Hansen 00:14:04], at the time, who were those two positions that said they saw kind of an alignment [crosstalk 00:14:10].

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

A different trajectory, and the right trajectory, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

A completely different trajectory, in terms of business impact and the job, and what it is. And you know, my background, my schooling was in sociology, and Damon specifically was really good at explaining to me why he thought that was impacting the way I did business, the study of people and making decisions. And applicable, in a marketing realm. So, I'm very appreciative of that.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

That's great. The workplace was very different for women back then. Tell me a little bit about that, because I'm sure [inaudible 00:14:47] the only woman at the table, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

You know, to be honest with you, the majority of my career has been lived out in the tribal gaming world. But that specific position and that property was the commercial gaming experience that I have. And that property was first owned

by Grace Entertainment but quickly acquired by Herbst Gaming when I worked there, and that certainly was a male dominant leadership group and team. I wouldn't say I was the only woman at the table, but there were very few of us. And that's often still applicable today, in certain situations.

But if definitely was a different world, it's evolved a lot over time. And I even think that my entrance into tribal gaming has probably been part of the reason that I have been more a part of a more diverse leadership group at many of the properties I've worked at. But it was challenging, I was very young, and it was certainly male dominated.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, there's no question about that, a little bit. How did you deal with that, because a lot of people would say that's a hard thing to deal with. How did you deal with that, when you were the only woman at the table?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

For me, I think that I probably preconditioned myself quite a bit to think that it was probably ... you know, I don't know if I can say it was as big a deal as it was in my mind, but to me it was. I think that often at that time, when I take myself back, 16, 17 years, I think of the anxieties that lived within me, being young and joining that leadership group.

I would say that it seemed as though, I felt as though, I had to work harder than anybody at the table. I had to perhaps work faster than anybody at the table. I had to justify my actions, maybe to a higher degree, than some of my peers.

But I was okay with that, because I feel like earning your way is a critical part of our development as executives. And so, yeah, I have actually said to a young female that I know in the industry that's facing something fairly similar, recently. I said, "You know, if you have to work harder, faster and smarter than the guys, then do it. And that's okay, you know."

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, yeah, you were telling me that when we talked in the pre-interview. And I find that very intriguing because at the end of the day, it's what you bring to the table. If they respect you-

[Wendt Carter:](#)

That's the way I did it.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

... and, yeah. If they respect what you do, and you're bringing something to the table which even they can't achieve, then you're part of the game, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

You know, I see it that way. To be honest with you, I see that in any and all leadership groups, whether they're male or female dominated. I think the nuances can be a little bit different, based on who's at the table. But, really at the end of the day, we all ... when we join a team ... everyone's eyes are on us. And they're expecting us to make some impact and they're expecting us to earn our way and prove our worth.

And I think that, that's largely acceptable. We're responsible for very important parts of our business, so, I think the advice would be, don't let that cloud your judgment or hold you back, if you're a female in a male dominated leadership group.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yep, yep, just bring your A game to the table, that's for sure.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Right, right.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) So you had a short stint at Meskwaki but then you went to Choctaw, which is definitely not a male dominated ... you were working some of the most incredible women in the industry, Janie Dillard and Tammye Gwin, right? Tell us a little bit about-

[Wendt Carter:](#) [inaudible 00:18:58] no mention that was very, very important to my career development, because I was the Player Development Manager there, at the Meskwaki Bingo Casino and Hotel in northern Iowa, and I'm forever grateful to them. However, I was only two years in with my tenure with them when the Choctaw Nation called and gave me this incredible opportunity to move closer to home-

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yep.

[Wendt Carter:](#) ... When they called, when their recruiter called, I said, "I'm not interested, I'm only two years in at the position," and I pretty rapidly got off the phone. And then I had a conversation with my GM, Patrick Brown, a little bit after that and told him about that phone call, and I said, "Patrick, why on earth would that bingo hall in Oklahoma want me to leave this beautiful casino and come to work there?" And he said, "Wendy. There's been a lot of development in the Choctaw Nation since you've last been there, you better look into that.

And so I started looking, and my goodness, that company had grown. And they have their beautiful, crown jewel flagship resort in Durant, Oklahoma. And so, it was just a very different view than I expected. So, we talked, and I talked with their recruiter again, and eventually I did go to work for Choctaw, and you're right. A driving factor, to the decision to make, to go down there, had it been basically built and run by these female executives that had all this heart and energy, definitely inspired by their presence there.

And even eventually, Tammye moved to another leadership role, and Heidi Grant was back filled, and she was critical in my development, over time, as well. But Tammye was a tough cookie. She had very high expectations, I think the fact that those women are all tribal members, and so they have a very in depth connection and need and want to provide for their people. They set very high expectations for those properties. But they also, they afforded ... at least me, and as far as I know, the other people on the team ... any and all resources, that were needed to meet those expectations.



And Tammye specifically well inspired me to look to achieve more, and to grow the business but also grow myself as an executive and a leader. And she did a great job of maintaining this culture of pride. They have 22 gaming properties, now. Some are very small, some are very large, but one thing that you will always notice when you visit any one of their properties is the standard of quality of guest service and pride that each and every employee, whether tribal or non, takes in their role with them. So, very, very critical, in my development.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah. What advice would you give younger women coming up in the industry?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

The younger women coming up in the industry, we talked about this a little, a couple of weeks ago. And I think the very first thing that's so important for me is that we don't expect any kind of special consideration, because we're female. I think we really should look at ourselves as executives, and whether or not we're the right person for the job, rather than whether we're female or male. But once we determine we're the right person for the job, then we just have to be very competent and bold in our abilities and ensure that we're bringing value to the organization, whatever that organization is.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, that's ... and you said, be bold. Which I thought was a very, very good word to use. I hadn't heard that before. Tell us a little bit about where you are-

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Well, have you ever, have you ... real quick though, that comes from me as-

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah.

[Wendt Carter:](#)

... once I read a quote, and I don't even know who wrote it or said it, but it said, "Speak the truth, even if your voice shakes." And that really resonated with me, because sometimes we do feel like, maybe we're the underdog. Or maybe someone may not care for our opinion, but when I say, "Be bold," that's exactly where that comes from, with me. Because I carry it with me, every day, that some things need to be said. Whether you're nervous or unsure if the group wants to hear them, or not.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, yeah. Well, it's definitely a part of also being passionate about what you do, right? Being bold. So, it's all hand in hand. Now, you're working with a very special woman also, at Cache Creek and you have a great team there. And Kari Smith, she's an amazing person, she's also been on the show. Tell us a little bit about the group there, and the leadership and how that all came about for you.

[Wendt Carter:](#)

I am, you know, it is so funny how it works out. Because I really, truly believe you land on whatever path you're intended to be on, and you don't have a lot of control over that. But, I met [crosstalk 00:24:05]-

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, that's for sure.

[Wendt Carter:](#)

... a few years back, and we had an awesome phone conversation about a role that was available at her prior property. And we weren't able to come to any kind of a situation at the time, that worked out for me moving out. When we met, the Choctaw Nation was opening or working to open a huge expansion on our Durant Resort, and timing didn't feel right, so nothing really came of that other than I made an awesome connection in the industry in Kari, and I enjoyed my talks with her.

So, fast forward a few years, and I hear ... get this call from an executive recruiter that Kari Stout-Smith is now at Cache Creek in northern California, and for me ... my children had gotten a little bit older, my son was looking at college out in California and it just made perfect sense to have a conversation with her. She's phenomenal in terms of, her leadership style and how she rallies a team and works always for the tribe's interests, and the business interest.

And so, I was able to connect with her and so, I joined the team here at Cache Creek about three months ago. And we are just having the time of our lives. We're under expansion as well, and lots going on here. So, it's just been fantastic.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, it's definitely very exciting times, for both of you. For, and the whole team over there. What do people need to know about climbing the ladder in the gaming business? What are the key things?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Oh, goodness, that's a hard one. I think, well the one thing, if we're talking specifically about young people ... and this comes from a conversation I had with my son recently ... sometimes young people seem to think that they're gonna start at the very top of whatever area that they want to join. And I don't think that, that's necessarily the truth for most people. So, basically it is to do the hard work and get the experience within the organization that you need. Whether that's in operations or HR, marketing or IT, but to work hard.

And I think that one thing that, at least for me, has strongly set certain teams apart is, the core values of those teams. Make sure that you're, for lack of a better quote, "With your people." Find your people, a team that your core values align with theirs, because I think we do our best work when that is the situation that we're in.

And then, you know, just work with integrity. Honesty and humility, with our teams and with our vendor relationships as well.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, yeah, that's great though ... you need to have integrity, and like you said, the core values, right?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Yeah, I think the alignment of core values. If you're working at an organization where yours don't align with theirs, then there's very little either one of you can

do, I think, to make that relationship work really well. So it's important to do your research and land in a place where you fit, you know?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah, absolutely. You gotta mesh with the culture. Tell me a little bit about what you see in the gaming industry now. Where are we?

[Wendt Carter:](#) Oh man, we're at a very important time in our industry. I think with sports betting, you know, in the conversation and on the horizon, that changes things. I think with online gaming in the conversation and on the horizon, things change for brick and mortar facilities as well as any organization that's gonna dip into those areas of the business.

You know, the legislation about those opportunities is always on discussion, and now, it will be discussed differently in every market, so I think it's important we do our research and kind of start mapping our plans, for what that looks like for us. Those are the biggest things, for now.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Business is good.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Business is very good. My short time in California, I've come to realize that many, many people are building or expanding, so there's ... competition is tough. Certainly.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yep.

[Wendt Carter:](#) But it is, it's a good time in gaming.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Should we take some calls?

[Wendt Carter:](#) If you would like to, that would be great.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Absolutely, this has been fantastic. Okay, let's see what we got here. You got a lot of callers, calling in here tonight. Let's see.

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

[Speaker 3:](#) Yes, thank you, Tino. As always, enjoying your show.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Thank you.

[Speaker 3:](#) Wendy, I'm looking at your website. Wendy, I'm looking at your website. It certainly appears your property is absolutely gorgeous, and you should obviously take a lot of pride in that property, so kudos to the entire tribe and the folks at your lovely property.

I'm interested in how, and can you give an example, of how your studies in sociology parlayed into marketing. I have often said, marketing is part sociology

and definitely part mathematics. And how, first, would you agree with that type of idea? And if you do, how, can you give some examples, of how you parlayed the sociology and mathematics and made it all work as one happy combination.

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Oh my goodness, well that is a very, very good question. Kudos to you, and thank you for the compliment on the property. We're very proud of our location in the Capay Valley.

For me, the interest in human behavior, in folks, really sparked my interest in database marketing and analytics. So, one of my very first positions in the marketing department was that one, specifically. And I think that that kind of intrigue that comes with studying humans, kind of sparks a lot of ideas in how you may manipulate offers or segment your database.

And then the database and mathematics part, in my mind, is kind of like your payoff, right? So that's where you go to evaluate whether or not your gut was right, whenever you were having all these ideas. So, certainly for me, I do think over time and especially when you work in the casino industry for a long time, we all have a gut kind of what's right and wrong with our database, just kind of a gut instinct. But, I think that especially as we move into the future, that data measurement of whether or not our ideas are actually paying off for our companies is critically important.

I like to say, you can't run the business from a spreadsheet, but you also can't run the business from great big ideas. We definitely need both firing.

[Speaker 3:](#)

[inaudible 00:31:14]. So true.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Yeah, that's correct.

[Speaker 3:](#)

I thank you, I know you have a bunch of calls, and so I just wanted to slip that in. Wendy, for now-

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

Well, if you got another question, that's okay.

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Yeah, [crosstalk 00:31:25].

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

You have another question? Okay, go ahead, shoot.

[Speaker 3:](#)

With social media, especially Facebook and the trials and tribulations Facebook is going through, to say the least. How do you, how have you utilized Facebook more than just a information source? I've had challenges trying to gather information from Facebook. No pun on Cambridge Analytica.

But, using Facebook whether it's by promotions, and then you have the challenges of ages, things like that. Age restrictions. Have you, what best tools, whether Facebook, Twitter or Instagram or any of the social medias have you

used, or have you seen that you really like, or thought, "You know what, someday I'm gonna give that a shot."

[Wendt Carter:](#)

So, for me, I would call it about two and a half years ago, I sort of shifted in the way that I manage the platforms on social, and it's not just Facebook. But Facebook is definitely the hub for our age demographic in gaming. Many casinos guests are 55 plus, or a little younger and that particular platform at the casinos I've worked at, is the most adopted in our loyal guest base. And so, Facebook is prioritized pretty highly in our strategy.

But I think that the changes that Facebook has made over time, you know, one day ... it used to be, you build a community and you can talk to that community of people however much you want. And what it's evolved to is, most certainly a paid media platform, because you don't talk to your whole community base unless you put funds, advertising funds, behind what you're saying. And so, that to me, moves us out of a place where it's just a wall where we share ... you know, maybe not high quality imagery or vetted out copy, or things like that.

It's less instantaneous, and now, when we're putting thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars behind our social media activity, it's now become paid media and so, like you wouldn't let me build a print ad you were going to pay for in clip art, right? So now the content matters. We're paying to show it, otherwise only one, two, three percent of our guests, followers, even see it. And so now, the content needs to be super high quality, in my mind. And it needs to be telling your brand story in a manner that you're very proud of, because you're using a good portion of your advertising funds to show it.

[Speaker 3:](#)

And do you, is the idea to add social media buckets, and, or to just simply take from, we'll say, billboards, radio, television, or ... obviously it's a mixture, do you notice one bucket might be getting pinched a little bit more, in order to support your social media funds?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

You know, I haven't personally looked at it that way, I've looked at it that, traditional media still stands and it still has a very important role in our overall strategy. I can say that I have migrated funds from some print, into digital, at some places that I've worked, because I do think that the nuances of the properties I worked at ... and I don't think this rings true for every property, so take it with a grain of salt ... the print publications ... So, like, I recently was near Dallas, Texas. And the Dallas Morning News is a great big newspaper. And so, I migrated a lot of my print funds to either their online advertising or, and, some to my social. And I could see certain markets where that might make sense. But overall, I think that a well balanced strategy including all those mediums is very important.

[Speaker 3:](#)

Oh. That's very interesting.

[Tino Magnatta:](#)

That's great. That's great, thank you so much.

[Speaker 3:](#) Well, thank you again, I appreciate both of you guys.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Appreciate it, have a good night. Great questions.

[Speaker 3:](#) You too.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good, good way to start it off. See what else we got here. Okay.

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

[Linda Gordon:](#) Hi Tino, hi Wendy, this is Linda Gordon with SCA. How are you today?

[Wendt Carter:](#) Wonderful, Linda, how are you?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good, hi Linda.

[Linda Gordon:](#) It's been a pleasure listening to you, and this remarkable journey that you took, starting at 11 years old is really something.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah.

[Linda Gordon:](#) I congratulate you on this journey and your bravery, and your being bold and willingness to take on things that, and try things, that you've never tried before. And it's, it's laudable. I do have a couple of questions for you, and then I'm going to let you go, because I understand that you are ... that lots of people that want to talk to you.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah.

[Linda Gordon:](#) So, with regard to when you started out, and, so, as, when women in gaming, particularly, in a male dominated culture which as you mentioned, it still is to a great extent. Did you notice that it didn't take very long for your credibility to build when they noticed that you worked hard, you respected the job, you understood your relationship between your job, their job, and the revenue that you produced and the contribution you make. Did you notice that they quickly understood that you were a valued member?

[Wendt Carter:](#) I don't know if I would say quickly, because-

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Well, like you said, that's an honest answer.

[Wendt Carter:](#) ... you got me there.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) That's definitely an honest answer, I love it.

[Wendt Carter:](#) You know, especially in tribal gaming, many of the tribes that were where I worked, did not have fully developed marketing departments when I started working there. And so there was sort of, I not only faced this kind of male, female inequity in some cases on the team, but I also faced this idea that marketing maybe was like, the people who did posters, right?

[Linda Gordon:](#) Right.

[Wendt Carter:](#) And so I took that to my advantage, and I used that to try to also educate the executives around me of the impact we could have through database marketing, through brand story telling, through social media, through casino promotions and measurement of those. And really what I tried to do was integrate myself into each department's business to a degree where male, female, yes or no, doesn't matter. They want me a part of their business because I'm impacting their business. Does that answer the question?

[Linda Gordon:](#) Yes, it does, yes.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah, that's, major answer.

[Linda Gordon:](#) That's a very [inaudible 00:39:06] great answer.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) And I think just to interject, yeah, I mean, just to interject. Everyone that's listening, that's a major thing that Wendy just said. I mean, if you're in there, being impactful and aggressive, and showing results on every level, you can't be denied. Is that correct? Am I saying the right thing, Wendy?

[Wendt Carter:](#) That has been my experience, for sure.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah. Great question, Linda. Go ahead.

[Linda Gordon:](#) My pleasure. I just, I have a question with you, with regard ... with all your food and beverage background ... I love this suggestive selling, the thing that you learned early, early on at Darden. It's all, as you said, it's across all work environments, actually. But do you find, with your background in food and beverage and you probably have some warm feelings for that part of the business, since you started there. How do you feel non gaming, which is part of food and beverage, and gaming revenues, how do you think they converge? Either at your property or overall, with regard to revenue share, and where you, how you integrate those two. Or how you separate those two, as a business model.

[Wendt Carter:](#) That's a good question. I do think that that answer ... and much like many answers, in casino marketing are gonna be different based on the property and the market and what all is there, but I will say that running those restaurants as efficiently as possible, and when I say efficiently I don't mean cheaply. But, I think that-

[Linda Gordon:](#) Right.

[Wendt Carter:](#) ... suggestive selling and menu engineering matters in terms of closing the gap, if the margin is not one that's favorable to the casino. In many, many casinos restaurants are loss leaders or, rarely, some of them do not contribute to the bottom line in a positive way. And so I do think it applies, whether each individual non gaming entity is a profitable or non profitable section, business unit, in your organization.

But I do think there are many markets, and namely resort destination properties, who can certainly position their non gaming entities to be contributing factors to the bottom line in their business. And I think that it's important that we get rid of, especially in any kind of rural casino, where it was largely accepted for many years that non gaming may be a loss leader. And reprioritize our resources, and make sure we have the correct focus on our non gaming entities.

Because I do think that they can, when positioned as a total package, kind of trip driver situation, that is ... you may not drive from, I'm gonna take it this way ... you may not drive an hour and a half from, or two hours, from San Francisco to Cache Creek Resort for the steakhouse alone, because you'll drive by 15 excellent steakhouses on your way. But you may drive there for an excellent steakhouse, a wonderful spa experience, gaming, certainly. A golf experience.

And so I think, when I say brand story telling, I think it's really important to position ourselves where we're appealing to guests at a broad spectrum level that they realize there is so much to do. Because for so long, the messaging was gaming only, in many markets, because that's how we pay our bills. But I do think they can contribute, when messaged correctly.

[Linda Gordon:](#) Yeah, that's a wonderful answer. Yeah. Thank you so much, I totally agree.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you.

[Linda Gordon:](#) And I thank you for your [inaudible 00:42:55] today.

[Wendt Carter:](#) I enjoyed your questions.

[Linda Gordon:](#) I know, I think ... oh, okay. Thank you for your time today.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Linda, thanks so much. It was a pleasure to have you on the show.

[Linda Gordon:](#) My pleasure. Sure, my pleasure. Bye Wendy.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Take care, have a good evening. Great questions.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Bye.



[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good night.

[Linda Gordon:](#) Bye bye.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Bye bye. All right, yeah, the other thing that does too, is if, you know, the husband wants to go play golf and have a steak, and the wife can go for a spa and play some slot machines, right? So, you have something for everybody.

[Wendt Carter:](#) I think that's so, yeah, and then also as we work toward building kind of a younger demographic, of course our 55 plus really loves the slots and tables, but we talk often internally at Cache Creek about, for me, my age ... which I'm not gonna tell you on air ... but, for me, I like to go visit casinos and you'll certainly get my whole wallet. But you'd probably get a larger cut ... you'd get some spa, you'd get some F and B, you'd get some golf and you'd get a smaller casino cut. But you'd get the whole thing, you know?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Right. Yeah.

[Wendt Carter:](#) And so when we talk about demographic and this experiential expectation we have not ... it's a little different than it has been, historically.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah. And, me and my wife, we're the same way. We don't really gamble, but we love everything else. So, when we go to a casino, we'll do everything else except we don't gamble, so. And that's a really good experience for us.

Let's take another call, here. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Wendy Carter?

[Nick Rossi:](#) Hello Tino, this is Nick [Rossi 00:44:30], how are you?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Nick, how are you tonight? Good to hear you.

[Nick Rossi:](#) Doing great. Hi Wendy.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Hi.

[Nick Rossi:](#) Hey, hi. I have one question, and the thing that really stood out to me was how you described your childhood and raising. I wondered if you could describe some of the skills you acquired being raised on a farm in a rural community, as well as, at 11 years old working in a kitchen. Things you use today.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Well, I don't want to oversell it, I was ... I mean, I can drive a tractor, but it wasn't ... I mean, I have seven brothers out of those 10 siblings that I mentioned I had. So I wasn't like, really bucking bells or anything on a farm, very often. But the skills that I acquired really I think were central to this idea that my family, we have a humble background. We weren't well off, and I think that, that many people in the family, that many mouths to feed for lack of a better statement,

taught me that I could one, very young ... nobody sent me to work, right? I just asked if I could earn some money.

And the owner of the restaurant that I worked at, I think that his commitment to teaching a young kid who he allowed into his business, basically, work ethic and integrity, really was what shaped my future. And really it was central around this idea that I could have as many shifts as I wanted, it was up to me. He didn't make me work, he allowed me to. And that for me, taught me that I could earn and do well ... by the time I was 16, by the way, I was supervising that restaurant, while women 40 plus years old, I was now the boss.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Wow.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Because I felt like he taught me how to run his business and then trusted me to do it because I had, I was reliable and honest. And so that, to me, is the more critical part about my development.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Yeah. You brought a lot to the table.

[Nick Rossi:](#) [crosstalk 00:46:43] great.

[Wendt Carter:](#) I'm sure I made plenty of mistakes along the way, too, but he was thankfully decent to me, to teach me as I went.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) That's great.

[Nick Rossi:](#) Anything you apply in your current role, today?

[Wendt Carter:](#) Yeah, I apply, what I really apply in my current role is this sense of duty, right? So that particular organization only had two full time employees and so, it was the one restaurant in many surrounding communities, and so it was very, very, very busy there. And so if you didn't come to work, you literally broke down service, you impacted all your coworkers, all the team members.

And so, if you didn't have a strong work ethic and you weren't reliable, you didn't have a sense of commitment to your team, you didn't last there very long. Because it really was mission critical that every person on the list show up, and I try to carry that with me always I have, for my whole entire career, this being reliable and showing up. Doing what you say you're gonna do, has been very important.

[Nick Rossi:](#) Fantastic.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Great. Nick, thank you so much. Appreciate it.

[Nick Rossi:](#) Thanks, guys. Have a good night.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Have a good night. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Wendy Carter?

[Speaker 6:](#) Yeah, hi Wendy, this Ron Mileti from Vilocity Interactive in Phoenix, Arizona. And I-

[Wendt Carter:](#) Hi Ron.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Hi Ron, how are you tonight?

[Speaker 6:](#) Hey Tino, how are you?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good, good, good.

[Speaker 6:](#) So I was wondering how you predict casinos changing to keep up with other entertainment over the next 10 years or so? So, like, consumers have a lot of options, more options, more high tech options keep coming on line. How do you think casinos will need to adapt, and then, how do you think us marketers need to prepare for that change?

[Wendt Carter:](#) That's a very good question. I think that casinos-

[Speaker 6:](#) Thank you.

[Wendt Carter:](#) ... I mean, it really is. Because it's on, if it's not on our minds as marketing VPs or CMOs, then it should be, because it's a very valid question. Entertainment specifically is a part of our business that's, you know, becoming ever so challenging. More and more every year, as the entertainers have more options, too. They have more options of what venues to play and how their tours look.

But, side note from that, as marketers, I think we have to think about being very diligent in our planning and our decision making. I don't think that, I think gone are the days that you could just have a big event, and they will come. I think that our, it's incredibly important to run pro formas and post formas and constantly track our return. And then also in our marketing, our advertising and our brand messaging, it used to be I'd say 80 plus percent in many markets, you were putting out a message that was specific to a call to action. Come to the concert, come to the promotion, book a hotel room.

I think that the brands that are doing it really, really well now are telling this ... they've developed a persona, whether that be luxury, fun, excitement, whatever that is. And they're telling, they're using more of their media dollar to tell that brand story which has a much longer, in my mind, impact on the business. We're just kind of learning that, in very many markets, about this idea that we can solidify our brand stance over time, if we use some of our resources to specifically try to aid in guest recall and unaided recall and telling our stories in a manner where they feel like they're going in a place that they want to be

because the people like them are there. I think that's all more prominent now than it has been to us, in the past.

[Speaker 6:](#) No, that makes a lot of sense. I think that once you have that brand solidified in the consumer's mind, then, it starts to create this, to lead some of the decisions for you, in terms of what the entertainment is. Because you can use the brand as your guide to what should be there, and what should not.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Certainly.

[Speaker 6:](#) So I think that makes a lot of sense. Yeah. Great insights.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Ron, thanks so much and thanks for calling in, we really appreciate it.

[Speaker 6:](#) Yeah, yeah, thank you.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Have a good evening.

[Speaker 6:](#) Yeah, you too.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Okay, that was great. Some really great questions tonight.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Yes, very [crosstalk 00:51:36].

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Really great questions. Linda's great, isn't she? I love Linda.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Yeah, she is, I'd like to meet her in person.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) She's one of those people that have been in this business so long, and knows so many people. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Wendy Carter?

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#) Aloha, Tino, aloha Wendy, how are you guys today? It's Mike Ka'ahanui.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Hi.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Hello Mike, how are you?

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#) Can you hear me now? All right, that's great.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Absolutely.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui](#): Hey, Wendy, great call so far. I'm just very interested to hear, on that background, it sounds fantastic, and honestly a lot of the callers ahead of me got some of the good business question out of there. But I always have a couple that are always important to me as I get further and longer in the business, and you know how small the industry gets after that time.

We talk about, how do you develop, and how do you look for that next generation of talent, so that you have that succession plan in place? And really nurture that growth? What something that you do, in specifics, when you're trying to identify that talent?

[Wendt Carter](#): Oh, that's a fabulous question. I want to start by saying, I think that that is perhaps our biggest weakness in many areas of our industry. Because these younger folks have a different expectation of a work experience than some of us have had in the past. And so, the days when we just wanted a job or an opportunity to prove ourselves, are not the same that they used to be, with some of our younger generation. They want to live and work downtown, where they can walk to work not drive to rural areas. They want to work from home, they want to do all kinds of things, some of the younger people do.

And so, to say that I have a great method or plan in place, would be not true. But to say that I am constantly thinking about it and identifying talent within my organization, would be true. I don't know that there's a secret formula, but I do think that we have to have it on our mind. Kind of the differences and how young folks, what they expect their work experience to be. Does that make sense?

[Mike Ka'Ahanui](#): Well, it certainly does. And then, so I guess the other part of that is, when you identify those individuals, do you try to bring some realism to their expectations, so that they understand that, though you have these high expectations of yourself, you gotta prove it sometimes. You gotta do the work, so that people acknowledge ... and that's really the biggest thing, and that's been the trend I've heard in your conversation all night. Is, you do the work and it's hard to deny, right?

[Wendt Carter](#): Yeah, and honestly, it's ... it's tough-

[Mike Ka'Ahanui](#): Right.

[Wendt Carter](#): ... because I wouldn't, you know, it's hard because overcoming that, their expectation they've developed for what their work will look like, it's really, really difficult. And I've been in situations where I've thrown people in the fire, who have shown a lot of talent ... and when I say throw in the fire, I mean they just, happenstance, happened to be the person who's there and available and has worked really hard ... and the only thing, many of the times, talent rises to the top. And many of the times, that works out really well.

I have had some experience with some younger people, even ever so recently, not now but in the last few years, that they have an expectation of a payoff of their hard work too, so I've had a couple run maybe interim or various things. And they did a decent job, but ... or a great job, for their experience, in fact ... but if the organization doesn't end up ultimately hiring them for that role, it has manifested a little differently in the younger people that I've worked with, than it had in years past.

So, I think it's important that we, when we do give them responsibilities, and they have any kind of expectation of a promotion or anything, we're super clear that they're working to earn a job, you know? Because I have seen some, I've run into some situations where they did a good enough job, for a certain amount of time, and the organization went with a more experienced person, and there was definitely more emotion attached to that decision than I was accustomed to, as well.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#)

Well stated, I have, I know I have, I think many people have run into that same experience. Having had the great fortune of working with Kari myself, and being in that market-

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Oh, you did?

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#)

... you obviously ... oh, I have. Specifically, at Thunder Valley. So, working there and understanding that climate, you know, you got some great competition coming in. And you talked about, it's gonna be, a good time to be a marketer and a good time to be in the casino business, but it's gonna be heavy. Can you talk a little bit about what your expectations are, for Hard Rock and then for the Boyd property coming in as well?

[Wendt Carter:](#)

You know, I really wish that I had been longer than 95 days or whatever it is, I haven't, I'm not ready to say, really, where I stand other than I have seen marketers fall victim to some idea that competition was not going to be impactful on their business. And so, I think my early, out the gate answer to that would be, of course it's going to be impactful. Of course, we need to work very hard right now. We're well positioned to kind of clean up our house and get ourselves buttoned up to where we've got a great stance in the market, before that competition comes on, and that is my early ... now is the time to prepare, is all I'll say to that.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#)

Well, I have to say, I've been fortunate enough to visit, within the last couple of months, the property. Gorgeous, love what you guys are doing-

[Wendt Carter:](#)

Thank you.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#)

... and it's good to see a team in there that's very eager, so, great call and thank you for your time.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you, very nice to meet you-

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Thank you Mike.

[Wendt Carter:](#) ... and we are eager.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#) Yeah, most definitely. You might see a LinkedIn request from me, just because I like to say hi.

[Wendt Carter:](#) I'll be watching for it.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Take care Mike-

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#) Have a good one guys.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) ... thank you so much. All right.

[Mike Ka'Ahanui:](#) All right, bye.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Okay, bye bye. I think we have time for one more. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Wendy? Yes, do you have a question for Wendy?

[Mike:](#) Hey [crosstalk 00:58:26].

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Tino Magnatta. Yes, I am.

[Mike:](#) Hey, how are you guys?

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Can you hear me? Hey.

[Mike:](#) Mike from [crosstalk00:00:58:28].

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Good, good, good.

[Mike:](#) I know you guys only got about a minute left, just, Wendy good conversation. I enjoyed it. A couple of quick questions. You touched on online gaming, and you touched on sports betting, sports booking. Two questions, one, are you hearing the demand for those ... call them products, or platforms ... from the customers? And two, without revealing company or property secrets, what are doing broadly to address this, if there's the demand for it?

[Wendt Carter:](#) I right now have not heard. I would not say that there's a large demand for either, yet. But I do think that that's largely related to the fact that our guests don't always know what's on the horizon or in legislation for their casino of choice until they see something somewhere else. So they may or may not be very in tune to what's on the horizon for gaming.

And as far as preparing for both of those things, what I would say is we're watching, of course, any and all legislation very closely, we're having lots and lots of internal conversations about what those, those two things, how they may fit for our organization.

And we're also monitoring other markets, right? So, there are other parts of the country that some people are kind of dipping their toes into those things, and we're keeping a close eye on them. I think specifically for sports betting or booking, many tribal casinos are in a situation where, floor space matters and how you allocate that square footage matters, and I think that one of the bigger things any of us need to be doing is monitoring how those situations are going in other places, and making decisions on whether or not we want to allocate any of our very valuable space to those, to that.

[Mike:](#) That's fantastic. And lastly, the conversation you had with, I believe it was your son. About not going right for the top position, or not expecting the top position. Record that, because I have a son that needs to get that message. So, I'd [crosstalk 01:00:48].

[Wendt Carter:](#) Hey, we will do that. I've got three sons.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) We'll send it to you.

[Wendt Carter:](#) I have three sons. That are all, you know, kind of ... they say, "Well, I know someone in a casino, maybe I'll go to work there." And I say, "Maybe valet, not ... to start with, that's where you start."

[Mike:](#) Yeah, it's amazing, right? I appreciate it guys, have a great night.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Same to you.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Thank you so much. Well Wendy, it's been an incredible interview and it's just amazing how an hour just flies by. We've talked the whole time. Some great, great wisdom, and some great knowledge and some great passion. And I really appreciate your being on the show. Thank you so much.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Thank you very much for having me, especially having just made a major move to a different gaming market, I certainly appreciate it. And to the listeners, I'm always looking to network, and idea share with others, so I just really appreciate the time.

[Tino Magnatta:](#) Thank you so much Wendy, you have a good evening and we'll have you back on the show.

[Wendt Carter:](#) Very well, thank you, bye.



[Tino Magnatta](#):

Thank you so much, goodnight. All right, that was great. Wendy's just an amazing person, she's incredible. I've done a couple of panels with her, and known her for a long time. And it's, she's really something.

Thursday, I have a special show, Brian Decorah, CEO of Snoqualmie, he's gonna be at the Mariner's game, the season opener at the Mariner's game, with his whole team ... because they have a deal with the Mariners ... and we're gonna meet his whole team and we're gonna talk about team building. And how he was able to bring people from various verticals and bring them together and make this incredible team. And so, I'm very excited about that. It'll be the first time that we've done a show where the guests will be in a different location.

Remember, everybody's got a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen. You guys have a good night, and God bless.

END