



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Laura Stensgar
	Marketing Director
	Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort and Hotel
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Tino Magnatta: Welcome to another episode of GG radio, this is Tino Magnatta and we are laughing here, of course the wonderful Laura Stensgar is on our show, welcome Laura, how are you?

Laura Stensgar: Hi, [inaudible 00:00:40] good evening everyone.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, and we are just laughing because we're having technical difficulties and Laura gets the award for the last minute guest on our show, so fantastic she made it just in time.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, one minute yeah.

Tino Magnatta: You went on an interesting trip recently to Barona, tell us a little bit about what you experienced and what you took away from it.

Laura Stensgar: Wow, it was amazing, so Barona has always kind of been top of mind in regards quality customer service kind of up and up in promotions. I've always wanted to visit and I have visited Barona before actually, I think we visited there during a NIGA Conference and I played golf on their beautiful golf course.

I didn't get to go into the casino and have the wonderful tour that I had with wonderful Thomas Dullien, what an amazing guy. We got to visit, I think it was maybe like a month ago or so. It's always good to kind of explore, see what others are doing in the industry, or just in general what people are doing with some cool businesses.

As I said I always wanted to visit Barona and got to visit and Tino, thank you very much for introducing us to Thomas. Thomas is this wonderful executive, I think he works in HR and he was just amazing. He gave us a tour and spoke to the culture, the identity of Barona, their value system and it was just amazing.

Everything is gaming centric and they cater to the gamer but also taking care of their employees and keeping them motivated and keeping them informed, so it was very inspiring to go there and just to see what they've done, the amazing things that they've done. To admire all the amazing awards they received up close and personal there.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah and the fascinating thing about them is that it's been eight years or 10 years, I'm sorry, since they've done any advertising what so ever.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, that was interesting.

Tino Magnatta: They hadn't done any advertising, they just do digital so they have none of that cost and I think they're pioneers in the sense of looking at customer service as it affects revenue. I don't think we've ever thought of customer service that way, you know what I'm saying?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, a whole different level it was very interesting, intriguing, they have I think they call themselves the home of the multipliers, is that right?

Tino Magnatta: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Laura Stensgar: I believe so so when it rains automatically add these multipliers.

Tino Magnatta: People know already.

Laura Stensgar: Their customer base knows, when Thomas we giving us the tour and he spent hours with us, I think it was two, three hours. I was just amazed by his customer service and while he was giving the tour he would be giving quality customer service right in front of us.

There would be customers there and he'd say, "Hi, Eileen, how you doing, how's your daughter and what can I do to help you?" Because her service light was on or she even looked at him and kind of gave him like I need some help and he was servicing right while he was doing the tour. He was saying that what I thought was really cool and I think that every casino should do that is just to stay in touch with their customer.

Is that their executives spend a least 20 minutes on the hour on the floor, communicating, interacting with the customer. Giving that customer service and also interacting with them and building that relationship.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, and I think when he talks about the consumer experience as it relates or retail things that we have in the casino. The casino gambling experience is a completely different experience. They treat the casino floor a little bit differently than they would if they had a hotel, and amenities which you can get your arms around. They're always floor centric.

Laura Stensgar: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes, definitely.

Tino Magnatta: They spend a lot of time on the floor.

Laura Stensgar: I love golf courses, so I went to their golf course again just to visit and asked what their rates are. Immediately their golf director states, "Well, do you have a card it depends on what tier level you're at and then you have the discounted rate based on your tier." I thought that's great, they sell the club in all their amenities and they are cross-promoting throughout all their different amenities. Yeah, very consistent.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah really good, good. What was the biggest take away for you then from that trip because if were just summed it up in a couple of sentences.

Laura Stensgar: I'm sure, okay, definitely understanding who you are, I think that's so important and they clearly, they're surrounded by competitors, they're in a highly

competitive market and they understand who they are and really build on their strengths. I think that's so important. I came back and that was the biggest thing I came back with.

Also, working together, working together towards that effort as far as building on those strengths. Anything that we do should be built around, who are we, what are we about and just everything enhances that effort.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, tell me a little bit about Laura Stensgar, you grew up on the Coeur d'Alene, right, on the Res?

Laura Stensgar: Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Tell us a little bit more what that was like back then.

Laura Stensgar: Things seemed much more simple and time went much slower than what it is now. My father, he was involved in tribal politics, he's been chairman for years and always involved with tribal politics.

Tino Magnatta: 30 years, right?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, he currently is our tribal chairman so growing up in the environment of always looking out for the tribe and our community. Often times he would be gone for meeting and things and then my mom was home taking care of us. Family values, also tribal values and I learned all of that when I was growing and you know we're a community, we're a tribe and we need to support each other.

When things are hard pick each other up and when they're good, let's celebrate and so learned that we should always be looking out for each other, I think that was really important and very tight with my family and our community and our tribe.

Tino Magnatta: You said you lived organically, hunted with your dad, you didn't like watching the animals but you liked the food, the trout, the big garden, the cows.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah [crosstalk 00:08:41]

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little bit about that feeling?

Laura Stensgar: A lot of people, it's real big now to eat organic, to live organic and back then we didn't even think that way and ...

Tino Magnatta: That's what you knew, that was normal.

Laura Stensgar: Yes, it was just normal and I did lived on a field, went hunting for elk, deer and moose just to sustained for the year. We would fish for trout in our creek, in our stream. We'd go stream fishing, loved that, I loved going up to the mountains

and going stream fishing. The mountains were just you know 20, 30 minutes down the road.

That was just amazing going huckleberry picking, and there's camas and some of the Indian roots, although I'm spoiled now I love spicy food but those traditional foods [crosstalk 00:09:40] I love venison and so we had the berries ... Yeah, it's delicious and trout and salmon so grew up with all those organic foods.

Then we had some pigs that we raised and we had a garden, yeah, I didn't realize how lucky I was to grow up in that environment.

Tino Magnatta: Amazing, amazing environment.

Laura Stensgar: Always taught to respect the land, to respect the animals, that we're all here living together and then even when we picked the berries, you know don't over pick. Preserve and protect, for next year.

Tino Magnatta: Something that if you look at today's society is something that is very on the forefront now the whole ecosystem and preserving our planet. Whereas your people have always lived by that rule.

Laura Stensgar: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah just take what you need.

Tino Magnatta: You've never seen it any other way, yeah you've never seen it any other way, it's really cool.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Your dad is a very special guy and he said we serve the tribe, get your education, come work for the tribe and give back, part of your duty.

Laura Stensgar: Yes, he always stated that.

Tino Magnatta: How did that affect you, because you seem to have done a lot of great things for the tribe, you've also done some other stuff too.

Laura Stensgar: Definitely was instilled in me, to go out, get education and then come back and come back and help the tribe. As I said growing up that's what we grew up as far as you know taking care of the community, taking care of the tribe. In that and we're always looking out for the next generations to come.

It was just instilled in me and it was kind of automatic and it was just something that we do. I did leave and I think it's good to leave as well. To get out there and experience the real world, to get out there and get your education but also learn the way of life as well. To get out there to see, get off the reservation, the Res and there and ...

Tino Magnatta: See the world.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah see the world and meet different people and see different dynamics and just living life. It was amazing, it was good to get out there. I did attend at the time it was [inaudible 00:12:28] junior college, now it's a university in Kansas. That was just amazing just to go there and see the different tribes, the Alaskan natives and the native teachers and just really be thousands and thousands of miles away from home.

To kind of grow and and then move on to Seattle for a little bit but like I said it was always instilled in me to come back and finish you're education my dad states and says you need to finish your education. That's what drew me back home and graduated from Eastern Washington University in Cheney and then much, much later which actually in 2014 I got my EMBA and that was so difficult to go back to school.

I did it an I got my EMBA but I did it because I wanted to further myself and I wanted to in order to contribute more towards my efforts to working for the tribe and the casino. When you're away like that you really learn to appreciate your home, learn to appreciate your family. I learned to appreciate my tribe as well. It was great to come back and start working with the tribe.

Tino Magnatta: What quality do you think your dad has that have made him such a unifying force for the tribe and how do you think he has maintained that through the years?

Laura Stensgar: I think understanding, you know that we really do need to look out for generations to come. Understanding that responsibility. We need to ... Our ancestors they did a good job as far as preserving our culture, our identity and some of the basic things that they were fighting for, we're still fighting for that today and I think he really understands that just simple things like education, health care, land base, water, our language, all of those things our ancestors fought for.

Preserved and protected for today, I think my father realizes that and he realizes he's got that responsibility to do the same thing for out next generations to come. In order to do that, you know what are we going to do to preserve and protect to provide for health care, for education, our land base and our culture, our language.

He's really good about identifying good people and to help towards those efforts and believing in our tribal people who do come back with their education and to help contribute towards those efforts. He really does care, really does care you know it's not just about him. It's about the tribe and those efforts to for our next generation.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, no question about that, he's got a vision for the future. Tell me a little bit about your experience with the education that you got. How you felt when you went to school, what you learned.

Laura Stensgar: I did feel like the Res girl, I did feel like the little Res girl that's in the big city and a different environment. I mentioned having a value system is so important and I had good teachings, to what am I there for? My dad talked to me before I left for college, it's like what are you going to school for?

He was very strict growing up so going off to college, he's not there, my parents aren't there and my grandmother wasn't there to tell me what to do and how to do it. I'm not saying things were perfect but I definitely did fall and stumble a bit and got myself back up and tried to get back on track.

A lot of those teachings came into play so understanding why I was there, what my purpose was and just trying to hold my head up and be proud of who I am, who I represent and move forward.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's a life changing experience to ...

Laura Stensgar: It's scary, yeah. It's scary but it's good, it was good just to meet different people, meet different cultures and mature and realize it's up to you. If you want to complete college, you got to do the work, put in the time, do the work, study, it's good, good, good stuff though.

Tino Magnatta: Work hard and you had some good mentors too.

Laura Stensgar: Oh, mentorship is so important, since I was in grade school. We had a tribal, well we have a tribal school but I went to tribal school, first through eighth grade was equivalent to tribal school, I always reflect back great memories. I even remember the teachers, instructors I had.

It's so cool to have Native teachers, we had Coeur d'Alene tribal teachers, we had [inaudible 00:18:20] Purse, we had a Chippewa Cree teacher.

Tino Magnatta: [inaudible 00:18:23] Purse I know who that is.

Laura Stensgar: Then we just had a great environment, we had many pow wows and celebrations, we learned our language and it was just a really [crosstalk 00:18:41] yeah it's very nurturing.

Tino Magnatta: It's so cool.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, and then we had mentors and to this day, I have some of the same mentors that I had in grade school and they told me you're going to do great things, we believe in you, we want you to do well.

Tino Magnatta: Some of them wrote you letters, too, right?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, I had, even when I was off to college, one of those teachers, she's the doctor, she's a doctor now, Dr. Chris Meyers and she wrote letters to me while I was off to college, still telling me and encouraging me, you're doing great, you're amazing, you're a smart lady and we look forward to having you come home and help contribute towards, moving us forward.

Always having that mentorship, I still go to her today for advice, I look to her and her accomplishments and it's so important to have mentors. Not only as a tribal person, a woman but she really did really helped me as far as believing in myself and having confidence to take on some of these difficult situations and experiences.

Tino Magnatta: Now you grew up before the gaming and you saw the transition. Take us through that a little bit, pre-gaming, how it was because I know that employment was scares, your dad was struggling and then take us through the whole what gaming did and how it shaped everything.

Laura Stensgar: Yes, definitely, I often reflect on this story because I kind of always try to remember where we came from and things are great right now but back then Coeur d'Alene casino we're 26 years into operation. This was in 1992 when we started, we opened our doors, however the process to getting into gaming started around 1990, 91.

Back then Coeur d'Alene Reservation had no jobs, actually they were seasonal jobs, there was high unemployment. A lot of the tribal members and even in community members, had to leave the reservation for jobs. Very low income jobs and things were kind of desperate, high social ills, a lot of alcoholism and it was just kind of hard times.

We had started like some operations, I think we had travel farms, and that kind of struggled, we had logging and so just things were kind of really difficult at that time. Then we heard about gaming, we heard about this gaming and kind of foreign to us. We had tribal leaders who said they have this sentiment that we're here to take care of our people, we're here to preserve and protect what we have so very, very cautious.

They said let's put together a committee as to whether or not gaming is good for us, let's explore the pros and the cons. That committee, actually we learned about the Federal Indian Gaming Regulatory Act which passed in 1988 and so we heard that gaming was supposed to be brought to the tribes to help them better themselves.

Also, later we understood that the Seminoles were operating their gaming successfully before the Act even passed. Truly it was infringement on sovereignty. We thought okay this may be an opportunity but we have to look

at it, and we've heard other tribes taking part in it. At that time there was bingo and there was charity bingo halls in our local market, Spokane, Washington.

This was at the bingo hall, we thought wow, bingo, the only association I had with bingo was like in the church basement with the little [crosstalk 00:23:15]. It's like how are going to make money having that? Yeah, but then they were full, those charity halls were full and then we went, we heard about the Colville Tribe in Okanogan, Washington. Went and visited their bingo hall and they called it high stakes bingo.

They paid a little higher in payouts and they were allowed to do that because it was Indian gaming and so they had an advantage over the charity halls. Then we heard about this amazing tribe called the Oneida in Wisconsin, Green Bay Wisconsin. Heard that they were doing great things and so we visited there and we flew into Green Bay, Wisconsin, my first time.

Got off this international airport and just like a mile down the road and you could see it, was this beautiful resort. They had what we have today which was amazing.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, they already had it back then, who did you meet with the [crosstalk 00:24:21]?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, Sharon House, Rick Hill.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah how about chairman Stevens, Ernie, Ernie Stevens.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, yes definitely and it's a very progressive tribe, it was amazing to see beautiful hotels, the casino and then they took us for a ride through their reservation. We saw the development that they did, what they did with their gaming dollars in the form of they have, they owned the shopping mall, they had their own senior center, their own senior living, their own housing.

They had a medical center and a wellness center, it was just amazing, we were just in awe. We came back and we were just inspired, we said we need to do this. Let's do this. Then we sat down with the state of Idaho, because that's what you're supposed to do in the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act is to meet with your state, each of the tribes, the five Idaho tribes.

You're supposed to meet with the state and negotiate their gaming compact. We did so and I know I'm kind of going on and on is this okay, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, because really are you kidding, this is [crosstalk 00:25:40] keep going.

Laura Stensgar: This is so amazing to me is that we were sitting at the table negotiating, I wasn't, I was there at the gaming meeting but our tribal leaders spoke up and said, "We want to put this into our gaming compact, we want 5% of our net revenues to

go towards education." The state representative they're like you want to put this in writing in your gaming compact and they said, "Yes."

A lot of people think it was stipulated by the state but it wasn't, our own tribal leaders said we want to put this [inaudible 00:26:12]. They didn't know we'd have what we have today, so we've followed through with that commitment and we given over \$33 million towards education with no real stipulation.

Yeah, so I'm very proud of that. Then [crosstalk 00:26:29].

Tino Magnatta: What did that money go toward?

Laura Stensgar: It goes toward education, as I said no real stipulation so the tribe has an application process to where they do submit their requests and then we award every year dollars and we've given out \$33 million since we opened our doors.

Tino Magnatta: Wow, unbelievable.

Laura Stensgar: That's amazing.

Tino Magnatta: That's incredible is a lot of it within the tribe to help kids go to colleges is that the sort of thing that, is that what you're doing with the funds?

Laura Stensgar: Some of it is, a lot of it goes to other like to colleges, to high schools.

Tino Magnatta: Oh, I see, of course.

Laura Stensgar: To grade schools.

Tino Magnatta: Right to support them.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, different organizations.

Tino Magnatta: Are you guys the only tribe that have done that?

Laura Stensgar: Oh, I'm sure some of the other tribes, actually I have heard of other tribes having some type of charity program, some of them it's not [crosstalk 00:27:35].

Tino Magnatta: It's not in their compact.

Laura Stensgar: That I don't know, I'm not sure.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I've never heard of that before, this is very unique. That's great, that's fantastic. So keep going you were telling a story.

Laura Stensgar: Oh, so that was put into our gaming compact and we have paid out \$33 million towards education and then in 1993 we opened our doors, our bingo hall in our

little steel building where we currently have a resort now with 96 employees. I always recall my marketing budget was \$26,000 for the year.

Tino Magnatta: Wow.

Laura Stensgar: [crosstalk 00:28:24] then we also had [inaudible 00:28:24] yeah, isn't that amazing and then on a daily basis I think, we had of the 96 employees a lot of them this is their first time job, there was just so much hope and opportunity in that room. It was snowing outside, you know here in Idaho, North Idaho we definitely have our four seasons and this is March and we were worried no one was going to show up.

One because there's this snow, you know we were just scared we'd never done this before opening up a bingo hall. They're were people waiting at the door, it was an amazing day. I was there and really got to feel and understand the whole bases to have it started and it was just so amazing, we had great hope and opportunity, you know all 96 of us.

Three years in operation, I believe we introduced our machines and now today we have about 1,300 gaming machines and then we have 300 hotel rooms, a beautiful 15,000 square foot spa, six restaurants, amazing Circling Raven Golf club, 18 holes. We just got [crosstalk 00:29:40].

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, your gold course is extraordinary, right it's world renown isn't it?

Laura Stensgar: It is we just got ranked number one in Idaho by Golf Week Magazine, just like a couple weeks ago, yeah. That golf course the big thing there is that we have 620 acres, it's just sheer beauty, a lot of golfers explain it as just you and the ball and your family and your friends out there in this beautiful natural surroundings, there's no development.

Tino Magnatta: It's amazing, yeah we'll have to come down some time and play, I've heard so much about it. So many people love that golf course they just rave about it all the time, it's pretty amazing stuff. Really incredible.

Laura Stensgar: It's great to have this right here in my back yard. Do you golf, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Yes, I do I'm not that great, my wife is the real golfer in the family.

Laura Stensgar: Oh, okay.

Tino Magnatta: I kind of chop my way through it but my wife takes lessons and she's got all outfits and she grew up in a golfing family. Me I'm a little bit rough, I usually like to hang out in the cart and create trouble, say yeah what are you doing out there?

Laura Stensgar: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: No, I enjoy the game and I definitely looking forward to playing one day, I just got to get out there.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, defiantly come up here.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I will have to come check it out. When you talk about that moment with the 96 employees, and the hope and everything that was in that room, expand on that a little bit. On those feelings and what it meant.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, we were preparing months out for the March opening and actually we invited a couple of Oklahoma ladies from the Choctaw, Choctaw Reservation. In Oklahoma they had huge bingo, really big bingo there. We invited them to come and help us get started, like I said we never had bingo before in gaming.

Oh, they were great and their cute accents, you know came I helped us get started with the program and so we were all very excited and as I explained things were pretty downtrodden you know we didn't have the jobs, we didn't have the dollars and a lot of them we weren't able to, some people weren't even able to provide for their families let alone have a great Christmas.

We had a lot of anticipation for being able to have a pay check and to be able to take care of our families. [inaudible 00:32:37] we're very excited and just this is something ... We were very proud of our bingo hall, it was a nice steel building and we're excited we were going through training as to how to conduct great customer service and we were very excited about it.

Just the feeling, there was just a great vibe that something great was great was coming. I thought this is going to be a great opportunity for all of us.

Tino Magnatta: What a moment.

Laura Stensgar: It was a great day, so we called it, because as Coeur d'Alene people we've always been know as being friendly, we wanted to incorporate that into our business, we called it, Traditional Tribal Hospitality. We were very friendly and had great big smiles and walked through those doors we wanted to make them feel at home, that this is their home.

We were able to provide food for them, when they get a big win we would celebrate with them and we spoke with them by first name and treat them like family. They came back again and it was great, it was a great day. [crosstalk 00:33:53] that feeling.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, what a moment, I can hear that.

Laura Stensgar: We still try to provide that care around Coeur d'Alene casino to make people feel at home. We kind of incorporate that into our guest service program, now we call it Coeur Spirit, a little play on the words, C-O-E-U-R, Coeur spirit and we

have a desk service training program that we've been operating [crosstalk 00:34:18].

Tino Magnatta: I like that, like Coeur d'Alene right?

Laura Stensgar: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Coeur means heart right, in French?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, yes, that's how we got our name for Coeur d'Alene and it's heart of an awl, like that pointy needle, you know. The Coeur d'Alene tribe, we used to control the trading route up on I 90, there's an interstate highway that goes clear across the United States. We used to control that trade route there, we've very shrewd traders and so that's how we got our name, Coeur d'Alene.

Tino Magnatta: I see, interesting.

Laura Stensgar: In Coeur d'Alene we call ourselves [inaudible 00:34:57] and that means discover people. That's our Native name, that's a little hard for people to say though.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I love the name and I'm Canadian so in Canada we learned how to speak French and English so I took French all through school so I know a little bit of French.

Laura Stensgar: Oh, yeah.[crosstalk 00:35:29].

Tino Magnatta: What can you say to other tribes to try to help them be more continuous in their leadership and less political?

Laura Stensgar: Oh, yeah, politics, I think it's so important to always look out what's in the best interest of the tribe and looking out for the next generations to come. I think that having that vision is so important to always look out for the generations to come and there's some interesting things that some other tribes are doing that we're doing but it's good to diversify.

I think that gaming right now is an effective tool and has been an effective tool, it is working but we need also to diversify and not solely rely on gaming as well. Always looking out for different ways to look out for our generations in the form for diversify but holding onto your culture, your identity, your language, your practices, your traditions, your value system I think is so important and a lot of our children they get lost or they're lost.

I hear that the reservations are having problems with suicide, the drugs, the alcohol, because they're lost, lost their way. That's why it's important to maintain that culture's identity that we have. Years ago our ancestors they had a way of life and we had roles and we all knew what our roles were, of course

take care of each other but we had providers and we each had a role, we had a traditional way, we lived in harmony amongst each other.

We knew our way of life and that was lost, we had a lot taken away from us, we survived all that and we always will, we'll always be here but a lot of times we lose sight of that as far as identity and the fact that we are Coeur d'Alene people and we have traditions, we have a language and we need to embrace that because that's who we are and take pride in that.

That gives us strength in the role to play and that we are part of something, something great and part of a people, of a tribe. I think that's important.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, well said, what is your advice to women coming up especially since our business is male dominated?

Laura Stensgar: My advice, I would say, I think I said this a couple times, I don't want to repeat myself but having a value system and that helps you make good decisions and hold yourself with respect, give respect, work hard, treat people how you want to be treated and then be positive and don't take things so personal. Those are some of the things that I follow.

Just hold yourself true to your value system and have good intent, move forward, charge ahead and move forward, set goals for yourself. When things get you down don't take it too hard, when things get good don't take it too good. My grandmother told me that, I didn't know what she was talking about but now I understand clearly.

Those are just some things that I would get, I know I threw a lot out there. Number one, just have a value system and follow it and take it and follow when making decisions.

Tino Magnatta: We've talked a couple of times and every time you say, it's an incredible thing you're able to do is not take things personally but how do you do that, not a lot of people can do that, how do you not take things personally? It's an emotional thing for people right?

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, I think that understanding what's your intent, well we're here, I'm here because I love my tribe, I'm here because I love my casino, I want to contribute, I want to do well. What is my goal, I'm here with my intention, I want to work hard toward that effort. If something, if I feel offended then you know I need to not take it personally but maybe on professional level and just say, you know what, okay is this worth making a statement or just moving forward just listen.

Sometimes just listen, okay what is this person trying to say or is it my performance and someone is critiquing me on my performance. Well listen and maybe there's something that I can take to improve myself rather than just

saying, "Oh, my gosh." And be defensive. I'd be totally hurt but really try to take it in and understand, okay I'm trying to do a good job here.

Is this person getting personal or they really have something there regards to my effectiveness and how I'm working. They are really taking that in and trying to be positive about it or learn from it. Does that explain where I'm coming from, Tino?

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely, it makes a lot of sense, I think that's a special quality and I think that people need to work more on that because it will definitely help get things done and not get things cluttered up. I think that [crosstalk 00:41:44] is the bottom line.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah and it's hard, you know I think maturity as I've gotten older is kind of been a little easier to do that.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, what do you see as the future of Native business and not just gaming?

Laura Stensgar: The future, so really things that really digital marketing is huge, influencers, people they have they give more merit to what someone else's opinion than the basic standard advertising. I think those influencers are becoming more and more important. Then sharing that information I think that's huge and it's going to get even more popular.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's all headed in that direction, there's no question about it. Shall we take some calls?

Laura Stensgar: Sure, okay.

Tino Magnatta: Let's do it. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta do you have any questions for Laura?

Vince: Hi Laura, how are you?

Laura Stensgar: Hi, I'm doing well, how are you?

Vince: I'm doing fine this is Vince [Manfreidi 00:43:11].

Laura Stensgar: Vince, oh my gosh.

Vince: How are you?

Laura Stensgar: It's good to hear from you.

Vince: Likewise I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed listening to you for the last half hour and I feel like you've been so open in expressing your opinions and thoughts, it's just been great.

Laura Stensgar: Oh, thanks and how are you doing, what are you doing, you gaming, marketing guru, you?

Vince: I'm [crosstalk 00:43:48].

Tino Magnatta: That he is.

Vince: Thank you I'm doing a lot of work with the IGT customers right now, in fact I was up at Coeur d'Alene for a day about four months ago. Maybe four or five months ago, you weren't there that day though.

Laura Stensgar: I don't think so no, yeah and we worked, it's been years since you've been up here, right?

Vince: That was the first time, I hadn't seen the new hotel part, I hadn't seen the new casino I was blown away with all the development and I spent the night in one of the new rooms, it was beautiful actually, it was great.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, we recently finished a \$50 million renovation and everything is kind of like fresh and kind of pulls everything together. Yeah, it's really nice, new lighting and new air system, ventilation system, new carpet. We spruced up our event center, we have a new sound and lighting system and a larger stage.

Yeah, I'm glad you got to see it. I think [crosstalk 00:45:01] and the spa and spa hotel rooms weren't here when you were here last so that's good that you got to see all that too as well.

Vince: The gentleman that drove me back to the airport is your head of transportation but he's also a very learned man. I had probably one of the most intense conversations I've ever had with a Native American the hour that we spent together, it was just wonderful, his name is escaping me right because I'm old.

Laura Stensgar: Is it Martin, Butch Martin?

Vince: Yeah, I think it was I think he was great.

Laura Stensgar: It sounds like Martin, yes, yeah he's Coeur d'Alene and he's always very good with the customers and he is very, I think he's been here from like a year or so and yeah, so here's come some great stuff for us.

Vince: Yeah. I have a question for you, I was interesting that you went back and got your MBA at this point so I'm wondering that after you have a legitimate business background why are you still in marketing, like what is it about marketing that attracted you. What is it about it that you still like?

Laura Stensgar: Yes, I do love marketing and I'm doing a lot as far as branding, for the whole property and just things have just expanded and I mentioned the golf course,

oversee the golf course. Started up the new culture tourism program so it hasn't been just marketing and I love the branding, I love identifying and clarifying who we are and what we're about and then conveying that.

Then creating all these different programs and events and activities to bring people here to see all that we have to offer. It's just so fun to watch everything, identify it, build it and then watch it come to fruition and celebrate, that's [crosstalk 00:47:10].

Vince: I'm sorry go ahead.

Laura Stensgar: I'm sorry.

Vince: No, how many years is it since you opened, the first 96 employees, was it 1992 did you say?

Laura Stensgar: 1993, 26 years ago.

Vince: Wow.

Laura Stensgar: Isn't that amazing, it's amazing how fast time flies, it's kinds of scary because it went by so fast.

Vince: Yeah, it's funny [crosstalk 00:47:41]

Laura Stensgar: I'm sorry go ahead.

Vince: No, I was just going to say with IGT I literally, I had the good fortune of working pretty much everywhere in the world you know and not blowing smoke, Northern Idaho is one of the most pristine and beautiful places I've ever been to and being up there again was a real treat for me. Seeing the growth and development I thought was just astounding.

Tino Magnatta: Yes just beautiful up there.

Vince: Yeah it sure is.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah it's gorgeous as I said you leaving the reservation and going out to different locations is like makes you appreciate the area and we definitely have our four seasons, winter is getting a little tougher for me to handle but we have beautiful spring, summer, fall and it is really gorgeous and we are very blessed, we call it God's country.

Vince: It is, it is God's country.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I've seen pictures and that golf course is just amazing.

Laura Stensgar: In summer it's very comfortable too, it's not humid and too hot, it's just very comfortable.

Vince: The first time I went up there was in January and I rented a car after I got to Spokane and drove up and somebody from the property said to be careful of the moose while I was driving and I thought they were making a joke. That's how green I was when I started, that was a long time ago, like 15 years ago when we started working together but I just wanted to say hello, it's great to hear you and I really enjoyed your conversation today.

Laura Stensgar: Thanks Vince it was good to talk with you.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah take care.

Vince: All right you two take care see you soon.

Laura Stensgar: Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye-bye.

Laura Stensgar: He talks about the moose, we have yeah we see moose sightings here almost on a daily basis. We have these bald eagles on hole 17, we call them Gracie and George and they've been nesting there for about the past four or five years now. It's so cool to hear them whistle and to see their nest.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, I can imagine. Let's see who else we have here. It looks like my system is jamming up here [crosstalk 00:50:12]. I don't think I'll have to do much to visit, my wife to come out and play rounds of golf with you because she's really into it.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, she'd love it, she'd love it.

Tino Magnatta: I mean it ...

Laura Stensgar: We have a beautiful Lake Coeur d'Alene it's just really pretty. We have a tour, I call it the tourism program, we do some hiking tours and you hike to the top and you have this beautiful view of Lake Coeur d'Alene and the St. Joe river going into the lake, it's just gorgeous.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah and the summer months must be incredible.

Laura Stensgar: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah it is. All kinds of a ... We have a canoe, kayaking tour as well and we have this bike trail called the trail of the Coeur d'Alene. A beautiful bike trail that starts here on our reservation, it goes all the way up into Wallace, Idaho in into Montana even.

It goes into the [crosstalk 00:51:21] trail. They have caves that you go through so I have yet to do it, I intend to, I've got to get out there and try that.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, let's take another call here. Hello this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Laura.

Thomas: This is Thomas can you hear me?

Laura Stensgar: Oh, Thomas, hi.

Tino Magnatta: Yes, we can how are you Thomas?

Laura Stensgar: It's good to hear your voice.

Thomas: This is like a family reunion, [inaudible 00:51:54] Hi Tino, Hi Laura.

Tino Magnatta: It is, it is. How are you?

Thomas: I'm doing great, thank you. Yeah, it impresses me that over in Idaho you get two eagles on one hole, how in the world do you do that?

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, they've been there about five years now, it's been amazing just to see them and hear their whistling, it's just amazing.

Thomas: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Incredible.

Thomas: We have one eagle on I think it's hole four and he steals balls once in a while but other than that it's beautiful. Thank you for sharing your story, Laura, that's very nice and very enlightening. Yeah that goes back a long time, I didn't get into Indian gaming until about two years later, '95.

The question that I have if I may kind of combine the MBA and what you said about taking care of the tribe and sustainability. For the MBA we get trained on the Western corporate thinking. It is quite easy for people who come by and say, "Well, let me show you how you can save some more money because that's all about efficiency."

Corporations don't really care, for the most part about sustainability, so my question to you is how do you inform tribal members or how do you maintain the culture to the take care of the certain generations and not fall prey to, we can generate some short term profits for you and you will see how good it is.

Yeah, they are short term profits and initially they might be convincing in a long term they will rob the sustainability. How did you find your way through and how do you communicate that with the tribal members?

Laura Stensgar: That's a very good question, and coming in from day one, I clearly understand why we got into gaming and that was one to provide for jobs for our tribal members and two to create revenue for our tribal social programs. We have definitely done that, over and beyond those goals. That's the basis of how we started, why we started but also understanding that our dollars go toward helping us in our efforts for buying back our land and our efforts toward taking care of our social service program and our efforts toward putting money towards education and investing in our people and our community.

I think that's been so important to have those values and understanding as to why we're here and what the purpose is with gaming. I think it's been very effective. A lot of people misunderstand that they think we're a commercial, compare us to commercial gaming and like some of the casinos in Vegas. We're not were more like the government gaming because here we take our money and we investing it and we're investing in our people.

In our community and that there's a reason and purpose, it doesn't go into one family's pocket or one individual's pocket, this is a benefit for all. We're taking those dollars and investing them in these different endeavors and I think understanding that is so important. It helps our tribal members, we have to remind them sometimes that you know, we're here for our people, we're here for our community, we're here to take care of each other and part of that is implementing and taking some of these dollars towards those efforts.

Thomas: It's a very smart approach, I mean it sounds [inaudible 00:56:01] but you know you almost have to run Indian gaming like you would run a nonprofit organization. Yeah you can make profits but all the proceeds go back into the organizations and into the social structure. How does the tribal usually respond to that, are they open to this thinking or [inaudible 00:56:25] that they'd buy into that?

Laura Stensgar: The tribal youth, the tribal youth we offer summer youth programs and then, I will say this I think that some of our dollars goes toward per capita and I think sometimes it's taken for granted and then so you know it's up to us as parents, as tribal leaders to explain these are part of our process but we take the majority of our profits to go toward taking care of our social services [crosstalk 00:57:05].

Some of them they say well, we should have it all for as a per capita so we have to explain and we have to invest towards these other endeavors, it can't go all into individual pockets. Sometimes it's a little disparaging to see or hear people complain that it's not enough.

Thomas: That this is so important and thank you for sharing that with us. Thanks again and nice to talk to you, please say hello to all my wonderful new friends in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, now, all right.

Laura Stensgar: Oh thanks Thomas you are such a gracious host, I really appreciate you sharing your culture there at Barona it was just an amazing trip.

Thomas: It was really a wonderful experience for me and I learned at least from them as they learned from us.

Tino Magnatta: Great to have them all,

Thomas: I hope we get to see you in events again soon.

Laura Stensgar: Yes, thank you take care.

Tino Magnatta: He's a great guy isn't he?

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, this is kind of a this is your life episode.

Tino Magnatta: That is so funny.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah he's such an amazing person and he's such a good person.

Tino Magnatta: He is incredible isn't he? Yeah, I'm glad you guess connected and ...

Laura Stensgar: I heard you two are writing a book.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, we're writing a book and actually we just completed it the other night and will still have to edit it and everything. It's going to be all about customer service and how the whole thing that you experienced but a little bit in more detail with how to go about achieving a lot of revenue goals and also getting your team involved. Like you were saying and making it all one culture.

Trying to get people to think of customer service as a revenue generating tool or an organic revenue generating tool.

Laura Stensgar: I think in today's world that is so important and that is something that we would distinguish a business from another and that's so important I think. I think definitely [crosstalk 00:59:39].

Tino Magnatta: If we go on the premise that the experience of the gambler is this, and this is our proposition to them. You come to use, you lose all your money, and then you come back and we decide when we give some or all of it back to you. Within that proposition there's a lot of different emotions that go on that I think are very different from, I stayed at the hotel, the pillow was soft, I ate the food, the French fries were crispy.

I went to the café and I had a great time [crosstalk 01:00:21]. I think it's a little different experience that they get out on the casino floor and I think that right now the way everybody thinks is that customer service is generic. It's the same

everywhere and what has become our resort, before we didn't have resorts, there was just a few resorts. Now it's like everybody has got a resort.

They have the restaurants, they have the pools, the clubs everything everything so the customer service become generic but I think that what you experienced and what they do on the casino floor is really innovative and I think it's something that has been overlooked.

Laura Stensgar: I totally agree, you know like [inaudible 01:01:09], how do you feel into that resort, that casino. How do you feel and then you know and when you play and you lose, how do you feel, how do people treat you and when you leave how do you feel. All of that is so important and it just really determines whether you are going to come back again.

If you go there, you walk in and someone greets you and then you feel warm and invited. Then you lose but then you go like, "Oh, well, I know where this is going, this is going towards a big cause." That's some people, I know some people are really upset that they did lose.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, but you can order anything you want at the slot machine and it will come to you.

Laura Stensgar: Yeah, and that's what we cater to and then when [crosstalk 01:02:07] you leave, then when you leave at least you feel like you were someplace good and you felt good when you left and that's so important.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, hey it was great having you on the show, you've been such a wonderful guest and I can't wait to have you back on and I am going to talk to my wife about coming down because she is going to just love, I've seen so many pictures about that and maybe I'll try some canoeing.

Laura Stensgar: It's a great area, you'd love it, it's beautiful in our golf course, it's amazing. I'd love to be your host, you know.

Tino Magnatta: Oh, thank you so much Laura, I really appreciate it.

Laura Stensgar: Thank you for the opportunity it's just so wonderful to talk with you, have a good evening.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, have a good evening, we'll talk soon, okay?

Laura Stensgar: Okay, bye Tino.

Tino Magnatta: Okay, bye-bye. All right that was a great interview and we are wrapped up and we had a great evening tonight and thank you everybody for tuning in and we'll see you next Monday, talk to you soon, bye-bye.