



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Erica Kosemund
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Tino Magnatta: Hello and welcome to another episode of GQ Radio, and tonight I have a fantastic guest. She is a wealth of knowledge and very well-spoken. Welcome to the show, Erica Kosemund. How are you?

Erica Kosemund: Good. How are you? Thanks for having me.

Tino Magnatta: Very, very good. Now we were talking a little bit before the show, because I usually talk to my guests 10 or 15 minutes before the show, about data and technology, and how that basically reshapes things. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, we were just conversating on the fact that here in Oklahoma, that it's interesting to see that tribes are becoming savvy and more technology-driven, not only in the gaming space, but they're using those data-driven decisions to make better decisions to drive their tribe as a whole in member services and health. And it's really energizing to see the data that kind of started in gaming, as we're able to leverage that across tribal governments and tribal relations to help a tribal people.

Tino Magnatta: We were also talking about the next generation, and how they're educated and all that, right?

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, it's really neat working in Oklahoma and seeing the second generation of gaming kids growing up, people that have watched their parents grow up in gaming and work in gaming, and how they have career trajectory and how they've grown up in the industry and watched their parents grow up in the industry, and leave for college and come back to seamlessly small towns a lot of times in Oklahoma, and come back here and actually be able to live in a rural area and have really great careers and join the gaming industry and follow in the footsteps of sometimes their parents or their family. And a lot of times give back to their tribe at the same time, so it's kind of heartwarming to see those people take those steps and see power and potential in the tribes and the development that are here.

Tino Magnatta: It's so incredible, because if you think about what the elders did to put gaming on the map, and now having the resources to build a different generation with a different infrastructure is pretty remarkable.

Erica Kosemund: Sitting in the facility I'm in now, where it was just bingo, it started with just a bingo hall, and to look where it is now, I think people just had to continue to have vision and to fight for a vision they had, not only for the tribe sometimes, but also between the states and the government and what they knew they could do to continue to drive their tribes forward. It's really incredible to see a lot of times when the tribes come together to do that, what they can accomplish.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, it's pretty incredible. Let's go back a little bit now and talk a little bit about you and your journey through life and through the gaming business. Tell us a little bit about where you were born, how you were raised, and what kind of values that your parents instilled in you.

Erica Kosemund: I was born and raised in Arkansas. I'm an only child with a very large extended family. I actually grew up on a farm. My dad was in the military, was deployed in the Iraq War when I was a kid. I remember that very vividly with my mom working, me being in elementary school, and him being deployed, and kind of growing up in a really small town, and how they really rallied around people that... the community that had deployed parents and people like that. I remember that. I have a really large extended family that just... lots of cousins and aunts and uncles. And really kind of an idyllic childhood. I was adopted, and so I kind of feel blessed to be in that family, and blessed to be able to be a part of that family on both sides.

Yeah, just had a really great childhood, a great upbringing. My parents are very, very hard workers. My mom's a nurse and a very caring and giving and loving person, even now. I couldn't do a lot of the things I do in my career without the support of my parents, even today. I think everybody listening or that's been on your show a lot of times knows the sacrifices as parents that we have to make for our families to be able to work these hours and travel to events and be a part of this industry. You have to have a network of people, and a lot of times that is your family. So she's still giving as much as she can.

So just a really incredible upbringing. Moved to Oklahoma in 2002 after high school to go to college. Started working in a casino my senior year of college, and that was it. I haven't looked back.

Tino Magnatta: Now you got a radio internship, right?

Erica Kosemund: I did, I started in radio. I worked at a country radio station doing promotional festivals and events during college in Oklahoma City Market, which was super fun. And it was right when gaming was starting. One of my friends who also worked in entertainment said, "Hey, they want to hire an entertainment coordinator at one of these casinos, and isn't that kind of what you did in the radio station?" I was like, "Yeah, sure." At that time, I wanted to do entertainment more than casino. I didn't really know anything about casino, because it was one of those things I hadn't been exposed to at all, or didn't have anybody around me that was involved in it. So I said, "Yeah, sure, I'll give it a try." It was outside of Norman, and we went, and I was able to help sell tickets and plan events and sales and catering and comedy shows.

Kind of ran the gamut of that for a little while. Then a little bit after that worked for a consulting entertainment company, and then at the time, the Chickasaw Nation had opened their largest casino at the time, which was also the largest casino in the state in Norman. So they were kind of recruiting and perfect age, perfect time, perfect spot, gave me a great opportunity as a promo coordinator,

on the floor doing promos, microphone. That's back before ticket in or ticket out, or electronic drawings, where you had to have a security guard helping you turn a hopper, and you couldn't wear long sleeve shirts because a ticket couldn't fall in your shirt sleeve and all of those fun things.

I think a lot of people say the bug bites you and it just takes you on a journey, and that's where it started.

Tino Magnatta: Now, you said to me you knew you wanted to be in marketing, right?

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, I remember-

Tino Magnatta: Because you had a degree in it.

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, I remember like a young age... I grew up in a really small town, and the only thing that's marketing that I knew was like the Chamber of Commerce or like newspaper sales, and I didn't really know what marketing was, but I knew I wanted to do it. I remember always planning events for my friends and always selling or talking about something. Always selling my mom on an idea of something or a shoe I wanted or a jewelry I wanted. I've just always been that way. I don't think until I realized coming to Oklahoma and getting in college and getting involved in internships, like solidifying and building around that idea of the eye-opening exposure of all the opportunity of what marketing is and can be in a hospitality and entertainment industry.

Tino Magnatta: Now you also worked at Chickasaw for a little while, right?

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, I worked at Chickasaw a long time. They gave me a lot of opportunity. There's a lot of great people at Chickasaw. Chickasaw and Choctaw are right nextdoor to each other. They do a lot of tribal investment and a lot of state investment across the state, give a lot of people a lot of opportunities. I grew up with them and they grew me, and I got a ton of opportunity and knowledge and growth there, and they've just had huge growth and expansion. It's fun to watch them still. Fun to compete with them a little bit. And fun to be around, knowing the work we did together, and knowing that we're all still supportive, because Oklahoma, we may compete, but at the end of the day, we're all still tribes and we're all still supporting the state.

Tino Magnatta: Let's talk about women in gaming, and I know that at Choctaw with Janie at the helm, she's such an amazing person, and you guys have a lot of women working in strong leadership positions, which is fantastic. I try to have as many women on the show as possible. Tell me a little bit about how that's nurtured, and also tell me if there's ever in your career been any adversity for you as a woman, and how you've had to counteract that.

Erica Kosemund: I think for the nurturing part, I mean, at the end of the day coming to work at Choctaw, and coming to work for Janie Dillard was a huge part of my decision to

take this decision and join this team. Everyone knows that. Being around a lot of strong women just makes you stronger every day. Also, adversity doesn't discriminate. There's not one person in this industry, no matter who you are or what you do or what level you're at... like everybody faces adversity. Everyone has challenges. And it's really how you mentally surround yourself around the people that can build you up and shake you off and put you back into the battle, and the way you can formalize in your mind how to get past those.

It's just a mind game of how those things make you stronger, because there's always going to be that, and so really it's your outlook that shapes and formulates how you view and partake in adversity, and ultimately what you're going to do and how you'll succeed or fail around it.

Tino Magnatta: Obviously you know that it's not like that at every casino.

Erica Kosemund: That's true.

Tino Magnatta: Let's talk a little bit about women that do have issues. What advice do you give them on coping with those kind of situations?

Erica Kosemund: I think you have to find a support system outside of your work life. If those are friends or church or a belief or... People that knew you before you got into gaming sometimes. Like people that can call your BS a little bit, and say like, "Hey, you know what to do. You know who you are." If you don't feel like a situation is right, or you don't feel like you're in the right spot, you can change that. You can do that.

But also, there's ways to cope and combat with that. The great thing about gaming is there's a lot of it now, and it's so networked and so connected, and there's a lot of resources and people you can pull on to also share those experiences with, to say, "Well, this worked for me," or sometimes there's some tough love. Always have that friend that will tell you to drop your ego or toughen up. I just think there's a lot of different ways to approach it. But yeah, you're always going to run into a non-ideal situation.

Tino Magnatta: You talked to me a little bit about the matriarchal tribal structure to solve problems with others. Tell me a little bit about that.

Erica Kosemund: Both Chickasaw and Choctaw, it's always very fascinating how much respect and love they give to their mothers, and how much power they give to the mothers of the household, and sometimes you almost see that in the way they handle situations, whether it's the leader of the department or the father figure of the department. A lot of times there's still a woman figure that has a leadership role, that carries a lot of wisdom or clout or encouragement sometimes even. It's funny how those sometimes traditional ways of a culture bleed into the business. It's sometimes powerful to see just a matriarchal culture of traditional

elements of who they are as a tribe come into also business elements of what we do.

I'm not tribal, but it's really powerful to see some tribal women and how passionate they are about their ancestry and where they've come from and things they kind of watched their moms do and their aunts do to get to this place, and kind of the adversity they faced to get them to where they are.

Tino Magnatta: If you want to look at strong women, you don't have to look no further than the elders, right? I mean, what they went through.

Erica Kosemund: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: I mean, it's pretty amazing what they've accomplished.

Now, some people may not know how to build those relationships. Tell me a little bit about how you build those kind of relationships, that infrastructure, to help, because sometimes there's not a lot of women at an organization. It doesn't have to be gaming. How do you build that infrastructure like you were saying? What do you have to do?

Erica Kosemund: I think organizations are organizations, and I don't think it's dependent on it being a female to female or a male to male relationship. I think you have to build relationships independent of anything that's based on that, and you just have to build relationships with who you're going to need to be able to accomplish your goals in the mission you're setting forth. It's not if you're going to have a problem, it's when you're going to have a problem in business, and if you build strong relationships, those problems can ease themselves so much easier because you're not focused on, "Oh, I don't know how to handle this problem," because you've already built the relationship and the trust and the leverage of unification there to be able to get through tough times. And sometimes it takes that really long front work to get to that really trusting back work to see the result.

Tino Magnatta: You told me that you need to elevate yourself, be vocal about your strengths, express and prove your seat at the table, participate. Talk a little bit about that. I think that's very important.

Erica Kosemund: I'm in marketing, right, and so I also tell Janie, if I'm not like one bad idea away from getting fired, I'm probably doing my job right.

Tino Magnatta: I love that.

Erica Kosemund: Because we're here to push it. We're not the finance people, we're not the analytics people, we're not food and beverage, we're not operations. The marketing people, we should be looking at the world differently. If we're not looking at the world differently, who is? But some people have never worked

with people who look at the world differently, and so sometimes it's almost an education along the way about the reasons why you do what you do, and why it's important that you make those decisions and the risk you take, because you have to remember the people around your leadership table with you aren't looking through those same lenses. Like the things that are important to you aren't going to be important to them. But that's why you need to be together, because if not, you're not building a strong team.

So sometimes you have to be vocal about your why, because not everybody's going to understand the why like you are. So you have to say your why, and kind of paint your story. I think sometimes as marketers, we just take that for granted, that we'll just put it out into the market, and people will understand why we did it because we put it out there. And I don't think that's often the case. I think a lot of times, especially to tell a brand story, we need to put some guts, especially in the internal team, reasons behind that why, so they buy into that belief as well.

Tino Magnatta: It's amazing what you said. You're the first guest that's ever said, "I'm one bad idea from getting fired." 20 years ago, I went to a conference, and it was being held in [inaudible 00:18:41], New York, and Seth Godin was a speaker, Permission, Marketing and the Purple Cow.

Erica Kosemund: Oh, I love him.

Tino Magnatta: The first thing he said to the audience was, "If you guys are not almost getting fired every day, you're not doing your job." That's one thing.

You told me credibility is your latest accomplishment. What do you mean by that?

Erica Kosemund: Well, you have to be credible. I think you have to do things that make people understand the why behind why you do things. You have to take chances, and people have to understand your why. But if you're just taking them and they're not understanding them, and the credibility isn't behind you and they're not allowing you to take them, really you're being misunderstood. But if they're saying, "Oh, I get why she's doing that note, oh, she's doing that and that's why she's doing that. Let her do that," and you have credibility behind it, then they're going to let you run a little bit. Your leash gets a little longer, your budget gets a little bigger, things go a little smoother, because they say, "Oh yeah, we know why she's doing those things."

I think we work really hard as a marketing team between marketing, PD, events, social, to kind of build that credibility to like, "Hey, we're going to work together and we're going to execute these events and these ideas," and they may be a little crazy and wild, but every time, they buy in a little more, so we become a little bit more credible every time.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, that's great.

Erica Kosemund: I think as a marketer, you're only as good as your credibility.

Tino Magnatta: That's great. Great stuff. It's okay to have diverse strengths. What does that mean?

Erica Kosemund: It's not only okay, if you don't, you're not as good as you could be. If I'm hiring someone, and I just had this conversation with a teammate the other day... I said, "Why would you hire them?" I said, "They're just like you." I said, "We're about to double the size of this place. We've got to have someone that thinks differently than you. You need someone that's going to actually look at the world completely different than you, because you need someone that complements what you don't have, not what you already own."

The people I keep closest and the people I respect most, we don't always have to get along. We don't always have to agree. But they always have something that I can't do myself, and that I wouldn't consider myself an expert in, because the diversity of a team is the strength of a team.

Tino Magnatta: Choctaw is a very unique place. A lot of women in management, and you have an amazing female leader in Janie, who is spearheading all these philosophies and these great female careers, and it's incredible. But why don't we see more of that in our industry?

Erica Kosemund: I wish I could answer that. I think that conversation comes up a lot. I think there's companies that make effort to make changes in themselves to drive that, to put women in leadership roles. But I don't know why that is. Is it a chicken or the egg? Is it that there's not enough women in the queue that have done it? Probably not. I mean, I know a ton of incredible women in the industry that I would get behind to run companies. But how do we get that exposure out to people?

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the things that you love to do in this business?

Erica Kosemund: One of the things I love to do is, as a marketer... Like we're all going to do the same things in gaming, right? You're going to have your direct mail, you're going to have [inaudible 00:23:03], you're going to have your promotions, going to look at your analytics, you're going to do all that. But my favorite thing to do right now to challenge the team is to look at disruptive industries, like look at your Ubers and look at your YouTubes, and look at all of the things that are happening around you in hospitality and entertainment, and like, what can we do to take pieces of that and infuse them into what we do? How can we make our business more exciting? Because if we don't, someone's going to try to.

Even tonight, we have a social media influencer event. We have a lot of social media influencers in from Dallas. We are infusing them into our Choctaw

gaming culture, our Choctaw culture. We're teaching them about what Choctaw's about, because social media is how millions and millions and millions people absorb the decisions they make on brands. And so they are a media channel that should be a part of your media mix. If every other brand in the country is doing it, why shouldn't gaming be doing it?

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the things that you don't like to do?

Erica Kosemund: Oh, I'm not a numbers... I don't like finance, accounting. That's not me. I love those people, because I can't be those people, and I make those people my best friend, like, "Hey, can we be best friends when I come in," because I have a big budget, and we're going to need to look through every single thing together, but I'm never going to be that person that sits in line by line by line by line. But I believe in its importance, and I believe in making sure that we're being good stewards of the tribe's money, but that's not where the best use of my time is going to be. But I want to make sure that our CFO and me are on the same page about the importance of marketing dollar spend and where it's going and that we're on the right track.

Tino Magnatta: What are some of the things that people need to be good at to get into this business?

Erica Kosemund: I think you could literally be good at anything, and there's probably a spot for you. I mean, if you look at game engineers that are creating and developing games. I mean, aside from healthcare, hospitality, food and beverage... I think there's a place for so many people.

Tino Magnatta: It's very diverse, so you can pick and choose whatever you want, is what you're saying, right? There's so many different departments.

Erica Kosemund: Yeah. I'm loving, especially as I get older and I continue to grow in the industry, I love meeting people who were in S&B and now they're GMs, or they were in marketing and now they're GMs. There's not just one specific track that gets you into a top role or a top position. If you have a calling or a desire to want to learn and grow, you can do that. That's one thing I love about gaming, is there's tons of people who don't even have a degree, that just come in and really just own the business and own the market and understand the importance of their role in their tribe or in their organization, and they have really important, valuable positions that... and their group needs them.

I think there's a lot of opportunity to come in. I mean, I look at designers and illustrators that we use on-site to make sure our creative's good. They probably didn't think that that's the creative they would be doing when they were in school.

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little bit about what's going on at Choctaw right now. There's some really exciting stuff going on. We were talking a little bit about that before we came on. Tell us a little bit about what you guys are doing.

Erica Kosemund: In Durant, which Durant, if you're not familiar with the geographical location, is in the Dallas feeder market. It is on the Texas, Oklahoma border. We are undergoing currently an expansion. We're adding 1000 hotel rooms, doubling our [inaudible 00:27:40] essentially, essentially doubling the size of our property currently, and it is our flagship property. We're adding about 1000 jobs to the market. It's a very fast-moving project. We broke ground in April of this year, and we're set to open in April of 2021. Cranes are outside, lots of trucks in and out. We are full speed ahead expanding.

Tino Magnatta: Amazing stuff. Just amazing.

Erica Kosemund: It's great, as is our market. Dallas is an exciting place to get to work in. There's so much going on there. We love that we get to work in that market and be a part of their heart.

Tino Magnatta: Incredible. What is your advice to young people coming into our business to be able to make it?

Erica Kosemund: I think you've got to say yes a lot, you've got to say, "I'll try it. As long as you'll work with me and give me honest feedback I'll keep trying and make it better." And you've just got to have a work ethic. You've got to be able to work, want to work, and you've got to be resilient and know your value and know that you bring value and whatever that looks like. I can always tell people... people that have grit and they just get in there and figure it out. I mentor a few young Choctaw ladies, and I love seeing their grit. You can give them any project, and they just figure it out. Most times, their goal is to make it better than anything I probably expected them to do anyways. That's the kind of attitude and delivery that's going to keep growing you in your career, to leave things better than what you found them.

Tino Magnatta: Great stuff. Shall we take some calls?

Erica Kosemund: Sure.

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

Janie Dillard: Well, I heard her talking about Janie Dillard, so I'm very concerned about that.

Tino Magnatta: How are you Janie?

Janie Dillard: I'm fine. How are you doing?

Tino Magnatta: I'm doing great, I'm doing great. I'm glad you called in.

Erica Kosemund: Hi Jane.

Janie Dillard: [crosstalk 00:30:10] tonight. I tell you. You did awesome, Erica. You did a great job. Awesome.

Erica Kosemund: Thanks Jane.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks guys. Erica is amazing. She's just amazing.

Janie Dillard: Well we have an awesome team, and she's definitely an asset to our team, and I love to see these ladies growing in the industry and becoming our next leaders. That's what it's all about. You love to hear them get on here and tell their stories and tell their adventure of where they started to where they are today. It's pretty phenomenal. Very excited. I'm just proud to be a part of their lives. That just keeps me pumped up every day, when I see the growth that they all bring to the table. It's phenomenal.

Tino Magnatta: You're such an inspiration to so many people, it's pretty phenomenal. Everywhere I go, and your name comes up, people just light up. So you've done an amazing job, and you have an amazing team and you're loved by a lot of people.

Janie Dillard: I appreciate that very much. As I've said many times to you, it's a team. It's a team effort. There's never an I in anything that we do. It's always a team. And Erica hit it on the head tonight whenever she said that it's all about the team. Erica and I have a lot more in common than she ever will let on or admit. We just get excited, and we're both in here throwing ideas, and our brains are just flying, and other people look at us thinking, "Why don't you two come to earth and get down to earth?" We do. We will have all kinds of ideas going, and somebody does have to come in and bring us down to earth, because we've gone clear off the map by the time we get through, because we're driven a lot alike, and it's exciting. It's exciting to have someone that...

As she said earlier, sometimes in our industry, people, they don't think outside the box, they don't look outside the box. They stay in their little world, they stay in their element, and that's what they do. And they don't see growth, they don't see change, and they sit and wonder why. Well, because they're not doing anything. They're stagnant, they're content. They're not even trying to step out. They're not even taking a risk. Erica and I are both risk takers, and we have to have somebody around us to really bring us back down and get us under control, because we are big risk takers.

But you've got to have all different personalities in your team to be successful. We're fortunate to have her. We're fortunate when we're able to talk with her and get her to come over on board with us, and then give her the opportunity she's had. I mean, she's done a fabulous job. She's an asset to our organization, and I say this to her face every day, and she knows how I feel.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you Janie.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, that's great compliments, and like I said, you've done an amazing job. You're an inspiration to a lot of people. I want you to come back on the show, because it's been a while, so I'm going to be contacting you, and we've got to book in a show for you, because I need to talk to you about all the great things that you're doing over there.

Janie Dillard: We'll do it. We will do it. We will definitely do it. Thank you for hooking me back on tonight, letting me come in. I've listened to nearly bit of her conversation tonight. I appreciate you guys very much. I appreciate you for what you do to showcase women in this industry. It's phenomenal. I love to see women grow and get stronger in the industry. I love it. So I really commend you for showcasing women like you're doing, so thank you very much for that.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you, Janie. And thank you so much for calling in, we really appreciate it.

Janie Dillard: Thank you so much. I appreciate you guys very much. Erica, have a great evening. Keep those [crosstalk 00:33:59] going now.

Erica Kosemund: Bye Janie.

Janie Dillard: All right, see you.

Tino Magnatta: See you later. Thanks so much.

Janie Dillard: Don't slack off. Don't slack-

Tino Magnatta: She's amazing.

Erica Kosemund: She is [crosstalk 00:34:13].

Tino Magnatta: She's just incredible. I mean, when I did the first interview with her she was so amazing, because for 10 minutes we had this conversation, and then I didn't even get a chance to introduce her. We just flowed into the show. It was the first time I had ever done that. We just had this great show. It was just one continuous flow, and it was just amazing. She's incredible.

All right, let's take another call here. This is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Erica?

Mike: [inaudible 00:34:41]. How are you tonight, Miss Erica?

Erica Kosemund: Hi Mike.

Mike: Well, I mean, always an exciting story. I love to hear them. Being in the business, we all have crazy stories. But some of the questions I would like to ask our peer

group is what are some of your pet peeves? You don't get successful unless you start checking what you're expecting kind of thing. So what are some of the pet peeves that you have in the business?

Erica Kosemund: Pet peeves? That's a good question that I wasn't prepared for. Probably just people that are inauthentic, that you kind of are just like, "Ah..." You've got to mean what you say and say what you mean, show up and be real, because there's a lot of sells around gaming and there's a lot of people that are probably talking to the title and not talking to the person. Just be real with those people, because you don't know when you're going to circle back around to getting to work with that person again. Just be good to people.

Mike: I think that's a very true statement, especially the part about you never know who you're going to be working with in the future. That's important.

One of the other things you mentioned that was that you really liked being a part of that growth for not just... All of your team, but specifically you've got tribal members out there that are growing in the business to help take control of their future, which is fantastic. I know everybody's unique, but is there a methodology to your madness when you try to mentor somebody so you can get them to see what it takes to be successful in the business?

Erica Kosemund: A lot of times, I make them read, and they get mad. I think it's cheesy, but the whole lifelong learner is a lifelong leader. I think you have to find ways, whether it's TED Talks or development books or blogs or podcasts, like I think you have to find something to channel the way you invest into yourself to continue to learn. That's always on you. No one's going to take as much investment in your own self-education as you are.

Mike: That's another good one. Constantly asking why and learning is probably a fundamental core to succeeding here. What's something you're reading right now that you're really engaged by?

Erica Kosemund: I just finished... I can't remember the name of the author, but it was... And it took me a long time to finish it, I'm not sure why. But the name of it is What Got You Here Won't Get You There. I mean, it's pretty self-explanatory. But it was a good read. It was a lot of short snips of what to do and being resilient and figuring out that yeah, you did a lot of things right to get here, but now what are you going to dig deep to get there? Like life's never going to be perfect, and it's never going to be great.

I also had the opportunity to listen to Emmitt Smith talk at a panel a couple of weeks ago, and I'm not a sports fan really at all, but it was so amazing how dependent he was on his teammates, and the goals he set for himself. I think it's just so important the way... He got so emotional talking about his team and what they did for him to get him where he was, that I think sometimes we need

to remember the things that other people do for us as well, that we depend on, and say thank you. I think gratitude's so important as well.

Mike: That's a good point. It always takes a team to get us there. I think people often see the title, and they're like, "Oh, you're doing all this hard work," but quite frankly, I always tell people it's that frontline that gets it done. I think it's a valuable point. You've really got to just show that genuine appreciation for the help and effort that your team gives you. It certainly resonates with me. That's a good point.

Maybe I caught on because I jumped on a little late, but did you mention... Was there a mentor in your career that you kind of really look up to and have been able to idolize as you've grown?

Erica Kosemund: Yeah, I have a few people I consider mentors. What's funny is I think one thing I've learned is the difference between, and I don't know why the difference is, but I've had a couple of really great female mentors and a couple of great male mentors, and the advice and direction they give you, and sometimes it's the same question that you're asking for advice, and sometimes just the way males and females look at things. I just really like the difference and having the juxtaposition of having a male and a female mentor. I would just say if you ever have the opportunity to have both, or even have an outlet to have someone you really trust the most, maybe someone that's not tied to a situation that you can talk to clearly, that can give good advice even, is...

But yeah, I would consider three or four mentors in my life that really have taken a vested interest in me and that I've learned immense amounts from.

Mike: That's great. I like that different perspectives and that element. Hey, I appreciate your time. One final, if you don't mind. With your growth in-

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, sure. Go ahead.

Mike: You mentioned the growth that the property's going to have, and by the way, I've had the chance to visit there several times now, it's a gorgeous property, great service. Anybody listening, I love that property. They do a fantastic job at Choctaw Durant. I want to throw that out.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you.

Mike: Absolutely amazing. But as you guys are... you're competing in your market, what do you think that next year and a half, two years is going to look like? I know you've got some pretty strong competitors in your market as well, and I imagine that they'll be looking to counter some of the efforts that you're making. So what's the roadmap you've got a little bit for that competition?

Erica Kosemund: Competition's fun.

Mike: Without giving the secrets out.

Erica Kosemund: Competition's fun, and I think I always tell some of our marketing team and our agency, like keep the main thing the main thing. As long as we build a consistent brand that people are proud to be associated and loyalized with, and we continue to do the right things day after day, and continue to build on those things, that are important to our core or our business... We're building our business, not competing with their business. So I think always keeping that at the center of a focus is important.

Mike: Great perspective. I just want to thank you for your time, and really like the call tonight. You have a good night, thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Thanks so much.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Great questions. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Erica?

JB: Hey, Tino, this is JB calling from New York.

Tino Magnatta: Hey, how are you, JB?

JB: Not too bad. Thanks for having me on the show, and Erica, really great to hear you. You've got lots of great insight, been enjoying hearing you up til now.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you.

JB: I just had a couple of questions for you that I just jotted down real quick while you were speaking. You had talked about taking risks before. Were you a natural born risk taker, or is this something that developed over time? Did you ever look back and see things that you thought you should've taken more risks on and that's how you developed this philosophy?

Erica Kosemund: That's funny. That's actually a conversation I had with one of my mentors actually quite a bit. I don't consider myself a risk taker, even now. Like I really don't. But I consider myself someone that wants to take chances with marketing, but I'm not out there like... I'm not Mark Cuban. I wouldn't consider myself like an entrepreneurial risk taker, but I think smart brand business building decisions aren't risky. They're just sometimes unconventional. Maybe other people, especially if you're in other business decisions, like you may think of it as risk taking, and that's a thought maybe I haven't given it to, but I wouldn't consider myself a risk taker personally. I look at people and I'm like, "Man, I wish I was more risky like them."

JB: Got you. A followup, kind of along those lines, but I'm in marketing myself, I come from the platform side for the gaming industry, though. Wanted to hear

your perspective... In combination with taking risks and really ideas and new roads, how is Choctaw and how are you approaching this multichannel or omnichannel environment as you might want to call it, to leverage it to create a better experience for your current players? And how are you using that or looking ahead to new avenues in that realm to reach new players?

Erica Kosemund: We look at a lot. We challenge ourselves a lot. We look at our app performance and our kiosk performance and our social performance. I think those are all channels that when we look at our website... I think those are all things that we look at, because we're so used to doing gaming so well that we're like, "We haven't even skimmed the surface here," because it's just not something that maybe even comes natural to us. I think that's something that we all, as natural competitors and achievers are always saying we want to do more of, we want to do better of. But I think gaming as a whole and the changes in the industry are pushing us all to get a taste to try more things and try them quicker and just to see if they work or not.

JB: Yeah, I got you.

Erica Kosemund: [crosstalk 00:46:09] kind of have to be willing and ready to do that. I think that's also where you have to maybe outsource some talent that maybe doesn't have a gaming background, but can bring some expertise from somewhere else that does it really well. I think that's where I was talking about garnering people or product, or like what are other industries doing that we can retrofit and expand for us to do in gaming, that will work to disrupt what we do here?

JB: Got you. Is that approach pretty common across different areas that you work in of looking for expertise outside the industry?

Erica Kosemund: I wouldn't say for our group, always, but I think it's something that we are continuously talking about, as things change and evolve and grow. I wouldn't say that was always the case, but I think it's always becoming part of the conversation.

JB: No, I understand what you mean, and I like the perspective, because typically we're always laser focused on finding the most experience within an industry, which kind of goes against what you're sharing about taking risks and looking for new roads.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Thanks so much, JB. Great questions.

JB: Thanks, Tino. Have a great night.

Tino Magnatta: Have a great night. Great stuff. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question or questions for Erica?

Michael: Hey guys, hey everyone, this is Michael from Catalyst Marketing. Thanks for taking my call.

Tino Magnatta: Hey Michael, how are you?

Erica Kosemund: Hey.

Tino Magnatta: No problem.

Michael: Good. I actually do have a couple of things. One, it's also in the professional and more the personal side... I guess the personal side, it's sort of professional too, what are the some keys you've found... Knowing that we work in such a 24/7 busy industry, what are some of the keys that you've found to help with work life balance to make sure you that you don't get too overwhelmed on the work side?

Erica Kosemund: Oh, I'm probably not the person to ask, to be honest. If my husband were listening, he would tell you I'm not the person to ask. He'd be like, "Next question. She needs help. Sign her up for a help group."

Michael: When was the last time you got a vacation?

Erica Kosemund: I do believe in vacations. I do believe in vacations and traveling, I will say that. But your phone's always on you. But no, I have little kids, I have two little kids, and so I think... I call them the power hours from about 5:30 at night until 9:00 at night, and I do try to limit my time on those... Because that is when homework, dinners, baths, rocking, lunches, all of those things happen. I try to be really present during that time.

Michael: See, that's something. You made it sound like you work, work, work all the time. I know we keep busy, but that's good to separate some of that time every day for family.

Erica Kosemund: [crosstalk 00:50:00].

Michael: I know it's important. I have no kids, but I have two dogs who if I don't get them out and get them running every day for a little while, they'll drive me nuts and I'll never get any downtime. Maybe one day the kids, we'll see.

Switching to a little bit of professional side, what do you think the biggest challenge the gaming industry's going to see, or your area in particular, over the next five to 10 years?

Erica Kosemund: That's a long span. I mean, we've seen a ton of stuff in 10 years, in the last 10 years. It's fun to have conversations. I feel like with sports betting and wagering... One of our competitive markets in Arkansas has just gotten approval for some casinos. Texas is always on the buzz. I think competition's the key

word, and relevancy. What are you going to do to stay relevant and top of mind, and how do you get your brand in that phone, on that phone? What does that mean for sports wagering in sovereign states like Oklahoma, and what does that mean for sports betting when it's legal here, with our state? What does all that look like? It's exciting times, but I think that's going to be a big piece of it for our region.

Michael: Everybody keeps talking about what are we going to do to attract millennials, and most people have said, "Well, when they get to a certain point, when they hit their mid-30s, they're going to start acting like their parents, and we'll see them come around." Well, that's not too far off. That's going to fall within that next five years, you're going to start seeing some millennials start hitting that age where they have some more disposable income. Do you think there's going to be a time when we have to shift gears on how we address attracting them as players, once they come into their age that they have that extra income that they tend to spend?

Erica Kosemund: That's what I try to do now. I mean, the event we have going on right now, it's exactly that. I'm a millennial, so I'll call myself a millennial in your range. The way we absorb media and messaging and the way we loyalize with brands is through social media and through people we trust. We have to put our brands in people's hands that will advocate on our behalf. So influencers, partnerships, activations, you have to align yourself with what looks right for your business and the message and the brand you want to build, what tier you're in, what that message looks like, who those people look like.

I think absolutely it has to look different, and your mix has to look different, and how you diversify those dollars have to look different, the way you speak to them has to look different, the way you do your creative has to be channeled a little different. That's not to say you have to change up everything, but you should obviously test things to see if the work better or worse, to see what direction is attractive to your customer.

Michael: I think we're seeing some of the same. We do a lot of research, especially when we're coming on board with new clients? Some of the things we're seeing is especially the shifting of how people are receiving information. And it's not just millennials. Even some of the older age groups, where they're starting to shift digital and social. I think you're definitely on the right track there.

Well thank you, and I'm glad to get to hear some of your stories today. You guys have a great night.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you so much. Thank you so much, great questions. Great stuff tonight. We've really got an engaged audience here. All right. This is Tino Magnatta, do you have a question for Erica, or questions for Erica?

Speaker 7: I do. Good evening. How's everybody?

Tino Magnatta: Good evening.

Erica Kosemund: Good, how are you?

Speaker 7: Good, good. This is [inaudible 00:54:46]. I just want to ask a question, like a followup question about the future of gaming. Erica, I'm interested to know what you think we are going to see more of in anything, and then what are we going to see less of in terms of the future of gaming?

Erica Kosemund: I don't know. I wish we all had a crystal ball. But I think obviously sports betting is going to be on the forefront. I think eSports has a conversational play, especially as the next generation gets older. I don't know what that looks like. Online, free to play, loyalization, I think all of those have conversational topics. But I also think games are just becoming more fun. Like manufacturers are getting very sophisticated in how they build their games, and they're getting more and more fun to look at and play. Even though that's conventional gaming, they're stepping up their game, and they look better, they feel better, they play better? I think they're taking note too to be more relevant and be on the forefront of what works.

Tino Magnatta: Hello? Did you have another question?

Speaker 7: Yeah.

Tino Magnatta: Hello, can you hear us? Hello? Hello? [crosstalk 00:56:35].

Speaker 7: Yeah, sorry. I just dropped out there. Are you there?

Tino Magnatta: Yeah, we can hear you now. Go ahead.

Speaker 7: Perfect. Oh, hi. Sorry, I dropped out there. I guess the next question is what do you have in place when Texas gaming gets approved? Are there any contingency plans?

Erica Kosemund: I mean, it's always top of mind. The contingency is that we just continue to build strong brand alliances and relationships in the Dallas and Texas market, and that we have an ability to work and live and play down there with them, if that were to ever happen.

Speaker 7: Do you think your brand will, let's say, still resonate if Dallas gets a commercial property?

Erica Kosemund: I mean, I guess we'd have to see. When any state gets gaming, politics plays a huge part in what that looks like.

Tino Magnatta: It sure does. Great. Thanks so much for calling in. Really appreciate it. Have a great night.

Speaker 7: Thank you. Thanks a lot. You too. Cheers.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Bye bye.

Erica, thanks so much, it's been a fantastic show.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you, Tino, for having me on.

Tino Magnatta: You've told us so many great things, and you're an inspiration, just like Janie and your whole team over there. Keep doing the great work you're doing.

Erica Kosemund: Thank you. Come see us at Choctaw sometime soon.

Tino Magnatta: We will, and you have a great evening.

Erica Kosemund: You too. Talk to you soon.

Tino Magnatta: Great, thank you so much.

Erica Kosemund: Bye bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye bye.

What a great person, with so much insight. My next show is [inaudible 00:58:32] Rubio, August 29th. He's been on the show a couple of times, he's a great guy. He grew up on the res, and I'll tell you, he's a rocket man. He's just out of this world. He's been doing some great stuff, and he's learned a lot since then, so we're going to talk a little bit about how he's grown and where he is now. Remember, everybody has a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen.

You all have a great evening. Enjoy your summer. It's almost over. Goodnight everybody.

END