



Conversations w/Tino

Guests	Michael Frawley
	Chief Operating Officer
	29 Palms Enterprises Corporation
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Tino Magnatta: Welcome to another episode of GT Radio. Tonight, I have a super interesting guy. He's a pretty amazing guy, a lot of great stories. Welcome Michael Frawley to the show. How are you doing, buddy?

Michael Frawley: I'm doing great. Thanks for having me Tino, appreciate it.

Tino Magnatta: No problem. We were talking a little before this, you were telling me that there's a big difference between operating a business quarter to quarter and then having a vision for the future. Let's talk about that a little bit.

Michael Frawley: Well, I work on both sides of the fence. I've worked on the side of the fence where you're dealing with investors and things like that. "We want topline. We want bottom line. This quarter was bad. That quarter was bad. What's the guidance for next quarter?" It's a lot different. It's much more preferable to me to operate a business in perpetuity because it gives you an opportunity to plan for five years, for longer, "Where are we going to be in 10 years? Are we going to diversify? Are we not going to diversify? What are we going to do?"

Again, I have to say it, I'm not a big fan of working for large corporations anymore. I'm doing this since, I don't even want to say, over 40 years. I've worked in all kinds of environments and environments that were very highly political, highly corporate which just became ... There was no passion in it for me. There was no creativity. A couple of people at the top get a little bit of creativity, but once you take that away from people and you're working for these large companies, the creativity goes away. Once that happens, it just becomes a gig. It's just, "I do my eight hours and I go home." I don't do that now. I don't do that.

I mean I haven't done it in a long time. I haven't worked for a corporation in ... I worked for private equity for about eight years and loved working with them. They were great, but before that, I worked for companies which I won't say and I did not enjoy it at all. Like I say, it just becomes a job. A job without passion, a job without where you feel effective, where you're making a difference, what's the point? I guess-

Tino Magnatta: You put your heart in it.

Michael Frawley: At my age ... Right. You want to put your heart in it. You don't want to just mark time. The quickest way, even with my staff, is you continually have to make sure that they feel effective and that they're making a change in what they're doing. They're not just a cog in a wheel that's just standing there pretending to do something which is what I found. I'm being honest. It's what I found. You're pretending to be busy. You're pretending to be thinking. You're going to these meetings every week thinking, "Geez, I got to go to a weekly meeting. What do I have to say? How do I say it? Should I say something? Shouldn't I say something?"

I hate meetings, but I love meetings they have a lot to say. I love meetings where everybody is yelling and screaming but in a good way. Nobody is calling anybody's baby ugly, but everybody is fighting for passion for what they believe in. I find that as the years went by, that passion was diminished and diminished. To tell you the truth, it wasn't encouraged. It was almost like if you have an idea, keep it to yourself. Me, I love a good tussle. The older you get, the less ego you have about these gigs, the less ego you have about being a general manager, a COO or president or anything like that because you've been through the mill enough. When you lose these jobs, you're nobody again.

You're just another guy online at Gelson's waiting to get checked out. Nobody returns your phone calls. You're really nobody's special. The special time is when you're on the job. That's when you're special, when you can do something that you're proud of. I was lucky enough to be thrown into situations that I had no busy in and you become the guy or you don't become the guy. I was lucky enough to get involved in construction project in Southern California for building casinos. I was lucky enough to have great mentors that helped me and let me go to the edge of the table and pulled me back when I was about to scrub which was pretty often. That's how you learn.

You're able in a business that you know is going to be operating for a longtime and you're not dictated by the price of a stock on whether you have a job or whether you don't have a job or somebody is going to have a takeover whether it be hostile or whether it be welcome or whatever it is and you're continuing worrying about that when you should be worrying about the business, the customer experience, how to be creative, how to use technology. You don't have time for that because you're worried about everything that's going on. "Did we have a good quarter? How are we going to make the numbers great for the quarter?"

I went to a financial review today. My ownership went like this. We're doing great for the year. We were over for the month, for the year to date. We had a bad month. Everybody has a bad month. What's your plans for next month? Then you go over your plans. You don't go in empty handed, but I've had other jobs where you turn in a budget and you say, "We're going to make this much money." They say, "Well, that's not enough." You go, "Well, how much would you like it to be?" Then you make the budget. Again, nobody pays attention to it and you end up looking at what you did last year.

I know if you have people listening that work for large corporations they should be shaking their heads. Yes, who knows if they are? I've been in situations like that a million times. "Well, the budget is not enough. We need to make this." "Okay. Well, I can tell you how we can do it." "No, we don't have the capital for that." "Okay." I guess you had these jobs or just because they think that you have experience and you're an alchemist that you're going to take coal and turn it into gold just by your presence, it doesn't work that way. You need to have collaborators.

To tell you the truth, that's what I miss the most about some of the last few jobs that I've had. I miss the ability to collaborate, to trade ideas with people and learn things because as long as I've been doing this, you realize that sometimes you don't know that much. I work right now out of the Palm Springs area and it's a highly Latin culture. I didn't realize how little I knew about the different kinds of Latin culture, the different music, the different food tastes, all of those things. I love that stuff because again you're learning things, but the most important thing is you're allowing your people to educate you.

You're allowing the people that you work with, your direct reports to advise you. That makes them part of the team. That makes them part of what goes on. A lot of people thought that when, even in other jobs, I've had jobs where I'm walking in and the other general manager is walking out, it always turned out to be a turnaround situation for me. I've always ended up for some reason in turnaround situations. Some I've done great and some I could have done better, but what I found is you got to keep your ears open on this kind of stuff. Not everybody that runs these places is a dummy or you go to a place that ...

I've worked in place, I won't mention it, but I was the 16th general manager. "You're telling me every one of those general managers was a dummy? I don't think so." If you don't have collaboration, you can't get ... Like I say, every guy there was an idiot. No, it doesn't work that way. I was not the smartest one of the 16. I certainly like to think that I was reasonably competent. If you don't have collaboration and somebody just drops you in and won't work with you because of embedded cultural norms or whatever it is or when somebody says, "I know I got the right guy to fix it," it doesn't work that way.

You should be scared when somebody says that. Like you're going to make a difference all by yourself. You're nobody without a great team. I'm really blessed right now. I'm really blessed that I have a great team that will tell me when they think I'm wrong, will tell me when they think I'm right and will argue with me until the day is long, but they understand that the boss is the boss. I'm accountable for the decisions. I've also lived by the rule of no surprises. I'm fairly simple in my management style. I live by the rule of no surprises. Don't surprise me with bad news. Don't surprise me with good news. Take the good news as well as you take the bad news the same and your people will come to you all the time.

I think I mentioned before, if they don't come to you, you got a lot of problems. Nobody is running in out of your office saying, "I need your help for something." I guess they think that you can't do it, you're ineffective or you're just not interested in helping them which is a recipe for disaster. I've been involved with those too. Those are the most difficult ones. Fortunately, I don't have that problem this time, so I'm very, very grateful for the people I worked with. I try my best. I can always try harder, but I try my best to show my appreciation as much as I can.

I'm really blessed with the staff that I have. They're so eager and ready to learn and so enthusiastic and have a great sense of urgency and don't have that and I've had this before, where they go, "You know what, dude? I've seen them come and I've seen them go and I'll be here when you're gone, so do what you got to do." I don't have that problem anymore and it's very refreshing.

Tino Magnatta: It's really cool. Tell me a little bit about your background.

Michael Frawley: Yeah, it's great.

Tino Magnatta: Tell me a little bit about your background, where were you born, where did you grow up.

Michael Frawley: I'm from New York City. I was born and raised in The Bronx in New York and spent time up in North Jersey. Went on an interview as a young college student. I gave a guy a ride to an interview and he goes, "Do you want an interview for resorts?" and I go, "For a dealer?" The only dealer I knew at the time were the ones I knew in college and they certainly weren't in gambling. I said, "Okay, fine. I'll go." My buddy didn't get the job. I got the job because I made them laugh. I made my interviewer laugh and told a lot of jokes and said I had no experience.

The next thing you know, they go, "You're just the guy we're looking for," which is very unusual if you think about that. You go there. You don't care about the job. You say, "I don't know nothing about this job. I haven't a slightest clue on how to do it." They go, "You're hired." I was like, "Okay." I was part of the first casino in Atlantic City. I was a crap dealer. Went to go work for Caesars which was a wonderful company at the time. It was a wonderful company. Probably stayed there for 13 years because I really didn't take the business that seriously at the time.

This sounds really, really funny, but I wanted to be an actor. This was my waiting tables job. If anybody is listening that worked with me at Caesars, they're laughing about it now because I would have to trade days, "Look, I got to go on audition to New York and I need the day off." I used to take the bus up to New York. I would audition all day. Then I would shave in the bathroom at Caesars, put on a suit and work all night. Everybody asked me, they go, "Well, were you a good actor?" I said, "Well, do you see me on TV?" If you name a movie in the '80s, I probably auditioned for it that's needed like a [inaudible 00:13:51] truck driver. They want that Italian New York kind of thing.

Then I went down to Mississippi Gulf Coast and it changed my life about the business. It was a huge lesson for me because I can remember sitting in a meeting with the owner of the company. When I worked at Caesars and probably for good reason, nobody took me really that seriously because I was interested in show business. I can remember I said, "I'm going to give this business one more shot," because I already had a job offer out in Los Angeles in production and said, "I'm going to give this business one more shot," and I went

down to Biloxi with some very good friends of mine. It was a real adventure for me.

I'm sitting around the table and we're opening a casino. The owner of the company says, "What do you think, Frawley?" It knocked me off my chair. Nobody ever asked me what I thought before. I gave my opinion about what we should do. The owner of the company said, "That's good. We're going to do that." Then I almost like passed out. Now, I was talking ... I mean it's a funny story and everything, but the issue is that all of sudden you're a part of something. All of a sudden, you have a stake. It was a real lesson for me that you have stake in this now and you're responsible for this idea.

You have a stake in something which I guess it really changed me. It changed my idea about the business. It also changed my idea that the philosophy of the company because it was growing so fast was to give everybody an opportunity to succeed. If they saw a spark in you, they took advantage of it. They immediately ... I guess they saw something in me and moved me to slots, moved me to all kinds of different things so I would learn. Made me in charge at night in the absence of a general manager as a shift manager. In those days, the shift manager was in charge of everything. You go to all these adventures, so many of them I could write a book on.

I was always learning something. When you're always learning something, people are taking an interest in you and you're learning something. That carried with me through my career. From there, I've gone to Louisiana. I got my first vice president's job in Louisiana as a table game and then slots. Then I went to Puerto Rico and learned about destination resorts. I can remember going to the general manager and saying, "I want to learn hotel." He goes, "Why Michael? This is an easy job." I went, "My friend, you're not supposed to tell me that. I work for you. You're not supposed to tell me that." I said, "I want to learn hotel. I want to go to S&D and I want to learn that."

I did have a plan. I did want to learn other things. I did not want to be known in the industry as a one-trick pony. I guess a good thing or a bad thing is when I'm in, I'm really in. I become obsess. I'm not real big on moderation. That's a good thing and a bad thing. When I wanted to learn, I wanted to learn. I wanted to go everywhere. I wanted to learn how to cook. Some of the things I would say, "I want to park cars tonight." I can remember when I worked in Black Hawk, Colorado and I wanted to learn how to park cars. I said, "I want to park some cars tonight."

I went down to valet with a couple of pizzas and bribed them and said I want to do it. They were laughing at me. It was certainly entertaining to watch the general manager pull in to a tiny, tiny car space and taken 15 minutes to do it until they taught me. There's a secondary effect to all of this. You start to develop relationships with people because for some reason people view people in these positions is like not regular people. It's really weird. It's like when I tell people, I said, "Look, when I worked at Caesars, I used to call in sick just like

everybody else. I called in sick from Acapulco. I called in sick from golf courses." I was not the greatest employee, but the one thing is I know all the tricks.

Then when I became very serious about the business, I became super serious about it and tried to learn everything I can. I was very lucky to have people who took an interest in me and mentored me. People that were secure in their own gigs that were able to say, "No, Michael. This is how you'll do it." In our business, like I say, I don't foster that environment, so I'm not sure how it is in other places anymore, but there are no stupid questions. When I was coming, I'll tell you a quick story, I remember dealing craps just I say as a child, there was a boxman next to me and this is probably again in the late '70s. I said, "What about this? What about that? What about this move? How do I become a better dealer? How about this?" I got blabby.

He looked at me and he went, "You know? Why don't you shut up?" I was like, "What?" He goes, "Just shut up." He goes, "I learned the hard way and you're going to learn the hard way. That's how this business works." I was like, "Okay." The advantage that I have is I've sat in those seats before purposely. I was a floorman. I was a shift boss. I worked in slots. I know what it was like to deal with customers. I cooked. I parked cars. I worked in slots. Some of it has a general manager, some of it has a vice president because I wanted to see what it was like.

When you communicate with your staff and they know that you're not just some guy that came in and I'm not disparaging education or anything like that, but you're not just some guy in at MBA school, doing things, but you understand the feelings of the people within the business. If you're going to eliminate and you're trying to change culture because in turnaround, usually you have a culture that is the culprit for the failure of the business. It always ends up in the corner of your office. It's a mirror of who is sitting in that chair.

I'm fortunate enough to be able to having done all of these things, having known what it's like to hear BS. What it's known to be like where the safest answer is no. What it's like not to be listened to. What it's like to be listened to. You learn all of these things. As you start to progress in your career, you take these things with you if you're smart. You take these things with you and you understand that you're still that dealer. You're still that guy parking cars. You're no better than anybody else. Your employees will sense that. Your employees will sense that you understand what you're going through. I guess the best word to use, it would be empathy.

I'd had to make some really, really difficult decisions especially in Atlantic City which bothered me until this day. I guess if you lose the quality of empathy, you're screwed. At least, I would think so. As far as your management style, as far as what you do, you're screwed. You look people have livelihoods and sometimes people take it seriously. I've always thought that those people on the floor are my responsibility. They're my responsibility. They're the people

that you should be looking out for because they look out for the customers which is what it's all about.

The best information I get is being able to sit down at a table or sit down at the bar and talk to a bartender and say, "What is it that I should be doing? What is it that I'm doing? Just tell me the truth. Don't worry about it." If you're approachable, it becomes really easy. They go, "Michael ..." This is stuff like, "We need sharp knives in the kitchen." You buy sharp knives. They go, "You're my hero." I'm like, "For that? For that?" It gets so easy to ... That's about a business in perpetuity. That's about a business in which I feel that I thrive. I thrive in a business that, "You know what? Don't worry about your job. Worry about the customer. Do your job. Do a good job. All right?"

I always tell them this, I said, "Look, a good day is a day when you go home without a headache and you might want to come back tomorrow." That's a good day. When people feel like they're part of that organization and then I go back to me sitting at that table and having that change in my attitude, having that change in what I thought of the business, it truly changed my life. I feel very, very fortunate to have all of these experiences and the mentors to give me those experiences. Some of them have been great. Some of them have been absolutely awful.

Sometimes I guess you can learn a lot more from a bad mentor. I've worked with guys that could screw a place up in two weeks and not even realize it which is dumbfounding to me. I've been lucky enough to work in so many jurisdictions. It drove my wife crazy. I've had 13 houses. My wife is very tired now. I'm not planning on going anywhere else. That's a different feeling for me. I've worked everywhere from Puerto Rico to Colorado to Mississippi to New Mexico, Southern California, Louisiana twice, Mississippi twice, Atlantic City twice, just back and forth. It's very tiring, but there's a lot of value in having I guess your experience basket and picking something up from it as you go.

Tino Magnatta: It's just an accumulation of experiences to your life, right?

Michael Frawley: Yeah. You know what? I find that at times, especially when you're dealing with ... I guess I don't want to turn it into ... When you're dealing with recruiters and things like that, I find it very rare that occasionally I get calls from recruiters not as much as I used to because I'm really not interested, but that recruiters are more interested in whether you have an MBA. That's probably because of things in the past with very large companies, whether you have an MBA or anything like that instead of really getting in depth about what is it that you can contribute. "Are you a free thinker?" "Yes." "Well, we're not looking for a free thinker." "Okay."

Also, I'm blessed to have and this is something that I'm starting to see as a trend that disturbs me especially since I'm starting to get a little bit older is having a multigenerational workforce. The ability to mentor people, you're not going to get somebody that's 26 years old that's going to mentor a 21-year-old because

they're not secure enough in their job. They're not secure in their abilities most of the time. If you get somebody like myself and certainly the people that mentored me that were very secure in their ability and very eager to pass on what they know to you if you're smart enough, just listen.

I see that trend especially in some of the larger companies of late of not seeing that, not understanding that experience accounts for something. Certainly experience that ... I'm always reading about technology. I'm always reading how technology makes things more efficient, how technology increases guest experience. I mean you definitely have to stay up on that. It takes a lot of work. It's almost like being a doctor. If you don't read medical journals and understand what the latest thing is, you're going to be left behind.

I've always been a gearhead and I've always been a gadgethead. Any gadget you got, I'll look at. I love gadgets. I do. I love gadgets. I'm looking at kitchen equipment now and learning about the latest in kitchen equipment. It's just amazing some of the things that you can do that can do great food offer consistency, efficiency and make life easier for your employees. Once you start doing that, then you get this esprit de corps and you get people going like they say, "Thank you for knives." You're like, "Okay." It's so simple. It's so simple it's right in front of you all the time.

I remember a boss I had that worked and I'm low to name names, but you would know the name of [inaudible 00:28:54]. I worked for a boss who worked for a company that was run by a very well-known legendary gaming person. The best day when you walk through the pit or you walk through the housekeeping department and have a meeting and say, "What is it that you guys need?" "We need vacuums." "Okay." "We need better walkie talkies." "Okay." Why they don't get them? These are turnarounds that I go into. Why they don't get them?

There are various reasons why they don't get the tools they need to do the job because people are being pennywise and pound foolish or they didn't make their numbers for the quarter. I mean I've worked in places on a turnaround where instead of using cleaning fluid, they were using water in spray bottles to clean. You try to understand that and you try to rationalize how that in the grand scheme of things will increase the guest experience, will enhance the guest experience. Sometimes, it goes down to bottom line. Sometimes, guys like me are under pressure and they're frustrated. Thankfully, I don't have to do that anymore.

I work for very understanding people who actually have confidence in me. Of course, my opinions are all based on data. I make data. I make promises as far as, "This is what it's going to do. This is the return. This is what you're going to get. It's going to be budgeted that way and I'm accountable." Once you're ready to put your head on the block for something that you truly believe in, it makes things a lot easier if you have people that believe in you. That seems to be a scarcity now at least in my experience.

Tino Magnatta: It's more of like a distance relationship rather than really getting to know people, having conversations. The world's changed a little with all the-

Michael Frawley: I don't mean to interrupt, but it all goes back to passion. It all goes back to caring. That all goes back to the guy who sits in the big chair. That goes back to the guy who sits in the big chair. Like I say and I'll always say it, "What goes down on the floor is a mirror image of what goes on in the executive offices." It really is. You have to lead by example. If you're not down there, if you're not able to sit in the host's office which I do often, I go talk to the host. Saturday night, I'll go sit in the host's office because it gives me a chance to get out of the cave. I go in there and I go, "What do I need to do? What are the customers telling you?" I go to the slot people, "What are they telling you?"

You take notes and you take pictures and you say, "We need to do this. We need to do that." Some of that is like, "Yeah, we need to build a thousand-room hotel tower." "Well, thanks, but can you give me something a little simpler?" There's a wealth of knowledge that you can garner if you can lose your ego and realize that you're just a regular guy. I'm not saying everybody in this position is that way, but it happens. It happens. You lose your perspective. You lose your perspective about why you got in to the business.

Me, I love the psychological puzzle. I love to know why people go left and people go right. I love to know why design, how people feel about design, because to me, it's a puzzle. I love having a problem and then sitting with a bunch of people on a white board and saying, "Okay, let's break this down. Let's distill this thing down and work on the puzzle." Then have people that are brave enough to give the craziest suggestions and you don't ridicule them. I'll go back to a story that when I used to audition and the rare times that I did work, I worked with directors which also taught me.

My father always told me, "You're going on all these auditions. What a waste of time." No, it's not a waste of time. You walk into a room with people who they don't know you. You're walking in from the cold. You're laying yourself out there. They're looking at you and judging you and then you get rejected and you never know why. It toughens you up and it makes you be able to walk into places and do different things. After a while, you get to the point where you don't care anymore about what the people in front of you are thinking. You just say what's on your mind.

That's what I need. I don't need people to tell me what they think I'm going to think like the same thing with the director. If you go like this to a film director and you and I have talked about this because you're in the industry. If the actor gives you what you think you want, they're going to screw up every time. They got to give you what they have. They don't give you what they think you want. You can give advice and say, "Okay, this is what you're doing. This is how you're doing. Show me something." Those are the best directors. Not the directors that go, "This is what I want you to do. This, this and this and this," and then you give this stiff performance which believe it or not relates to what we do.

We're always on stage when we go on the floor. All we are are entertainers. We're all selling the same product. All we are are entertainers. People may say, "Well, dude. It's a stretch to compare an acting career to being a chief operating officer." It's really not. It's really not. You take a lot of that stuff with you. I've been really lucky. I wish I would have gotten more acting jobs, but I've been really lucky.

Tino Magnatta: Let's talk a little bit about work ethic. I know that we have discussed this before and you're a big believer in hard work and being thorough. A lot of people think it's easy, but it's really not. Tell us a little bit about that.

Michael Frawley: Well, you know what I mean? Let's just put it from a turnaround perspective. It's deceptive that you're going to go in there and you're going to work hard. Working hard is not about ... I tell my coworkers, I shouldn't say my people, I keep telling my coworkers all the time that your family life and your personal life is just as important as your work life. I don't judge people by the amount of hours that they work, all right? To me, that's not hard work. Staying at work for 14 or 15 hours a day does not impress me. Bringing something to the table that makes a difference, whether it takes two hours or 40 hours, is what impresses me.

Believe it or not, there are careers and then there are jobs. Those of us that have careers are always working, always. If you are in a hotel, you can't help but go like this, like me I look at the bottom of the plates, I look at the silverware. I'll go, "Can I see the kitchen?" to see how they work because there may be an idea that I can steal or there may be something that I can look at. "Do you use a database? Do you not use a database?" That's work. Work is not sitting at a desk writing. Sometimes, I sit at my desk and my assistant who I have to give her, who is my favorite assistant in the whole world, [Marie 00:37:08], I'll just sit at my desk and she'll think I'm staring off into space while I'm looking at a whiteboard. I have like four or five whiteboards in my office.

I just think. I say, "Okay, okay." I try to put things into perspective and think of ... Normally, if I get a great idea, the first offer in my head is, "Okay. How do I screw this up? How do I mess this up?" Of course since I thought of it, it's going to be success, but now I have to think about how I can screw it up. To me, that's work. Work is not something that has to be hard. Work has to be productive. Work has to be satisfying. Work has to be spending time with your family and again going on like, "I'm ready to go to work and kick ass." That's work.

It's really hard to change that perspective that when you go in there and people think because they spend 12 hours in the office a day that it's like a badge of honor. It's what you bring to the table that's the badge of honor. That's what I prioritize. For me, I'm always looking at things, I watch TV or I see something. You're always working, always because you have a passion for it. When you go to a place, and I'll go back to being a turnaround, like I said you have these embedded cultural norms and some people will want to go along with you and some people will not. That's when the difficult decisions have to happen.

Because as nice guy as I am, I don't suffer a fool. I will not suffer a fool. I will give everybody a chance to succeed, all right? You can either come with me or you can make a decision that it'd be best for both of us not to come with me. I'm not shy about that either, but I will do anything I can to develop somebody if they want to be developed. If you don't, we should part ways and you should do what you think is best. It's very hard to go into a place that's been operation for decades and start to try to change the culture. That takes hard work and it takes a lot of dedication. To tell you the truth, it really never ends. It really never ends.

It took me a while to change the culture where I am now. I still have work to do. I know that I'm making progress and that makes me happy and I feel effective. That's what work is all about. You feel effective. You feel you're making a difference. You're not just some dude that's punching the clock because I've been there before and it's just not good for me. Like I said, either I'm in or I'm out. If I just have to punch a clock, I'm way out.

Tino Magnatta: Where is that-

Michael Frawley: I don't survive in there.

Tino Magnatta: Where does your passion come from?

Michael Frawley: I think it comes from my dad. I think it comes from my dad. My dad was very ambitious. My dad was very honest. He still is. He's my idol in a lot of ways as far as his work ethic, his honesty, his sense of fair play, sense of compassion. I think it was the way that I was raised. Plus, I wanted to be successful, but successful in my own way. Successful from a self-realization point of view. I was not a great student. Anybody that's worked with me knows it. I have ADD which I love. My son has it. I said, "You have to keep this power under control. If the ADD power was to get into the wrong hands, we would have disaster."

With me and if you know anybody with ADD, it's almost like having two wheels in your head. One is going one way. One is going the other way. To me, it makes you more creative. It makes you more sense of urgency. When you're creating something or doing a new program or trying to create something, since it's your baby, you want it to be successful or somebody comes up with a great idea, it seems very fine to me how you wouldn't work hard to make it successful. I honestly don't know any other way to work.

Even when I wasn't interested in the business and I was auditioning, I put as much into doing that. Sleeping on the bus on the way to New York, getting off it whatever 2:00 or 4:00 in the morning, sleeping on the bus on the way to New York, going on three or four auditions, then taking the bus back and sleeping and then working all night and then doing it again the next day. I really don't know any and that energy that I put in to that is the energy that I put in to my job now. I guess it's just ingrained in me. It probably came from my dad, the short answer. Yes.

Tino Magnatta: Great. Should we take some calls?

Michael Frawley: Yeah, sure.

Tino Magnatta: Let's do it. Hello, this is Tino Magnatta. You have a question for Michael?

Heidi Antezana: Yes. Hi Tino. Hi Michael. It's Heidi [Antezana 00:43:15] from Temecula. How are you guys tonight? I am wonderful and I've just-

Michael Frawley: Hey, how are you? How's business up there?

Heidi Antezana: It's awesome. Absolutely awesome.

Michael Frawley: I know it is.

Heidi Antezana: How's Coachella Valley?

Michael Frawley: Doing fine. We're doing fine.

Heidi Antezana: Wonderful.

Michael Frawley: I'll tell you a story. I can remember when I was one of the builders of Valley View Casino and this is again probably you're way too young to remember this, but I can remember going up to Temecula and there were double-wide trailers.

Heidi Antezana: Wow.

Michael Frawley: It's just amazing what a great job you guys have done up there. It's just amazing property.

Heidi Antezana: I'm not with Valley View. I'm an independent consultant. I work with the casino leaders on incidence and impact. I live in Temecula, so I know Valley View, et cetera. Michael, I've taken so many notes. Actually, I was taken by surprised when Tino put me on because I've got so many questions for you.

Michael Frawley: Great. I'm flattered.

Heidi Antezana: You're like a toolbox of these amazing golden nuggets. The first thing I wanted to ask you very quickly is that you wrote this great article and it was about, "A good COO is never undercover," which I absolutely love. I know you've crashed a forklift, you've burned steaks. I wanted to know, what was your biggest lesson when working on the frontline or your biggest experience that you had?

Michael Frawley: My biggest experience on all of them was pretty much identical because it was mostly from a psychological point of view. I mean it was very entertaining for the people to watch. I've built great relationships while people watched me screw up, but it also was more psychological than anything else, so I could put

myself in their place. When they spoke with me, I was able to speak their language. I was able to understand. It's almost the same thing as when I came here and was totally unfamiliar. I mean with the culture and what would be successful in the culture and what wouldn't.

Most of these jobs that I've taken, to do it, it was more about psychology. It was more about putting myself in that place and imagining they were dealing with somebody like me and what would motivate them. I knew it from being a dealer. I knew it from being a forkman. I knew it from being a slot attendant or doing slot change. That was part of my training program when I was with a company, but I still wanted to understand, even in Puerto Rico, what it was like to work the front desk. When I spoke to somebody and they would say, "What is it that you need?" they would be able to speak whatever lingo it was and I would understand it.

I made beds. I did all of that stuff because I wanted to understand what it was like. Puerto Rico was a great opportunity for me because they have slow season. During the slow season, there was like ... I don't have the attention for golf. If golf was seven holes, I'd love it.

Heidi Antezana: It's going to be nine soon.

Michael Frawley: If it was seven holes or even three holes, I would love it. I just don't have the attention span for it. The only thing to do in Puerto Rico was to play golf, but I went to my boss and said I want to do all these different stuff. I learned a ton. What was the common denominator through all of these jobs was to put yourself in their place psychologically. The one thing that I knew from working for large corporations as a line employee was nonsense and I could use another word, was nonsense when I heard it, with management not having the credibility they should have had and feeling that you were just a cog in the wheel and feeling that you're going to do the same thing and you had no part in what was going on.

That's up to leadership to go talk to you. Now, you can't please everybody and people are going to be angry, but it's amazing that if you sit down from some reason and again, I hate to say this, somebody in my position to sit down and sit in a kitchen on a Saturday night and talk to people, that it makes their day, it's very flattering to me.

Heidi Antezana: Absolutely.

Michael Frawley: It's very flattering to me that it makes their day to say, "How's it going? What are you doing? Can I try it?" "Sure. Go ahead. Give it a shot." Then they laugh. You really have done nothing.

Heidi Antezana: It's something so easy that it's not being done and applied more effectively, right?

Michael Frawley: Right.

Heidi Antezana: Michael, I'm also intrigued by your whole acting career. You've spoke so much about it-

Michael Frawley: If that's what you want to call it, I'm flattered.

Heidi Antezana: I think very few people on this call know that you also trained to be a marine biologist. If you go to your LinkedIn banner, it's the strangest LinkedIn banner I've ever seen. It's dolphins mainly in suits which shows your creativity, but that's a whole other conversation. William Shakespeare said, "All the world's a stage. All men and women are merely players on that stage." It sums up everything you've said. From your acting abilities, what do you think served you in business today, especially in the way of how you can influence and impact your team?

Michael Frawley: I think as far as acting goes, from a point of trying to be another character, that has little to do with it, but understanding and this is an overused word. It's funny because I went to acting school for almost eight years and my father laughs at. He said, "You could have been a neurosurgeon after eight years instead of what you're doing." One of the things that you learn is you give what you get. If you're able to understand ... Like one thing I love was improv. From improv, listening is important. You have to listen. You have to understand where the person is coming from so you can come back with something else.

What acting does, there's empathy, there's listening and the most important thing is you give what you get. The other thing it's given me is the ability to walk in to a room and not be afraid to walk in front of a group of people and not be afraid and speak what's on your mind. They say that public speaking is the number one fear. I love it. I love being on stage. I love the whole creativity part of it.

Heidi Antezana: Do you have any tips on how to show up as a leader with great presence? I think just by the sound of your voice and by your visuals, you already portray yourself with great presence. Is there anything that you could give us in terms of that?

Michael Frawley: Yeah, I do. I ask. Usually, I'll hold, especially if it's a bad situation where like to say a GM has left under bad circumstances and you're the new guy and everybody's worried and everybody's worried about their jobs, "You're going to bring in your guys," which I think is really stupid. I'm sorry. I shouldn't say that. It's probably not the wisest. The first question I usually ask is I go around the table and I say, "What's my job? What is it that you think that I do? What do you think that I will do?" They make a job and say, "Well, you're probably going to fire everybody."

"No, I'm not going to do that because that would be stupid because you know where all the bodies are buried here and it would take six months to find the

bathroom without you." What I ask is, "What is it that you think that I do?" You'll get these answers. They'll say, "Well, you keep the numbers and you answer to corporate and you do all that." I say, "Those are all great answers, but what I do is I'm a servant. I'm a servant." I said, "It doesn't mean that I'm going to serve tea at 4:00 or I'm going to be your valet, but I am here to serve you. I am here to make sure that you have the tools you need to do your job." Everybody gets really quiet about that. I think I wrote an article about that, about being a servant manager and the value of being a servant manager.

What you have to do is toss away your ego and admit that you're a servant because that's what you are. You're responsible for your staff. Your staff is responsible for everybody on that floor. The day that you forget that, you're screwed because then you become an Ivory Tower manager that just dictates from the top, but you're a servant. Make no mistake. You are there to service your people. If you keep that in mind and I tell them that that, "If the day that I treat you poorly, the day that I snap at you, the day that I don't respect you, you have permission to do that, but until that day comes, you don't." That kind of-

Heidi Antezana: Wonderful.

Michael Frawley: Everybody gets perplexed by that. They're like, "I've never heard that before."

Heidi Antezana: I love that. Thank you, Michael. You are again a wonderful mentor I'm sure to everybody and to your team. I really, really appreciate the golden nuggets and thank you, Tino, again. Have a good evening.

Tino Magnatta: Thank you. Have a good night. All right, bye-bye.

Michael Frawley: Thank you for the call.

Tino Magnatta: Great questions.

Michael Frawley: Yeah, that was a good one.

Tino Magnatta: Yeah. I'm going to have to log back in because the system is giving me a hassle.

Michael Frawley: The hassle is once in a while.

Tino Magnatta: Welcome to the land of technology.

Michael Frawley: I tell you, I'm a gadgethead. I can help you.

Tino Magnatta: Exactly. No, sometimes it just doesn't want to cooperate. Great system though. It's easy to use, but it's a little buggy. All right, let me see if this works. Here we go. I think we should be fine here now. There we go. Hello. This is Tino Magnatta. Do you have a question for Michael?

Jeff: Hey, Tino, Michael. This is Jeff.

Tino Magnatta: How are you?

Jeff: I really appreciate you having me on the show and I have been just glued to the phone because everything you've been talking about is really pulling on my work heartstrings I guess is a way to say it.

Michael Frawley: Thank you. I'm flattered. Thank you.

Jeff: I really, really, really respect your value on empathy and organizational culture. It truly is tough. You don't see empowerment these days as much and it's awesome to hear such a strong, refreshing opinion about it. What I wanted to ask you about, I'm a young person in the industry and I want to be a well-rounded executive someday. I just wanted to know, do you think it's as easy these days to jump from discipline to discipline whether when you were a GM or a lower level to learn in that way? What kind of advice you have for approaching that challenge?

Michael Frawley: A couple of ways. I think it's a little bit more difficult on one level that some of the job descriptions that I read absolutely for some of these places are ridiculous. They want an MBA. They want this. They want that. They want this. Like I say, there's no substitute for education, but to me, the biggest thing is enthusiasm. I think I mentioned this. I think there's a clip on it. If there's a crappy job, take it. If there's a job that nobody else wants to go to, take it. I can remember volunteering for jobs and they would go, "Who wants to do this?" They would go, "Anybody but Frawley," because I would always raise my hand.

I move a lot because I didn't want to become part of the furniture. I drove my wife crazy because I was always looking ... I had a plan. I knew what I wanted to do. What I can tell you is this. Volunteer for the craziest jobs that nobody else wants. Throw the lazy people. Let them go their way. If you think about this in your life ... Think about any committee, think about any actor, think about anybody on TV, enthusiasm is contagious. If you have enthusiasm for what you work and you do the right thing and you don't talk about people and people understand you as a straight-up guy and you're a straight-ahead guy, you don't get involved in politics, you do your job, you do the best job you can do, whatever it is and then find yourself a mentor because they will come to you.

If you have that attitude and somebody sees that spark in you, they will come to you especially if you're in a business. If you're in with a big company, it's going to be a little bit more difficult. I got lucky because I was in startup companies and did it. There are still positions open within smaller companies that will eventually lead you to a bigger company or you may end up running that smaller company because people see something in you. The one thing that and I talked about the acting and I talked about leadership and things like, if you have

that spark, somebody will recognize a spark of leadership. Somebody will recognize that you can rise above everybody else.

My strongest advice is two things. Volunteer for anything nobody wants to do, but make sure that you can learn from it. Make sure that it's to your advantage like something stupid. Like I can remember they needed a shift manager on grave shift when I was first starting out. Nobody wanted to do it. I'll do it. I'll go. It's going to screw up my family life. It's going to screw up everything, but there is a method to the madness. I don't mean to take these acuties with you, but what I would do is this. First of all, make yourself a plan. What is it that you want to be? What position are you in now?

Jeff: I'm an affiliate marketing manager.

Michael Frawley: Great. Because that's a great field to get into. That's great. Make sure get somebody that understands, that will decide where you want to go in marketing. Is it going to be on the database side? Because you're going to need to learn it because obviously you're going to want to be a VP of marketing and you want to be able to chart the course of the business model that whatever you choose and you're going to have to solve that psychological puzzle. Those are the goals that you have to look at. Set up your goals and say, "Okay, I need to learn database. I need to learn ..." if you don't know it already. I'm just making an assumption.

"I need to understand player development. I need to understand the financials of how this is going to work, what are the financial metrics that I'm going to be needing to be a good marketing person so when someone speaks to me, I understand it." If you find a mentor, it's very difficult, at least it is for me, for someone that goes, "Will you help me?" to say no. That's a fool's errand to turn somebody that really wants to learn, to turn them away.

Again, make yourself a plan. I had a fairly specific plan. I can remember telling my wife when I moved to Colorado and saying, "We're going to be here for two years until I figure this out and then we're moving on." I already knew what I wanted to do. What is it that you want to do? What is your ultimate goal?

Jeff: My goal is to create something whether it's a program or a new department. Just basically something new like you said that nobody else is doing. Something that exists with a new spin on it that it's so out of the box and something that nobody else wants to do. It makes a mark and it lasts and I can carry it to another place somebody, something like that.

Michael Frawley: Here's what will happen. What will happen is you need to absorb everything that you can. Even if you think it's mundane, you will be able to pull it out someday because here's what's going to happen. If you have the enthusiasm, if you get the experience, if you do all of these things, somebody is going to recognize it.

Usually what happens is they will throw you into a situation that you're either going to be the guy or you're not. This becomes the old axiom. It becomes experience and preparation meet. You've got to be prepared. You sound like a guy that's always working. You're always looking. Always look at what everybody else is doing.

It sounds terrible, but some of the best ideas are somebody else's and then you make them your own. Look at what everybody else is doing. When you're at work, do everything that nobody else wants to do. You show up on time. You ask the right questions. You do all of those things. You work for a big company?

Jeff: I don't actually. I'm pretty lucky to work for a smaller company that gives me a lot of freedom and a lot of flexibility to explore my own creativity. I'm very blessed [crosstalk 01:03:31].

Michael Frawley: That's great. If you have somebody that will go like this, "But I don't understand this financial statement. I don't understand these metrics. Would you help me?" Because they realize they're going to make you better. Once you understand the financial metrics ... Here's what's going to happen, you're going to come up with some great ideas. When I used to work for private equity companies like that, you'll do analysis, analysis, analysis. If you come up with some great ideas, the first question is, "Okay, what's the financial implications? What are these financial implications?"

If you can convince somebody with enthusiasm that this is it and finance unfortunately has become a big part of whether you're going to get the programs that you want on, so do the jobs that nobody else wants to do because that builds a reputation that this guy can be counted on. Ask questions about, "Would you please take some time with me and go over a financial statement? We can take it slow. Get me into ..." The heavier marketing metrics that you can get, the better off you're going to be because you're speaking their language and you know what you're talking about. That's important.

Here's what's going to happen. Now you've done all of these, they're going to go like this, "He's a sharp guy. He's willing to do anything. I can count on him because when he does something, he does it." I'm going to tell you a story that my wife reminded me of a couple of weeks ago. I had a boss who I loved. He was like a father to me and a mentor to me. I would run through a wall for him. He needed some papers. I knew that he needed them by a certain time. I was trying to get them done and get them done and get them done, but I kept going over because I get obsessive that I want him to be correct and because I wanted him to have confidence in me.

I knew he was playing golf with one of the executives of the company. I went out there in a golf cart and gave him the report and he knew that I was looking out for him because I wasn't going to wait until Monday because he had the meeting on Monday, but I don't say that. I just said, "Here's the report." It blew him away. It blew him away. Those are the things, the little things that make

people notice you because you do want to get noticed, but you want to get noticed in the right way. You want to get noticed in a way that you're going to screw anybody over. You want to get noticed by your ability and your creativity.

Jeff: Amazing, really truly. [crosstalk 01:06:23]

Michael Frawley: That's what I would do. Unfortunately, it sounds terrible, but there's a lot of people that aren't willing to suffer for what they want. I know that my wife suffered from me moving all over the place so that I could do different things. I know that I suffered by not spending time away with my family because I was on the road for three years. I had to do it because I was learning construction. I knew that in the end, it would do it. Sometimes you're going to have to do things, you're going, "I don't really want to do this," but you do it because you're dedicated to your career. Those people will notice.

The other thing you have to watch out for is you're going to make other people insecure. Guess what? That's their problem, not yours. You need to be the guy that people count on. Did that help you? Did I help you at all?

Jeff: So much, I mean really, really awesome.

Michael Frawley: Thank you.

Jeff: No, thank you. That was just all very refreshing to hear. That's it for my question. It's been a pleasure.

Michael Frawley: Thank you for asking. Have a good day.

Jeff: Have a great night.

Michael Frawley: Take care, Jeff.

Jeff: Take care. Bye-bye. Thank you, Michael. Bye.

Tino Magnatta: Great interview, Michael. We've run out of time, but we're having you back on August 26th. We'll continue. We've got a lot more to talk about.

Michael Frawley: Tino, I don't want it to end. This is great. I'm looking forward to the 26th. Thank you so much for having me.

Tino Magnatta: Absolutely. That's why we booked another show when I interviewed you. We have so much to talk about. It's fantastic. We got you in another show in the 26th.

Michael Frawley: [crosstalk 01:08:16] too blabby.

Tino Magnatta: No, not at all. Are you kidding? Everything you're saying is fantastic. The people who are listening who didn't have the opportunity to call in, August 26, we're having Michael back on because I thought that he has a lot to say and a lot of great stuff to say, soon and then. Michael, thank you so much for being on tonight. We'll see you back on on the 26th. I really appreciate it.

Michael Frawley: Yeah, happy to be here. Thanks for having me, Tino. Thanks again.

Tino Magnatta: Take care buddy.

Michael Frawley: All right, bye.

Tino Magnatta: Bye-bye. August 19th, I have Jenny Cummings on the show. She's an incredible woman, GM and you're going to love her. Remember, everybody's got a story to tell. You just have to have time to listen. Have a good night, everybody. Bye-bye.