

An Interview with Perry Ussum and Tina Quigley

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Perry Ussum and Tina Quigley, Senior Vice President Business Development and President and CEO of Las Vegas Global Economic Association, and was conducted on 12/19/22 by Kelliann Beavers and Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

## **Interview with Percy Ussum + Tina Quigley**

**Date: 12-19-2022**

**SPEAKERS: Kelliann Beavers, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Percy Ussum, Tina Quigley**

**Kelliann Beavers [00:01]**

Oh, got it.

**Percy Ussum [00:02]**

Here we go – ah, there she is. And Carmen, I apologize. I was being distracted there for a moment. If I may say, "good morning." So, it's nice to meet you as well.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio [00:14]**

Good morning to you as well. I'm also recovering. I'm on the mend, so I'll let Kelliann take the lead – but I'm super excited about the 300 businesses that you've been talking to. It's really going to give us some insight.

**Percy Ussum [00:28]**

Yeah, it's been fun. I tell people one of the coolest parts about my job is I get to see a part of Vegas that about 99% of the people that live here don't get to see. And that is just the diverse mix of businesses that are here. I mean again, everyone knows Las Vegas Boulevard. Everybody knows the Convention Center. But then when you get into the types of companies that have called Southern Nevada home over the last, oh gosh, 50 years for that matter, you know, aside from hospitality, that's been fun. And in the past, I've had some really cheesy, useless trivia, as far as what those businesses do here, so it's always kind of fun. So, eh, maybe I'll throw one or two at you as we have this discussion.

**Kelliann Beavers [01:07]**

That sounds great. We love trivia. And the first question does speak to what you were starting to share with us, which is, can you describe your role in your organization throughout the pandemic and the role of your organization as a whole?

**Percy Ussum [01:22]**

Yeah. So the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, we serve as the regional economic development authority for Southern Nevada. What that means is we're one of seven regional development authorities that make up the state. So we are, essentially, acknowledged by the governor's office to provide different duties and responsibilities on a regional level. And unique to Southern Nevada, I'll say over the majority of the state, just because the majority of the state tends to be smaller or rural in nature; is that in Southern Nevada, you do have local representation at the municipal levels. So we all have unique roles, and we tend to have some crossover. But with recent leadership that changed this year, I think we're going to start to see a little more definitive as far as what each of us does so that we're more efficient, and yeah, we're not duplicating one's effort.

But with that said, I would say a primary role of our organization is marketing through the region to businesses, whether it's in a proactive state or in an opportunistic state. Those opportunities coming to us either from federal or local sources, whether it's public or private. But then it's essentially selling businesses on why it makes sense for them to be here. And then also, being very thoughtful in as far as gathering the kinds of information that businesses need to make an informed decision about having their operation here. So, it allows us to kind of be masters of a lot of different things. But when it comes to the expertise, that's where we rely on our partners in many, many areas, to provide that kind of detail. Again, to help those businesses on whether or not it makes sense for them to be here.

**Kelliann Beavers** [03:03]

Great.

**Percy Ussum** [03:06]

So that's kind of the high level, and then, I'll say this. The types of businesses that we focused energy on, I'll say, pre-pandemic are businesses that we would call – that are companies that are primary in their operations. And what that means is a primary business is a business that generates more than 50% of its revenues actually outside Nevada.

**Kelliann Beavers** [03:25]

Interesting. Oh, you're frozen. (Zoom hangs up) Uh-oh. Is he also frozen for you, Carmen?

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [03:38]

Yes.

**Kelliann Beavers** [03:37]

Okay. Hmm...

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [03:49]

Maybe if you chat at everyone in the chat.

**Tina Quigley** [03:51]

I'm going to walk up and let him know that he's frozen. We've had some issues with our internet. I apologize. But he may have to log back in. I'm going to run up there real quick.

**Kelliann Beavers** [04:01]

Thank you so much. I appreciate you.

[break: 04:04 - 06:09]

**Percy Ussum** [06:10]

There we are. Can you guys hear me?

**Kelliann Beavers** [06:11]

We sure can.

**Percy Ussum** [06:14]

My father had an old saying: "To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a computer."

**Kelliann Beavers** [06:20]

That is an absolutely true saying. (laughs)

**Percy Ussum** [06:23]

So I apologize for that.

**Kelliann Beavers** [06:25]

That's okay. Thank you for your diligence in relocating.

**Percy Ussum** [06:31]

So, learn to be flexible, right? So, as I was saying about – again, the businesses that we focus our energies on. These are companies that have marketplaces that are regional, national, or global in form. So, again, they're exporting a product or service; they're importing new dollars; those revenues come in and go through those businesses. They then turn into payroll, they turn into investments, and they turn into tax dollars. So, all good things, essentially, rising the tide that benefits all ships that call Southern Nevada "home."

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:05]

Interesting. And the distinguishing factor, if I understand you correctly, was that a significant portion of their business is done outside of Nevada or originates outside of Nevada.

**Percy Ussum** [07:13]

Correct. More than 50% of revenues are generated outside of Southern Nevada.

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:19]

Got it.

**Percy Ussum** [07:21]

Yeah. And that has been the focus of the organization for some time. Interestingly enough though, when the pandemic hit, of course, that was equal opportunities as far as who it affected. And really, when that happened, we were getting calls from all types of businesses.

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:39]

Mm-hmm.

**Percy Ussum** [07:41]

And they were basically – and I'll say, what really started the thing was companies calling us, going, "Am I essential? Where are the definitions to identify if our business is essential to operate? We don't want to be in a situation where someone's going to show up and shut us down, and fine us thousands of dollars potentially."

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:59]

Yeah.

**Percy Ussum** [08:01]

So that was a huge concern, and that was really kind of where we got into this form of okay, you know, let's communicate with the governor's office; let's communicate with the local municipalities; let's make sure that these businesses can stay open and operational – the lifeblood of what they do so that it's not a complete detriment.

**Kelliann Beavers** [08:22]

Yeah, that makes sense. And I think it folds into the next question, which is about a timeline as you remember it, and particularly, pivotal moments that shaped response and leadership. So if you'd like to share, from your experience, speaking with businesses as to what they shared respectively.

**Percy Ussum** [08:41]

Yeah. I mean, again, it was the essential aspect, the next aspect of it was businesses that weren't generating revenues – hey, how do I keep these people onboard? Of course, the SBA was scrambling. The state was scrambling with funds too. And then to identify how to get funds to businesses because of this being such a huge impact on companies everywhere. If entities like the SBA or the state did not have those systems in place to get funds to those businesses, now it was a mad rush to make this happen.

So the SBA was working on – let me get this correct here – there were the PPE grants; there were the EIDL loans. There were different types of resources. And one of the things we did that was kind of unique was, we were doing a series of webinars, and it was open to any and all businesses, and it was an opportunity for them to hear from the SBA director that was based here in Vegas, just to learn like, hey, here's how the application works. Here's what you need to have in that application. Here's what you don't need to have in the application.

And the gentleman that ran the organization, you could tell – I mean this guy was putting in a lot of hours, and talking to hundreds, if not thousands, of companies, just trying to stay alive and stay afloat. And these webinars were a way for him to streamline that conversation to a lot of businesses all at once. So that was I think, definitely, a feather in our cap in helping convey to businesses what they could do to receive that. You know-

**Kelliann Beavers** [10:20]

That sounds a bit distinct from what you articulated at the beginning as well, as far as the organization's purpose of drawing businesses to the region. Because what you just described sounds more like a supportive service for businesses that are in the region.

**Percy Ussum** [10:35]

Right.

**Kelliann Beavers** [10:37]

And so, was that something you felt shifted due to the pandemic, or that's also a role you play in general?

**Percy Ussum** [10:43]

Well, so within the organization, I will say, on the business development side of our business, about 70% of the energy was always focused on business attraction. And then 30% of the business was focused on what they call retention and expansion. Now, interestingly enough, my role with the organization focused on retention and expansion, so I was kind of that 30% during that time. Obviously, because this now being what it was, now over – we had the entire business development team involved, responding, and communicating. Not to say that those attraction efforts didn't stop. They continued, and we had a couple of folks focused on that new business.

So communication was still happening but for, I'll say, that first 6-12 months, a lot of companies were like, "Okay, we're putting the brakes on things. We don't know what's going on right now. We're unsure. Let's just hold off." So it was the job of our team just to keep in communication with the businesses or the consultants, just to ensure, "Okay, is this alive, or is this dead?"

So that continued. But then in Q3 of 2020, we really started to focus – and this was through support from the county – was then a proactive effort, where our team reached out to over 2,000 businesses in Southern Nevada, just to find out, "Hey, are you still operational? Are you familiar with these types of resources, whether it's at the federal, state, or local levels? And if you're not, here's some information."

Another thing, and I'll say this in answering some of the questions that you provided. The businesses that were really hit hard, as you can imagine, were companies that were really focused on the hospitality sector. I mean, we had – I call it "the trillion-dollar ghost town" that was, in effect, on Las Vegas Boulevard for a long time. It was very eerie to see all of those hotels shut down. And all of those trades and services that had a majority focus in that industry sector were now, "Hey, now I've lost 80-90% of my business. What do I do?"

Well, if you remember, through leadership with Jim Murren and other leaders in the community, there was the COVID Taskforce that started. And with that COVID Taskforce, it was essentially identifying businesses that supply resources for first responders – the hospitals and those that needed different forms of PPE. So we were then communicating to businesses saying, "Listen. If you need PPE, or if you're transitioning into things where you're generating or producing PPE, let's get you on that list. If this is a way to diversify your marketplace, let's get you involved with that."

So that was an opportunity for us to help those local businesses. In fact, I can think of – there was a 3D printing company; there was a shade structure company; that they transitioned, and they were making things. And I think it allowed them to increase a part of their market share that was impacted by all of what was going on during that first year. So that – I'm sorry-

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:47]

I'm so sorry to interrupt.

**Percy Ussum** [13:48]

No, go ahead.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:51]

You were on the topic of PPP loans, and how LVGEA worked to help businesses access those loans. And I bring it up because Brookings Mountain West published a fact sheet, pretty much, right after those came out. We allowed for maybe eight to nine months after the policy was in-house to evaluate the impact. And so what we found is that Las Vegas, among very large metros, were kind of in the middle amongst Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, so, metros in the Mountain West.

**Percy Ussum** [14:23]

Mm-hmm.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [14:27]

They don't necessarily have comparable industries, but are nearby, right? The basic finding was that there wasn't enough or even distribution of PPP loans. And so, I wonder what businesses' experiences were from your perspective, right? What they were saying to you, in terms of what barriers and types of challenges they were facing in accessing those loans?

**Percy Ussum** [15:00]

So I think, again, depending on how – (says hello to the fourth speaker, Tina Quigley).

**Tina Quigley** [15:04]

So, Kelliann, it's good to see you, sweetie. And you got the right person on this call. So Perry, as you probably know, spent a lot of time talking with businesses, so I'm learning and listening as we're having this conversation today.

**Kelliann Beavers** [15:17]

Thank you so much for connecting us and for being here.

**Tina Quigley** [15:21]

Yeah. Thanks.

**Percy Ussum** [15:24]

So Carmen, yes. So to answer your question, I think that the businesses that benefited from the grants and the resources provided through the SBA were companies that had, I'll say, established relations with the banks because the banks had acted as an intermediary. So those companies that had that strong banking relationship, or even multiple banking relationships for that matter. I can remember there were some businesses that were essentially saying, "Well, this primary bank that I'm using, they're kind of maxed out right now. But I'm working with these couple of other banks over here." And there were some new banks that actually came to the market as a result of providing those lending options. Those businesses that had that flexibility, and just that establishment, I'll say, in the community were successful in getting them. I didn't hear a whole lot of negativity, as far as not being able to receive different support. I think that there was a lot of funding that came into the community.

And then also, kind of on a side note too, is that you look at the support that was received by those that were unemployed. And I don't know what the percentages are as far as how many



people did receive both state and federal unemployment benefits. I mean you did hear a lot in the news about those who didn't. But I heard a lot of stories where there were businesses that were like "Hey, I wasn't able to keep this person on board. They received unemployment. And you know, they're in a good place you know while we're restructuring and trying to figure out how to bring those folks back."

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [16:56]

Thank you, Perry. Just to follow up on that because you mentioned that new banks popped up. And so I wonder if you saw any other similar patterns or changes in the flexibility for lending requirements from banks. Because people had less cash flow, credit readiness, etc.

**Percy Ussum** [17:20]

Yeah. And again, I don't know the specifics because I didn't get into the weeds too much with the actual formal filing process for that. But I can say that it was definitely – businesses that had those strong relationships were able to get the funds they needed. And again, those businesses, being in the situations that they were in, would do everything possible to get the information to the banks that would provide the compliance that both the banks needed, the SBA needed, so they could get those funds to stay operational. Also, I'll say it was kind of on both sides. You had the banks saying, "Hey, what can we do to make this happen?" and then the companies going "Okay, we really need this. So you tell us what we need to provide, and we'll bend over backward to make sure that this happens, so we can stay up and running."

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [18:06]

Yeah. Flexibility on both sides. I'm going to write that down, thanks, Perry.

**Kelliann Beavers** [18:13]

So you talked a bit about both the groups that were hardest hit and the policies. Do you want to talk about the innovation question – what do you think have been the most innovative ways that organizations and citizens have dealt with the challenges of the pandemic and/or the recession? Examples of collaboration, programs – anything else that comes to mind? Feel free to speak to the other questions more if you feel like you didn't thoroughly get into them, but I know we touched on them.

**Percy Ussum** [18:46]

Yeah. So three things I'll say that was – I'll call it the innovation – the evolution of business. The first one, interestingly enough, there were businesses that had a retail component. And those businesses that were brick-and-mortar-dependent had to quickly change into that e-commerce model. But in doing so, they also learned how to create a model that went direct to their consumers. So with that direct consumer focus, it allowed, actually, for greater profitability; but it also allowed for greater communication between the company and the consumer, as to what they liked about their product or service, and how they perfected and improved it.

And it's interesting. In our line of work, over the last, I'll say, 10-15 years, there's been this constant talk about onshoring and reshoring manufacturers and getting businesses to the customer. Well, I'll say, because of the pandemic and technology, it forced that. So businesses, while they may have had those existing things in place, now, all of a sudden, we're using

e-commerce as that medium to get to those customers. And in doing so, it allowed for that communication to say, okay. What do you like about our products, or don't you like?

But then by having that relationship, eliminating the middleman essentially, it allowed for greater profitability, and just benefits for those businesses that had to pivot because those existing models they had pre-pandemic, a lot of those things had eroded away. That's one area.

The second thing I'll talk a little bit about was the hybrid working schedule. So for businesses that had the ability to go remote, I've heard from a lot of these companies that the five-day work-in-the-office scenario is probably not going to be coming back any time soon. But not to say that companies are now getting folks back into the office two days, three days, or four days. But giving that flexibility to a worker to say, "Hey listen. If you're working on something – in fact, I was just talking to a company the other day, and one of the things that they provide their employees with is to say, "Okay, Monday is the one day that everyone gets to work remote, and so we'd like you to be in Tuesday through Friday. However, if you're working on a project that you need to have complete focus on, and you can do it from home and have that ability, we'll give you that option." And for the company, they've been doing it now for some time. It's proven to be quite effective.

Now, for those businesses obviously, they have to be face-to-face, whether it's retail, manufacturing, or logistics. Those kinds of businesses where you have to be onsite. From that point, it was more of a safety protocol, and it was those companies looking at it and going "Okay. How many people can we have in a safe environment, so that we're not potentially spreading something that may or may not exist."

But then also, too, I think companies and employees being more cognizant of their overall health – I'll admit to this. There were times, pre-pandemic when I wasn't feeling all that great, but I'd come in because there were things I had to get done. Now I think twice about that and take a little bit less selfishness in saying, "All right. What's in the best interest?" But then also, too, having that virtual capability, "All right, I'm working from home. If you need me, I'm a phone call or an email away. If we need to go virtual, we can do that." But then having that safety barrier, I think that's just overall health overall has improved the overall workspace. The other thing I'll say to that is, I've seen some recent surveys saying that job satisfaction is actually improved because of that flexibility with the remote scenario.

And then the last thing I'll mention on this too is virtual communication. Virtual communication, I think, has been more widely accepted by businesses. And when it comes to transactional discussions, those companies that were like "Oh, no, we've got to be in person. We've got to have that face-to-face communication." More companies, if it's a transactional discussion, have more acceptance of saying, "Let's keep things virtual." And I'll say, from the person that's having to do the commute to that company and back, the time savings and the benefit of not having to have that – I know for myself, while I enjoy visiting companies here in Southern Nevada, having that virtual ability really helped me do this recent project that I was working on, in interviewing those 300 businesses. I think if I had to go drive to every single business, I would have done it but it would definitely have been more of a strain. So that, in and of itself, I think has been beneficial.

Now, with that said, when it comes to new business, when it comes to events, companies are looking forward to getting back into that face-to-face environment, especially when it comes to new business, being able to read the body language, and having that interaction with their potential customer or other folks. Again, conferences and different events like that, that is something businesses are looking forward to. And I think we've started to see the momentum over the last 12-18 months that businesses are getting back into it. Because it's safer. Things are not quite so bad now. We have a little more understanding of what COVID is. And again, I think people being more conscientious with it – if they're not feeling well, hey, stay home. Stay away, and don't put yourself and others at risk of getting sick.

**Kelliann Beavers [23:54]**

A question came to mind about the project that you've been doing, interviewing 300 businesses. I think Tina mentioned that it was federally funded, or you had a grant to conduct this research. Is there a deliverable that's coming from it, or, I'm really interested in the fact that you did this work, and that it was something there was interest in you doing, and it seems really important. And I mentioned it to just hear about the purpose, whether it was to inform your organization more fully, or if there's more purpose outside of your organization.

**Percy Ussum [24:30]**

Yeah. So it was funded through a federal grant through the Economic Development Association, so the EDA. And they provided the resources for us to be able to focus on this, over last year and this year.

One of thing things I'll say I took on was that okay. If I'm going to gather all of this information, what are we going to actually do with it?

**Kelliann Beavers [24:47]**

Mm-hmm.

**Percy Ussum [24:49]**

And it was something that I'm really putting energy into this report – is to make it more of a – I'll call it a user guide. Maybe that's not the best term for using it, but instead of it just being one of those white papers; that you see, and if it's too long and lengthy, you may or may not even read it. It gets stuck on a shelf, and now it just collects dust. Well, what's the benefit of that?

**Kelliann Beavers [25:08]**

Right. Yeah.

**Percy Ussum [25:11]**

And the approach that we're taking with this report is to say, okay. What are the things that we've learned? What are some of the best practices that we've learned as a result of those things that are learned? And how can this be something that a business can take and implement into their own operation if they haven't already?

And with that said – and this is news to Tina, so we're going to be – in fact, I've got my evaluation with her today. Where we've got the outline, and actually, just about completed for the

– actually it's completed, but we're just kind of finetuning it right now, as far as what the overall piece is going to say. But then the goal here is early next year – so January – February is when we should have this completed. And yeah, I'm looking forward to seeing this thing done because we're taking a different approach to making this useful, and it's not just top-down information being spewed to folks. And it's like "Okay, you know, thanks." (laughs)

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:03]

Yeah. Well, I'm sure you're learning, as we have, there is just so much out there you can only learn from talking to people. And you've had so many conversations, and I'll be really interested to hear what you've heard, essentially.

**Percy Ussum** [26:12]

Yes.

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:14]

The next question is about that takeaway you just articulated, putting it into the report. So, anything you'd like to share that speaks to what we can learn from the COVID crisis could be lessons for future crises. You can speak to this from your own perspective or from the perspective of the businesses.

**Percy Ussum** [26:29]

So, again, from that information and from all the stuff that we've experienced over the last three years, my three takeaways are: Be careful of the information you receive on a global scale and pay attention to what's happening in your own community. I think that when this thing first hit, everybody didn't – and there was so much ignorance out there of knowing what is this really going to do. How is this going to impact us? How is this going to impact us on a local level?

Well, now that we've had this experience for some time, it's affected communities in different ways for many different reasons. So, be mindful of that and just be careful not to get too wrapped up in that message that may have zero relevance to the community that you live in.

The second thing I'll say is to be respectful of other peoples' views and beliefs, even when they're not your own. And this is something I'm learning with my 16-year-old daughter right now is how to respectfully disagree about certain things. And I think that as a community, as a county, and as a nation, how can we have that without being so polarizing? You look at stuff that's been happening over the last few years and it's gotten pretty fierce. I mean the riots and just all the negative stuff out there. How do we have a dialog, where it's okay to disagree, but yet maintain that level of respect? And then the last thing is that we're all people that wear skin. Let's look out for each other versus tearing each other down.

**Kelliann Beavers** [28:06]

Thanks. Those are really lovely takeaways, and meaningful. I can't wait to see the results of everything you've learned from these folks.

Looking back at the questions, I'm just thinking about any that might want to go into more depth on. Is there anything, in particular, you heard from folks about things they wish the government,

at any level, had done differently or could do differently now, in response to the pandemic or the economic downturns?

**Percy Ussum** [28:32]

So, a lot of varying thoughts out there. And again, a lot of opinions as to how our state and local leadership dealt with the pandemic. And I'll say this: We didn't know what we were dealing with. We didn't know how lethal this situation was until we got into it. And I'm going to say this, no matter what side of the aisle you're on when you watched leaders that were on TV talking about how businesses had to shut down, or things that people didn't necessarily want to do. I mean, I read it in their faces, that it was not something that they were really happy about and saying, "Look, you need to shut down. You need to stop doing what you're doing." I don't think that was easy for anybody, no matter *who* they were. But again, it was just trying to figure out what was in the best interest of everyone involved in this. And again, looking at the public services, our first responders, how do we do things so that we don't get ourselves into a really bad situation?

So I think they did the best they could with what they had, and in hindsight – again, I think if we can focus locally, and see how things are matriculating, then again, make those decisions on a real-time basis to figure out what's best for us in the area, and how do we get through this?

**Kelliann Beavers** [29:55]

Thanks for that. Is there anything outside of our questions you feel like you talked with businesses about that you'd like to share?

**Percy Ussum** [30:05]

Oh, goodness.

**Kelliann Beavers** [30:07]

I just want to ensure that I know you had very specific conversations with these folks. I'm interested to learn from you as to what you felt was valuable from those conversations.

**Percy Ussum** [30:18]

You know, the last question you asked, you said, "Are you hopeful? And if yes, what am I hopeful for?"

**Kelliann Beavers** [30:26]

Mm-hmm.

**Percy Ussum** [30:28]

And I guess I look at the last 20 years – or I'll say the last 22 years. We had the dot.com. We had the recession. We had One October; it was unique to Vegas. We had the pandemic. And I've heard this from folks, we've had more, I'll call them "crisis situations" in the last 20 years than we've had in the previous 50 to 100. I mean, yes, we've had some really bad situations. But especially when you look at Southern Nevada, and how these situations really had an impact, you know, they happened, and we got through it. And I think that we realized, we're more resilient than we give ourselves credit for. And to not get caught up in that narrative of "Oh, what are we going to do?" Well, let's figure it out.

And I think that there are a lot of innovative and creative people that call Vegas home. And the reality is, we're going to have more things that are going to happen, and who knows what the next thing is going to be? So, how do we learn from this, and not – I'll say the short-term amnesia that maybe people tend to get? So, how do we take this experience and previous experiences and say, "All right? Let's apply some of these things so that we can get through this next crisis."

**Kelliann Beavers** [31:43]

Yeah, definitely, the creativity within our community and the capacity to respond to so many of these emergencies have been really inspiring for us to learn about them.

One thing I was thinking that might be meaningful for us to do, as a follow-up interview, would be to speak with someone more specifically about the COVID task force that you talked about. Is there anyone, in particular, you would recommend, that you think we might talk to?

**Percy Ussum** [32:13]

Tina, if you have any recommendations here. I know that we had Jim Murren speak to the group one time. Yvonne Kinsella, if I'm saying her name correctly, she was the public leader part of that. Tina, would you have any recommendations?

**Tina Quigley** [32:27]

The only person I know that was on that was Betsy Fretwell. So Yvonne and Betsy were the only two that I know.

**Kelliann Beavers** [32:33]

Okay, that's great.

**Tina Quigley** [32:36]

Kelliann, do you have a contact for Betsy?

**Kelliann Beavers** [32:38]

I don't have Betsy's information. I can look around for it.

**Tina Quigley** [32:42]

Oh, we can – I'll send you her email and her contact information.

**Kelliann Beavers** [32:46]

Okay, great. Thank you so much for that. And thank you so much for all of this. Yeah, Carmen, if you have any follow-up questions, please feel free to ask.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [32:55]

I did. I was just jotting some things down as you were talking. Perry, there was a point where you mentioned the question that businesses brought to you about how we diversify. So at an individual business level, that question makes sense. And then I thought about it at a more macro level because, as a university, we've always said, we've always come up with research that says Las Vegas has a need to diversify its industry so that we're not so reliant when things like this

happen, right? One of the things we were researching was how flights decreased to Las Vegas, and we tracked those patterns. And so that was one of the fact sheets we released.

But my question to you, Perry, is how do you see that diversification manifesting in the near future? What is LVGEA doing about it to bring it about, right? You mentioned attraction, retention, and expansion. And where do those – this is a three-parter, for sure. What does the university do to foster that diversity?

**Percy Ussum** [34:06]

Great questions. Great questions. Let me get a stab at this. And Tina, I would love your feedback on this as well.

What I will say is, it's almost kind of like the ethos of our organization, as far as the types of businesses that we concentrate on. So, what I'll say to that is if you're a local business – and I was a local business operator in the mid-90s, and I was at a unique business where I was in construction when things were going crazy here, so we were very fortunate. But in simple terms, don't put all of your eggs in one basket, especially the Vegas basket. If you've got your business, and you're just focused on the local economy, think beyond that. And there are a lot of programs and a lot of organizations that will help you get into international trade. Or even just doing business in other states.

So, how do you start to think beyond just the borders or beyond the community that you call home? So, you know, is there an opportunity for us to educate and inform others? Possibly. I mean, I'll leave that to Tina and her vision for the organization. But I would say, probably, through our example as an organization that we begin getting back to focusing on those businesses that have that existing marketplace in formation. So that way, then, the more of those types of businesses that come here, that's creating more of an economic impact. And Tina has a great metaphor, you know, talking about the bucket. Have you heard Tina's metaphor about the bucket?

**Kelliann Beavers** [35:26]

I don't think so.

**Percy Ussum** [35:28]

Tina, do you want to explain your "bucket" metaphor?

**Tina Quigley** [35:31]

Yeah, and I like sharing this. Because actually, when I first came to economic development, I didn't fully understand it. And I ran across this analogy, and it works for me, and I share it when I do my public presentations. So, a local economy is a lot like a bucket of money. And inside that bucket, the money is whirling around, like you've got a KitchenAid mixer in there. It's going between the daycare center, the grocery store, your employer, and the gas station. It's just whirling all around. Millions of transactions a day.

The problem is there's a hole in the bucket. And in Las Vegas, there's a big hole because every time you buy something or have something serviced that wasn't in our economy, it goes to

somebody else's economy: Detroit, Phoenix, to China. And we've been very blessed here in Las Vegas, and we've grown because we have a huge spigot of money just filling up our bucket all the time in the form of hospitality and gaming. This is great because that's all money from other people's economies coming into our bucket. The problem is when it slows down, or in this recent pandemic case, stopped. That's when we are really vulnerable, and we lose – in my case, I lost friends and family who had to leave our economy and go to another economy because there were no jobs here. And then when it picks back up, it's that much harder to get those jobs back here again. Especially things like engineers, the technician, and those specialty types.

So, to the extent that we can build our – bring in additional spigots that aren't necessarily gaming, but spigots in the form of advanced manufacturing, technology, or creative industries. Sports and entertainment are one that we want to focus on as well. Those that will not necessarily – well, they'll help balance out our portfolio of spigots. So to the extent that we can get existing businesses to grow beyond just the Vegas boundary, and be importers of money but exporting what they have, that helps out a lot, too.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [37:37]

Tina, do you think the synergy between hospitality and sports entertainment is going to make it a more fluid transition to more types of diversification?

**Tina Quigley** [37:46]

I do. Yeah, I think that sports and entertainment-type things are things that, if they're developed here, can be exported out. And then also, they do import beyond just gaming. The nice thing about that particular vertical is that it is organic to who we are and kind of where we're moving anyways. So it's not a heavy lift, but it does help us expand a bit. We're never going to be Detroit in terms of manufacturing cars. We're never going to be Silicon Valley in terms of creating this unicorn – well, we don't know that for a fact. But we need to accept who we are, and continue to grow and diversify, but also, accept who we are, embrace it, and use it as an asset.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [38:39]

I have a thought about that, and it's less of a question – but I would like to bring this back and forth between us. So we're the tourism industry, right, and we just had a medical crisis. There are people who will fly to UCLA for special treatment because UCLA has the caliber of medicine they need. With the School of Medicine opening up recently, and the impact reports that have come out in terms of the school's contribution to our economy, how do you see the transition? Because I love what you said: that it's not a heavy lift, so we're getting more dollars in, right? And I'm speaking as a student – the elasticity of hospitality, tourism, and entertainment, while all great things are still elastic, especially for future crises, right?

**Tina Quigley** [39:28]

Mm-hmm.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [39:31]

And so, I want to ask you, as business experts, how do I get from here, this elastic place, to turn those dollars and make Las Vegas a medical tourism hotspot? We already have the infrastructure to receive a lot of people in hotels, so they can participate in the economy while they're receiving



treatment, as soon as we have those things that they need, right? Enough physicians, enough residency programs, I could go on. So, how do we get there? How do we make the leap?

**Tina Quigley** [40:05]

So the first is just making sure that the conversation is top-of-mind from a statutory and legislative perspective and from a state funding perspective. So, you probably know that one of the reasons that we have the worst healthcare condition here in Nevada is that we don't have a business environment that supports it. So we have the lowest reimbursement rates for Medicare – is that right? And we have not, today, been very strong as it relates to our workforce pipeline. And you're right: the School of Medicine is that first step towards starting to have more credibility and presence, but our entire tax structure, our investment in healthcare, and our state investment in healthcare have got to change as well.

But Dr. Krakovitz who is the regional vice president – or Regional President for Inner Mountain Health is on our board. We talk with him regularly. And he's trying to help educate Nevada and bring Nevada leadership and community up to speed as to what needs to be done. But he'll be the first to tell you that everybody always thinks "medical tourism" because we have hospitality and we have these rooms, so it just makes sense. But first, you actually have to have a reason for those doctors to locate here. It has to be where they can make money, or at least, be able to survive. And they also need to know that again, they've got a pipeline of employees that will support their business model.

So, lots of work to be done from a legislative perspective. But I do think there are leaders out there who will help guide us and who will help get us there. And Brookings is actually a really great ally because they do the research and the data that helps support and educate our stakeholders.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:06]

I love that you finished with that because that was going to be my next offer. Anything that we can do to pair up with anything that LVGEA is doing to address all of those things you just talked about? I guess – that's a statement – but the question really is, are there any plans underway for LVGEA to-

**Tina Quigley** [42:28]

To get [over talking @42:29] more?

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:30]

Yeah.

**Tina Quigley** [42:32]

There hasn't historically. Right now, I'm in conversations with our incoming Chair. His name is Clark Wood. He's Regional President of US Bank. But he wants to have a healthcare council, and we will ask Dr. Krakovitz to be the chair of the council. Because we do want to educate; we want to figure out what is LVGEA's role and position, and policy advocacy as it relates to healthcare. So we'll just be dipping into that pond here, probably in Quarter One of next year, just forming

that council, and then figuring out what the agenda is for that council. But yeah, I'd love to pull Brookings in or make Brookings maybe a presenter to the council when the time is right.

**Kelliann Beavers** [43:23]

Absolutely. Let us know how we can support you and be a part of everything that you're doing. And thank you both so much for your time. This has been immensely meaningful. If you do think of anything else you'd like to share, Perry, please send it our way. We're all ears. And again, this has been just incredibly wonderful. Thank you so much for your time, and it's nice to see you, Tina.

**Tina Quigley** [43:46]

Well, it's nice to see you too. Carmen, it was nice to meet you. Perry, thanks, as always, for being so smart and competent, and a good community advocate.

**Percy Ussum** [43:51]

(laughs) Well, thank you for the chance to share some of the things I've learned over the last few years. And yeah, at the end of the day, it's been a lot of fun, and onward and upward, I'd say.

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:02]

Absolutely.

**Tina Quigley** [44:03]

Yeah.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [44:05]

Please let us know when the user guide comes out.

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:07]

Yes, do. We look forward to it.

**Percy Ussum** [44:09]

We will get you on the list, absolutely.

**Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio** [44:11]

Okay.

**Tina Quigley** [44:12]

Thanks, guys. Good luck.

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:13]

Thank you.

**Percy Ussum** [44:15]

Take care.

**End of audio: 44:19**