Hey there restaurant pros. It's David Scott Peters and welcome to episode 62 of the restaurant prosperity formula. I've been coaching restaurant owners since 2003. And the restaurant prosperity formula is based on what the most successful restaurant owners I've worked with doing a daily basis to achieve their success. The basic premise of the formula centers around achieving prosperity, Freedom free restaurant and the financial freedom you deserve. To achieve prosperity, you have to follow a very specific formula made up of leadership systems training, accountability and taking action. I want to tell you about our guest today, Gina Sidebottom. Genius family has owned Maria's Mexican restaurant which was started by her mother Maria in 1992, and is located in Grass Valley in Northern California, where they love serving their community not only great food but great service. Listen in our conversation, where Gina only talks about her journey with systems and profitability, gaining free time, but more importantly how she can help you make your team members feel appreciated, what she does on a daily basis to make that happen. make them want to work for you and stay longer. And the beautiful part about it. It won't cost you a dime. I want to welcome Gina Sidebottom to the show today. But first, a word from our sponsor. This episode is being brought to you by repeat returns. If you're a restaurant owner of a medium to high volume, independent restaurant, multi unit or franchise operator, and you're looking for a proven and realistic solution to attract, grow and retain customers. Then you need to visit repeat returns. Repeat returns as a modern marketing platform created by a restaurant owner for restaurant owners. It studies each customer's habits and patterns predicts the most profitable outcome for your restaurant every single day and deploys a marketing to make that happen. You'll never lift a finger to see if repeat returns. is right for you. Visit repeat returns.com forward slash DSP. I want to welcome Gina to the show today Gina Welcome. I'm really excited to have you here. As people may not know you and I just discussed it's taken me about a year year and a half to get to do this podcast because it's not your favorite thing to do is get on a YouTube channel. Or a podcast to say here let me talk about myself. So I appreciate you very much.

Yeah, you're welcome. Hey, talking about myself.

I know I'm aware. I'm aware I've been working you pretty hard. Now. I have two reasons why I wanted to bring you on today. And the first reason is, you know the case study thing. Hey, here's a member that's made huge change and we'll talk about that very briefly. But the second reason why I wanted to bring you on is you are an incredible communicator, getting the most out of your people. You have a system that you follow to make sure people feel appreciated, listened to cared about and that has paid dividends in you being staffed and keeping people for many, many years. And I think that's important today where we have labor shortages and people wonder why people don't want to work and why managers aren't communicating with their their team very well. And that's really where I want to focus most of our efforts. But to get started to me favorite, tell people about your restaurant, a little bit about your family history and where you're located.

Well, we're located in Northern California in a town called Grass Valley. There's approximately a little over 13,000 in population with a Mexican restaurant. We've been in business for 30 years. So my mom essentially had started the restaurant. We've let's see have done three remodels. Currently in the wintertime we see about 179 and in the summer we're close about 240 And you know that our core values is that we want to bring that home cooked, feeling warm to the bones, family style atmosphere and share that with our community. And I feel like we've done pretty good having established that,

well, 30 years in business and from the years that I've known you little, little facts. We've known each other for many, many years. In fact, we work together at my old company where your mother and your brother came to one of my three day workshops. We've kind of dabbled in my old company when I had the software on and off. But we started working back together after years of knowing each other and still staying in communication that in November of 2020 with the pandemic and everything was going on. There were new challenges for restaurants and it was kind of your wake up call and time to say hey, we need to really take this seriously. Can you talk a little bit about what was going on at the time and why you reached out to kind of start to work work together again because we had done it before but it really didn't stick?

Yeah. So for the last 12 years, I essentially have been running the restaurant without my mom really involved. And since COVID hit in it just really became evident that I can't something's got to change. We're either going to end up closing our doors. You know the restaurant, where can we can only do takeout. How are we going to generate this money? We have a whole bunch of employees, what do we do? And this is a whole new arena that nobody has ever been in and how we would do pricing automation is we just shoot off prices off, you know off our foot and go okay, I think we should charge 20 bucks for this and then maybe this will help with the labor and how much we're keep you know paying our employees and we can't You can't operate business like that any longer. And so I was watching actually your YouTubes and trying to get as much information as I could, which is all great, but I needed something more I needed your brains to help me navigate what we were in, essentially and so I called you and it was actually peace of mind hearing your voice because you're so enthusiastic. And you hold you held me accountable just out of the kind of that first interview and how it felt David is that even though I called you it was like you were interviewing me because you wanted to find out where you know, what's my thinking? Where do I want to go? What are we doing now? And so I think it was a good like is this Are we going to be a good mutual fit for one another? Because you know you're gonna hold me accountable and I want to make sure I'm gonna do what you say. And I didn't want to put us in a situation again, where we have again on and off work together in the old company again, that was software driven. So it's a little bit different, but they still had you still had me as a coach. I didn't want to waste the money. I didn't want to put you in a spot where you weren't ready to take action because that's the most amazing thing for a lot of people they don't understand. You can't be ready for this kind of change until you are ready. I can't make you ready. I can't shake you. I can't yell, scream, get enthusiastic or whatever you can buy into the idea of change, but actually implemented it's not the easiest thing in the world to do. I suck, I create work. And then the biggest thing is the culture change. You know, it's we're going to do things differently and people going, wait, wait, you don't understand. That's not how we do it. You go no, no. Now there's change coming and it's uncomfortable, but it can truly make a difference. And I kind of want to fast forward this a little bit. And and in a moment, I'll ask you to kind of share maybe some of your unexpected changes that you that you got from working together. But to summarize, you made a lot of change. One of the biggest changes you made was following my new program and I realized that you needed to implement it and you've got Emily who came on as a manager in your in your helping you on this journey and made her way to General Manager, but she was your implementer somebody who gets shit done and how important that extra person is. As entrepreneurs, we have so many things to do to operate the business from making payroll to marketing to accounting, and you name it. And so having an implementer was huge for you. With that said, in a year's time you made incredible progress. And if I may, I'm gonna share some of your numbers. When when you first said hey, we didn't know if we can close our doors and when people understand you were a $3 million business. I mean, this was not it's not a mom and pop little little talk arena that doesn't have volumes. You are a staple in the community. People come back to you generation after generation after generation. And so it's a $3 million business in 2020. You know you finish a year and well quite honestly it struggled. It may have been in the in the red or slightly in the black. But 2021 After implementing the systems having Emily help you put this in place changing your role to become the leader your restaurant needs. If I remember I'm looking at my notes here, you did 620 You I'm sorry you did $3.68 million and you made $626,000 What? What kind of changes that to go from, you know, increasing your volumes, but blowing up going from losing or breaking even to actually making a lot of money. What was that like?

Well, first off, I would attribute to get our labor was astronomical. And before using your systems, we I mean, all of our dollars were going out the door just to labor we'd actually if you remember schedule, the same crew for Friday night that we would on a Monday night and do a fraction of a business. And so once we started using your system we have saved money on labor, food cost, and we started getting creative. So now that I started having a little bit more free time with using the program, we're able to become more creative and actually just this week alone, we fired our marketing team and now are actually using POP menu and and work which we're very excited about. We found about popping you through one of your other actually restaurant owners that you work with. And I love the community in your system like in your program because we're able to bounce off ideas and ask questions. So that helped out Yeah, and I mean you have to really get creative with how to survive and it was nice also being able to rely on other business owners and what they're doing to. So I hope that answers your question.

So again, because we're trying to condense this because I want to get into the meat of communication, making people feel appreciated. But I've got one more question for you and that is, what were your unexpected changes or things that you didn't expect from working together or with the other restaurant owners and and having that community? What didn't you foresee that really was a benefit for you?

I'm gonna tell you my time. First off, is that when I called you and made that first initial call I fell, okay, now it's you know, pounding the ground. I'm gonna have to work harder. I'm gonna now have to use your system and now create even more work for me and I'm gonna have to pass it all down. And it's been none of that I have now more free time than I've ever had before. And so definitely time I have more time with my family. You know, I'm now doing another competition which was not going to happen because that creates a lot of time.

Being going in fitness competitions require a shit ton of dedication you've got to have the time to work out or it doesn't work so so you've you've got time with everybody now and you've got more systems in place you're making more money that's pretty awesome. No Yeah. Oh

my gosh. This systems having those systems in place. I don't even know how we survived the last, what, 28 years not having those systems. But it is so easy because, you know, if you're having issues with your staff, you now have a place to point to instead of saying well, let's talk about what you're not or not doing or not doing you now have proof you now have checked, you know, check marks that they can that they're doing on their job system that we absolutely love. Yeah, we have more systems in place. I mean, literally, if we wanted to sell the business, it's it's literally you can hand it over, which absolutely helps you if you're selling right, which is not going to happen, but

in fact going out of your family, but then there's still more systems like it's not like you're done. I mean every month or so we talked about something go hey, we've talked about that. Well now's the time and that goes back to the can't. You can't force systems in place if you're not ready for them. Yeah, and I always tell people, I don't care how long it takes you as long as you still work towards putting them in place. It's when we give up and we make excuses and we stop and that's where our businesses really falter. And that's where I've been so impressed with what you and Emily have done. Because you you became the leader your restaurant needs. Emily made sure that the ship got done and that it stays in place and doesn't mean we don't have hiccups doesn't mean there aren't times OH SHIT. We have been looking at that for a while and we've got to re implement the system and do that's the nature of the restaurant business. But the change has been amazing. It's also wonderful to see on the side note not only have you gotten the free time, but Emily now has managers and she's starting to see free time and be able to shut down her phone and that's that's really powerful because you created that you did the work that meaning the two of you, but you've led it and that's huge. Now let's switch gears. Let's get out of the number side and what have you. And now let's talk about the people side because this is something that for years I've known, you do extremely well. But during the labor shortage and on the group coaching calls, it's really become more and more apparent that this is a skill set that every restaurant owner should learn from you. And that is the how to communicate with your team members that they feel appreciated. They stick around they feel valued, that that is probably the number one thing restaurant tours and managers especially need to learn how to do because people don't want to be in our business. They've been treated like shit for so many years. Paid too little flexibility taken away. And now there's a reckoning the labor force is telling us you got to change, but this is not a change for you. Can you talk a little bit about how you communicate with your, your, your team members, and why it's so successful? Yeah,

I would say a mantra that I follow or tell myself is that if you want to grow the business, you have to grow the people. And that is listening to what's going on for them, you know, in this business, which I'm sure I'm not the only one who thinks this way as you do become a therapist. But it's how you communicate to your staff is what's gonna make the biggest difference, you know, when they come to my office or somebody comes to my office or even has a quick question when I'm on the floor, is I make sure that I give them my undivided attention. Like I am completely present with them and they're letting me know what's going on for them or if they're excited and want to celebrate that they just got this $200 tip off the table. I really feel it's so important to be able to value your staff that way.

So you keyed in on something that I think is extremely important. And that's being present. Can you describe some of the what are some what is the present mean to you to me, I know what it means. And I do my very best as an entrepreneur to be present with my family. You know, I'm not really good at it. Sometimes that cell phone comes up and I pick it up and I'm like, I'm off somewhere else. Even though we're having a conversation. I'm not 100% present, and I get called out for it and how important it is to truly be present. Can you describe what you mean by presence so people can understand.

Yeah, and I think this was a great practice to is to help with your family as well. So you know, What present would look like to me is if I'm talking to an employee, and they're saying something to me, that's important to them and then somebody Sam downstairs and somebody is else is trying to get my attention. I literally will have to say, Can you give me a minute, I'm talking to Christina and you know, right now, you know, I'll talk to you in a bit but I really do. I'm interested in what she has to say. So it's having my eyes focused on them eye to eye contact important. Your phone's not in your hand, you're not looking around, you're not staring at your watch. You're literally in that moment with them. And when two people literally are coming together like that eye to eye contact that they're feeling heard, understood, listened to all of that and that's so important because I don't think that you know, like you said with our even our families, we don't even give ourselves that with them. I think it's important practice, especially now with mental health, illness and people need we need each other.

Yeah. And the truth is mental health has been an issue in the restaurant business forever. It's just been swept out. We don't talk about it. And that's kind of been here in the States anyway. So if there's a positive of what COVID did is it brought it to the forefront and said, Hey, this is actually normal and we need to listen to people and get them the help they need. But if you don't actively listen, if you're not present, you're never recognized and need help on a side note, and I want to make sure people understand. We didn't call it being present. In the old days. I've been doing this for 30 plus years. But when I would talk to an employee, I would do my very best to keep my back to the door because we all know you start to look at the front door you start and now all of a sudden that employee sees a customer sees you're not being present. And so it's being staying engaged with that person truly actively listening, not just hearing I think that's really important when when we talk about this. So what are some of the benefits of taking the time to listen to be an active listener to understand what your employees are telling you? What are some of the benefits to that?

Well I think having reliable employees, um, is a huge benefit. They, you know, I feel like you want to be interested in what they're having to say something else I wanted to point to too, is not only just listening but interested and I feel because I do give that to the staff that having reliable employees if I need somebody to work last minute they're always a yes. They don't feel taken advantage of, you know, those people want to come in to work if they're not feeling 100% Just because they know that that that we actually value them being here and they want to be a part of the team. They don't want to let anybody down. And I think it also makes us a priority employer for our you know, for our staff, and I think they they actually do tell other people because they'll say, hey, my brother's looking for a job or my sister's looking for a job, or my mom's looking for a job or I have a friend who wants to come work here. Can we interview him? So I know that we wouldn't have people that are close to them want to be able to work unless we were that kind of employer.

Are there any times you've had a conversation or listened that you've discovered something that kind of set you back when wow this person needs my assistance, whether financially or time or really an ear because of family issues? And if so, what have been some of the unexpected benefits of that?

Yeah, you know, somebody told me yesterday that I have a bleeding heart, like a bleeding heart. What does that mean? I don't realize that means that you like you care.

So much. Yes, yes.

And so you know this year what you're having your question is, so I had an employee actually, just this week, it's Christmas time, inflation is super high. And he said, you know, is I need to sit I need to talk to you about something and I said, Okay, he goes I have, I have two vans. My wife drives one and I drive one but we have a flat tire and now I have to drive hers and I'm on a spare. He lives in our way. He doesn't have any extra money to pay for a tire. And you know, it's Christmas time he has six kids and so he goes Can I borrow some money and I'll pay you pay you back the minute you know sometimes we say to ourselves, okay, well we know how that's gonna go and and so we let him borrow some money and immediately he paid his tire got his tire, got some extra things that he needed for his family and said, you know, hey, I'm going to pay it back to you immediately. I don't want to make payments, but I want to pay it back immediately. And I said, Hey, no problem. You can actually make payments if that works out better for you. And I think what was your question?

Well, what was the the added benefits, the unexpected benefits so like all of a sudden you heard a problem? You help them out and it doesn't always work out when people want money. You know, you've got you've got to listen pretty hard. Sometimes people are takers. This is obviously not somebody who was a taker. This is a true benefit to you as a company as well because if they if an hour away, can't get to work, you lose an employee, right? It's a double edged sword. What do you think the benefit is of him of you coming to the rescue and allowing him to borrow that money and seeing his is the energy he wants to put to say, I'm going to pay you back?

Yeah. Well, what the benefit that I see here is that he's someone who if we were sure another somebody called in sick the next day and he was not scheduled, I would say hey, Jose, I have this open opportunity for you to come in and work out he would do it. He would do it. It is like scratching your back. And I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine. And in I think in those restaurant business that happens a lot and I think it's important for us to be able to support our staff

and listen and feel out for what it is that they need.

So you and I initially talked about this and probably a year plus ago. No kidding. Again, I've been working hard to get you to do this for me. And that was you were I was asking how you taught others to do this because you had been helping Emily, you're now GM implementer on to do the same thing with the team, because it really mattered. So this is trainable. Like learning how to be an active listener to truly empathize with your employees. This is a trainable skill, because all too often we've got new managers, young managers who only know how to communicate on their cell phone texting right next to each other. This this is trainable.

You know, it is it really is and Emily was telling me a few weeks ago that the staff says hey you sound like Gina right yes, she she said that the subtitles are sometimes she sounds like me, but it is possible.

Are there any any tips, maybe a 123 things that somebody could do to start them on a path to truly sit down and say I'm being an active listener? I'm gathering data I'm making this employee feel appreciated and moving our business forward at the same time, like what would be some of the tips you'd share?

First would be to actively listen. So you know if Emily, Emily aligns, I would start with your most important person so if it's your implementer or your general manager, have them be the one that because they're the ones who are communicating with the rest of the staff. So it's so so important to get them on board. So with Emily, I will will communicate and talk I make sure number one that I'm 100% available to her. So she calls me I'm at home at the gym, whatever she texts me I'm I'm I respond immediately. So I think that's one of the tips that I would say is be available the other thing would be Listen, listen, listen to what's important to her. Now, sometimes what she's telling me isn't necessarily what she's actually feeling. So you almost have to read between the lines or listen between the lines. So you want to hear what is it that she's actually trying to communicate? Is she upset? Is she frustrated? You know, is it just this particular session? Is she constantly complaining about this certain thing and, you know, and I'm like, why hasn't she fixed it? Well, maybe I'm not actually listening because she's having to complain about it all the time. Right now. Maybe I haven't helped her come up with a solution. So I would say to listen to what's actually happening. When she's communicating the emotion behind it. I say, listen to the emotion behind it. And um, you know, I'm gonna say this again, I think also being interested in present, being present to what she has to say. And even though I may not agree with what she's saying is, I have to say, well, what would have her say that what's the value in what she's telling me right now? What is it that she's trying to communicate? So I I asked myself those questions when she's needing to really talk to me about something,

and then again, she's doing the same thing with her team members. And the added benefit again, from an outsider's perspective is you keep employees for a long, long time, like years upon years. It's very rare that you've got turnover and if you do, it's usually a new person that just hasn't hasn't cut the mustard yet, because and honestly, your restaurant has been around for so long that you've got to fit the culture pretty quick. Like if you don't fit the culture you're not going to make it there. But if you do, like it's a very much a family atmosphere. You're a part of the team. You care about your people and I guess bleeding heart, I would call you a social worker, not a bleeding heart. But that's a whole nother thing. Kind of going backwards. Knowing what you know, as far as communication and making people feel valued, knowing what you know now about systems, your budgeting, the tools that you put in place. What would be some advice you'd give somebody who was listening to us saying, I haven't started the journey on systems yet. I think and I've got a challenge with my people, because that's the real truth of it. The systems I teach are easy. It's the people part. That's the challenge, and that's why you were able to get such results. It's not just that Emily implemented it's that you got your people on board to understand. What would you tell somebody who's who's listening to us going, Man Should I start this journey? It sounds like a lot of work on systems. And it sounds really hard to say I'm gonna start to be patient and listen to my people actually make the time to be active listening and make them feel valued. Because right now, I may feel taken advantage of. What would you tell somebody? How would they approach this journey?

So are you referring to is if somebody somebody who's wanting to start

with your program or my program on the journey on their own, it's just time to make change, right, because that's really what we talked about whether or not everybody's going to work with me. I'm not the right fit for everybody. But the journey has to happen for everyone.

It does. You know, when I was in Las Vegas, a couple of weeks ago, I went to this amazing restaurant and ironically I happen to sit next to this guy who owned five restaurants, okay, and and I'm like, Are you the actual owner? Are you a corporation like talk to me? And he said, No, I'm, I'm one of the owners and the main one who takes care of all five and I said, Well, how's your restaurants going? Like, this is exciting. I have one. And he said, You know, I'm struggling. And he goes, the labor is just, it's killing us. It is killing us. And I don't know what I'm gonna do. I'm honestly stressed out about it. And I was like, oh, no, Gina here comes diarrhea in trucking, you know, we're having a couple cocktails. I almost feel stuck sometimes because there's so much I thought, you know, but you know, when I said you know, I'm working with this. This amazing guy named David Scott Peters, you should look him up, you know, their system. It's not just a system for your restaurant, but it's a lifestyle of how to be able to be successful because you can have a business plan and that business plan is going to show you how to start up but you need something that's going to carry you carry you through your business till the end of time. And there's nothing like it out there. There isn't. And you know, I felt so bad for this man who was so successful. So hopefully he gave he called you. I said, you want to be successful in your restaurants that you need to start putting systems in place and there's actually a way to be able to calculate how much labor you need given the amount of sales you're doing.

Crazy system that work. And oh, by the way, I appreciate it. I'm hearing news stories. All throughout this We talk all the time and I'm hearing new stories. And you know, what's interesting is I love you to death and I think you as well as other mastery plus members or RTI members when they have success. They want to evangelize. And I swear sometimes people think you're a part of a cult This is a call now. Yeah, making money having a life as a cult. I'm in it all day long, right?

Yeah, in fact, I have to tell you though, because that guy that when I was sitting next to my, I go are you like what are you doing? Are you here for a convention as well? And he said, Yeah, I'm learning about you know, bookkeeping and stuff. If you're in the wrong convention, you need to be like, where's the word meant? We're turning the world in the results. Of being a restaurant business owner.

Yeah, yeah. No, it's awesome. If there was I first of all, I want to thank you I this was like pulling teeth to get you here. I cannot tell this enough that everybody listening that this was a big deal for me to get you actually to do this. I think the world of you world of Emily, your restaurant, what you've done your mom what she's created. I love what you do as far as making sure people feel appreciated, and that's why I wanted to bring you on here. With that said, I don't want to take much more of your time. Is there anything we didn't talk about or anything you'd like to share or advice you'd give somebody listening to us that we didn't touch on before we go

um, let's see. What it you know, I do have to say that I'm a big advocate of yours, David, and I know it's come through on the podcast. I feel you know, for anybody new who's listening that has not, that's on the fence of whether or not they should join, I would say 100% Like there's if you want to be successful and grow your business, that you're you have the best program that's on the market, and we have gone through other programs before, but there's nothing like yours.

I appreciate you very much. And again, thank you for taking the time to do this. I hope everybody listening to us understands that. What you shared with us can truly make a huge difference and the beautiful part it is trainable. It's learnable and that's incredibly important in today's day and age with the labor shortage and the cost of labor. Having good people, having them respect you, having them appreciate you and be appreciated, means they stick around, they do a better job. It's just it's just invaluable information. I want to thank you again. Thanks, David. Hey, that was an awesome episode. I want to thank you for taking the time to take action on building a better, more prosperous restaurant. Before you go. I want to give you these three thoughts. One by combining leadership and taking action with systems and training being checked by accountability. You are on your way to creating prosperity for you and your restaurant, too. I something I need from you. Please leave a review on Apple podcast Spotify or wherever you happen to listen to podcast by leaving us a review other restaurant pros seeking out this information are able to find it. I read the reviews and hearing how this information has benefited you. does wonders for me and three, if you find any discussions helpful share them, the more restaurant pros who have access to them, the better we become as an industry. For more restaurant resources or to get in contact with me. Connect with me at David Scott peters.com. Be passionate about what you're doing. Be persistent. But more importantly become better and help everyone around you become better and your restaurant is going to kick some ass.