

James Robert Lay:

A recent Harvard Business Journal article notes quote, It is well known that firms where strategy and culture align outperform firms where they do not. It follows then that if the two aren't aligned, you most likely need to change your culture. Now, I want you to pause and think for a moment about the culture of your financial brands, your bank, your credit and your fintech. How have you been navigating the complexities of exponential change since the start of this decade since 2020? As an individual, as a team as an organization? What's your plan going forward to navigate the ongoing complexities of exponential change as we continue to move forward into the age of AI? And finally, what opportunities are there for you to inspire human transformation by providing your internal team, your organization with help and hope, with clarity, so that they can then in turn provide your account holders along with people in the community that you serve with help and hope to guide them beyond the confusion beyond the chaos of financial stress so that they can get to an even bigger, better and brighter future? Well, let's find out together on today's episode of the banking on digital growth Podcast.

Greetings and Hello, I'm James Robert Lay and I'd like to welcome you to another episode of the banking on digital growth podcast. Today's episode is part of the digital growth journey series. And joining me for today's conversation is Gene Pelham. Gene joins us with over 40 years of experience within financial services and has a deep focus deep expertise rooted in executive management and elite and leadership at credit unions. And today, Jean and I are going to explore some of the biggest growth opportunities that can be found at the intersection of leadership and culture. So that you can confidently navigate the complexities of change as an individual so that you can then guide people on your team guide your organization at your baggage credit and or FinTech to create an even bigger, better, brighter future for your account holders. Welcome to the show, Jean, it is good to share your time with you today.

Gene Pelham:

It is so fun to the opportunity to be able to join you and share thoughts and ideas and and actually connect and catch up. I'm looking forward to it.

James Robert Lay:

It is and before we get into talking will say leadership culture and navigating the complexities of change what is good in your world right now personally or professionally? It is always your pick to get started on a positive note.

Gene Pelham:

Oh, you know, I love that question. I love the opportunity. And for me, there are so many great things going on not only personally, the fact that since I have retired, I've really gotten to choose my path and, and be able to spend more time with my family, but also repurpose, and do really fun things like I'm on two foundations, the Go West Foundation, credit union Foundation, we're doing some incredible things, especially around workforce housing. I'm on our University Foundation, where our new president is doing some incredible things, working to take the burden off students from a tuition perspective, actually consulting with some credit unions and, and helping some small credit unions. Just because I can't, and they can't afford me. So I'm just helping them anyway. And it's it's real. I'm learning so much. And then I know you've talked to a friend of mine recently, Harrison Hockman, from Sparrow FYI. And so I'm serving as a strategic advisor for them too. So even though I've retired I I'm staying engaged.

James Robert Lay:

Well, I appreciate that. It's that idea. You haven't retired, you've just repurpose. And that right there is a testament to your perspective and perspective is the sum of context and framing how we view the world how you view the world. And I think right now that's so important for us to consider because it is a uncertain time. For many, it is a turbulent time for many, and I want to to discuss that in just a bit. But I

want to roll the clock back, because you were the CEO of Royal credit union for over 15 years. And looking back, you mentioned you're still learning, which I think once again, that's a mindset that's a something that we can all still learn. We can all be curious kindergarteners, regardless of where we are in our own journeys of growth. But looking back to your time at Rogue, what were the big lessons that you learned along the way that would be helpful for others on their own journeys of growth?

Gene Pelham:

On I'll actually just go back a little bit well, it's my time at Rogue but before I became the CEO Do I was, had been the CEO of a smaller credit union, and then came in as the executive vice president. Our CEO was great, but really wasn't ready to turn on the reins much. And I knew I needed to do something before I can see you. So I went back and got my master's degree. And I think one of the key learning elements for me was my master's Capstone where I studied high performing credit unions, and looked at what created success amongst them, including our good friend, John, John Cleese, credit union, study that credit and I interviewed these leaders and and kind of solidified my my view of how to run a credit in and realize that now I understand what it was I didn't then but really the whole stakeholder strategy perspective of making sure that everybody wins in this thing, and that was the foundation for us. And when I became a CEO in January of 2007, great first year than 2008 yet, and that's when we were tested more than everything, but it's that whole perspective of Do you see the glass as half empty, or half full, and we saw it as half full, and while others were closing branches and, and laying off people, we committed to our staff, that if you work hard, we'll keep you on, and we're not going to close branches for our members, we're going to give back to them. We're going to take our rainy day fund our net worth, and we're going to invest it in you. And guess what happened. It Roque happened, it was incredible. We went from a \$400 million credit union to over a \$3 billion credit. And I've got growth numbers, there are periods five year period, where if you looked at five major growth numbers, remember growth, asset growth, loan growth, share growth, out of those five items for five years, there were only three years that we didn't hit 10% or more annualized growth during that period, it was it just the end blew up in a really positive way.

James Robert Lay:

I mean, if you think about that, I often and I wrote about this in banking on digital growth, this idea of 10x thinking, in fact, Dr. Benjamin Hardy, and Dan Sullivan wrote a book called 10x is easier than 2x. And it's the idea that if you're going to access something, you're going to work harder, you're going to work longer, you might invest some more dollars into whatever that thing is, and you will you'll double it. But if you want to truly TEDx something, it takes a transformative approach, it takes a transformative way of not just doing but a transformative way of thinking. And when you think back on that experience, joining a 2007 2008 happens. It's almost like the past is now we're reliving that to a degree but through a different context. If you think back to that, what's the best way to lead through uncertain times to lead through turbulent times such as you face back then we're now facing again 15 or so years later. And when I say lead, I want to look at this through from two lenses. First and foremost, leading ourselves as an individual, because as I've talked about, in other podcasts that I've been guest on around the idea of leadership, I've always said you have to learn to lead yourself before you have the honor and the privilege to lead others. And then once we lead ourselves, and we can lead others. So let's start leading ourselves through turbulent times, thinking back on your experience 2007 2008. What did you do for yourself to get through those turbulent times?

Gene Pelham:

You know, and I wish I could claim original thought but even in talking with the CEOs when when I did that master's Capstone, I called it believability at the time, but really, as I've grown over time it was really trust is that they were trusted leaders and trusted leaders or people that their staff can count on. Their customers slash members can count on their boards can count on. And part of that trust is telling the

truth, even when the truth is not good. But being honest with folks and I still remember the conversation where we sat down with our staff and said, These are difficult times. Here's the list of things that will happen if this happens. So if we joined together, hopefully we can avoid things like reducing our 401k or cutting it back to the top of the list, which I always struggle with and I know you will too. And it happens at most organizations loves, eliminate marketing or reduce marketing? Well, one of the really great things was is that when we gathered everybody around this shared honestly, when others weren't with them, the challenges we faced, they all dug in, they all joined together. And we didn't have to cut marketing except for a little bit. And we didn't get into any of the other items, the credit union continued to do well, because folks joined together, I would think it's a bit more difficult now, especially after COVID. And when we kind of had created kind of these independent perspectives, and so on, and maybe lost some connection. But then it was incredibly powerful, because everybody was working for something, they were protecting the job of the person that sat next to them and their job. And they knew at that point, that maybe that person sitting next to them, their spouse had lost their job, and they were the sole breadwinner in the house. He was powerful. James, Robert.

James Robert Lay:

You bring up a very key point that I want to dig deeper into. It's this idea of telling the truth, writing bank you on change, I have a lot of mental, their mental models that I've been thinking about for probably a decade, but it was through the COVID experience that I really sat down and figured out okay, what are what are the mental models that can provide a framework to guide the thinking of others. Because the power of thought, that's the seed of future growth, it's the seed of creation, if you will, it's thought it's ideas. But if you come back to telling the truth, it's one of the three T's for future transformation that I'm running about. Number one is tell the truth. Number two is training education to provide clarity into future potential. Because we're often held back by our fears of the unknown, let's see these just continuing learning back to your point of starting this conversation. And it's also interesting to just to note on the sidebar, the influence that, that you're in that your masters had that capstone to go and learn through conversation, through discussion through dialogue through discourse, and maybe we come back to that. And then the third 130, for transformation is just taking time to think, because it's so we're so busy. It's I think it's, quote, unquote, it's gotten worse. So we have to be even more intentional to create the space and time to break out of doing to review to reflect, to learn to then think of how we can do even better. But I want to come back to telling the truth. Why, why do we fail to do that sometimes, particularly during tough times.

Gene Pelham:

There are a lot of reasons fear, uncertainty, people will people will act, and maybe choose something differently, if it's if it's fear, and I will always go back to is if someone chooses to do something differently, because you're honest with them. They probably weren't right for the team in the first place anyway. And so we found that now it is difficult, I think probably as I've worked through various mergers is my original strategy was to just unload upfront until everybody. And then they had 18 months where they had to worry about whether their job was going to be kept or not, because that's what we think about mergers. So we have to learn about how to doing it strategically. But when we need to engage people in tough times, I think honesty is the best policy. Yes.

James Robert Lay:

And that brings that idea of instinct sticking with the three T's for transformation framework. I want to go from telling the truth back to training education here because you opened up this conversation that even though you have repurposed here, you're still learning along your journey of growth. And if we go from the the experience at road to where you're at now, what are you learning from the lens of your own experience, and I keep coming back to the word experience, because as we move further into this age of AI, we have an amazing capability. That it's interesting, some are resistant to explore, try learn

from. But we as human beings were horrible data processors. The technology, the AI is always going to beat us on that front. We're fantastic experience makers. And I believe when we bring the experiences that we've had through our own journeys of life of growth, and then you're able to transpose them over other people's experiences, you create a new experience that you're moving forward together. Other with. So what are the experiences that you've learned now, through your journey of repurposing in the recent months?

Gene Pelham:

You know, I am dating around a little bit with AI, my daughter has an online business. And she's she's been working through it, one of the credit unions I'm working with the one of the leaders is really, really focused on AI. And it's kind of increased my curiosity. So I, I'm wondering about that. But even more, so I'm learning about just human behavior, and how to organize and drive and connect people on a common purpose. One of the things that I'm realizing is that what we did at road is not as easy or what as what it seemed to be, as we did it, that road is I work with organizations and help them, you know, understand the power of strategic focus, the power of strategic discipline, the power of creating a cadence of accountability around that, because we have a tendency to act as individuals within an organization for maybe a common dollar growth purpose. But man, when everybody's combined around, reaching that, and fulfilling that strategic purpose, then all the other growth things happen. So, and I'm learning fun things too, like I learned how to change a resistor in my, in my old Jeep, and to make sure the fan on the on the heater core worked again. So I'm just kind of I'm curious, I've always been curious. I was on a management training program, and I got a scholarship in high school for a management training program, I was put on that constant learning path. And so I continue to learn all the time.

James Robert Lay:

Is that is that innate, that need to learn? Is that something that can be nurtured? I mean, if we're thinking nature or nurture here, the reason I'm asking is, as we're moving into this new age of AI, to use the your perspective, curiosity, it's almost like we have to go back to being in kindergarten, almost a five year old, and looking at the world through a sense of wonder, because I think sometimes our own personal biases and our own personal experiences can become roadblocks. Audrey are obsolete here, she recommended an amazing book, to me at the right time. And I'm reading right now. It's called the mountain as you know, in many times, we are our own mountain to our future growth, whether that be personal or professional. But where does that drive to learn come from? Is that nature, nurture, can you create a culture, if you will, of learning and growth for the team for the organization?

Gene Pelham:

It takes, it takes an organization led by individuals that that have that curiosity and value education. And unfortunately, we had that. And so we created an environment where learning not only was was an opportunity, but it made it very easy for folks to be involved. We created our own internal management school, it was a two year program, taught by the leaders in the organization from everything of history and philosophy to running a simulated credit end developed by our executive vice president now CEO, Matt Stephenson, we had both a member focused learning perspective and and a staff focused learning perspective. And a lot of folks did it because they had to. And then they realized the value of doing it, but we we just made sure that learning was part of it. One of the regular conversations I had with staff is I said, Never leave your future in someone else's hands. They said, make sure your future is always have the opportunity to move and do whatever you need to do to be able to be valued and valuable to either us or others as you go forward. And so whether it was high school student branches, or it was our own management, school, or now our online learning system, all of those things facilitate this constant process of self improvement.

James Robert Lay:

It's interesting, you touched on human behavior in your previous thoughts because as a digital anthropologist for over two decades now, I've been studying the intersection of marketing sales, technology, and human behavior. But if I reflect on my own journey of the last 20 plus years, I'm continuously am drawn to the human behavior component. It is the most interesting, it's the most intellectually stimulating for me. I've always liked technology. But if I look at The macro level, technology is actually quite easy compared to the people side of things. And that's where when we're thinking about this was a recent HBr, Harvard Business Journal, that a article I was reading, they were talking about strategy and culture. And they were noting that if you're struggling here, and you're confident in your strategy for future growth, the culture is the thing that most likely needs to be transformed. But that's also the hardest. Because it's, it's the people issue. However, if you do, establish a cause, a common cause that people can get behind that's greater than the present moment, it's easier to unify around that. What's your recommendation for those that are watching or listening to help identify that cause that purpose? Because back to your point, you noted, what worked for, amazingly for Rogue hasn't been as easy at other organizations. Why? Why is that?

Gene Pelham:

Yeah, and it's really one of those perspectives of, you have to understand the opportunities in your market in your marketplace. Creating loyalty with membership in an urban environment, where there are limited numbers of opportunities for branches, and so on. It's more separated, is not as easy as it was for us in a community focus, serving small communities, being able to be present in those communities in an active and meaning, meaningful way. But I believe strategy is long as you're committed to it, no matter what the strategy is, is, is critically important. And then it's congruent thought and congruent action. I think and that goes back to trust is from the perspective of a leader, not only identifying what they're going to do, saying what they're going to do, but actually doing what they do in a trusted and meaningful way that's consistent. So that staff and those that are engaged the other stakeholders in the organization, because your board leadership, your community interactions, and connections, all of those are critical to the success of an organization. But it starts with those leaders being having strategic congruent thought and action. And it's not just the CEO, but it's everyone in that purpose leading, setting that example. And that's, that's a lot of folks, when they're taught in business school, or whatever. They're taught the details of how to how to do the finance and how to do this, or whatever. But they're not talking, talking about how their behavior sets the example for others behavior going forward.

James Robert Lay:

That's a great point. And I think about parenting year, which is, I'm always learning of how to be an even better father. It's been a big growth area, actually, my son and I, he's 13. Now we were sitting down the other day, having a really good conversation. And he was just sharing some challenges and struggles with his sister. And one of the things that I've always asked my kids, though, is, and we have four. And it's about I think, every six months, but it's the question of what can I do to be an even better father for you? In some might think, well, that's a bad question. But I also know, I'm blinded by my own perspective. And I'm not going to know where I'm falling short, until I asked the question. And we kept going through and one of the things he said, and we were talking, he said, and I asked him, well, where have I fallen short? Where have I not applied what you shared with me? And he said, Well, when I was younger, I always used to want you to play more with me, but you never did. And that kind of stung. It hurt. I'm not gonna lie. But I didn't let it drag me down. I said, You're right. And I was wrong. And I do regret that. But I also am moving forward. And we're creating new experiences now, together. It's this idea of listening, and having the courage to maybe ask questions to learn where we could be a better leader. Because we don't learn this in business school. This is the human aspect, the human element. It's also interesting too, we know the idea Give the leadership development you were building internally and how philosophy played

into that. Talk to me about that. They're asking questions building philosophy into this leadership experience.

Gene Pelham:

One of the things I learned early on is probably the less I said, the more I learned. And and so just simply talking to people and understanding what was important about them, and that was one of the biggest challenges with the growth of Rogue is because I could sit down and I could No, one of our staff members sons was playing soccer, and their daughter was playing soccer also are playing softball. And in when they had a big tournament, I could remember those things. And, and so did I do that as a as a tool? No, I just did it because I was curious about them. I'm curious about people and how they're enjoying life. But what it does is it connected people that, well, if he cares about me that much, I should probably care about what what I'm doing for the organization at the same time. And so, so it worked out incredibly well and harder and harder to do with 600 employees than it was with 150 employees going forward. I think listening, allowing others to give you insights and perspectives that then allow your behaviors and actions to be molded, to help them grow and learn and achieve their, their abilities. The other thing that I'm doing right now, James, Robert, which is really probably the funnest thing I'm doing is I'm doing leadership coaching, specially for a mid level management group, and really sitting down with them and helping them understand their why. And you know, we're not really asked to identify our why we're asked to follow the organization's why or, or whatever. And so really sitting down with them, I use the analogy of a compass is what's your TrueNorth? What are you founded on? What's that that foundation? And then how do you? How do you navigate? I think you mentioned Audrey earlier mentioned the book, your your mountain is the peak or the obstacle or whatever. It's really, how do you find your way back? Because we'll always be off course, there's always something pushing us away from what our objective is. And so what are the tools that you use in this visual to kind of be your triggers to remind you to adjust appropriately to find the peak that you're seeking?

James Robert Lay:

When it comes to subjects topics, like cause purpose, why we do what we do, once again, the humanities piece of the puzzle? Why do some leaders within the financial services vertical? Maybe they shy away from that? I wrote about this in baking on digital growth. I look at this, you've got to you've got the analytical mind. And you got the emotive mind. What prevents us from leaning into people?

Gene Pelham:

Though it's, well, basically standards are one of that I know that especially as I proceed on loyalty strategy erode, I really was an outlier. Because you can't measure the direct impact of a loyalty strategy on the bottom line. But I can show you proof that it has a significant impact on on the bottom line, but it's just not measurable. And we're taught business school and so on MBAs about the logical solution to organizational success. And one of the most impactful classes I had in my master's degree was emotional intelligence because I was not. I was not emotionally intelligent. And the instructor saw me maybe as a special case, she really held me held me accountable. But it really was one of those perspectives of moving folks for purpose, not just through financial incentives and everything. One of the things I advise against are just sales quotas. One of the things I learned in the in my study was organization incentives were really powerful tools. If those incentives were directly related to the achievement of the overall strategic goal, that everything was consistently set. And so if it was just to get higher production or or whatever, it wasn't as effective and the effect ended, when the payment was gone, versus if it was for purpose higher good. The effect remained even if after the incentive was gone.

James Robert Lay:

It's a great point about emotional intelligence, empathy, I just did a closing keynote on the subject of digital empathy. About a week ago for a state association, very well received, because people, I don't

think they've really considered empathy as a digital experience. And I go, Well, it's just the human experience being delivered through a digital, quote, unquote, interface. I'm gonna come back though, to empathy and maybe dive deeper into this because as I think about where we're at right now, in this age of AI, it's a bit of a paradox that everyone is now more connected than ever before through digital devices through mobile devices. The problem is, though, it's at a surface level. Even in banking on change, I have a chapter around digital stoicism and the need to reexamine the relationships that we have with our devices. And how those relationships with our devices are impacting the relationships that we have with other people. So EQ, emotional quotient, quotient, emotional intelligence, it can be measured, it can be benchmarked. It can be coached, it can be taught, it can be elevated and increased, just like when you go to the gym, you can build muscle. There's another quotient though, that we're starting to explore here, which is AQ. So adaptability quotient. And I have a hypothesis that EQ when combined with AQ, is greater than just IQ alone. When you think back on your journey, and not just on the EQ side, but the AQ side, your adaptability quotient, what has provided you the foundation or the ability to adapt your behaviors, your habits, which is more deep than that, it's not just your behaviors and habits, it's the way you think it's the way you feel. It's your inherent belief systems and structures. Because a lot of times we're like, oh, we build a new strategy, and we're gonna go in this new direction, but we haven't considered the implications of the human transformation required to its to achieve a strategic objective. And a lot of that is the conflict is not the habit or the action. It's the belief system and structure that inspires the habit or the action influences the habit or the action. What have you done to continuously transform that adapt that in your own unique journey here?

Gene Pelham:

Well, I think what you just said is the beliefs, the foundational things, and oftentimes, we can use those to limit our adaptability. But I always saw those as the opportunity to expand adaptability is not let them give me these hard and fast rules, per se. But give me the idea that as long as I'm moving forward, kind of going back to the compass analogy, as long as I'm moving forward towards this purpose, this objective I have, I've got to be off on new paths and new trails, and find new discoveries. And I think that's the funnest part, and probably one of the most frustrating parts for my staff at the credit units that, yeah, we had a budget, or we had a strategic plan. But we always had to consider the opportunities that were ahead of us. And we could not let the plan solely limit the movement forward. And sometimes I the terminology from my baseball coaches, you got to be on the balls of your feet ready to jump and move whichever way and so I've always looked at that as being very grounded in that purpose in that vision, but flexible enough to understand that a step to the side. And that will give me three steps farther forward.

James Robert Lay:

So that's a great analogy. You use baseball, I'll use basketball, I played basketball growing up from the time I was five all the way through my senior year. And it's the balls of the feet. You're in that defensive posture, being able to move left right back front. So it's a fantastic analogy. That's that's the adaptability, if you will. And I think right now as we're entering into this age of AI, the amount of changes that we're going to see and experience at a macro level, and how those macro level changes will then influence how we think and how we operate at a micro level through the lens of financial services. Whether that be credit union community bank, FinTech doesn't matter. The it's it's inconceivable. And that's because, and I've been thinking a lot about this, how old we were in 1994, is directly influencing a lot of our thinking today, because 94 was the year that the internet reach the mass consciousness of humanity. And I've had the privilege to sit down with some boards and in their directors and talk about, well, how old were you in 94, and some were 40. Some were 51. One gentleman was 3055, even in 94. And it's interesting that, and I look at this very judgment free, like I'm just here to learn, and just to ask questions. And one of them shared with me that in 94, the whole idea of the internet was like, this is just a fad. You know, this isn't gonna be anything new the idea of online banking, well, that's just, we don't

have time to mess with this stuff. But I'm almost seeing the same pattern now. happening again, in some of these conversations around AI. There weren't even jobs available in 94 that are available now. And I think about my kids, what they're going to be doing in 1020 30 years, we can't perceive that because perception is only looking back. Now we could project but the best way to project is based upon looking at experiences through an unbiased lens, because the bias will always tend to skew that one way or another. As you look forward and towards the future, of financial services of Community Financial brands, because that's what I'm most passionate about. Myself. Coming Community Financial brands are the backbone of the local economy. What are you feeling most hopeful about? What are you feeling most excited, most encouraged about looking ahead towards the future as we start to wrap up?

Gene Pelham:

Well, I think one of the pieces that's really important, especially from AI, is what we can learn. Going back to 1994, I was 34 years old, I was a fairly newly minted vice president. And we didn't have internet, we didn't have email, and the world was going to end because we didn't have it yet. And then then we did. And it's one of the most successful organizations in Oregon now. And then we're looking at AI, it's the same thing, it has changed just in the six months that I've been been messing around the tools that I've gained access to, whether it's video transcription services, that like for what we're doing right now, that then gives me the ability to go in and ask questions about what James Robert, say five times in this session, those things are really powerful. And so we can see that as a risk to us, or we can see it as an opportunity. It's going to give the power to smaller organizations, more community focused organizations, organizations that have that I call it boutique versus the beast. And so it's it's going to give boutique organizations the opportunity to compete. In Oregon, there's a great example BioMart, Northwest owned and operated they they compete directly with Walmart. But guess what, they're still here, because they're still delivering an experience and a brand and product and service options. So I see. And this is where we've got to do is instead of looking at what's limiting us look at the opportunities that this can create, and how can we leverage these tools that are available to us, instead of ignore them? And or doubt them or question them? Let's let's put them to work for us.

James Robert Lay:

And the only way to do that is to just do it. It's to explore, it's to experiment, and it's to learn. I think about some of these recent board conversations I've had, and I asked the group, okay, everyone here who has not played with chat GPT just played with it. And it's right now around an 85 90% 92% threshold. Now go, that's your homework. Just go and just play. Be a curious kindergartner because there's no better way to just learn than just to have the experience. So I like the way you frame that. Boutique brands have the potential to and I We'll take a different direction, but to unlock beast mode with some of these new capabilities, and we're experiencing some of that here and transferring that knowledge back into the industry. On that idea of transferring knowledge, what would be the one thing, one action something small, you would recommend to someone watching or listening, that they could do next to transform the boutique experience or to level up the boutique experience to unlock beast mode, if you will, going forward into the future, what would be the one thing that you would recommend for them to do next.

Gene Pelham:

And then that is to understand that there is a consumer out there that needs you and your unique boutique experience, and your failure to build your business to meet the need of that that puts them at the mercy of the beast, I guess since the other way. And so understand that you have the opportunity to create experiences there there are if you're focused enough, and your strategy is honed enough, you can find those clients and customers that that needs you and will give you a business opportunity. That is really, it's whatever you choose to make of it.

James Robert Lay:

That's right. Put people at the center of your thinking put people at the center of your doing. And either you will find those people are more deeply, they will find you because they are looking for you. They're looking for help, they are looking for hope. And they have not found that through the other experiences that they've had up to this point.

Gene Pelham:

Those clients customers that that you've done a good job for will tell them about that experience.

James Robert Lay:

And that creates a network effect. Yes. And and that is that is very true. Even in this age of AI people still trust people. People still do business with people. It's just the way that people connect. That's a transformative experience in and of itself. And I do thank you, Jean for connecting with me today. For this conversation, it has been a very positive one. It's been a good one. It's been a fun one. What's the best way for someone to continue the conversation that we started here? How can I connect with you going forward?

Gene Pelham:

They can find me on LinkedIn. If they send me a message, please make sure that they saw the podcast with you. Or they can reach out to me at Jean Pelham, at Pelham and associates.com and I'd love to continue the conversation with folks about these issues. There's so much more to talk about whether it's the opportunity for small credit unions you talked about the connection and social we were just in Europe and yes, there's the QR code on the table and you order electronically but you're sitting in a plaza with 150 people all creating a social experience so they're leveraging technology instead of risk receding or retreating to it so it's so cool to be able to be part of.

James Robert Lay:

Very much connect with Gene learn with Gene grow with Gene gene. Thank you so much for joining me for another episode of the banking on digital growth podcast.

Gene Pelham:

Absolutely enjoyed it.

James Robert Lay:

As always, and until next time, be well do good and be the light.