

Welcome to the Event Brew, where event professionals from different backgrounds talk about the latest, most controversial and interesting topics dominating the minds of the industry right now. This is a candid conversation the likes of which can only otherwise be found late at night in host hotel lobby bars during industry conferences.

So relax and drop in on what event pros really say when no one else is around. This show is brought to you by Endless Events, the event AV company that tells you how it really is. Now, let's brew something up.

Hey everyone, welcome to Event Brew, my name is Will Curran from Endless Events.

This is Nick Borelli from Borelli Strategies.

This is Dustin Westling from One West Events.

And this is Thuy Diep, with PRI Business Events LA.

Awesome, well welcome everyone to our first full episode. We did the prequel episode last week, so if you missed that one make sure to go listen to it to hear a little bit more about why we did this show, what it's all about and everything like that. But last time we kind of focused a little bit on us as hosts so you can get to know us, and we started dropping a little bit of bombs and shakers here and there.

But this week we're going to start diving straight into a topic and get really brewing on it, and start a debate a little bit about what it's going to be like. We'll talk about that in just a sec, but first, as tradition states, let's talk a little bit about our brews and what is everybody drinking today? So what's everybody drinking and having in front of them right now?

Mine literally has the word brew in it, which is one of the Starbucks cold brews, the coco and honey one. Which is really good, very creamy.

Do you guys actually like Starbucks? Does anyone actually like Starbucks?

I mean, it's there.

I definitely do.

I love playing the point games.

Yeah, they've done the hospitality thing.

I've been the gold member since like the minute it was available.

I love it. They totally got you guys. I mean think about like hospitality point programs and they basically just did it to all of us.

Yeah, I had the worst hospitality point program, this is a side deviation, thing happen to me. But I have to get it out. It's so crazy. We used it the next day in a presentation about loyalty. I was offered, when I got to my hotel, and I had a picture of this, the opportunity to have 100 additional points or this bag of Cheetos that they left, and they left it up to me.

And I'm like, doesn't that really devalue the whole idea, it was like a tiny bag of Cheetos or 100 points. And you're like, wow, so points are done.

Now you know what 100 points are worth.

Bag of Cheetos.

Yeah, and now I think of everything by Hilton in Cheetos now.

I don't think points are dumb.

How many Cheeto bags is a full nights stay at the Hilton Brooklyn?

Exactly.

Like a pallet worth of Cheetos.

It's a currency. Sorry, I hijacked that, I apologize.

No, it's all good, it's all good. Tou, Dustin, what are you guys drinking?

I'm drinking water this morning, I'm cheating on the brew. I'll get better at finding a fun brew, but this morning it is all water.

Is it tap water, bottled water?

No, no, no, no, no, we have like a cold filtered water tap in our office, it's the most wonderful thing you could ever do.

Well in theory technically they brewed the water a little bit, because they had to filter it, you know? And reverse osmosis it.

Stretch.

Good old Canadian water brew.

Canadian water.

So fancy, so fancy. Thuy? What about you? What are you drinking?

I'm drinking my favorite Yogi Green Tea, it helps reduce free radicals, I don't know what that means, but it tastes delicious, and I bought this organic honey from Whole Foods, and fun little fact about my green tea, I always have one of these in my bag at all times, with a little thing of honey. So if you see me you can always ask, I always have tea on me. I'm like the little old Asian lady.

Like one bag of tea or multiple tea?

Probably multiple, depending. If it's a conference, which we'll go into, I'm definitely, I have a whole entire case with me. I'm definitely that girl that will just ask for hot water at places to make my own tea. I'm not joking you guys, it's a thing.

No, no, we have a guy who's the CMO of Experient named Jeff [Hugate 00:04:26] and he just moved from, in the last year, coffee and soda, of which he was a pretty addict of, to tea, and then he went like deep into it, and when you do that you realize that there's good tea and there's everything else.

So yeah, he's the hot water asking for, going into his bag thing, which you would think is something a 90 year old would do, but I get it. Once you've had the good stuff, why go back?

Definitely.

That's what she said. Well, what are you drinking?

Well, I'm drinking a chai latte from one of my favorite coffee shops in Phoenix called Press Coffee, it used to literally be below my apartment and I'd go there every morning for breakfast and chai and they used to have matcha, but they don't have matcha anymore, but it's actually the powder is so good that I found out what it was and bought a bunch of it. And it's really ironic that I spend money there when I could literally make the same thing at home, but it's David Rio Chai, which is like the perfect balance of sweet, you know, creamy. I don't know, it's my favorite chai powder I think I've ever had. Better than the Oregon chai stuff.

I think Nick and I are going to have to step up our brew game.

Yeah, for real.

Yeah, definitely.

I'm literally getting stuff just in grocery stores. It's pretty embarrassing now. At IMAX it's going to be really embarrassing because I usually just bring a container and fill it up in the, you know the lounge, with water, and that's about as exciting as I get, because convention brews are pretty sad unless you're going to the Visit Scotland booth and doing it right.

That's true, I mean other than beer and whiskey and wine that we'll probably have there, like Tou, what are we going to do for tea? We'll have to find out where the Vegas tea spots are so we can get some good tea for when we record there.

Well, I used to live in Vegas, so I know where all the good tea spots are.

Oh that's right.

And or, just my purse. Because I will have tea bags.

I might bring some tea up with me from Phoenix so that way we can brew some tea. Maybe I'll bring my tea maker too, so then that way we have a legit ...

We'll do like a little tray on the side.

There you go.

We'll just like secretly walk to the corner. You know?

I do that in Vegas, but it's not with tea.

Oh my ...

But I hear you.

I love it, I love it.

That could be off or on line, your choice.

Both.

Cool.

I love it.

That actually will dive in really well with what we're talking about today, actually.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, Nick, why don't you explain a little about, so what's our first topic that we're going to be talking about?

I might not dive directly into that part of it, but so this is we're actually going to have a conversation about our personal event industry conference attendee strategies. So this isn't what we do in our client's events or anything like that, this is when we attend events that are aimed at professionals within the live events industries. How do we tackle them? What's our mindset going in? How do we get the most out of it for ourselves and the things that, at this point we're looking for?

I'm very curious to see if that has changed over the years. As many of us have been to maybe some of the same shows or just aggregate volume of shows over time, more so, so it kind of maybe has evolved, but yeah, I'm really curious to hear, I guess, what everyone is thinking. And this is, for us, going into many, I guess all of us are going into a show in a couple of weeks and this might be top of mind right now, so I thought it'd be kind of apropos.

I got a good question to start us off.

Okay.

Get everybody thinking about it. So I feel like there's two camps of how you attend an event, at least for maybe event professionals, because when I think how an attendee thinks for our events it's totally different than how our attendees think going to our events, if that makes any sense. But I feel like in our industry there's two people. There's, "I'm going to go to every education session, and like soak up all the knowledge," and then there's the people who are like, "I'm going to go to every social event and spend most of the time just in the hallway talking to people or be in the lobby bar, hanging out with people." What camps do you guys think you fall in, and then feel free to disagree with me, obviously if you feel like that's true.

I'll disagree with you right off the bat, that there is more than two groups with that. Because I create attendee personas for conferences, it's like a big portion of what I do. Those are two overarching archetypes for sure, but behaviors people have, going into a show are really varied. There are some people that literally go just because they want to be seen, and they don't care about anything else.

Some people go because they think it says something if they don't. Some people go because they have obligations because maybe they have like a ... If it's in the medical industry they have to get re-certified, or if it's in the event industry they have some foundation that they're on that has something that's going on there too.

Okay.

There's a myriad of reasons why people attend these kind of conferences, and but the big ones that people who design events design events for, usually are the two areas that they get the most feedback on, which is networking and education.

All right, all right. Fair enough, so what persona does everyone else fall into then?

So actually well you actually described exactly what I do. So I usually, in the past, am really big into education, I'm a learner for life, and I will sit there with the schedule and put it all in my agenda with the rooms and I'm always sitting in the front middle. Like my tiger mom would be so proud of me, but as of lately, just actually attending LA Alive, I did the opposite, I actually worked during the day, and didn't attend live conference at all, and went to all the social events in the evening time, and it's completely two different worlds.

I was so flabbergasted by how much free time I had during the day to get all those emails out. And then, you know, showering and getting ready, hitting the evening events. What about you Dustin? Because I see Dustin every ... At LA Alive I saw you everywhere, even on stage.

Everywhere. Oh my god, it is ... Some of these conferences are a bit of a grind depending on the role that you play within whatever organization is putting it on, but I think for me I always go in with the best intentions of doing education and I find that these conferences and the education pace is so intense that I burn out really quickly.

So I am good for a day of hitting half of my education goals, and then usually by day two I don't show up to anything. It's a bit exhausting and a bit of a grind. I have a big team that I send to a lot of conferences and I will's two kind of conference personas, I find that those are quite accurate, and either you're there for your business, you're there to learn, or you're there to network at social events.

I always tell my team to go to the things that really resonate with them, don't stay in sessions that are missing the mark or that are not inspiring them, and hang out at the conference as much as you can, stay in the hallways, make an effort to meet new people. And in our part of the industry I definitely think the best connections are made in the lobby bar after all the education is done and gone.

Well it is in the intro of our show too, right? So it might be like a little bias to it in some ways, right?

Totally.

I think I'm on what Dustin said too, I get really burnt out with a ton of education, I think my brain can't handle a lot of it. But, as much as I totally agree Tou, that I'm a lifelong learner, I always want to learn, a lot of times I'm going to these conferences and unless there's some specific ones, like newer ones sometimes, I feel like a lot of times sometimes the content doesn't go

advanced enough for me. And if I'm at a conference for something I'm usually probably one of the more advanced people.

I'm not like going to a conference to learn the basics, or something like that. Maybe I should start doing that when I'm trying to learn something in the beginning, go to a conference to learn. But like for example the handful of times I've been an attendee I can think of recently, is like Inbound Hub Spots, Inbound Conference, C2 Montreal. It's so tough because I feel like I speak at so many events industry stuff that I never am a true attendee, I'm always a speaker.

But those two cases, it was interesting, Inbound I went to as many sessions as I could and there was some that were just absolutely mind blowing. It actually shifted my whole marketing strategy and how I did content and everything like that. But sometimes I sat in on them and I was like, this is so basic ... I wish I had thought about walking out, which I need to start doing more often.

But then like C2 Montreal, I tried going to some of the education, but then I discovered brain dates, and I cleared my schedule and did brain dates which are basically ...

Brain dates are so good.

Like networking. And maybe we can talk a little bit about what brain dates are, really briefly, or actually probably better than that is go check out Event Icon's episode about brain dates. I think it's called like Networking is Dead, Brain Dates are the Future, or something like that. I can get the episode number and post it in the link, in the resources. But, like I was just all about talking to people, and I think that's what I've realized I like the most.

And unless there's a session that's like some dude is dropping mind blowing education, I get kind of disappointed when later like six months later I see the session online and I could have watched it online or something like that, right? I don't know.

Yeah, the tricky part is, so, 15, 16 years ago when I started going to national and international conferences, I went for the education and I went to every session every day and I was a good little kid and soaked everything up and everything was new and exciting and it was somebody outside of my market, and it was just whatever.

And then there was like this crazy kind of line of diminished return, of gaining more knowledge, therefor not needing the one on one knowledge. The last 10 years of availability of content that is on demand in any form you want and any way, and, also knowing more people.

So like all of those things, it really makes it difficult for me to then say, I'm going to take that same methodology and apply it 15 years later, when I know the people now, like who create the best content, I can get it at any time, I can call them at any time, because I have access, and I

need ... My deficit of knowledge in certain areas, to do what I do for the events industry is not as deep as it used to be.

I find that if I go to marketing conferences I am that guy again. Just like I think maybe the profoundness that you experience at Inbound, when you're outside of your industry, when you're not seeing the same heads, the same people talking about the same things, over and over and over again, and that it's something that actually is outside of what you would expect, then you start paying attention to maybe like the way you used to, and also you're not as encumbered by the fact that every time you turn left or right there's somebody you know.

So, I don't know, I gain my knowledge now in sessions of things that I'm into outside of the event industry that still apply to what I do. Specifically marketing conferences. But yeah, I think it's evolved. I think most of us, just are at a point now potentially where we value time spent face to face with people so much and we know where to get the content, we know where to be educated and there's just no shortage of that.

Do we want to talk about since we kind of have, either some little thread about agreeing that we all love to talk to other people, maybe we want to talk about what our strategies are trying to meet up with people? I love that Thuy you said like the idea of you work all day and then you go to things at night, I think that's really, really cool, do we want to talk about that a little bit?

Yeah, no.

You guys can also say no.

I can express on that. I don't know about you guys, but it's so hard to be fully present. You know? There's just like that internal pressure of like I need to check my emails and I need to just step away and while I'm taking notes on my laptop during these sessions I feel like I need to check client communication and making sure the team is okay back home, and it just ... It's a horrible feeling to feel.

So I either need to be fully present and just really engaging or learning, or I just need to be dedicate X amount of hours and just get work done. Especially during certain times of the month, well, not for females, but just conferences, like when they are, like summertime. It all depends on just workload. So for me, doing that for the first time, I'm actually about to do that again at IMAX, like not going to any of the educations, and just working during the day at some meetings here and there, and just enjoying the social events at night.

So I've done that. Do you do that in a visible place, or are you really hardcore? Like in your room, doing the work? Like are you in a hotel space that if someone walks by and sees you, because there's a better chance of bumping into somebody at a conference, like do you make yourself sort of available like that? Or do you just really grind?

At LA Alive I was just in my Airbnb, complete silence, just needed to get some work out. At IMAX I think I'm going to split it. I'm going to do some at the Venetian, and then definitely a day in the PRA Vegas so that I can truly focus. And I show ... I have a different strategy in how people know I'm at a certain location.

It's great, I actually love being disrupted, and there's a sense of collaboration and a sense of Tony Shay writes in his book, it's about collision and given the opportunity to have those connections. But if your goal is to get that proposal out, or that contract out, I like to just step completely away.

Especially because I don't know about ... I don't know maybe Dustin, you have that feeling, but as an event planner, as a ... Especially where supplier partners want to talk to you, and do business and trade business cards, there's just like a certain mentality I have to be in to really engage with them. Because a lot of times they just see the title, and they say, "Oh my goodness." And I don't want to say they're fake nice, but they really ... They want to get to know me from a business end, not on a personal end, and I feel like networking needs to really ... That relationship develops because of learning about someone personally and having that human connection.

Yeah, I couldn't agree with you more. I find that being sold to is really exhausting and it makes me avoid areas where you know you're going to get targeted for that. I keep my head down when I walk through the trade show or I often put my badge in my back pocket and I want to explore and just be on my own a little bit, I don't like being overly inundated.

I definitely find that I am looking for suppliers and clients everywhere I go and I do my research, I see who's going, I download the painful 100th conference app, and go through it and I look who's going and I learn a little bit about them so when I seek them out I have something meaningful to talk about and it's not just a pass of a business card. I don't carry business cards, I have them somewhere in a box in this office.

I generally don't take them with me, I prefer to connect with people on a much more meaningful level, and I make a point to connect with them digitally before I walk away. But, as much as I don't like my time being gobbled up by a sales pitch I really try to be mindful of other peoples' time when I seek them out.

Oo, I like that a lot. I like the mindfulness. I also really like that you ... I mean really enlightening to know from the planner's perspective that you're getting sold to all the time, that suppliers are literally trying to hunt you down and find you and make you their new best friend and how can you avoid that in a lot of ways.

I do like that you're like, "Hey, I don't carry cards with me at all." And you know, do you guys have any sort of strategies at all for avoiding the monotonous conversations that you have that are just, yeah, you want to move on, you're like, "Okay, this is going nowhere." Or it's someone

you're just like, "I know you're just trying to sell me." Do you guys have any sort of like conversation ... Like how do you avoid that sort of stuff? Other than keeping your badge in your topic, avoiding areas, to kind of start off with. But let's say someone hunted you down, or they've been emailing you and you know you're going to see them, or they come up to you at the party out of the blue when you're having a conversation?

I'm really honest with people.

Strategies for that.

I'm really honest with people. If I'm not in the head space for it I just tell them that and I ask for them to connect in a different way and I do try really hard to follow up with people that want to connect or put them on to the right person on my team, but yeah, I think honesty is the key to just tell people that you're not there, that's not where your head's at, and go stalk somebody else.

I'm like the opposite. I'm like very nice, but in a, I will honestly ... I feel like there's an unwritten rule of how much time if it is that first connection, if it goes maybe over like, I don't know ... Like three to five minutes, if it's not an actual deep dive into conversations and things like that, just like what you do.

I at that point will do anything, I will find, "Hey, have you met Nick?" And I'll do an introduction and like legit leave. Or, it reminds me of that meme with that little girl that's like, "Um, I'm going to go vacuum my room now." That's seriously what I've done at previous conference. I will do anything just to like, "Oh, hold on." And actually if anything, someone comes into the conversation and they're like, "Hi." At that point I'm like, okay, let's extend this circle and I'm going to use the restroom, slash go to the bar, slash insert excuse here.

Wait, so you tell people you're going to go vacuum your room?

Have you never seen those?

Or the equivalent.

Yeah.

Okay, okay.

I'm going to go vacuum my room now and just awkwardly grab my drink and just walk away.

That's funny. I mean for me I'm not selling anything to anybody and nobody wants me to buy anything from them, so that's not my problem. My problem as a consultant is, "Hey do you want to go over here and ..."

Problem as a consultant is, "Hey, do you want to go over here and I can pick your brain?" And then I'm doing consulting for an hour, and then I'm like, "Well, this is usually what I do," which is fine. Honestly, there's a dance to that and that's just something that anybody that sells a service that is an intellectual piece knows how to eventually figure out how to do graciously without being a jerk.

There's a line there, for sure, not just be being like ... I literally have a number that you can call so that you can talk to me per minute. I have that in my pocket, so I use it mostly just to get rid of people, and sometimes people from Europe who actually call me on it and it's pretty great, but it's mostly just my shield.

But in those conference settings, like I might get ambushed like that, but honestly, like I'm hearing a lot of joy of missing out, which is really interesting. I think it's-

Joy of missing out?

Yeah. JOMO. It's a real thing and I think that people who are, maybe their time is more valuable just in general, probably experience that more than they experience the fear of missing out. Like any one of us likely could go to any event for free any given day just because we're in the events industry, we have opportunities that ... At least when it comes to experiences that a lot of people don't like the levels of which we get to experience things sometimes are a lot heightened, so it's either very difficult to impress us or we're just not as impressed with that stuff as we used to be.

Therefore, look at your time a little bit differently and you're not just pushed to do things because they're like, "There's a free Sunday bar or something." We don't care. We'd much rather have our time to compose it in the way we'd want to do it, and that's really ... When it comes to the event industry, I don't see a lot of designed JOMO, which is a shame because the ... I understand like where people are coming from, when the over-designed, when there's like literally at the WECNPI, there was a point where there was 13 simultaneous tracks. That's very overwhelming.

And I understand, it's like, "Well, we're giving you a choice. Choose as much as you want, it's a buffet," which is fair, but I think people need to be empowered enough to say, "Or don't." And here's a bunch of opportunities to get away. And a networking break is not a break. I say this at nauseum like networking is over 50% of the reason why people, most of the, at least of the surveys I've read, why people attend events. So it's networking work, it's not networking break. There's no such thing as networking break.

Break-break is go off and do some stuff and see the city and get some air. But yeah, I don't know. That's my soapbox moment on the design of things.

I agree 100%. I think like we've been trying to do an episode on EventIcons about this for a while, but the idea of like white space, like we need a design fence with more white space. I know it's like a hype term and cool like let's all get on the bandwagon with it, but like so true that like we need to make it that like you just had a profound session that blew your mind, I don't want to go to another session immediately afterwards. Like I want to like write out plans and come up with all these ideas, and it needs to be forced in a lot of ways because yeah there needs to be that like ...

Or create those opportunities so there isn't like the feeling, the need to pull away. It's the idea that you are away in that sort of way. And one concept that I came about us sharing this week when I was speaking was this idea of like we need to also consider like creating things like coworking spaces inside of events.

Because, like you're saying like I need to get out in a way, but then sometimes you want to be there. Like why don't we have these areas that are like outlets, you can make calls from, it has super fast WiFi, so then that way like you don't feel the need to all go all the way to the PRA office. You literally just go into another ballroom and everyone's in there working.

Honestly, I probably would attend more events if that existed because sometimes I just need to have a one-hour meeting and sit down with someone and that's going to be the most profound thing that happens in that conference and the rest of the time I want to remotely co-work and I want to remotely co-work with other people. I think that'd be super duper cool to do. Just make sure it's fast WiFi.

Big shows have these, but they're for journalists only. Because I used to work on CES and Berlin, and they had these spaces exactly as you're describing them, but again, they were kind of exclusive to the journalists in order for them to be able to empower and enable them to tell stories about the show as a value to the show itself.

But frankly, again, another thing I say all the time, we're all publishers now. Everyone's a publisher, everyone's creating content. Everyone has the same kind of writing that they have to do for their work, et cetera. I think that same kind of mentality would be great for other events.

I actually have a little a trick/ tip about like content writing. When you're at any event or you want to post, I actually pre-write my post, and then all I need to do is take a photo and then I just copy paste and just hit send so then I can really enjoy the moment, instead of sitting in the corner and saying what it is, what I'm doing. I always will pre-write my big posts before.

And then obviously, you want to do it immediately so people know that you're there and things of that nature. But that's always been a good little like secret tip that I'll do.

Yet another random secret tip too. Sorry, go ahead, Dustin.

I do something similar, yeah. I totally, I do a little bit of research before I go in and I keep my notes on my phone with the social media handle of the speaker and the correct spelling of their name so I don't make any stupid mistakes so that I'm not buried in my content creation and I can stay plugged in as much as I can.

I used to do that like really systematically, like in a way that was like really absurd. Like, yeah, same idea as to pre-write stuff, make sure I had the photos. I had shot lists of things, I had sponsors and social media tags their. Hashtags, so they would ... If I took a picture of their thing, I looked at the people that were the most likely to share it so I could get boosted. I did all that stuff.

I barely do any of that anymore. I've turned off my machine so much because I'm like, I'm just in a different set phase right now, and I'm not exactly being loud anymore. Not because like I don't think that anything is right or wrong, it's just where I'm at right now in trying to like evolve what I'm doing.

But, there's lots of ways. Like I look at people that are like, "How do I get bigger in the industry?" I'm like, "It's not hard. It's just is work." It's not even like super smarts, it's just, you just got to outwork the next person to get known and recognized and whatever.

And then, don't fall flat when you actually get the opportunities from the noise. But there's just lots and lots of opportunities to take advantage of that stuff with pre-work. But, I have shifted my focus completely now to being like present more so than I used to be. Like my social media posting at events goes way down. Even though there's technically more fertile content to share, my thought is, there's plenty of people sharing it and I'm not depriving anybody of anything.

Like, I bank stuff and I'm thoughtful about it and I release it later because I add some context onto it through time spent on really focusing on why I think something is important and valuable to another person enough to be able to have the ability to share it.

But, I think I've just been ... I've missed out over the years of being so, being a social media person from not really engaging in face to face for all its worth. So now, I'm much more interested in having a really long conversation with somebody for like an hour in the hallway than I am about figuring out how I can get 12 more retweets on something.

I love that. I have kind of a black hat, and this going to be ... Might be a little controversial. I don't know if it's going to be controversial per se or a bad idea, I don't know, but I guess I'll throw it down on here.

We're always talking about how we want 10 sessions and like really be in the moment instead of like taking notes and remembering things, but honestly, like as an AV guy, and I just thought about this, I'm going to totally do this now at every conference I go to, get like an audio recorder and know just like audio record in the room, but go to like the mixer, the audio mixer in the back,

you can hook into it and record directly from that person's mic, record the whole session. So then that way you can really be in the moment. You can listen to it later.

You do that? Because that's generally proprietary content, right?

Well I'm not sharing it with anybody, right? I'm just like, I'm keeping it so I can remember it later. What's the difference between that and me setting up like my phone in the back with a tripod and just sitting and record for an hour, right? I'm just getting better audio quality.

Feel free to disagree. Disagree with me 100%.

The AV team is complicit in the recording of your content. They also know things like contracts. Like for instance, like I deal with a lot of speakers on the conferences that I work at that have contractual standings-

You can't record those.

Correct. And like you're saying, you could anyway, as an attendee. And I'm saying, yeah, probably, but when the audio visual team who's been hired to it has made complicit, like you could potentially be putting them in a position you probably wouldn't want to be put in by somebody.

Like an attendee at one of your shows, they say, "Can I just jack this in there?" You go, "That's cool, fine." And you find out later that producer was like, "Hey, that couldn't be recorded. Unfortunately we can't use you again." That would be a ... I don't know.

True.

Putting my risk management hat on, which I almost never wear. It's a really dusty hat.

No, that makes sense, totally. I mean, like I'm almost thinking that you wouldn't tell anybody, you just kind of do it. So they would be kind of like ignorant to it. Honestly-

Now. I'm cool with this then. As long as you're taking all of the fire.

And this is me as an attending, not will currently anything like that. And it's like kind of like the ask for forgiveness rather permission, yeah. Someone says to me, "Hey, you can't be recording that." I'd be like, "Okay."

If you're the consumer, you can do anything you want as long as you don't get caught, for sure. The ethical boundaries are not as much as they are when you're part of producing a show.

Totally.

But yeah, I like it.

Maybe like the right way, the white hat way of doing it is like you reach out to the conference and say-

Of course.

... "Hey, I want to really be in the moment. Is it okay if I record your sessions? Do you have any sessions on this list that are, I'm not allowed to do that?"

And if they say no, then no, right?

At least from my perspective of someone who works on shows, like on conferences, if someone would ask that, I would absolutely give them the honest answer that like, yeah, only one guy is going to be a pain in the butt on this one.

Yeah, totally. And I'm thinking about it too, for me as a speaker perspective, I'm totally okay with it as long as it's for you to take notes and for you to implement. If you're like recording it so you can turn into your own blog posts later-

But I've had that.

... Things like that, that would be ... That's I think when you're definitely breaching the proprietary side.

We should should definitely do some-

Well, I don't think you would fare well in jail, so you have to be careful.

This is true.

That's the best thing I've heard ... Yeah, true. Yeah, I definitely wouldn't.

One thing that would actually lead to that, is I actually will ask presenters for their slideshow. I'll give them my business card and I feel like that's more common. Just so, I see people rapidly taking notes. I honestly will just sit and listen and afterwards just ask them for their slideshow.

And I feel like 10 out of 10 times I've done that, they do send me content and it's not a problem. If it's for a personal use to understand. And one thing that was so incredible, I went to, it was just a small planners meeting that was hosted with event MB and the technology., It was basically, the slideshow, the presentation was running live and everyone was on their laptop

and you were able to watch the presentation from your laptop and go back a slide, you can take notes in it, you could ask a question like in real-time.

What platform was that?

Remember what tool it was? Glisser or Veniom?

Yeah, I was going to say, I think I know what platform it might, like it's probably of four it could be.

I can't remember. I feel like if you guys say it, I'll say like, "Aha." They were at IMAX. Like-

Who's the sponsor of Event MB right now?

I'd say Venium I think.

I think so. That's how you'd find out.

I was going to say, what we'll do is if we do think of it, we'll leave it down in the resources section as a link to check out, but keep going, .

No, that's it. And just asking for those slides.

I can't wait to talk in one of these episodes about our thoughts on speaking as speakers, because like this is making me think of a lot of different things. Because for me like attending the amount of shows that I attend, a high percentage of them, I'm speaking as well. So like it's just intertwined in that experience. Like my strategies include capitalizing off the speaking.

My profound realization as someone who was attending conferences was, boy, it's a lot easier to network when people come to you, and speaking provides you that opportunity to have more people feel like they have a reason and an excuse to come to you.

So like my networking really isn't all, I don't have a lot of tricks other than like you get on stage in front of people and then hang out for a while and then they just kind of come to you.

Definitely. We should definitely add to the list of us talking about like speaker's perspective and things like that as well. Any other like strategies you guys have for as like attendees attending events in a sort of way?

Like are you guys like maximize as much as possible, stay up as late as possible, or do you guys go to bed at like a normal time, anything like that?

I go in with good intentions and then ... I used to very much be the guy like onstage the next morning and be like, "Hey, if you guys don't have raccoon eyes like I do, then you're wasting your money. You need to stay up like every hour of this show and absolutely get as much out of it," et cetera.

I just think that I still believe that, I also just don't have the energy I used to. To be able to like really kind of do that stuff unless the right set of circumstances are in place, then I'm back to where I used to be. And some of the best memories I have, even with people on this call are like super late at night, out, and it can be really, really great.

Like my business card that I exclusively use at conferences, at event industry conferences, the only reason I use my business card has a line for me to write where you met me and also what you'd like me to do for you. It's because I gave my business card out so late at night often that I think people would forget the night.

So this is like the business card to like protect myself from like blackout drunkenness from other people. I met this guy, think, and I don't remember what he does. Like, I was just like, I'm going to get around that because I'm talking to a lot of drunk people so I'm just going to make a business card that addresses.

Dustin seems like he has some thoughts on that one.

I have learned to pull the shoot earlier than I used to, that's for sure.

What do you mean? Like to get out?

Exit out a little bit earlier than I used to, and yeah, I used to-

Remember New Orleans? How late were we out that night? That one Saturday night.

Four in the morning.

Yeah, I had a flight at six. Like I literally went from that to that. Like it's bad. I could never do that now, like for sure.

It starts a wreck on you. If you think about it, for most attendees, they might be going to this, their one conference a year, and you talked a little about they want to be seen-

Go crazy.

Go crazy, do your thing. But like for us, like I'm coming back from a conference right now-

A few a month.

... Yeah, three or four a month. And on top of that, it's the events that we actually produce too. So it's like not only just the attending the events and speaking at them, but then also then the events we're actually producing. It seems like nonstop we're at events.

I actually have a confession, because I keep hearing it here and there. What? Why are you guys laughing already?

I'm just getting excited.

Well, okay. I know as an industry we always talk about open bar and drinking, being drunk and socializing at the bar and anything of that sort. But I actually don't really drink and I think that's why I'm able to stay out really late and I wake up in the morning. I'm definitely, this is ... Like I work out at the gym or I'll go for a run in the morning and people are always like, "How do you do it?"

I actually like have a little ... What is it called? Like Asian flush. So like I'm not allergic to alcohol but when you do see me it's usually a sparkling water or like a green tea. And I'll have a drink or two, but I can't remember the last time I was actually drunk at a networking event. And I think a lot of times, people, I get it, that's how we market, like when I'm on the board, open bar, like it's great for socializing and networking, but I just want to let you know for those out there that don't drink, it's okay. You can still have like a good time.

And a trick to that is I actually will throw a lime or lemon in my sparkling water so it looks like a vodka tonic.

These are AA tricks that you're stumbling across. That's good.

And usually, the bartender won't serve me because I look like I'm 12, so that's also-

So that helps too.

Julius from ... I was about to say, Julius from Event MB, like he talks about this a lot, that he thinks it's a macro issue with our industry, that we as producers push out that message so much that it's doing us harm, like it's an expectation.

I think he's like the only one I've ever heard you as a decent size platform to actually have that conversation because most people, it's like uncool or whatever to talk about. But I think it's a real, it's a really interesting take.

I was talking about this with Tracy literally this week, is that she's saying that she's now, she obviously does a lot of like food sensitivity training and things like that, and she was saying that she recently connected with a guy who's doing alcohol sensitivity training and the idea that like

we need to start offering more mocktails and things like that because she pointed out that basically 30% of like the world just doesn't drink, and that we push it so hard, like it's 100%.

And there's all these social connotations with the idea of drinking. Like the fact that you have to put a lime in a drink to not get pushed to drink is so crazy.

Yeah, it should just be-

This is probably a topic for a whole own episode for sure.

It's interesting. But yeah, you're right. Again, I think that, it's funny. Like the reason I'm going to bed earlier at conferences is because I'm drinking like 90% less than I used to as well, because I just have less to I think prove. And I also feel like if I stay out late or if I engage with people for conversations, like I don't feel like I have to like I did 15 years ago, like go toe to toe with them, or I just do my own thing cause I'm just more confident than I used to be.

But, in that same way, I feel like if I'm missing out on the like one to four o'clock escapades that I used to partake in, I also am just like cool with that too.

Totally.

But yeah, I think ... It's just interesting to see like where you are in your kind of like evolution. Not to say that there's like a straight line for everybody, but I think that that kind of plays into it too. Like because everything I probably do now, I didn't at one point.

Awesome.

We've seen in, at least in our market in Western Canada that drinking at events and drinking in general has gone way down in the last 10 years. I look at consumption bills or budgets for alcohol from 10 years ago compared to what the same companies are spending now and it's a huge decrease.

People are drinking a lot less, they are a lot more health conscious, they are a lot more social conscious and I think that is a good thing. And I think kind of on the topic of industry conferences, you got to keep your shit together and there's the opinion that people have of you is being formed not only at the conference but after the conference as well.

So I know I have a few opinions of people that were set by the behavior at one in the morning and I thought, "Jesus Lord, you've got to pull it together."

Totally. Is there anything else you guys want to talk ...? Go ahead.

Yeah, so-

I just feel like this is its own topic, so I'm like super excited for this one.

I think there's a lot of ... Like there's just a lot of social pressure and I think that like there is ... I think more people would be, like even if you're early in your career and you're like, I just want to fit in and not kind of rock the boat or whatever, I think more people at a senior level would be impressed by your ability to say what you're comfortable with.

I'm not saying that there's like a right and wrong and you're doing wrong by drinking more. I'm just saying that if you feel like that's not the path, but you also want to do the social thing in order to network because I think that's where a lot of it comes and then all of a sudden it's like peer pressure and then all of a sudden everyone's doing the same thing, and it's just this wave.

I think that there is a fair enough percentage of people that are probably are drinking to excess more than they need to simply because it's like a domino effect. I don't know. I find that if you're trying to make an impression on people, it's probably easier to make an impression by sticking to your guns and being cool with the fact that you are who you are than it would be for you to just kind of like, again, just roll with everybody else because while it might be fun in the moment, you're certainly not going to be memorable or it's not going to make someone be like, "I really want to work with that person or connect with that person because they did exactly what I told them to." That's not really how it is.

Sometimes we celebrate the ... I know that we celebrate those that can go all night and can show up the next day. And it's kind of a funny thing to celebrate. It's like, "How late did you stay up last night?"

The ones that I kind of celebrate are I do that because they're like in their 60s or whatever-

The ones that I kind of celebrate, I do that because they're in their 60s or whatever. I'm like that's...

That's fair.

Yeah. That's just an endurance test that also disproves a lot of, "Well when I was younger I could do that," and it's like no, I don't think it has anything to do with that. I think of every time, especially when I'm in Vegas, my hero is always Kate [Patay 00:46:21].

She'll be at an event. She'll get there early. She'll see everybody as they come in. She'll say hi, she'll hug people or whatever. Then all of a sudden an hour into it, I'll look around my left shoulder and she's gone. She just left. Complete ghost. I'm like, "Huh."

So true.

And the next morning, there is no one who is more put together, on, happy, into it, energetic than her. It almost hurts your eyes. You're like, "What's that sparkly...?" Oh, she went to bed three hours before you did. It's like, oh yeah, she's really using her time when there's business to be done and it's not like that three hours it takes for me to become a human being again.

I think when I'm on the road with events too as an attendee, really try to make sure that I'm eating breakfast and things like that, and kind of get to do my normal routine when I'm on the road attending events too. Because I feel like when I get to do the full routine, I'm not rushing out the door to get to the first session and things like that, I end up having a much more organized day.

Yeah, that beginning of a day for conferences is really like... Just like I think Dawson said, there's going in with the good intentions and then the day kind of lets you... It does what the day does. I have a few sessions that I'll highlight that these are my musts, and I'll still pick a session that I want to go to every single opportunity, but I probably am at 30% now of actual follow through because the rest of the time I just decide I'm just going to hang out or do this or whatever.

Even at WEC, I found this perch in Toronto, which was amazing. I didn't plan on it, but I found this perfect spot where I could look down on everybody walking past, and then they couldn't see me. I'm like, this just too good not to take advantage of. And then Dustin walks by-

That's where I found you.

Yeah, yeah. I yelled. I'm like, "Hey!" You had your badge off and you were cape up and all that. Not literally wearing a cape but you were ready to disappear for good and I'm like, "I'm going to yell and see if I can get your attention" because this is so awesome to be able to see if I can have conversations with people away from everybody else but also get to choose my targets. It was the perfect vulture move.

You were like a conference sniper.

Yeah, exactly.

I definitely have a confession to make too. I think this might be the first time I ever make this on air for most people to know but most people think I'm super extroverted. I think you guys would all agree that I'm probably really, really extrovert. I'm super high energy, I'm super excited all the time to see people.

But when I go to industry events, unless I know someone, I usually latch onto people. I'll be like, "We're going to hang out all day. Don't leave me, dear God." People find that so funny because for example, the best scenario I have of this is last year's Arizona events industry, Kelsey Rouch

was taking me and giving me the tour and I'm past president of the ILA chapter so I didn't know much of what was going on.

She gave me a tour, showing me everything but I kind of look up and I go, "Hey, what's that up there?" She's like, "Oh, it's this balcony thing." I was like, "Oh, can you stand up there and get up there?" She's like, "Yeah, but we couldn't use it as an event..." "No, no, no. I want to go up there so I can escape from everybody."

She was so shocked. She was like, "What do you mean? You're so extroverted. Aren't you so excited to see everybody?" I'm like, "No, I want to just kind of hide." Like, Nick, you said, "Pick the conversations as I see fit and so I tend to find that I am not extroverted when I come to industry events."

That's an interesting conversation to have just as far as those words in the binary. There's never been a better example for me to show people that binary thinking is not real than the idea of introverts and extroverts. Very few people can't overcome the tendencies on one side or the other and most people are not only in a spectrum but also completely different when it depends on a different set of circumstances.

I'm an extrovert, I'm an introvert, I always roll my eyes because I'm like, "No, you're not. You're more complicated than that."

So true, so true. Anything else you guys want to add as far as personal attendee strategies?

I have one.

You go first.

You want to go?

No, you go for it and then you throw it to me.

You guys are way too nice. I came into episode 10 where you guys were like, "No. I'm going to go right now."

He's Canadian, he's like, "Oh no, sorry. Sorry, you go."

Sorry, sorry.

Thanks, Dustin.

Mandatory Canadian jab.

I have to do one.

We're playing the drinking game.

Careful, be careful.

Never careful.

As a female, I would say my hair. I actually get my hair professionally styled day one or day zero of the conference and I'll wear it different every single day. If you actually look through my past conference photos, day one is curls, day two is waves, and then day three or four, it's half up half down or in a ponytail and brushed out for beachy waves.

I think that helps a lot and I just throw in some dry shampoo if I need to and that helps me with that extra because I feel like you boys don't understand. Girls, we're expected to put makeup on and to be on point with our outfits and things like that. Wearing heels, make sure they're really comfy.

Fun fact, I own over 500 pairs and I will choose. I actually have conference shoes. There's certain heels and that's actually a strategy of mine is I like being put together and wearing some big stand out pieces and it's a great conversation starter.

When you are networking, one thing I always do is find a connection, something that I have in common with someone else but sometimes that's hard until you really get to talk to them so what I do is I wear just outrageous outfits. I'm a designer, right? It's business attire, so you have to wear a pencil skirt or a suit.

Okay, well then I'm going to wear neon yellow heels and the coolest printed pencil skirt that I can't breathe in and that's going to be the case then and that's a way to stand out. But I would say females, that's something I do all the time and I'm going to be doing at IMAX is just get my hair done and then every single day, just change it up in regards to how I style it so it's not shower, blow dry your hair, straighten it or curl it every single...

It helps you save that extra hour to sleep because you're out so late the night before.

Conference producers sometimes really screw up, in my opinion, because I've seen the actual pain of not giving enough buffer time between the last session and then the networking event. I've seen women, "Well, I'm just going to have to skip out on the last session," or they're stressed out or whatever. You should protect that time because there's a significant enough amount of people that spend that time, to not put that undo stress on people would be a good thing.

I think that goes for everybody, that's not just... Every attendee should have a minute to collect themselves, a minute to drop their shit and get ready for the next thing and I think they schedule things way, way too tight.

I did want to mention kind of as a last thought on this topic, the four of us have been attending conferences and participating for a long time and I don't want anybody that's listening to this that is maybe new or younger to the industry that's just getting started to be put off by this and if you're looking to build your network and you are looking to put some energy towards it, know that come prepared, bring energy, show up, show up to everything, put yourself out there and I know that the four of us love meeting new people that are interesting, that have something interesting to share.

So, don't shy away and don't be a wallflower and put yourself out there and you'll be amazed at the incredible people you can meet.

Holy crap, Dustin. That was amazing. I didn't even think about that. Yeah, there's people out there who are still trying to build their networks and we're so jaded in so many ways that we're just like, "Pick and choose. We need more white space, we want time to work." Things like that and someone's like, "I would die to have the conversations that you guys get to have", right?

Yeah. There's lots of people in the events industry and very, very, very few of them actually attend conferences or any types of events that are national or larger or even really... There's such a minority of people who attend regional association events. If you think of the grand scheme of things of the volume of people who participate in live events.

We have it admittedly good, right? We get to do our thing, we get to be inspired and talk to the best people in the world at this kind of stuff and a lot of people are just doing their job and their head's down and that's what they have to do.

You're right, we're talking about these optimal, optimal situations. That all said, I do believe that a lot of this stuff is a journey and we're at different points than we used to be and I think a lot of us did this differently when we came into it as far as experiencing event industry shows.

I think it's just an ebb and a flow. I know people who are 20 years my elder in the events industry as far as how much time that they spend in the industry and they approach shows completely different than I do too. I just think that there's this kind of journey that people go on that again, there's a lot stacked against you if you continue to keep going to these shows to not go to the way that you used to.

Mostly, if you do your job right, you know enough people that you're spending time with the people that you want to spend time with the most. But that foundation doesn't come automatically. You have to put the work in.

Yeah. I actually used to be a student and a young professional in the industry. I was a student member of MPI, [ILEA 00:56:43] and Las Vegas/Southern California chapters and I would pay my own money to go and attend these. It's intimidating, you guys.

I will say even to this day, there are some moments where I'm like, "I'm shy," and that's usually not a characteristic of mine. Especially when you think of it as a young professional or a student getting out of college, they think there's nothing that I can benefit to these people. I don't have a job yet, I'm looking for that.

Bring business cards. Even if you're a student. That was one thing that I learned at TSO. I think the one thing that we love about our industry is we're all so passionate and if someone doesn't know anyone or this is my first time, I'm so happy to start introducing and finding out what they want or need. I love socially connecting people together.

I will find the smallest bits. "Oh my goodness, you like astrology? This person likes astrology. Here you go, you guys talk. I actually have to go back in my room now." Will step away and it's so important to be involved, especially when you are in the beginning of your career because you really want to grow that network. So, Dustin, I'm really glad that you mentioned that.

Because when I speak, especially to young professionals, that's the future of our industry. If anything, I actually love talking to the younger generation because I'm always like, "What's the latest social media platform that you're using? What apps are you using? How do you feel about this conference?" Because it all just matters and it helps me design when I go back. There's value there no matter how old you are. Just know that.

Preach.

Working with conferences in different industries, I believe our industry is one of the most generous when it comes to senior people with their time at conferences. It is extremely rare, I can count it on one hand, the amount of times I've seen people push off someone else because their social standing was lesser than theirs as far as industry standing or experience or whatever, that they say, "Shoo shoo."

In almost 20 years of going to shows, I've seen it just a handful of times and mostly from the same people. The common story I see is when people have the guts to go up to somebody at the "highest" quote unquote level in the industry and ask them for something or have a conversation with them, not from a position of hard sales but a position of mentorship or in a position of reaching out an olive branch, it's very, very easy to connect with the people that you think are the hardest.

I'm going to tell you when I experienced this in pharma and medical and legal and other industries, it's not the case. You just don't do that and they don't care. People care in our industry and they want to see success, I think more so than a lot of other industries and I think

that because there's kind of a shared hardship sort of, I guess, that's kind of understood at least throughout most of the events industry, I think people are on the same team.

Well said, Nick. I agree completely

Yeah, completely.

We all came to an agreement in the end. I feel like that's a good signing of the close for us, yeah?

I mean, unless you want to get into which conferences have better education than others.

Dang!

Let's not, because there's a very high possibility of me being too honest there. Maybe another time.

Episode 22. Definitely I think we'll have to switch [up a brew 01:00:35] for that one, for sure.

Yeah.

I love it, I love it. All right, let's start to wrap up. Anything else last minute you guys want to plug or anything like that, you guys want to recommend to check out? Or should I take it home?

I think that if you have the opportunity and you know somebody who has been to a number of conferences, reach out to them and ask them what their take is on a bunch of different shows. If you have the ability to go to one or whatever. Say, "What's the feel of the show? This is the kind of things I'm trying to accomplish with my career right now. How would I go about that? What would be the best show to go to?"

That kind of information is probably within arm's length most of the time. If you don't know somebody, you know somebody who knows somebody and again, most people don't go to all the shows and that's kind of crazy. Trust me, it is crazy. Instead, ask someone who has been to a lot of different events within our industry to say what's their take.

I like it. Maybe if we all just go around with maybe our one final tip that we all give as an attendee to events industry conferences. I'll start with mine since I'm on my high horse about this whole concept of coworking spaces. Design some coworking spaces for all of us who work remotely that need to step away and get some things done so we don't feel overwhelmed, so we don't feel the need to go to a coffee shop, stay in our hotels, go to an office. Give us fast internet, outlets, and a quiet place we can make phone calls.

I would say mindset. When I give advice, especially to young professionals and they're saying, "I want to work with you and how do I do that?" Or people that come up and just give their stats. It's being just a morally sound person. That's who I want to engage with, that's who I want to work with. If you focus on your character as just being a human, to me, that's so regardless of how many awards you've won or your stats.

If anything, the people that have won those things, they don't brag about it. So, if you just come in with a good heart, good energy, that's felt. Your non-verbal communication, that's what attracts me for me to go up to someone and say, "Hey," and just be nice. If I do see someone that's in the corner and I have no idea who they are, I'll approach them.

I'm definitely that person like when you were younger at the cafeteria, I'm like, "Oh, come eat with me." Because we've all been there too, right? We've all been the one that's like, "I know no one in this room and I'm terrified and I don't know." I always remember the people that will then put me underneath their wing and say, "Hey, let me introduce you to some people that I know."

Kevin actually, as much as I rag on him, he's incredible at doing that. It just leaves a really positive, memorable experience and that's where those connections happen. So, really just bring your energy and just bring that positivity. That really shines through at any event, conference that you go to.

Dustin.

I think maybe my last thought and we kind of grazed over this but to those that are producing the conferences that we attend, you need to feed us well and you need to feed us healthy food. I find that I work best when I am feeling energetic and well fed and yeah. Yeah. Feed good food. No garbage food.

I like it. Nick, I came up with the idea for the last tip when you were kind of laying out some knowledge. Did you have one more tip that you wanted to lay out or do you consider that your one tip?

No, I mean, I think what Thuy said is super important and I think what Dustin said is what sustains that. Have that energy go in. I think honestly people make their own luck by putting themselves with the right attitude in the right rooms. These are the right rooms. If you have the right attitude and you can sustain that energy, be it good food, be it waking up early, watching what you do while you're there, I think that you're going to have the luck that you need to get to the next level.

It's really just about energy, sustaining it and making sure that the time that you spend there is aimed at advancing other people and not just looking to find a way to cram your message down. How can you add value in every conversation that you have?

I love that. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Well guys, I think that wraps up our first full episode of Event Brew, talking about an actual topic, not just ourselves even though I'm sure we love to talk about ourselves all day long. You guys are absolutely awesome. Let me take everybody home and obviously stay tuned for some more topics. I think we uncovered three or four more topic ideas just in this one topic which is fantastic.

But thank you guys so much for joining for this awesome conversation about our personal events industry conference attendee strategies. For everyone who is listening, thank you to you guys. Make sure that if you want to continue listening to Event Brew, you head to eventbrew.com to subscribe.

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