

Welcome to the Event Tech podcast, where we explore the ever evolving world of Event Technology every week. This show is brought to you by Endless Events. The event AV company that doesn't suck. Now let's talk tech.

Will:

Hey everyone, this is Will Curran from Endless Events. Welcome back into the Event Tech podcast where we are broadcasting live recording live. Recording live, I should say.

Brandt:

Recording.

Will:

From IMEX America 2019. Sitting across from me is the clammy BrandtKruger.

Brandt:

Oh. And he is the practical Will Curran.

Will:

I'm so practical.

Brandt:

Yeah. I am a little clammy. It's Vegas, it's hot. And then the air conditioning is turned up to negative 20. So as a result, it's this weird like I'm hot, but I'm cold kind of thing going on that you get. You get that in Vegas and you get that a lot in Southern venues as well where like it's like-

Will:

And Phoenix.

Brandt:

... 1000 degrees outside. Yeah, probably I bet you get that a lot in Phoenix.

Will:

It's freezing on the inside because the rest of it is so hot everywhere else.

Brandt:

Well, so we're here, it's another IMEX. We've done a couple IMEXs now together, you and I.

Will:

Yeah, four years.

Brandt:

IMEX America. Yeah. Four years. It's hard to believe that it's only been four years since we bonded over ham biscuits at Yardbird way back in the day. That's a story that if you'd like us to

tell, we're happy to do so over a beer. So next time you see Will or I, just pull us aside and buy us a beer, and we'll tell you the story of how we bonded over ham biscuits at Yardbird because it is actually more to it than that. And it does involve Event Technology.

Will:

It does. It definitely does.

Brandt:

So we can go over that one. But that's not what we're here to talk about today. We're not here to talk about ham biscuits, sadly. And we should probably pour one out for the ham biscuits so they don't have them at Yardbird anymore.

Will:

Oh, so sad.

Brandt:

It's so sad. So sad. But so today we wanted to talk a little bit. So it's IMEX America. We've been broadcasting Event icons live for the last two days. We've got one more day of that to go. Always a great experience. We love working with IMEX, and getting to meet all the people. I say it every year, but it's true every year. Every year I meet more people in this industry and every year most of them are here.

Will:

Oh, absolutely.

Brandt:

So it's absolutely a can't miss show for me. And I just love getting to see everybody and reconnect and network and meet new people, and for me see new Event Tech.

Will:

Ooh, I like it. Yeah. So I think definitely all about sharing all the technologies and all the things that we've seen because as you've kind of talked about, over the years it's expanded and grown so much from being a little tech center.

Brandt:

Yeah.

Will:

Now it's a quarter. It feels like quarter of the trade.

Brandt:

I don't know about a quarter, but it's definitely gotten bigger. I mean when we first started, it was kind of the little corner, the far back corner. It is still the far back corner, but now they've got the

food service and stuff back there too, so it doesn't feel quite so... You're actually kind of on the way to the food, so it's not so bad. And yeah, it's blown my mind how every year there's more and more and more vendors when it comes to the technology side for events. Specifically, we see a lot of the mobile events, the mobile event apps that are out there. What was interesting to me is the number of new people getting into the space. It's already such a crowded space, whether it's the event management programs, or registration software, mobile apps, all of those things. I mean, there's already hundreds of companies in this space. And yet, here's another new one, and here's another new one. It's so funny to me that there's still enough people that think that there's enough room in this crowded market, that they can find their niche.

Will:

Absolutely. And I think interestingly enough too, it shows the testament of the show too that like they have heard the power of IMEX and that people are ready to buy and this is a place to buy stuff from. And I love it because this is definitely becoming the one stop shop. If you have a big major event that you need to do in one year, you can get it all done right now.

Brandt:

It is. There is a lot of business at this show. There's a lot of business that gets done at this show, both on the venue side, as far as all of the destinations and all that kind stuff, but also on the tech side that I hear that every year. And I don't think they're just blowing smoke. I say, "So how has been?" And it's usually it's like, "Oh great, great. We got so many appointments. We had 200 appointments. We had 300. I had seven people here and I could have used two more." I heard that literally this morning.

Will:

I heard this year from a vendor that is actually a very prominent one, said that they had something like... The number of points they had day one was equal to the total number of points they did all across all three days this time.

Brandt:

Wow. Okay. So that's an impressive metric right there as far as the amount of things getting done. So let's kind of take a little walk down some of the stuff that we saw. What was fascinating-

Will:

Brandt primarily.

Brandt:

Will was a little busy.

Will:

Will has been filming content like crazy. So I'm ready to talk a lot about sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and a bunch of different awesome topics. I actually haven't made it onto the show

floor formally yet. After we record this which is probably a little late. But there is a lot of stuff talking to technology vendors that I was able to glean from. But you got to see it all firsthand, which I'm excited to hear about this and react to it.

Brandt:

I did. So before we get there, there were a couple of tasty things that I found on the floor. But I think it's worth talking about the fact that there weren't many. So despite the fact that the show is bigger, the floor is better, the footprint of the tech area is larger, there's more people, there's new products being brought to the market. Despite all of that, and the positivity coming from the vendors regarding the appointments and things like that, I didn't see a ton of innovation. There was a lot of like the more iterative stuff of like, how do we make our product a little bit better in this area, or a little bit better in that area. Surprisingly, there was not a lot of talk about AI, at least in the folks that I talked to. They weren't emphasizing that like they have been the last year or so where like that was just like every single product had to mention the fact that it was somehow using AI to the point where it kind of lost a lot of its meaning.

Brandt:

We've had conversations on this show and others about the difference between AI and machine learning and okay, it's not really AI, you're just kind of having teach itself the basics. And if this, then that kind of stuff is not AI. So what was interesting to me is that there seem to be kind of a re-upped commitment to service, which is something that I've always thought was a really important part of Event Tech that sometimes was not being handled properly. When I was doing more of the consulting stuff, a few years ago working with Event Tech companies, I was surprised at how often people were wanting to start a service or start a new tech product and then they just wanted to like step away and let the money roll in.

Brandt:

Even the ones, there are some names that will go unnamed, that were the giants of mobile apps just a couple of years ago with 40 by 40 booths, with trusts and LED and wiggly lights and people in gorilla costumes and all that kind of stuff running around, and they are gone.

Will:

Or not even here.

Brandt:

Like gone, gone.

Will:

Oh wow.

Brandt:

Yeah. Like, actually I believe the company has dissolved. Even the one that I'm thinking of. What was interesting to me is... Or I think they might've gotten absorbed by somebody else, one

of the larger juggernauts. They had all the money in the world, they had all the things. I always go back to the first time I met them, I met their brand new head of sales, and their brand new head of marketing, and within 30 seconds I discovered they knew nothing about Events.

Brandt:

So it's like, I'm sure you're a really good marketer, and I'm sure you're a really good salesperson, but you know nothing about Events. And so what was really heartening, for lack of a better word, to me this year, is to see how many of the tech companies were kind of doubling down on service and really talking about we've tried to make our site easier to navigate, we've tried to make it easier for planners to just get rolling with an event. So you want to get a registration page going, great, we can be up and running in three minutes. Answer these few basic questions. But then if you want to go in and hit all the check boxes and all the fields and all the customization beyond that, that was like just under the covers, right? So you could very easily get... You look tired.

Brandt:

You're like, "Wow, wow. That's wow," It is a marathon, not a sprint folks. If you're coming to one of these shows, bring your walking shoes and hydrate.

Will:

You definitely. That's why I'm drinking a chai latte right now.

Brandt:

Right, right, right. I'll try it. I'll try and keep my voice as soothing as possible.

Will:

Oh God. You're going to put me to sleep. Will's going to bust out his NPR voice.

Brandt:

Yeah. We'll start doing like some AMSR stuff, is that right?

Will:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brandt:

So anyway, I was really happy to see that. I met like some brand new sales people.

Will:

Will, real quick, on that point, it's really interesting. I think you almost hinted at this too, is that back in the day technology companies hired you to be their service arm, to come down and set it up. But now a lot of it's like... Or more like direct to consumer, right? It was like almost like the change from enterprise to consumer-tech related things, is that before you needed someone to

set it up, you needed a partner to do it and things like that, and implement. But now it's so easy, you can just get it done all on your own, right?

Brandt:

Yeah. It's funny that... Yeah, when I first kind of went out on my own, that was a good chunk of my business was actually being the onsite service arm for technology companies. And it's funny because now I'm kind of starting to de-emphasize that part of my business, and now everybody wants to do it. It was like, "Hey, where were you three years ago when I was trying to do..." So that's really funny to me. But again, I would still rather see that from a customer service experience that they're starting to do that more and pay attention to that because planners don't have time for this crap. Yeah, you want that customization, and you want that flexibility for when they want it, but not a moment earlier.

Will:

Yeah. Totally. You don't want to give them the ability to create custom web pages and things like, they'll look at it and be like, "Cool, can I have my web guy do this for me?"

Brandt:

Yeah. Can you do that for me?

Will:

Can you do for... Yeah, totally. Like what's that cost to look like? Are you seeing anything like at all when it comes to service too, less of like an onboarding fee, but are you seeing more like all a cart things like for example, "Oh, I want that. Oh, we'll do that for you real quick." Almost as like as if they were like an all a cart service element. I'm just curious.

Brandt:

I would say actually little less of that. Well, I'll preface this. I think the smarter companies, just like the smarter companies, the ones that are surviving, the ones that are lasting, were the ones that were more service oriented. I'm seeing some of the ones, the companies that I think are smarter, are moving away from modules. I heard that from a few different vendors of like, yeah, we're reworking our pricing so that it's not going to be so much for this much and so much for this.

Will:

For less of like the Event Mobi, like you can buy a little bit of everything, so like we're one full platform for you.

Brandt:

Exactly. And it's all turned on. It's turned on from the beginning. You don't have to use it, but it's there if you want it. I heard from at least one registration platform that was doing that where they're like, "Yeah, we've got all of these different modules." That's just part of the package. And to me, I can see the model. I can see the model for wanting to do, well, it's an add on. It's like

the upsell, right? It's like do you want the clear coat on your car. That kind of stuff. So I get that model, and there's certainly... Obviously it's a tried and true model. It's a model that's been around for a long time. But at the same time, it's easier for everyone involved to just... The price is the price.

Will:

Yeah, totally.

Brandt:

I've been in a situation where I was working for a technology provider for one of their major clients, and we were running into a situation where the client wanted to do something and it was like, "Oh, you don't have this module. You haven't paid for this module." And they had. So it's like one of those like, yeah, we're supposed to have like the deluxe wash, the ultimate package that's supposed to have everything in there.

Will:

And they got the quick wash.

Brandt:

And it was just a bit that didn't get flipped on the back end, and it was like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'll call them and I'll get it taken care of for you." And it was taken care of relatively quickly, but it's still that moment, that hesitation of like, "Hey, we paid for the ultimate package." And anytime you hit a speed bump in that, it's like a thing.

Will:

I have a random pro tip, and I don't think I'll ever remember this other than right now when we're talking about this all cart portion. I buy a lot of software that helps run my company, so I am constantly feel like I'm talking in lots of different software companies about pricing and new features that come out. A pro tip, I'm not sure if technology can, certainly happy to hear this. But one thing that you can always do, is if you're like a one step, you just need one feature of the next plan up and you don't really need like all the deluxe features. Just don't be afraid to hit up your customer service rep or the support thing and say like, "Hey, what can I do to just get this one feature turned on? I don't need a global one log in. I don't need 30 terabytes more of space and things. I just literally need this."

Will:

Like for example, it's very, very common that it seems like the HubSpot integration, and a lot of apps is the most premium version because the people who spend a little bit of money perhaps have money, so we're going to charge you a ton of money. And be like, "Look, I literally don't need any of the features. I just want to integrate with HubSpot." And just ask. Don't be afraid. And if they are doing all the cart or if you need that plan, pro tip.

Brandt:

And it's funny how often they are inflexible as well, or there's a mile between the basic package or even the free package. Actually the CRM integration that I used with my email, I'm on the free package, but their next step up is far more than I need and really expensive.

Will:

But you want one feature.

Brandt:

I've actually reached out to them a couple of times saying, "Look, I want to support you guys, but can you give me a middle package? Just something that's like 10 bucks a month as opposed to 100 bucks a month or free." Something in between 100 bucks a month and free. So yeah, we-

Will:

Can you do that just from a support standpoint versus like you don't need a feature, you're just like, I want to help keep you guys on.

Brandt:

Yeah. I believe in paying for software. That anytime you're doing something for free, you have to watch out for what the product is. Are they selling your data, are they doing that kind of thing. And that's a whole another discussion for a whole another day is... But the general advice is if you can't figure out how they're making the money, the product is you.

Will:

For sure.

Brandt:

And so just be really clear and, and... I'll hop on the horse and then hop off the high horse. But when we're talking about things like VPNs or cybersecurity or things like that, free is not the best option. That's not the way you want to go. You want to make sure you're paying for stuff. I think that does translate though to what we're talking about today, that people are willing to pay for service. They're willing to have to pay to have their hands held, they're willing to pay. Planners are busy. Planners don't have time to spend, many of them, there's also plenty of planners that their whole thing is they love doing it themselves and they love getting into the nitty gritty and they know they can save a little bit here by doing this themselves and a little bit here by doing that themselves. That's definitely a personality type. So I don't want to take anything away from that.

Brandt:

I think there's a lot of planners who are like, "Can you just make it go, and I'm willing to pay for it, and I'm willing to pay for someone to be there on site to support whatever if it's an engagement app or your mobile platform or registration." And so there's definitely... That all ties back into this idea that I think finally a lot of companies are starting to come around on that, and

realize that while there is a certain demographic who you can just throw the software out there, and they'll pay you for it and use it, and you can watch the money roll in, the vast majority of people who want to use a software of a service in our industry don't want you to forget the service part of the software as a service.

Will:

I love it. Listen up Event Tech companies. Listen up.

Brandt:

What. So that was the interesting trend number one, was kind of re-doubling down on customer service. Interesting trend number two, and I kind of alluded to this already, was a lack of giant, big flashy innovations. It was a new module that does this, or a new module does that. So expanding a lot of their existing capabilities and making their services or their products more broadly applicable to events or maybe being able to add in medical events, the things that are specific to medical events where you need to be able to sign a nondisclosure agreements, or have scientific papers or something along those lines. Seeing a lot of those things being added into more and more services and more and more platforms.

Brandt:

But I think that tells us something about what we're looking at for kind of for 2020 is between IMEX Frankfurt and IMEX America here, and some of the other shows like Connect that we've been to, we're starting to see a little bit of a less of the, wow, that's amazing new stuff, and more of this kind of iteration. And so I think as we're looking out and starting to look at trends for next year, everybody's starting to, "All right, it's the fall. The leaves are starting to turn. So start busting out your trends posts." So for the next two months we're going to get inundated. I didn't get it out last year. I might have to go back to my post of trans-posts. I just got busy in January.

Will:

We're just going to make you do it for us.

Brandt:

Yeah. I'm much better at the, here are the things that are not going to impact your world.

Will:

For sure.

Brandt:

Blockchain, not going to impact your world. All right. So I love that kind of stuff. I think that's saying something, right? I think as we look at the trends for 2020, I don't think we're going to see big and splashy, flashy, even phones. We just had the big iPhone announcement, and easily 75% of the reporting that I'm seeing in that are like, "Cool."

Will:

It's interesting. I think everyone's really excited. The thing I'm seeing in a lot of headlines when it comes to that. I mean this is kind of random and maybe I guess we probably won't do an episode just on the Apple event, but is that the price dropped too. And maybe that's also something to look at the industry potentially as a trend, to do a little bit futurism. Is that maybe the costs are... Everything's been going so high, maybe also in technology in general, maybe we'll see the industry eventually get that same way, and then there'll be a return back to no, "We don't want to pay \$20,000 for Event app."

Brandt:

Yeah. Well, I mean you look at... Yeah. I don't know that it's good for a whole episode, but we can dip into it real quick here because it is indicative of larger trends. Same thing with the Pixel phone, right? So the pixel phone also we're getting ready to have the pixel four come out. I'm sure that'll probably be in the thousand dollar range again, but if it doesn't, then great.

Will:

Sure.

Brandt:

I got the 3A, which was 90% as good as the 3 for half as much, over half as much. I think I actually got it on sale for like 299. Whereas when the 3 came out-

Will:

Your phone is exactly like mine, and I spent way more money.

Brandt:

Well it was like 8, 900 when it first came. Yeah. I think we're going to see kind of maybe the tic talk a little bit even more so than we have before where Apple was doing like the iPhone, and then the iPhone X and the iPhone, and then doing the kind of the on again off again stuff. I think that might speed up a little bit where it's like, "Here's the brand new iPhone." And then like six months later as opposed to a year later, "Here's the budget version." Or even the XR is already kind of the budget version of the new iPhone.

Will:

I wonder if we'll see similar stuff in the events industry really at tech two, is like you talked about being iterative too. Is that like throughout the year, or instead of waiting for these big gigantic releases, like event app five, we're seeing like, hey, we just push out this little bit. I've been noticing I think a little bit more with more software in general. Lots of fast push outs of little small updates. And I think that we're seeing that in the technology side. I mean, I can't agree more on the iterative side of things. I think that we're definitely getting there. And what's interesting too is, I mean that might be a general event trend as a whole is that I've been hearing that a lot in the conversations across everything, is that there's nothing like, "Whoa, Oh my gosh." I'll parallel this to another, might seem completely opposite topic is sustainability. Everyone wants to know, what's new in sustainability? And you got a chance.

Will:

I've been talking to so many people about sustainability, it's been amazing. Wow. I've learned so much. But the interesting thing is I keep going, "So what's new? What do people need to know of?" And they're like, "There's nothing new. We just need to act and do." And I think that's where we-

Brandt:

We know the things that we need to do, we just need to do it.

Will:

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. I think Event tech's maybe the same way too, is that like, "Hey, we're not trying to push ARVR now. Yeah, those are big things. Instead, we're trying to take the little small things and improve the experience."

Brandt:

I think we're seeing that on the show floor even. So I was kind of... Anybody who hasn't been to IMEX, it is a spectacle for the eyes. I mean it's this massive trade show floor with these incredible, beautiful booths, and a lot of creativity and a lot of variety. And so I was kind of keeping an eyeball on that side of the Event Tech as well, right? Because Event Tech is not just a mobile apps and things, it's LED walls. The number of booths that had clearly made the investment in like really sharp, really clean, really beautiful LED walls as opposed to either a projection or even to a certain extent like pamphlets and printed brochures. Just really trusting in the display technology to not only get people in the booth because it's pretty, but also to actually inform and educate.

Will:

I think a great example of this, we mentioned this when we recorded the event brew episode about IMEX, which is more just general IMEX, but it's funny, a technology portion got brought up, which is the Hilton booth. You ever seen that?

Brandt:

I was going to bring it up. You're talking about the waterfall.

Will:

Yeah. Yeah. So I'm going to try to describe it the best because I haven't seen it in person. So let's see how well. This is how well they did at doing this. It's a gigantic LED screen waterfall, basically in a booth it's like what? 50 feet tall, 20 feet wide, and it's four sides, and it's caught waterfall sound effects. And I've seen so... It's been on Instagram. I've seen everyone's been talking about it. And it's not anything crazy to do. And the idea that it's cool though is that it's all to promote, if I've got this right, water conservation and what they've been doing at Hilton. So it ties back into this larger CSR movement they're doing, and it's using their technology to

promote. It's not just, "Hey, bright lights to hurt your eyes." It's let's do this. And I think it's so cool.

Brandt:

One of the things that I love about it is... And why I was going to bring it up is because I'm always a fan of when we see people doing creative things with existing technology. So there was nothing about that that you just talked about that was new.

Will:

Yeah. It's just speakers and LEDs.

Brandt:

We've got LED wall, and instead of going like horizontal panorama, it's this kind of narrow and tall and foresighted and just water rushing a never ending animation of water rushing down. And then they had, yes, clearly some speakers mounted up in the top that was doing a very wishy white noisy waterfall type sound. I joke, I couldn't be anywhere near that thing because I would be going to the bathroom every 20 seconds because it's just like nonstop waterfall. And I was like, "Oh man, I got to go again."

Will:

Turns out they put a toilet right behind-

Brandt:

Right, right. Yeah, I think it was near the restroom. But it was a gorgeous use. You couldn't miss it. Like you said, it was an Instagrammable moment. Everybody was taking their picture of it. A gorgeous use and a creative use of existing technology as opposed to reinventing the wheel, as opposed to coming with something totally new and totally exciting.

Brandt:

The other interesting thing that I noticed on the show floor was... And this is kind of been a trend for a while, but for some reason it struck me on this show more than it has recently, is really a smooth mix of digital and physical reality. So a lot of like really pretty clearly wooden solid like trellises and things like that, greenery in the booth mixed in with digital technology, mixed in with LED screens.

Brandt:

And large things like tall things. Things that are designed to catch your eye obviously from across the show floor. So that kind of interesting mix of the physical and the digital is something that I always really like. And I feel like I saw a lot of like really well implemented versions of that at this show.

Will:

I like it. I like it. I'm a huge fan of that too. You know what I mean? I think that waterfall concept is so cool. And I saw people saying, best booth design of IMEX. So good for them.

Brandt:

So to get to, and I kind of teased at this at the beginning. I did see a few things on the floor that were new, but-

Will:

And I told you not to tell me about it. So this is going to be my honest to God reaction of all the things that Bryant saw.

Brandt:

I think you're going to like it. It's funny though because it's a couple more examples of creatively using existing technology. So creatively using existing technology in a way like, that's cool, why did nobody think of that until just now?

Will:

Cool.

Brandt:

One of them is, and yeah we'll just mention the folks by name because why not, give him a little credit. So community brands had a couple of things going on there. And for anybody that doesn't know community brands, they're like a global conglomerate of about 50 different partners all coming together for your mobile app needs and your registration needs and all that kind of stuff. And so they've got access to all of this fun technology that we've already talked about on this show, like facial recognition technology. They're partnering with Panels to do that kind of stuff. Go back and listen to that episode so you can hear me change my opinion on facial recognition technology.

Brandt:

So in addition to all of that, they've made convenient, pre-packaged AR, where you think of like the very fairly stereotypical AR, where you can point your phone at a poster or some pamphlet materials or things like that. But they've really made it like a turnkey thing that you can just add into your mobile app, where it's just like, okay, yeah. And so you can go to then to all of your vendors and say it's an upsell.

Brandt:

So in addition to our bad scanning technology, which you can rent for this amount and this technology, we can do a custom AR experience for your booth. And they're handling it soup to nuts. So it's just a pre-package thing of like, okay, great, what do you want it to do? You want it to be a video? You want the graphics to pop up? And then they'll supply the code and then because part of their group is supplying then the mobile app and all that kind of stuff, it's seamless. So super simple.

Brandt:

Again, this is not new technology, it's not crazy technology, but just making it turnkey, making an easy add, an easy sponsorship opportunity, an easy way to add a little bit of flair to your trade show booth. I thought that was a really cool thing.

Will:

That's awesome. I was going to say, with that too, I mean like when you used the turnkey, I didn't quite get it, but now you've explained it. In the past, I think for anyone who doesn't know how this worked is that you hired a company like Tyler and Donnie from BrightLine to say like, "Hey, I want this built." And they would custom build it. An actual app that did it or like integrated in a web thing. And it had to do all these things, and it had to be built from the ground up every single time. Maybe there's some people who have templates, but now they kind of turning into you literally... It's almost like you're just switching the feature on your-

Brandt:

And it's not going to be anything like... I mean they're producing multilevel giant cross-sections of cruise ships and things like that. That can be walked around in full AR and VR type stuff. So it's nowhere near that. But if you just want somebody to pick up their phone and pointed at a thing on your booth, and a video plays, or a person pops up and says, "Hey, let me show you the features." Those kinds of more simple turnkey AR experience.

Will:

I love it. I love it.

Brandt:

The other thing that they came up with was some of the hardware that was like, "Oh man, how did nobody think of this until now?" And this is the one I think you're going to like, that's what I was talking about last night that I wouldn't tell you about.

Brandt:

So you know how in like events frequently we've got drink tickets, like physical drink tickets and things like that?

Will:

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brandt:

Or the passport game, right? So you got to go to a bunch of different vendors within the Scotland booth. You've got to go to each of the hotels and get the little stamp on your passport. And then you bring your passport, and then you get a shot of whiskey or something like that. All very common experience. Or even like a bad scanning and stuff like that, right? So you go into your breakout room, and let me scan your badge, that kind of thing.

Brandt:

So what they've developed is it looks like a little stamp, like a rubber stamp, where you do a big rubber stamp on your thing. And so it's a little box, maybe two inches by two inches with a nubby handle on it that you can grab like a rubber stamp. What it does is it's actually conducting your capacitive finger touches, right? So your body electricity through that thing. And on the bottom of the stamp, are perfectly placed like five little metal nubs. And what that does... And then you actually are stamping the app. And so all it's doing... And like I said, this is actually... If anybody that knows anything about how cell phones work, it's a touch sensor, right? It's detecting your finger touches and that's the electricity in your body conducting. And it's like, "Oh, that's how it knows where you tapped on your phone." Well because of pinch to zoom and things like that, we know you can do two fingers.

Brandt:

Well most touchscreens are capable of actually doing five simultaneous touches. And so all this stamp is doing is putting five little perfect circles in exactly... And then the app just recognizes the pattern.

Will:

Oh wow.

Brandt:

So for drink tickets, you okay bring up your app. Great. And so when you go to "pay" for your thing, you literally... And it takes no brains. Just like funk, just like a stamp on your phone and it's that fast, just like a stamp. Great. One of your drink tickets has been used.

Will:

Wow. So wait, I have to really understand how this works because I'm trying to visualize it right now. So the bartender has a physical stamp-

Brandt:

I bring up my mobile app. I bring up my mobile app-

Will:

And he touches it just to the screen.

Brandt:

And just taps the mobile app with the stamp. And instantly it was like, "Yep, one of your tickets is used."

Will:

It's using NFC.

Brandt:

No, it's capacitive touch. It's literally as if you took your five fingers and tapped the phone in a pattern.

Will:

Wow. So they just figured out like, oh, hey, we'll pay it... But we forgot a way to manufacturer a dollar cost-

Brandt:

Oh yeah. Costs nothing.

Will:

And it literally is not proprietary in any sort of way.

Brandt:

Well I was kind of pushing him on that. I was like, "Is this something you guys developed?" And they were like, "Yeah, it's ours." So who knows. I'm sure it's probably one of those things that anybody want to, but they've already implemented it, and that's the big thing. So he showed me those three. The three things that I just talked about, right. So doing any kind of a ticket turn in. So when you register, right, you get your X number of drink tickets, and then when it comes time for the social occasion, whatever, you just... And it takes you zero training. Literally, you just take the stamper and go gong onto the app.

Will:

Wow. Yeah.

Brandt:

And it goes, okay, great, you used one of your tickets. And then once you hit, you're done, it's like you're done. It says you have used all of your tickets. So anytime you're using those kinds of tickety type solutions, anytime you're doing the passport game, so now same thing, right? You give each one of those vendors a stamp that has a different pattern on it. So it's the pattern of the five nubs that are on it.

Will:

So it's almost like braille. It's like recognizing braille, but other way.

Brandt:

It's literally the pattern of those five touches. It's hard to explain like verbally. I'm kind of making pictures in here in person with my fingers across to Will what I'm talking about. So all it is detecting that pattern of those five dots, as if you were touching your phone. And so you would go to each one of those passporthy booths, and instead of having a physical passport, it's all an app. And it's all trackable. Each one of those vendors is going to be able to know exactly which people stopped by each one of the things, and then you get the little passport stamp. And he

showed me. It's just like the game, like a little stamp comes up, the little... It's like, ooh, you stopped by that vendor, ooh, you stopped by that vendor.

Brandt:

And then the last one, and this one I think it's a stretch, a little bit. It was session tracking because then you have to require everyone to have their phone out, as opposed to just scanning a badge or using some kind of radio frequency or something like that. But it would work. And it would be a physical, I need to stop you and make sure that you've got the app and all that kind of stuff. So if you had maybe something that needed to be a little more secure, you could do that. So that's an example. Again, it's just something so dead simple. It's literally, there's no electronics in that thing. All it's doing is conducting the electricity in your fingers to those five little nubs that are in different patterns. And so pattern recognition is like the one thing computers do really, really well. So all it's doing is saying, okay, it's that pattern versus that pattern versus that pattern. Dead simple, amazing idea.

Will:

I love this. I have a lot of questions and thoughts of how this could be in play. I do agree that session tracking is kind of weird.

Brandt:

You'd have to have your phone out, and you would have to have stamp every single one of them.

Will:

Well, I think the benefit of it too is that you're getting that instant feedback of like the satisfaction of seeing the stamp. I think that's why stamps are so cool, it's like boom, is on there, is like all it's marked. And that's why drink is good because you can see how many you would have left. The bartender can see like, "Oh, this guy is a little crazy." For instance if he scans a badge, "Oh, these guys had three drinks." That might be kind of weird.

Brandt:

But also takes care of like any kind of weirdness of like, hey, the bar is saying that we did this much money in free drinks, and well how many tickets did we go through? I don't know. It was like a roll in a half of tickets. All of that kind of stuff. Now this way you're able to literally track, well, half of our attendees only used one of their five drink tickets.

Will:

Is there anybody else tried to digitize drink tickets?

Brandt:

First time I've seen it.

Will:

I think that's so smart because I mean I'm just thinking beyond that. I mean, not even just how cool the technology is, but digitizing it is that this is also very important, I think, also for safety. Because in theory, not only safety, but you can say like, "Yeah, oh my gosh, this person's had too much." It can't be given to other people too. So if you want to...

Brandt:

That's a fantastic point. Yeah. I'm not going to use my tickets here, you can have them.

Will:

Yeah, exactly. And that dude has like 17 drinks.

Brandt:

Yes.

Will:

But then also at the same time to, it also gives you budget control because what I... so we have this all happen all the time. Obviously our events are very small for like our local Ilya chapter, but we constantly debate about who actually they do like lunchtime events. People are like, "Oh yeah, we should have cocktails." Because some people like it's later afternoon, they want to be done.

Brandt:

Yeah, sure.

Will:

And for me, and we've talked about this on event brew now at this point about like attendees strategies with drinking and things like that for events. And I'm not a big fan. I don't drink as much as I probably did when I was in college. But I think that it introduces this really interesting thing that we constantly debate, well yeah, half the attendees had at least one drink. And I'm like, "I think I see one person drinking, two people drinking." Things like that. You would instantly know who is... Not like Brandt drank, but you can be, "Okay, look at this, our attendees are actually drinking the alcohol." Okay. This kind of attendees, we're trying to attract more attendees like that. So maybe we do have to keep the bar open or things like that. I think it draws a lot more data into that-

Brandt:

It's another data point. It's another data point. We talked a lot about data this week as well in some of our interviews. And every single data point is interesting in one way or another. And so yeah, that's another thing that you can track, another thing you keep in the back of your mind or like maybe three drink tickets isn't enough. Or maybe that's plenty.

Will:

And also you ever had it where there's been like an open bar drink tickets and then all of a sudden like all the tickets have been burned through, and then all a sudden you see the organizers handing out tickets.

Brandt:

Yep.

Will:

Imagine where you could do something where it's like-

Brandt:

You just push it.

Will:

You can just be like, you know what, actually we have a little bit... Where are we on our alcohol budget? Okay. We have a little bit left over, boom, everyone gets instant push notification. You don't have to shout.

Brandt:

It takes away one thing. And I just thought of this, and it takes away, some people like to be the big shot that hands out the drink tickets.

Will:

Oh yeah.

Brandt:

Give them to the CEO, give them to the CMO, whatever. And then they kind of like to be in the big shot, the people are, "Hey, I heard you can get me some more drink tickets." "Yeah, let me check my pocket." That kind of thing. There's always that kind of guy.

Will:

That's true. That's a good point. It kind of destroys a little bit of a social-

Brandt:

To give and take. It's a give and take. It's a give and take. So that was one. And the other one is I met the guys from Aircam. And Aircam is another one of those things that's like, really, how did nobody think of this before? I mean, you're kind of a camera guy, Will, you know how a lot of the cameras now have wifi capabilities.

Will:

Yup.

Brandt:

And so they've packaged together, so when you're buying, you're not buying the tech, you're buying a package. And so the package is a photographer for your event that's got a wifi enabled camera, it's like a Canon 5D or whatever.

Will:

I think we're a couple of years behind.

Brandt:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm not a camera guy. Whatever those really nice cameras-

Will:

Mark 17.

Brandt:

Sure, we'll go with that, the Mark 37. So you get a photographer, comes to your event, it's got the wifi camera, you're either doing a photo booth or just a wander wander, that kind of thing. And it instantly pushes that photo plus whatever like sponsor graphic or anything like that you want to put on it, pushes it to a webpage and you just go-

Will:

[crosstalk 00:38:03]

Brandt:

And so literally you go to the Air.cam, and it's location-based, right? So you say, "Yes, I give this website access to my location." And if you're within that geo-fence, it says find nearby events. And you click on find nearby events, and there's your photo. By the time he like sets his camera down, he was just kind of like a magic trick. He's like, "And now if you pull out your phone, you've already got that photo." I was like, "Oh wait." The handkerchief was in your pocket all along, that kind of thing.

Will:

I love it. I love it.

Brandt:

And so again, just dead simple. So you're able to go and look at the photo, and if there's multiple photos of you, you can go click, click, click, print, and then they have a printer there on site as well. So you're able to instantly download the photo and push it out on social media or something like that. And it's very, very frictionless. So super easy. Like he said, "So now pull out your phone and go to the web. There it is. Allow location. Check nearby, boom." And there's the photo of me taken 30 seconds earlier. You can click on it and go print and away it goes. And back to kind of what we started with, it's a package, right?

Brandt:

So you're not having to go get the photographer, you're not having to get the printer, the photo-

Will:

Convince technology.

Brandt:

Yeah, convince them. And he said that was a big part of it. Like they did a lot of beta testing in the LA area, they were struggling a little bit convincing photographers to use the technology. And so like we'll get our own photographers. We'll find good event photographers and bring them onto the network. So when somebody contacts us to use our technology, it's a package. And so it's back to that customer service thing of like, let's make it easy. So you get for one low price, you get your event photographer, you get the ability to print it out, you get the ability to push it out to social media, and people can just get their photos instantly basically.

Will:

That's so-

Brandt:

Simple.

Will:

... cool.

Brandt:

Easy. It's not rocket science stuff. And again, it's one of those like, well yeah, why had nobody thought of that before?

Will:

My mind is racing because it's like very similar that either using technology to disrupt a space that literally isn't moving very much. Photographers are complaining about, "Oh, everyone has a camera now. Everyone has cameras in their phones." And then you have like photo booths, which are also disrupting that. And I think there's a time and place for photos booths, but I'm not a fan of it being the primary way of having photos taken because honestly the best photos I remember years from now are one candid shots. Or like when someone's like, "Hey, Oh my God, let's get you guys together." Like I'm not going to awkwardly for every like... I'm just thinking. I'm thinking like very recently we just did the event icons dinner at IMEX this year, and we had a photographer and shout outs to LV photo for shooting photos of that. Literally, thank you. Thank you so much. It was so fantastic to be able to... I think photographise. Take pictures.

Brandt:

Photographic document.

Will:

Yes, our event. I think the interesting thing that I learned about... and I was thinking about it when we started, use of this is that, for that event, it had been so cool. I had to have Aircam there because I'm like now waiting for the photos.

Brandt:

So what's funny is Aircam was there, they accidentally walked into our event, and that's how I met them. And so I was like, "Hey guys, who are you with?" So I was like being Mr. bouncer guy because we were getting some folks accidentally coming in through the back way. And so I was standing by the door and they were just kind of wandered in, I'm like, "Hey guys, who are you with?" And then it's like, "Oh, we're sorry, we didn't know it was a private event." Then like later they came up and they're like, "Hey, we looked you up. You want to stop by our booth."

Will:

No way.

Brandt:

So it's totally funny that you said that because in a way they were there.

Will:

I have a feeling there'll be at our next event for sure. I'm thinking about how cool-

Brandt:

They were really cool about it and they were like really apologetic. I'm like, "It's okay."

Will:

Yeah. Well because I'm thinking about like me, like I was so busy bouncing between people. I wouldn't have had time to grab every person pulled in a photo booth and say, "Let's get a photo." But thank God we had a photographer there because he literally... He saw every single time I was with somebody, he was like, "Hey, group photo." Boom, done. I think that's so cool. And especially in this day and age where people want their photos now, that is solving that problem completely.

Brandt:

Yeah. Yeah. Well that's what I got. Like I said, there wasn't a whole lot of mind blowing stuff. I just loved those couple of instances of like, duh, technology. I love it when people do, and are able to take things that are off the shelf and do things creative with them.

Brandt:

I'm always promoting that because people are always like, "What's new? What's new?" Just don't worry about what's new, just get creative with the technology that already exists. So what did I miss out there folks? Let me know, hashtag Event Tech podcast and let us know, "Dude, you totally missed the coolest thing on the show floor. You idiot." It's simultaneously a really long

week and a really short week. We tried to get to as many things as I could. So if I forgot something really amazing that was here at IMEX America, please do let me know.

Will:

And let us know too, if there's something that you saw or you heard us talk about now that you want us to dive deeper into too. Please let us know. That feedback's always so fantastic. We've been loving getting all the emails, all the tweets, all the Instagram posts, definitely let us know and keep the feedback coming. I thought it was fantastic. This year, this is the first IMEX, in America, since we launched the podcast too.

Brandt:

Oh yeah.

Will:

And been getting a lot of people coming up and saying like, "Oh my gosh, yeah. Event Tech podcast". Like so happy, they're loving it. And everything like that. And everyone's now getting confused, now we're launching a third podcast. It's awesome. But getting a lot of really good feedback and that we really appreciate everyone always coming up and seeing us when they see us on a trade show floor. We love seeing you feedback.

Brandt:

Absolutely love it. That's been one of the things that I've really, truly enjoyed. Obviously I've had a passion for podcasts for a long time now, and so to have been on event icons for as long as we have, and now with the new shows, it's really a fantastic opportunity for people to focus in a little bit. So each one has a little bit different focus, has a little bit different things. So obviously we'd love it if you listen to all of them, but we totally get it. Everybody's time is busy. Again, it hasn't been really fun talking to folks and they're like, "Yeah, wow, you have like a face and a body." Not just this like disembodied voice going through the halls. You know who you are. And so that's been really fun as well. And meeting folks that... Podcasting is an intimate format. I know we're wrapping up, but I just wanted to opine on that for just a second.

Brandt:

It is amazing to me that it's such a fun format and it is in a weird sort of having people broadcast straight into your ears or all over your house as you're doing stuff like that. It makes you feel like you know them. And so it's definitely a much more personal thing than compared to like TV or something along those lines. There's something about especially audio podcasts that it's just an intimate thing.

Brandt:

So love it. Again, like you just said, Will, keep those comments coming. Keep stopping us on the trade show floor. Love it. Love meeting you guys. Always happy to do it. And if you do have any comments or criticism or things you want us to deep dive on, absolutely, please do let us go. Let us know. Let us go. Let us go. That's what we need to do because it's been a long week. So I

think that about sums it up. Thank you guys so much for joining us. We'll talk to you next time on the Event Tech podcast.

Thanks again for listening to the Event Tech podcast. Be sure to rate and review us on your favorite podcasting app. Also, be sure to head to Eventtechpodcast.com and leave us a comment about this week's episode. We'll see you next week on the Event Tech podcast.

Brandt:
Event Tech out.