

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.

Brandt:

Hello, everyone and welcome to another addition of the Event Tech podcast. He is Will Curran of Endless Events.

Will Curran:

And he is the conscious Brandt Kruger Event Technology consultant.

Brandt:

But only barely, only barely conscious today.

Will Curran:

Only barely conscious.

Brandt:

As I hopped up on cough medicine. It's been that kind of week. I think I've recorded more podcasts this week than at any other week in time, but I'm making it through. I've got my chloro septic spray. I've got my cough syrup. I've got my Dasani. We're all set here. It should be an interesting podcast with all the various drugs floating through my system.

Will Curran:

Well, I think it's going to be a really interesting podcast because I'm really excited for this topic that you came up with as well.

Brandt:

This one occurred to me over the course of the last month. We've literally had three or four mentions of AV in the news, like specifically in politics news. It kind of struck me. You know, there's a lot of power in our hands as AV professionals. We get handed content all the time from our clients. We have to make sure that the video plays at exactly the right moment. So, when we extrapolate that out to both large events, large scale events, corporate events, things like that, and then over to political events, there's a tremendous amount of pressure, even over and above the amount of pressure that we normally have on our events to do it exactly perfectly.

Brandt:

Over the course of the last few weeks, I've seen really high profile examples where something hasn't gone quite right, something broken, or something wasn't done properly in the AV world that made the headlines. So, I kind of want to take a moment in this episode and just talk about this intersection between politics and AV. Even though it's specific to politics what we're talking about today, it obviously extrapolates out to corporate events and other things where there's got

to be have it, got to have it right. That's kind of what I was thinking, so that's why we were talking about hot mics, teleprompters, and power. Just makes for a good sound.

Will Curran:

I love it. I love it. I thought it was a really good, yeah. It's a little bit click bait-y, but I think it's a good one. I want to make sure everyone knows too as you're listening to us too, we're going to definitely keep this super dual sided or apolitical, we're talking more so this is happening to be political events and just AV issues that happen. Obviously, they're televised. They're everywhere. They hit the news and they're such a big deal, because they're such high profile events that we just thought it was really interesting to talk about it, because yeah. This stuff probably happens. I bet everyone listening to the show right now is like, "Yeah, this has definitely happened to me at some point in my event," but it doesn't obviously make national news.

Brandt:

Right, right.

Will Curran:

So, I think that's where we thought it was just really interesting to talk about.

Brandt:

And that's kind of the difference, right? That's the difference between what happens on a small to medium sized corporate association event versus an actual televised political event because any time, you've got high end politics involved, you're going to have TV cameras there. You're going to have people snapping pictures and taking cellphone camera footage and all that kind of stuff. There's this extra level of documentation when somebody screws up on one of these events, so I kind of wanted to start off with teleprompters. So, the most recent teleprompter issue that came to pass was President Trump was delivering, I want to say it was the 4th of July presentation that he was talking to folks.

Brandt:

Let me just verify that. Yes, it was the 4th of July speech that he was giving here in the US. Was talking about the American Revolutionary War and took a lot of flack when in the process of doing that, talked about the fact that the army manned the air, rammed the ramparts, it took over the airports, it did everything it had to do. So, of course everyone immediately jumped on their favorite social media platform and talked about, "Airports. There weren't airports in 1775." The very public excuse then that was given was that the rain was causing issues with the teleprompter and it made it more difficult to see. It made it a harder to read it as the rain kind of filtered off of the Presidential, which I can kind of understand that, right?

Brandt:

Because as you're looking at a Presidential teleprompter ...

Will Curran:

Teleprompters aren't waterproof.

Brandt:

Exactly. Specifically, the quote on quote Presidential teleprompter is just two pieces of glass at an angle. As rain is coming down, you're definitely going to get drips and drabs of falling on those sheets of glass which is going to make it more difficult to read. Then, he also claimed at one point that it actually went out, that it was kind of hard to read already, and then it was cutting in and out. Now, we don't know if that's true. We don't know if that's not true, but to me what was interesting about it is how quickly that story came out, first of all, when somebody makes a mistake when they're speaking, but then how quickly it was blamed on the teleprompter, right? On the AV equipment, as far as, excuse me, as far as how that was the reason for it. That was the reason for the flub.

Brandt:

Now, regardless again of how you feel politically about this situation, I think it is worth talking about, this idea that when you're using a teleprompter to a certain extent, there's a flow there and I don't know if you'd agree with that, Will.

Will Curran:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brandt:

It's one of those things that I've done it a couple of times, and it's AA. It's not easy. It is something that takes practice. It's something that takes rehearsal. It's something that takes time, and so when I've talked about in my classes and things about when to use a teleprompter, I always try to emphasize the fact that you need extra rehearsal for someone who's never done it before. Now, at this point in time, obviously Mr. Trump has used a teleprompter quite a bit in his career. At this point in, so it's not necessarily a matter of rehearsal, but what comes with that is the words are just coming to you. Right, they're just flowing. It's very easy to get caught up in that. I always think about that Ron Burgundy scene where I'm Ron Burgundy.

Brandt:

Because somebody put a question mark at the end of a teleprompter script. While it's funny in that context and depending on your politics it's funny in the political context, it is however absolutely true. I think we need to give people a little bit more of the benefit of the doubt that if there is a mistake in a teleprompter and you're not necessarily going to notice it. You're not necessarily going to stop and try and correct yourself or something like that because the words just keep scrolling.

Brandt:

Now, a good teleprompter operator is going to stop if you stop, but then you start getting in to the weird kind of Michael Bay thing and for anybody that knows what I'm referring to there, that

was a famous teleprompter fail with Michael Bay doing a Samsung event. Just Google Michael Bay Samsung Curve, and you will find out about that one, where you start to get into this weird moment of where the operator is wondering, "Are you stopping? Are you going to go back? Are you going to go forward?" You can get into a weird loop that can cause, you're trying to skip forward and they're trying to skip back and that kind of thing.

Brandt:

So, that was kind of the point that I wanted to make on that. Will, I don't know if you have any more input on the teleprompter side of the world.

Will Curran:

Yeah. I mean, I think you bring up a really good point because we obviously have teleprompters at a lot of our events and you learn a lot about, yeah, what's a good teleprompter operator? How does it work? There's, can I use a symbiotic relationship between the teleprompter operator and the presenter.

Brandt:

Yeah, I think that's a perfect word.

Will Curran:

It very much so, that if you don't have the right flow or if it's not written the right way, like I've just seen it before. You have to do the rehearsals the right way. It has to be written the right way and it's difficult because I think everyone assumes that okay, with the teleprompter, yeah. I can just read right off it. No, you still have to know your speech. You still have to be rocking and rolling, and it's really there just as a guide to kind of remember okay, I'll go from this. I'll go from this. I think that a lot of times, I've seen it at events where executives for example, are coming to give the awards presentation, right?

Will Curran:

And they don't know everybody's names. They don't know every awards about, but then it becomes so reliant on the teleprompter that it becomes very, very, very obvious. I think that just goes to show if you are having a, there's a heavy amount of tele prompting needed. Maybe you need to find somebody who can memorize a speech and give it off the cuff, right? And can do it on their own, and I think that at any point, you're 100% reliant on technology, if for example, yeah, the teleprompter goes out, that's your single breaking point.

Will Curran:

We've talked about this like a million times on shows. I feel like we're definitely beating it with a dead horse at this point, but definitely I think there's a point where you can't have that single point of failure and if you don't know your speech and you can't do it without the teleprompter, at least to hobble by, give something, then maybe you shouldn't be doing it without the teleprompter at all, right?

Brandt:

I think if there is a criticism that that's where it lies is that the best people that are delivering speeches off of teleprompters have 90% of it memorized and that I think was such a fundamental mistake that it shows to me the more than likely this wasn't rehearsed enough for the President to make that kind of mistake. If there is a criticism there, that would be mine is that it feels like maybe there wasn't enough rehearsal time in there and that's what we can extrapolate out for our events is just making sure that you can't use the teleprompter as a crutch. It's a tool. It's not a crutch. So, it is designed to help-

Will Curran:

That's a good point.

Brandt:

... you move along. It's designed to help you be precise with your words, so it's not just a bunch of free flowing bullet points. There's plenty of speakers out there that are perfectly capable of delivering a fantastic, energizing speech based entirely on bullet points, but when you need to be precise with your words, which high end politicians generally have to do, they have to be precise with exactly the right numbers and exactly the right facts.

Brandt:

Otherwise, exactly what happens happens. You get lambasted. So, when you have to be precise, that's when you use a teleprompter because you have to get exactly the right numbers and exactly the right wording for what you're trying to present. If that's not the case, then maybe you shouldn't be using it. If it is the kind of thing where you can just do it from bullet points and wing it, then you don't need a teleprompter. So, why bother? Why force yourself into that situation where again, like you said, there's a single point of failure?

Will Curran:

Absolutely, and I think I may have two points of suggestion for how you can apply us to your events, because yeah, it's easy for us to be like, "Well, yeah. I don't have teleprompters. I don't have a President giving a presentation at my event, but what does this have to do with me?" My tactical advice I think I have for everybody too is that if you're using Presidential glass, an option for you is to also have the teleprompter go to the downstage monitor and if for example you're outdoors and it might rain or it might be really sunny and it's going to cause glare on the Presidential monitor, whatever it might be, have a back up option so then that way, you can have something else for them to look at so then that way, they can still follow along with their notes as well.

Will Curran:

It's super duper easy, right? Just add a TV, the downstage monitor and runs a teleprompter as well, so just an idea. The second thing that I have as far as advice goes as well is understanding, and we did a whole white board Wednesday video on understanding downstage monitors and switching and things like that come to it, but what happens a lot, and it literally just

happened to me on Wednesday when I did an event, it happens at least once in an event, a presenter will come up and say, "Okay, cool. I'd love to see my notes in the downstage monitor."

Will Curran:

And this is very similar to a teleprompter. I definitely will always say that I am worried whenever I hear that. For two reasons, A it is a little bit more complex. You usually need a second laptop so you can run that to the main stage or you need two outputs from a computer to be able to stage to one to go to the screen, but not even talking about complexity of AV, but also just from an event design and presentation standpoint, if you do not know your presentation enough to be able to rock it without stage notes, then I get worried that you're really going to lose audience really, really fast.

Will Curran:

You definitely need to practice more. So, whenever you hear a presenter say, "I need my downstage notes," push them and say, "Look, we're not doing downstage. We need you to practice more." I definitely would consider it a big warning flag for any presenter who says they need notes at their downstage monitor. I agree with timers. I agree with being able to see your own slides but I don't agree with seeing notes because you get so reliant on it and if at any moment, that your notes are wrong or the font's too big so that it halfway gets cut off or something like that, yikes. There can be major issues.

Brandt:

Couldn't agree more. It's one of those things that is absolutely a warning flag when it also happens all the time. At this point, it's like, yeah. Okay, yeah, we can do that. You do kind of feel like an enabler at that point. You feel like you're enabling them, the ability to not rehearse quite as much, to not have their speech down as much, but at some point in time, you kind of just got to say, "Yep, okay. Sure, we can make that happen." Then, not go push back too far.

Brandt:

The other thing that you brought up in addition to the DSM, the downstage monitors, another frequent option is because the Presidentials are usually off to the left and to the right, you kind of get someone who turns to the left, turns to the right, turns to the left, turns to the right. Sometimes, you want people to look right down the pipe, especially because that's where the camera usually is, is straight down the middle. So, especially if it's being filmed or being put up on IMEG, you want to make sure that you've got the ability for the person to be looking down the middle.

Brandt:

And so, frequently I'll see a large LCD monitor or something like that in the back of the room, just as to give them an extra place to look, one more place to look. Now, the downside of that is that anybody can turn around and see it, but is that really a downside? I mean, they're literally saying the words at the exact moment that it's scrolling by, so it's not like it's a big surprise or

anything like that. It's the kind of thing that may catch your eye and you go, "Oh, look. There's the speech," and then you turn forward and watch the person.

Brandt:

That's usually been the criticism that I've seen is, "Oh, we don't want people to see it?" Why not? It's exactly what the person is going to say. So, it really shouldn't be a problem. It's different if it's notes or something along those lines, but when you're using teleprompters, having that extra one to kind of fill the middle area, I think is always a good idea.

Will Curran:

Totally. Couldn't agree more.

Brandt:

One more thing that I wanted to touch on in teleprompter world is kind of along the same lines. One of the things that bothered me and I don't think it was a political thing or maybe it was, I don't know, but one of the things that bothered me about the previous administration is there was a lot of criticism coming from the media about President Obama using a teleprompter and it was just like, "Oh, he's so addicted to the teleprompter. He uses the teleprompter all the time. He's lost without the teleprompter," and it frustrated me from a standpoint of kind of as an AV person, right?

Brandt:

Honestly, teleprompters have been used since Linden Johnson administration. Once they discovered teleprompters and discovered how much better it made our Presidents look, I mean, if you go back and look at the footage of Kennedy even delivering speeches, he's constantly looking down at his notes. Depending on the state of the union-

Brandt:

Looking down at his notes, depending on State of the Union, you see the president's looking down all the time, and as soon as they realize the power of teleprompters, they immediately started using... now there's a reason that they call those glass panes, presidential teleprompters, right? Because literally every president has used it since then, every president probably will continue to use them, until we reach a point where they're tattooed on the inside of our eyeballs.

Will Curran:

That would be creepy.

Brandt:

So from an AV standpoint, it always kind of bothered me that people picked on Obama for that particular reason. Again, regardless of your politics, that's what everybody does, and the current president has as well. So president Trump is using a teleprompter basically all the time, and

when he They're going to be a little bit less measured, a little bit less precise, again, with their words, because they're off-script at that point.

Brandt:

So I guess, there's no real moral to that, it was just another interesting intersection to me, that that became a talking point, that an intersection of AV and politics that once again, our kind of industry made it into the headlines in a way that was derogatory, even, that, "Oh, he can't do it without a teleprompter, blah, blah, blah." It's like, "Okay, well you do it without a teleprompter", was always kind of my response.

Will Curran:

So true.

Brandt:

And obviously, nothing has changed in that department. All high level politicians, whenever they want their words to be precise, use teleprompters. If they want it to be a little more off the cuff and fun, then they don't. So again, no real moral to that, but I think other than the fact that that is how you can make your decisions for your own events, right, is this something that needs to happen, or is it because they think it looks cool? Is it something that's going to actually help make the speech better, or is it likely to be more trouble than it's worth? Just try and be realistic about that, and try and be open and honest about why you're using it, and whether or not it's going to actually go toward making the speech better.

Will Curran:

I agree, I agree. All right. You ready to go on to the next topic?

Brandt:

Bring it.

Will Curran:

All right, so the next one we wanted to talk about is hot mics, and the term of hot mic is obviously when the microphone is left on and it's hot. Anything, whenever it's turned on, we just call it hot in the AV world. And this is obviously extremely common, again, across not just political events but also every event, but we just thought it was really interesting about some high interest events, and where mics got left on.

Will Curran:

And obviously, when it comes to politics, a very, very famous one now with the Access Hollywood video, where the mic was left on and everything got recorded, right? And the mic was left on the entire time, and obviously this is straight up, always the AV person's fault, unless they were like, "Hey, I'm going to switch my pack on and off when I want to talk", but that most of the time, everyone... so again to AV nerdiness, A and V alert, AV nerd alert, there's a thing called power locking, and most people don't know this exists, but we get asked all the time when

presenters are going on stage, they say, "Hey, okay. Is this mic going to be on? How do I turn it on?" And the AV guy will say, "Don't worry, I power locked it so you can't even touch the power switch." Even though you switched the power and try to turn off, it never turns off, so it's always on.

Will Curran:

But then it's always the audio engineer, specifically the audio engineer's duty to mute and unmute the person when they go on stage. And as my audio engineers always say, they say, "I'm never going to put your mic on, unless you're on stage", right? And that's the go-to kind of practice, I see you walk on stage, I'll unmute you, I see you get off stage, I'm going to mute you.

Will Curran:

But there's obviously been some cases where microphones are staying on, especially really, really recently with the Democratic Debate.

Brandt:

Exactly. And just to reemphasize your point, I have seen my favorite, the best A1s that I know, the best audio people that I know and would trust my life with, I have seen them make this mistake. I mean, we're only human, it just happens, especially the more microphones that are in play.

Brandt:

And a perfect example of that came out in the first set of Democratic debates here in 2019, is they came back from a commercial, the previous moderators had gone off stage, a new set of moderators had come back in. Now, imagine though, the scenario for the audio people. I mean, even before this debate started, I was actually already feeling bad for the A1 of this, because you had 20 people onstage, it was either 10 or 20 on the very first... 10, so 10 and 10.

Will Curran:

10 and 10.

Brandt:

10 and 10. You're right. So it was a total of 20. 10 and 10, you've got 10 people on stage all arguing, all fighting, all "They're not letting me, excuse me, excuse me, can I just say something?" So the moderators are throwing questions to one of 10 people, and then people are jumping in all over it. I was not at all surprised when all of a sudden, in the first debate, they came back from commercial, like I said, the moderators had swapped out, and they go to start back into the debate, and all of a sudden, you can hear people off stage. You can hear people talking about, "Hey, where's my binder?" What were some of them, some of the other stuff that they said? It was, "Someone's got my"-

Will Curran:

"Someone's got my binder." They said, yeah. So, "Where's my binder? Someone's got my binder?", and the best one ever was the previous moderator said, "I need to go to the restroom."

Brandt:

Right, exactly. Right. So you've got all that happening, and then the current moderators are going, "What the heck is going on? Is this coming in from the audience?", and I can just, I can physically feel the anxiety, and I can see in my mind's eye, the audio engineer looking at the board, looking at what's muted, looking at what's not muted. You've got probably 14 channels at least, right? Not counting music or any of that kind of stuff. Just in straight up microphones, you've got at least 14 channels, trying to look, "Which one's on which one? Where's it coming from?", trying to find out which one it is, shaking their head, looking back and forth, and they eventually cut to commercial and sorted it out.

Brandt:

So this idea of hot mics is, again, is a human failing, right? But I think it's something that, it comes up again and again in politics, it comes up again and again in celebrity news, right, Where someone is on a movie set or something like that. I think anytime you've got a microphone on, you just have to assume the worst. It's like I tell my kids, and they don't know the full ramifications of this yet, but I've been driving it in early anyway, never take a picture that you wouldn't want mom or dad to see, because it's... and like I said, they don't know the full ramifications of that yet, but it's good advice, and it...

Will Curran:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brandt:

It's the same kind of thing that when you're on mic, you just have to assume that anyone can hear it at any moment in time, and that's why it's funny, usually the first time someone gets mic'd up with a loud mic, and almost always the first joke out of their mouth is, "Hey, if I run to the bathroom, just make sure they can't hear it", right? And so, this idea of power locking is fantastic, because then you're not dealing with someone accidentally shutting it off, and then going on stage and forgetting it's turned on, but you better darn well be ready with those mute buttons to make sure that if someone does go to the bathroom or something like that, it's not accidentally going into the main house feed or their backstage.

Brandt:

And like I said, I've been in situations with the best audio engineers in the world, accidentally making this mistake. So I think to a certain extent... I don't want to put blame or anything on anybody, but I think to a certain extent, if you've got a mic on, you need to be aware of whether or not you're coming through the house some somehow, but that might be difficult when you're backstage, you don't always-

Will Curran:

Yeah. I mean yeah, you definitely don't always... especially if you don't have a stage manager who can say like, "Hey, audio engineer, are they off? Okay, they're off? Yeah, you're off. You're good to go." Obviously, that's the perfect solution to fixing that issue, but I think one of the interesting things as well, is I think yes, it is important obviously, for speakers to always make that joke about the bathrooms because to be honest, it's also a really good chance for you to see if the audio engineer knows what he's doing, because if he's like, "Oh no, yeah. Oh, you'll turn it on and off."

Will Curran:

But I think it's important for planners to understand as well, is this idea of power locking and having these conversations with your audio engineers, so if it ever happens again, you can also go talk to your audio engineer and be like, "Does this guy know what he was doing, or what was going on?" But what's interestingly enough is that, think about the polar opposite of this as well, is that obviously that's an issue where the mic was on, but how many times have you ever seen where people get on stage and their mic is off, and then you see a stage manager, audio engineer run behind them and neglect to flip their pack on-

Brandt:

And that's why I prefer the power lock option. I mean, even though it's opening up a whole separate can of worms, I would rather send someone out and know that it's on, and trust the board op, than to trust the person to remember to turn it off and turn it on themselves.

Will Curran:

Totally. And there's some really cool technologies now too, on the audio side. My audio engineers knows this way better than I do, but they basically allow them to remotely monitor the pack too, so they can see how much batteries are left in that pack, is it on, obviously if it's on, you can see their signal coming in, but now you can see is it switched on? Is it just not getting a signal? How good is the signal? Yeah. How much battery is left in that pack, all those things.

Will Curran:

Because yeah, if someone gets on stage and it's not working, you do about 5,000 troubleshootings. You go, okay, did they switch it off? That's obviously the first thing. Okay, are the batteries dead? Okay, is it this? Is it this? Is it this? Is it this? Is it this, and all these things like that, and that's on top of just making sure, hey, do they even sound good on stage?

Brandt:

Exactly. So I think the moral of this particular area of the story is basically, always assume that your mic is hot. I think you and I would agree it's still better to trust the audio engineer, rather than trying to put that that onus on the speaker. Anything else you want to add on that?

Will Curran:

No, I think that's a really good one. I think it's just so funny that, yeah, literally this week we had that issue where we were trying to explain how power locking worked and everything like that,

and yeah, yeah. I mean, it's also really helpful too, when it's on, because I mean... a little known secret, I'm not sure if my audio engineers will hate that anyone ever knows this, but a lot of times too, like for example, if you need to, they can listen into the mic before they go on stage to make sure they're still sounding good, all of these things like that, right? Are they ready to go? Does their mic sound good right before they're going on stage, versus if the belt pack's off, and they just walk on stage and turn it on and all of a sudden, it sounds like crap they're like...

Brandt:

No, I think that's fair. I think that's a fair point to bring up, is I frequently look over and see the A1 just popping on the headphones and checking the mic, and, "Have you got them?", "Yep, I've got them", and that kind of thing, right when the A2 is hooking them up. So A2 is usually the person backstage, don't want to get in jargon jail. A2's usually the person backstage making sure that the mics have good batteries, and swapping out the microphone, the audio person. And so, once they're mic'd up, yeah, they'll just check in, just a little quick check in to make sure that they can still hear the signal and maybe hear a little noise, if they're just sitting in the house, that kind of thing.

Brandt:

Also, frequently, if we're getting some kind of interference, right? So where is that coming from? Just kind of, let's check in and see is that coming from one specific mic or is it just coming from something that's somewhere else in the system? So yeah, be aware of hot mics, definitely a cautionary tale for a lot of folks out there, that if you're wearing a mic, it's entirely possible you are still being recorded somewhere or being listened into. So just be aware of that as you move forward.

Brandt:

So the last one that I kind of wanted to bring up in this kind of intersection of AV and politics that has happened over the course of the last a month or so, is there's really the most recent as we're recording this, and that was a situation where the president, president Trump, was at a youth conference, and there's the whole sizzle reel going on before he comes out, which I don't remember that being a thing, having sizzle reels before a president comes out, but it's probably more of a fundraiser, so I'll give some latitude on that. And maybe other presidents have too, I don't know. Let us know, #eventtechpodcast, if you know if other presidents have had sizzle reels before they come out.

Brandt:

So there's the whole sizzle reel thing and then he comes out, and there's this giant LED wall behind the stage. Yeah, massive, tall.

Will Curran:

It was gigantic.

Brandt:

Also pretty, not very deep on the stage, which is a whole other discussion we could have about just the aesthetics of that particular event, because he came out, and it just made it look like this tiny silhouette coming out, that maybe you want to think about the design and the use of a giant, bright white LED wall behind somebody on camera. The camera shots also did not look very good, the still shots that I saw.

Brandt:

But where we're going with this, is as the president came out, there were two presidential seals, one kind of in the center screen, which was clearly where the video was being displayed, and then there were kind of these wing screens of LED, off to the sides, and on one of the wing screens, they had a presidential seal. But if you look at the video, and we're going to drop links to all of these various kerfuffles into the show notes so you can see them and judge them for yourselves. There's a great article on hot mics from the Event Leadership Institute, and my buddy Howard Givner on that one. We've got articles from the BBC on the teleprompter woes, and then this one that came from The Washington Post, was the first one to notice it, and I know there's a lot of controversy between the president and The Washington Post, but this is legit, this happened.

Brandt:

This is not fake news, this legit happened, and it took people a couple of days to actually notice after looking at the pictures and the videos, the presidential seal on the left was actually not the presidential seal. It was a joke presidential seal that someone else had made, that this guy had made for his kind of anti-Trump website. He's now since been interviewed in all kinds of articles, he was a former Republican and graphic designer and he talked to The Post about it, and that he absolutely loved the fact that this presidential seal that he designed is kind of a joke and a t-shirt, and that kind of thing.

Brandt:

They used this seal instead of the actual seal on the wings. And so, it looks very similar at a glance, but when you look at it, the eagle is holding golf clubs, and it has a wad of cash and in the other hand, and instead of "E pluribus unum", it that has something not so nice in Spanish,45 is a puppet.

Will Curran:

Yeah.

Brandt:

And-

Will Curran:

It says "45 is a puppet."

Brandt:

And so, regardless of your politics, I think this is objectively funny, that this accidentally happened to someone.

Will Curran:

Well apparently, so what happened is the graphic designer apparently made this for joke shirts and made shirts or something like that just for fun, yeah, back in the Bush days. And then yeah, what ended up happening is someone Googled it, shows the show the high resolution, the most high resolution version possible, and grabbed it on accident, and it happened to be this one.

Brandt:

For almost 80 seconds, so a solid minute and a half, this giant, fake seal of the president of the United States was on screen. There's lots of photos with the president standing in front of them, before someone was able to, "Oh, holy crap." I can't even imagine what the headset chatter was on that.

Will Curran:

Well, I wonder who spotted it. Who recognized it? Because there was someone who knows a lot about, probably history and no, was like... but for example, if you told me two different ones, I mean, you look at this one, you might think, "Yeah, it's legit", and then you're like, "Oh, wait."

Will Curran:

... two different ones. I mean, you look at this one, you might think, "Yeah, it's legit," and then you're like, "Oh wait, that's definitely not right."

Brandt:

Especially when you're seeing both of them at the same time. Because there was one, it was probably the last frame of the video or something like that, that was showing up or in a loop or something in behind with like the President Donald Trump thing flashing around over the top of it. And then this one was out on the left. So anybody that was literally looking at the stage could see these were different things and being able to compare them side by side. But if you weren't comparing them side by side, it would be much more difficult to notice. And so they've blamed it on a staffer.

Brandt:

But the point that I wanted to bring up is, I think this brings up an interesting set of morality. So they're saying it was a staffer. So it's somebody on the president's staff, gave this seal to someone on the AV crew. So what I kind of wanted to all pine on a little bit here was, all right, so you're on the graphics team, right? You've got a major client or perhaps the President of the United States about to go out and someone hands you something. Now it's entirely possible that the person running the graphics didn't look twice at this graphic and just ran with it. I honestly envision, the way that I could clearly see in my imagination how this went down is, "Hey, we've got this great video plan. What's on the side screen?" "Oh, boy. Hey, I know, let's put up the seal of the President." "Okay, great."

Brandt:

And you Google 'seal the President of the United States,' you grab the first one that's on there and you load it up and you put it on there. So I honestly think nobody noticed. But it raises an interesting discussion, Will. I'm curious to get your take on this. And this is kind of the culmination of what I wanted to talk about today, is we have a lot of power as AV people. We have the power to make people look good. We have the power to make people look bad. We have the power to display things on time. I had a whole kind of comedy routine set up about what my last day at the production company would look like based on what I could do to a presentation or what I could do involving swapping videos out on a playback on my last day, since it doesn't matter because you can't get fired on your last day.

Brandt:

And so I just wanted to take a moment to talk about this level of power and this level of responsibility that we actually have as audio visual professionals. I mean, the core answer is yes. Of if somebody on staff, from the client, hands you a graphic that you know to be wrong or a spoof or incorrect in some way, obviously, I think, you've got an obligation to say something about that. But in today's really charged political environment, someone's going to have to make a call on that. And do you just pretend you didn't notice and let it go through and then play the innocent? I think that would be really hard to justify and not a good idea, not a good use of our responsibility and the use of our power. And I'm sure you'd agree.

Will Curran:

Yeah, I definitely do agree. I mean, if you do notice something, like see something, say something. For sure. And I think not even talking about like egregious things like this, obviously very like... if it was purposely done, like politically motivated, whatever it may be. But sometimes also we sit in these positions a lot of times where, for example, I'm on site and someone who's not maybe direct client or something like that says like, "Hey, do this." And I'm like, "I don't think that's a good idea showing a graphic early," or something like that where I'm like, "Hey, I think it makes more sense to do it this way and run it smoother." At what point do you as the power of the AV company say like, "No, you shouldn't do it this way," and you disagree with your client or do you just do what they say that you need to do right? And just kind of play the person just doing it. Right?

Will Curran:

It's so tough for sure. But yeah, I mean obviously...

Brandt:

Honestly I find it really hard to believe that the person running the graphics... Because if you look at this thing for longer than one second, you realize it's not the actual seal. I mean, it's pretty quick.

Will Curran:

For sure.

Brandt:

It's clear that something's not quite right with it. And so I, yeah.

Will Curran:

Well, that's why I also want... Oh God. I was going to say that's also probably why you do rehearsals too. I'm curious, did the graphics person actually go through the graphics with the client? Because if, for example, obviously an aid got fired over this so the aid gave it to a person, and the question was like, okay, did the aid give it to him and it was it just a PowerPoint deck? Was it a video or was it just a JPEG? And that was the only thing. And they physically had to see it to load it in to make sure that it was good to go. And did the graphics team, were they even allowed to look at the content before it went up?

Will Curran:

There's a lot of places, but yeah, I mean you bring up a really, really good point. Yeah. If you did see this and you saw something, -

Brandt:

I would love to know, so if anybody has connections to this particular event, and we would absolutely keep your opinions and responses anonymous, I would really be curious to know about the ins and outs of how this went down. And especially, I'd love to know what the com chatter was at the moment that it was discovered and the, "Oh my God, Oh my God, get that off there, get that off there. We got to find the real... That's not the real seal. Get the real seal." Because that would've been unbelievable, much like the com chatter when things go wrong at the Olympics or something like that. I think it would be a pretty amazing.

Brandt:

So if anybody out there has any ins on this particular event and might be able to fill in a little bit more of the backstory. But I think it does raise an important point that we do have. Again, we have a responsibility. We have a responsibility, like you said, see something, say something. Even if it's just a spelling error, right? You see a spelling error, our job is to make you look good. And so if we're doing our job, we need to be able to be honest about something and say, "Yeah, you can absolutely do it that way."

Brandt:

So I usually give it the push once, see how it goes and go from there. Because if you push once back on something and if it's an immediate shutdown, then okay, we'll do it your way. If there's any kind of give, then you can kind of push again for a second time and then take it from there. And then if they say no again a second time, then you're out. But I think we do have an obligation. We are the AV professionals, right? We are the people that do this for a living and we've seen a thousand bad presentations. So why wouldn't our voice be worth listening to, to a certain extent. Now you can't make anybody do anything they don't want to do. And some

people are like, "Nope, that's the way I want to do it." And then at that point you go, "Okay," so we don't know. That could've been what happened here.

Will Curran:
All right.

Brandt:
So, I think, for me, that's kind of the overall takeaway of all of this stuff, is that there is a tremendous amount of responsibility, a tremendous amount of power, that we as AV professionals have. But we're also people, right? And so, when we look at some of the other things like hot mics and some of the other teleprompter issues or things like that, we're still people. And so, having understanding that and being able to roll with it, that's actually a really good point, Will, that I think that's worth bringing up. Is whenever something like this happens, and you and I have seen a 100 examples of the mic doesn't work or the presentation doesn't come up or something along those lines, because either a problem with the technology or because we're human and someone made a mistake.

Brandt:
When something like this happens, how you deal with it as a speaker says volumes about your professionalism and about your ability to roll with the punches and your ability to take command of a stage and make it yours and deliver those things. So when something goes wrong, not being the person that just stands there blankly going, "Um, uh, um, uh, um the, um the, the thing's not working. Um, uh, ah, these people, ah." You know what I mean? And you've seen those people. When they're delivering their presentation and something goes wrong, they just vapor lock, versus the pro speakers that somehow find a way to roll with it.

Brandt:
I was working on a show where it was a hot swap of a laptop at the last minute it was the only way it could work based on the speakers' schedule, and we had to run it off of their laptop. And so we hot swapped in about one and a half minute break to stretch and put it in. And there was a clock. It was like the old Macs where you could have things floating on your desktop. And for whatever reason during the presentation this clock appeared and was just floating over his presentation. And we're all going, "Oh crap! What can we do? Is there any way..." Because we don't have any backup because it's a hot swap and it was just running off his thing. And he just looked at it. He's like, "You know, time is really important to us. And so that's why I've gotten that clock up in the corner, just reminding of the time." He just absolutely perfectly rolled with it in a way that I would never have imagined in a million years. And we joked with the guy afterwards, just be like, "Man, you could not have done that any better to make it look like it was intentional."

Brandt:
And so, I just wanted to throw that out there as kind of one last take-away that should the worst case scenario happen, should one of these things happen where you've got the hot mic or

you've got a teleprompter fail, just roll with it. Just roll with it, make a joke out of it and then do the best that you can with what you've got.

Will Curran:

I love it. I love it. Brad. That was amazing. Great episode, yeah. Oh my gosh. Super like... I think, we talked in some tactical AV tips and also planned current events as well.

Brandt:

Absolutely. So let us know what did we forget. These are just the ones that came up over the course of the last month and the ones that popped immediately to my mind as we started to sit down and talk about this topic. So, what are some other examples of these kinds of equipment fails or AV fails or things where people just maybe didn't understand how the AV was suppose to work, whether that's an intersection with politics or an intersection with the greater kind of corporate industry at a whole. If we expand that out to like Apple events and things like that, actually my mind starts to go pretty hardcore with things that I've seen. Even people with the most money in the world as far as mistakes and issues that go.

Brandt:

So let us know, did we forget any, be sure and let us know using hashtag Event Tech Podcast. Send us an email eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com.

Brandt:

Will, man, thank you so much for joining me on this little journey. I really appreciate it.

Will Curran:

Absolute, I appreciate you...

Brandt:

Great discussion as always. Be sure and check us out at eventtechpodcast.com. There you're going to see all the show notes, all the links to the resources that are shared, all of the links to these news articles related to the topics that we talked about today and of course transcripts of the show itself. All the ums, all the ahs there for everyone to read. You're going to have links to subscribe in your favorite podcast app, iTunes, Pocket Casts, Google Play. Whatever platform you want to hear us on, we want to be on. So if we're not there, let us know and we'll be sure and get there. And when you do stop by there, be sure and give us a rating. Give us that five star rating, let us know that you liked the show. It helps other folks find the show. Spread the word, tell other people write a blog article.

Brandt:

We just got written up on another blog article on top shows to listen to. Really appreciate that. So be sure and spread the word for folks to listen to it. But leave that review. That really is where it helps. And if we don't get that five stars, please do reach out and let us know what we can be doing better. What do you want to see on the show? What topics do you want to be

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