

Welcome to The Event Brew, where event professionals from different backgrounds talk about the latest, most controversial, and interesting topics dominating the minds of the industry right now. This is a candid conversation the likes of which can only otherwise be found late at night in host hotel lobby bars during industry conferences. So, relax and drop in on what event pros really say when no one else is around. This show is brought to you by Endless Events, the event AV company that tells you how it really is. Now, let's brew something up.

Dustin Westling:

Hello, friends, this is The Event Brew episode two. This is Dustin Westling from OneWest Events.

Thuy Diep:

This is Thuy Diep with PRA Business Events.

Nick Borelli:

This is Nick Borelli from Borelli Strategies.

Will Curran:

And hey everybody, it's Will Curran from Endless Events.

Dustin Westling:

Today, we are going to talk about the most overused word in our industry, the word busy.

Nick Borelli:

This was your idea. I'm excited. I will say that it's both the default answer to how are you doing? And it's also the default answer of any guru that says, "You shouldn't say that," so it's really funny that, I find that almost it's almost as cliché for people to say, "You shouldn't say you're busy, you should say something else." As saying you're busy is at this point.

Will Curran:

I'm curious to know how much does everyone here say the word busy?

Dustin Westling:

Every time I say I go shit. Why did you say that? You need to say something other than that. I'm actually quite... The reason I put it on our topic was because it's something that I just wish I could find another way to change it. What I find happens a lot is that people ask you are you busy? That comes up so much, and it seems to be a qualifier for people. It's the first thing that comes out of somebody's mouth. When I talk to somebody I want to know about your family, anything other than busy. People just jump right into it. Are you busy? Have you been busy? Are you busy next month? Are you busy this month? Are you busy this weekend? It happens all the time. And then you get stuck in this trap where you're like, "Well, I'm not going to say I'm not busy." So then you're like, "Yeah, I'm busy."

Will Curran:

That's true. If you put it in a binary, then you're screwed, right?

Dustin Westling:

Totally. I do make a point not to ask people if they're busy. And I find other creative ways to do that. Some words that I like that are not busy are active or involved. I'm trying to steer people away from this word.

Thuy Diep:

I never say busy anymore. I say productive because you can be busy and not productive. But you can be productive and busy. So I actually eliminate that word altogether from my vocabulary list. When someone asked how I'm doing, and it's work related, I'll say it's been a really productive day.

Will Curran:

Well, I'm curious to know too, the awkwardness, I'm agreeing with all you guys. I'm probably going to listen a lot to this episode because I love what you guys are saying. How awkward is it when people say they're not busy? They're like, "No, things are slow." It's a really bad connotation. Are you going out of business? What's going on? Where are you slow? Why are you not busy?

Dustin Westling:

Which is why the word I think, and the answers are you can never really tell what you're talking about. So you're not... Any person in business is not going to say I'm not busy, which makes the whole question so stupid, because you're not going to get a real answer. And yeah, when somebody is like, "Oh, I'm not busy man." I'm like, "Well, now I don't want to tell you about how busy I am."

Nick Borelli:

Is it a question of capacity? Is that what people are sourcing out because it's so subjective.

Will Curran:

I think to bring it back is that you talked about also Dustin that the, are you busy next month. I think also because events can be seasonal, that people are like, is your next month really busy? Does that mean you have a lot of gigs? Almost like they're trying to gauge how the industry is doing in a sense to agree.

Dustin Westling:

Totally.

Will Curran:

I think not in some way.

Thuy Diep:

Well, I agree with you, especially Dustin you're a planner, right? So people are asking, and they're trying to gauge, oh, is there business opportunities there? How busy are you? I feel like you probably get that the most out of all of us totally.

Dustin Westling:

Totally. I think too it's when I have conversations about business with other people, sometimes it's to figure out where I'm at. So, if I'm coming up to a slower month that I don't think is as full as it should be, I even get caught in the trap, start asking people, "Hey, what's going on in October? Are you feeling busy?" Then that tells me it's like, "Okay, if these people are busy, then we got to get to work?" Or if people are like, "No, man, I don't know what's going on with October." I can be like, "Okay, good. It's not just me."

Nick Borelli:

I get that question from people that I subcontract to for marketing execution, or things like that. They ask me how busy I am. It is an introduction to the idea of, do you need some help? Is there something we can take off your plate? That kind of thing. Oftentimes, I think the question is coming at me like it is the pretense for discussion about working with me. As opposed to the other side of it is if I'm talking to just somebody that I don't do any business with whatsoever, then it's more of a question of just not really asking a question just that I saw, I've identified you, you're in front of me, my mouth needs to move and make sounds. What's the least amount of work I have to do to make that happen? Are you busy? How's business?

Nick Borelli:

It's just boring on all fronts. I know a lot of people that are in the, again, the guru space, and the motivational thing because I guess I attend a lot of stuff with those types of people. And they're just super passionate about all the quirky things that you can say, instead of that. They're right, but also if you meet 100 people in a day, then it's difficult to play those games constantly.

Dustin Westling:

Totally.

Will Curran:

To circle back on I think the conversation starter topic that we're having too. I love the feedback. I think I want to definitely hear what you guys are saying because Dustin, that was so super enlightening for me. I want to circle it to a... another circle of people I'm a part of called Sandbox. What's interesting is it's a group of awesome people under the age of 30. They're doing incredible things. And there's this really interesting thing that no... It's almost taboo to ask someone what they do. But because we're in the industry, we all know what we do. We're like, "Oh, you're a planner." But a lot of times, we end up being, "Okay, well, I know what you do. What's the next question? How's business? Are you busy." I think that's very similar to Sandbox mentality is that we need to figure out a way to start destroying this mentality and create a culture of don't ask that, ask a better question.

Will Curran:

Dustin, you said, ask about the family. Ask them, what's something new that you've learned in the last month? Get deeper with it too. I mean, Sandbox, we're known for having really deep conversation with people we met five minutes ago. What are you scared of? What are your goals in life? I feel that's such a better way to dive into a great relationship.

Thuy Diep:

We all crave that though. We all crave those deep, intimate, those really personal conversations. We tend to go to those, how's business? Are you busy? What do you do? How's the weather? And so, we all strive to do that, but how? Someone tell me how.

Nick Borelli:

What are you drinking right now?

Will Curran:

Well, real quick, can we do the brew?

Dustin Westling:

Let's do it. Why don't you go first?

Will Curran:

I'll go first. Well, I'm drinking right now some Maca from a local tea company in the form of a latte, so it's this is ground up Maca milk. Great for my digestive system. What about you guys?

Nick Borelli:

I'm having a Coca Cola Zero from the Coca Cola company, and it has my name on it because I'm a sucker for personalization, even random personalization.

Will Curran:

Wow, Nick. That must be nice.

Nick Borelli:

I know. That's what... So, I got it... As soon as I got it, I was like, "Oh, that'd be cool if I could get one for everybody. I can take a picture of it." Then I was like, "Oh, wait, that's probably not going to happen."

Thuy Diep:

Seriously, happy vacation. I would just love... I honestly think, "Oh, maybe there'll be a Thuy. No, never. And so-

Nick Borelli:

It's never happened, has it?

Thuy Diep:

I'm drinking mine not branded, no names on it. Same thing actually as the last episode, my Yogi green tea that it reduces free radicals, whatever that means. And I have some organic honey in it. What about you, Dustin? What are you drinking?

Dustin Westling:

Well, the people listening don't know what time it is when we record. Normally we record in the morning, drinking our brew, but because it's five o'clock on my time zone, I am drinking a Village Cider. I'm having myself a nice cold cider. Village Brewery is an awesome, awesome local brewery here in Calgary, and I'm drinking up their cider.

Will Curran:

I love it. All right. Let's circle right on back. So, Dustin, I feel like you're really passionate about this topic. So, what do you what do you think that we need to start doing in order to fix the conversation... this conversation starter? Let's start with that. I think we definitely need to talk about just being busy in general, too.

Dustin Westling:

For sure. I think you can start in the way that you approach people. I know that for as much as I hate saying I'm busy, I really try not to ask people if they're busy. I think too in the way that we answer people. I think answering, telling people that you're busy, I think starting to change that language. I know that when I want to share, and this is from when you're talking to somebody business to business. When I want to know something about their business or what's going on, I share first. So, if I want to know what's going on next quarter for them, then I got to open up my books, and say this has been really interesting. This is the trend that I'm seeing and be really open and transparent. And then ask them something specific about it instead of just this general, are you busy, are you not busy? That is a really good starting point that I know I've tried to incorporate into my conversations.

Dustin Westling:

I think, being busy is something that can be really easily reframed. I don't know that the word itself needs to be banned. I think it just needs to be used appropriately, and busy is not a feeling it's in so many cases you can disconnect from other people by using that because when you say you're busy, that just tells the person that you're talking to that your plate is overloaded, that you're busy, for lack of a better word. I think too it also keeps you from being present, and if you're running around telling the world how busy you are, and you have it in your head that you're so busy, it really makes you wonder how much time that person actually has for this conversation or this project or whatever it is that you're doing together.

Nick Borelli:

I like the unselfish networking technique. I think it's not only strategic, but it's just a good feeling to have too, if you want information or if you want to relate to somebody to give what you want from someone first. I think it's a really, really sound way to do it.

Will Curran:

Well, how else do we want to tackle this idea that we often go into these conversations busy as well. Thuy, do you have any other final thoughts about the conversation starter before we dive into everything else?

Thuy Diep:

It's actually, when we say busy I actually don't think of busy as in business. I think of busy as in, overwhelmed. When someone asked if I'm busy. I usually... I'm thinking, well, I have job security for sure. Or I joke and I say, "I got to eat lunch. So, not too bad of a day." And so, I think that's also why we ask those questions is because as an industry we're just constantly... Maybe it's... I don't know how... Are you guys overwhelmed on a daily basis? Are you guys "busy" or productive?

Will Curran:

I think it's almost like a pride thing, right?

Dustin Westling:

I agree.

Will Curran:

We're like, "Yeah, I'm so busy." Pride.

Nick Borelli:

Pride in being overwhelmed is definitely a event industry thing. I personally find it abhorrent, and I try to be the opposite of that as often as I can, because it's just very much not what I'm about now. I definitely was about it 10 years ago. But yeah, I find that it's... I've even had the opportunity to talk on stage where I feel like... And I have no data to back this up, so this is just the musings of a person without any kind of information.

Nick Borelli:

But that we are probably getting rid of some really smart talent that would come into our industry. But then they're exposed to people in our industry who are just constantly talking about the worst parts of it all the time. Kiss your weekends, goodbye. It's not going to be like the movie, the wedding planner, which is a 20 year old reference point. All this stuff of, wait, wait, calm down. Before you tell them all the worst stuff couldn't you court them a little bit or also, don't you think that there's a way that they could have it to be like other businesses? But we're just so excited about telling people how bad it is.

Will Curran:

Well, I mean, I think that probably brings up a totally separate subject of barriers to entry, which probably we can do a whole episode on. But I feel like it's also this thing that we want to scare people away because we... Yeah, pride, but also in some subtle sense bars entry, you want them scare them away because you're afraid of job security like Thuy is saying.

Dustin Westling:

I do find that pride in what Nick was saying. This sort of pride in being busy, and I do feel about myself, and I wish I could be the one on this. That is so against all of this, but I do. And I'm still trapped in a little bit of a trap where being busy and having this overflowing plate, and having this appearance that I'm always on the go, that I've always got million things going, it still is important to me. I've noticed that, my business is 10 years old, and every year that seems to get a little bit less. Every year I get more comfortable with the success of my business, and the work that I do where I don't feel I need to do that. I don't remember where I read it, but it said busyness is the modern day status symbol. I can totally relate.

Will Curran:

That makes sense.

Thuy Diep:

See, when people... Because all the time, actually people say, "I don't know how you do it. You're always at all these places. You seem so busy." I actually try to reflect that conversation, and tell them a secret, like an inside... Oh, you know what I do? And they're like, what? I go to the event for an hour, and I take a photo, and then I leave, and I go home. And they're, "What?" Yeah, so then I'm at the next event, the next morning. And so, that I feel like I try to start conversations like that versus saying, "Oh, how busy we are. It's so stressful." I try to do... It's the same thing actually. I get so awkward when someone over compliments me. And so, what I do instead is I actually compliment them back in return. So that they would just stop.

Thuy Diep:

And so, it's just changing that mindset in that conversation. What Dustin was saying and just being able to speak truly, and it's how you feel also. It's also nice, because I think us as an industry, we tend to... We want to relate and to feel like, oh, that we're not the only ones that feel overwhelmed, for example. And so, it's nice to have those conversations as well. But yeah, I feel like the, are you busy is the same question as how's the weather? Let's talk about something else. Let's talk about something... Let's talk about space even. That's how you want to develop those relationships. That's where you're going to actually get the nitty gritty.

Dustin Westling:

Do people to people ask you how many shows your company does each year?

Will Curran:

Yeah. That's really common or how many employees I have is a very common question as well.

Nick Borelli:

I feel like there's different... There's different qualifiers, and busy is the... I don't know, the least intimidating, least specific gauge of where are you? What are you? Whatever. It's kind of like this vague one. But then the next level that I get with organizations that I've been a part of, or talked to is, again, how many shows do you work on? And so, I told you when we were hanging out, I asked you that question because I'm curious was my opening thing. There's been a couple years before I asked that question. But I told you that there's a company that I used to work with that did 20, 100 shows last year. To me, the president of that company, the owner of that company could justifiably say, "He's busy at all times." He works Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, part of the day Saturday because he wants to, and that's it.

Nick Borelli:

People get to say, and put out anything. Someone could say, "Are you slammed? Are you going crazy?" I know that guy pretty well. And he would say, "Yeah, we're doing great. The team's working hard, and everyone's doing everything." Then somebody might be, "Oh, so you're not... because I'm slammed, this and that." Oh, you have a team of four, and I've got a team of 130. So yeah, I can understand your 50, 40 shows would seem like a pretty crazy thing. It's all scale and perspective. But also there's, a lot of this is in your control as far as number one, what you put out, and also what you choose to call "busy."

Will Curran:

What you consider answering to those questions too. I mean, as much as someone asks you a question doesn't mean you have to answer it too. So, you could totally shift in a different way. Maybe it's that now the future is when someone asks you that question is that you say, "Well, I listen to some podcast called Event Brew, and they talked all about this, and I agreed with what they said. What do you think about people asking you about being busy? Don't you find it weird?" I don't know. I know the twist is in that one, but I'm sure someone will figure it out.

Thuy Diep:

But don't you guys feel also busy, it's unhealthy. It's like busy, and we want... It's like that pride and bragging, but it goes on to... It's like saying we're the fifth most stressful career. That's not anything to brag about. That makes me sad. When people say they're so busy, and they don't have time to do this, and that. That makes me so sad for them. You know what, actually, I say it more times than not, especially as of lately. I am a part of Wanderlust Hollywood Yoga Studio, and I always get to bring someone new for free each time. I always tell them. That's actually how I actually bond with a lot of my colleagues now. I say, "Why don't you come to yoga with me or come to meditation?"

Thuy Diep:

If you're feeling those ways, the hippie in me wants to help a sister or a brother out. Like come on, let's go do this, that and not work. But what do you guys feel when someone says... is that... I don't want to say it's a turn on. Are you guys, when someone says, "Oh, they're so busy." That to me is like yikes. Have your boundaries then.

Dustin Westling:

It's definitely a qualifier, and it's definitely, I think, for lack of better vocabulary in this topic that you want to be perceived as being busy because busy equals successful. When somebody talks about you, you want people to say, they're really busy because they're great at what they do. So yeah, so sometimes I don't think it's... I'd like to hear people refer to my company as busy, and I want them to refer to me as balanced, which never...

Will Curran:

Well, it's almost like your company is a reflection of you. So it's like you almost don't want people to call your company busy, because then they're just going to call you busy, right?

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, I look at organizations where there's a depth chart. Where there's a fair amount of employees, and then the visionary type person says that they're busy. And they go on further to explain how exacerbated they are, and how they're going in a million different directions. Then I go, okay, I see that as a weakness in an organization because I'm like, if you create a sustainable culture, and a good to business then the visionary position should be one where you are being able to step back. I mean, this is all pure idealism, right? But that's what we're talking about is image, giving up this image.

Nick Borelli:

I've always been impressed by the larger organizations, maybe not even larger, but lower organizations with some depth to it that are like, yeah, if they get into it, where everyone's working, everyone's better than last year, that kind of thing. And I'm in a position where I'm working less. I'm like that's success to me. When I hear that I'm like, "Whoa, cool."

Thuy Diep:

Actually Nick, when you talk about things that, especially how you've shifted your mindset and everything, I actually aspire to be more like, "Oh, I want Nick's like lifestyle." But quick questions for all three of you guys, how busy are you right now? Are you guys like whoa or you just chilling?

Will Curran:

I want to tackle this one because I think people think that I am way busier than I really am. I feel like I don't ever publicly talk about it because people know that I have high energy and that I'm doing a million things. People literally ask, they're like, "How do you do it all?" It's one of the most common things I hear. I'm not sure if anyone does that to you, and maybe they say it to everybody. I find that I am... like right now, in this very moment, event-wise I'm not busy. But I feel overwhelmed. I'm trying not to use the word busy because we're going into IMEX really soon. And all these like things that. Our team has... We took on so much on our plate. I think we're like, yeah, yeah. We were saying yes, and yes, and yes. Now we're regretting it, because we have so much stuff to do. But I feel that way. That's why I feel busy.

Will Curran:

For example tonight is board game night, and I'm going to, when we finish recording podcast, I'm going to go get dinner. My friend is going to pick me up, we're going to a board game night, and we'll play board games till 9:00 PM. I'll go to bed, I'll wake up in the morning do work. But I won't feel the need of being like I have to be up until 2:00 AM tonight to get everything done [inaudible 00:24:02]. I'm literally going to... I might have projects I'm halfway through, emails that I haven't answered, but I'm still going to walk away from it. And so, I feel like there's all this stuff going on. But I'm also not letting it pressure me into not sleeping or not enjoying my free time.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, you have a lot of really smart automation tools, really good at delegation-

Will Curran:

Thanks.

Nick Borelli:

... in my opinion. Just seeing it from the other side. And that without people seeing that invisible hand, then that looks way more day to day than it probably is because you have help, and you have systems that are about efficiencies.

Will Curran:

That's true. People think that I actually manage my...

Nick Borelli:

I think of everything in... Yeah, I look at everything like capacity, because I am an organization of one. So for me it's just where am I capacity wise? How many clients could I take on? I think most people who have event teams, if you ask them for the... I don't know, I shouldn't say this. The responsible ones will say, they'll tell you when they wouldn't start. When they would say no. I've dealt with a lot of ones that are not responsible, and are just like, we'll just keep scaling, or "just take anything." But as one person for me, I hit my capacity pretty quickly, and it's not hard for me to be at capacity.

Nick Borelli:

Then I think my capacity is where it used to be, and where it is now is so different because of minimal levels of engagement, and just my ongoing business that I have with teams that I'm on. So for me, I'm always covered, and then I take stuff that I want to. I refer, I would say eight out of 10 things that come at me from other people. So, while I'm always... I'm probably at 75% capacity at all times, just because I leave myself open to be 25% if I really wanted to dive into something that was super cool. It's a completely different way of looking at things I think, because I don't think most people would say that. Like is my 50% capacity covered for what I need. The other 25 is stuff that I'm doing a little bit more than that. And then I still probably have another 25 that I could use if I wanted to.

Will Curran:

I like capacity in terms of business.

Nick Borelli:

It's different. I'm just not as... I'm the opposite of a tech entrepreneur, or maybe most entrepreneurs in general, where I'm not looking at how do I make as much money as I possibly can with everything. It has to be right for me, it has to work for me. I generally like to work with friends, and then after that really like I have a couple of businesses that I work with all the time. And then that's really the majority of my work.

Dustin Westling:

I like Nick's point about capacity. I stay really, really, really full professionally. And by the time the week starts, there's usually only a couple little spots in my calendar that are left to be filled, and I enjoy that. What happens outside of that is that I do have restrictions on what I won't book. I won't encourage client meetings after hours. One of the reasons that we don't work in the wedding market is that it has nothing to do with weddings, it has more to do with the client base needs you at times that just really, really disrupts a normal working schedule because they can meet at night, and they can meet on weekends.

Dustin Westling:

What I was finding is that my team was having to constantly, constantly adjust and they could never get into a normal, proper schedule. I keep a really, really busy schedule. But there's a few things that I don't do. I don't have a home office. I work from my office. I only take my laptop home if there's a morning meeting that I have to go to. So, I really make a point. Or if I forget it or it's when it's on a loading dock or in the security office somewhere. But I don't take it home, and I don't try... I really try hard not to take my work home. So that means that I work until 6:30 or seven o'clock at night. Sometimes I do that consistently, when I leave here the work is done. And I pick it up again the next morning.

Dustin Westling:

With that, I do to keep a little bit of flexibility because in our business, the faster you can react to things that are coming in and the faster you can jump on them, oftentimes, it makes a difference to whether you're going to win a job or not. In Canada, and I don't know if this is like this everywhere, but business is so short lead. I think we're in a bit of a funny economic spot in an operator. Some would say it's not funny at all. We're very oil and gas dependent, and we're having lots of issues on getting our oil to shore and America is figuring out their own shit with oil. So, we're really struggling with our major industry. What's happening is that budgets aren't getting confirmed until really close to the event, and we're getting calls that are a couple of weeks out. We're working on big projects with three weeks notice.

Dustin Westling:

I do find that I have to be flexible enough to jump on those things, and when the word busy comes up, that for me is where a lot of that comes from. Because you're just... You're constantly getting these fireballs thrown at you that you know are important for the business, you want to make sure that the client is taken care of so. So yeah, some of it is just unavoidable. I've been a part of so many conversations where it's like, we have to train our clients to give you more notice, and to not do things last minute, and to confirm earlier. Sometimes in the economy or wherever it is you're working, that's not possible. So you need to build a system that allows you to be flexible with the time that you have.

Dustin Westling:

I find that scheduling meetings, same time, same place and being really strict in keeping those. I have a couple other business interests, and the way I deal with them is there's a certain time a week that we have a standing meeting, and I protect that time as much as I can to keep some consistency. Then everything else is ebb and flow and I can slide things around. I also make sure that I take my dog to the dog park every day. I love to hike. I live in Calgary and we're on the base of the mountains. I think we said that in the first episode, and I do take the time to make sure that I'm connecting with the things that I like, and that I'm not just buried in work all the time. Thuy said that it's great to tell people, I don't actually work all the time. I'm glad you think that I'm working all the time, but I don't. I go to the mountains every weekend. I have friends over for games. I went to a bonfire on Sunday night. It's not all work all the time.

Thuy Diep:

I love that, and I completely agree with you. I feel like there's just been a shift as of recently. I used to... At PR, we turn over our program. So, I'm leading, doing all the program elements and designing. Then once it goes to the contracting it goes to our event producer, operations manager. I feel lately we do, Dustin, get those quick turnarounds. That actually, if anything is keeping us busy because we're putting some other programs off. We're not an ad agency where we have two accounts. I have probably, I don't know, like 10 right now that I'm constantly juggling. So, I also agree with you, Dustin, that you say about it's about adapting to it because that's how you have to roll with the punches. I love... and you didn't say the specific word but balance. You give yourself balance and you give yourself those lines that you don't cross, and certain times you dedicate to these different aspects of your businesses, and then you make time for yourself.

Thuy Diep:

I think a lot of times, we aren't busy enough making time for our own self care, our own family time, the reasons why we are so intertwined with this being our whole life, this career of ours that we forget that there's a lot more past that. And so, absolutely, yeah, that's great.

Dustin Westling:

What's that saying, tell a different story, and you'll end up living it. So, if you're telling people that you're busy all the time, then that's the life you're going to live and if you start changing that

language, and creating space, and reminding yourself of all the things that you do that are not classified as busy then that's the life that you're going to lead better.

Thuy Diep:

I want to walk Dustin's dog. I want to be a part-time Dustin dog walker.

Dustin Westling:

He's so cute. Oh my God, he's so cute. That's funny. That is another thing that I don't do is my personal social media, my Instagram specifically, I don't post work shit on there. I keep that space for all the things that I really cherish outside of work. So that is for my friends, that is for my dog, that is for my hiking trips. That's for things that inspire me, and you'll never see me post a work picture on there unless it's something that's monumental with my team, which I consider to be a crossover into personal. I don't use that platform for work to show how busy I am. I use that platform to share with people the things-

Thuy Diep:

I want to hear Nick's input on this.

Nick Borelli:

I think-

Thuy Diep:

Yeah, go ahead, Nick.

Nick Borelli:

I'd say that is an episode. How do all of us... How have all of us adapted social media into our lives? How do we use it for... If we do use it professionally, if we don't, that's fascinating. Because I think that there's a lot of fertile ground there for a conversation that a lot of people could really sink their teeth into. Because honestly, as much as I've done many, many presentations on the topic of social media, it's very, very frequent that someone will ask me a question. And they will say something to the effect of, "What should I be doing with my social media platform in order to fulfill my duties at my job better?" Be it sales, be it a leader, that kind of thing.

Nick Borelli:

My answer is always that it's super subjective, and there's not one path that is the correct path. I don't know, there's ones that are very strategic, and that only talk about business and only talk about... For instance, my Facebook is almost exclusively aimed at event professionals and talks about things that would be relevant to those people. It's not about what I'm doing almost ever, it's just about the industry in general, because I really use it as a sounding board to talk to all my friends in the industry about things that I find interesting. And to be able to help them or share something with them, and also mostly just to get feedback. But I have at least two accounts for

everything. So, that's not bearable for most people, I would imagine. Because my other life, my hobby stuff is so... There's just no overlap, and I get a lot of joy from that.

Nick Borelli:

But I wouldn't want to push that on anyone else who didn't really buy into it. So for me, it's always like if it's information that really isn't a natural bridge from one to the other, then I split channels until I decided I don't want to do that anymore. That could be, for instance, when I had kids, I was like, "Well, I'm not going to suddenly turn my Facebook page, which has been primarily aimed at talking to event professionals about event professional stuff into here's pictures of my kids." Even though that's very natural, and that's what people want to do.

Nick Borelli:

Honestly, that's not wrong to do that. For me, I just thought it was people opted in expecting a certain thing because that's what I did. Then for me to change like that, it's not what they signed up for. So, I just created another stream. There's a place with just pictures of my kids, and you can go there if you want that. I don't push that on a lot of people. Frankly, there's not as many people that it would be relevant to. But there's so many different strategies that I've seen that are honestly as long as it's fulfilling to you or if there's some strategic thing because you're a small business owner, and you're just trying to figure out how you can utilize tools to be successful because that's what you need. There's a million different ways to go at this. I think we could do a deep dive on this for sure in an episode, and I could definitely structure a lot of types of questions about what I've seen other people do, that would be interesting.

Nick Borelli:

I think there's ways to make yourself look busy through social media beyond what you are. I think there's ways to make yourself look more balanced than you are. I think that social media is a tool of perception change, often. And it's a storytelling device. You can really... One of the things that I get all the time is that, "Boy, you travel a lot." And I'm like, "I don't really travel that much." I used to more, but I just post less than I used to. Then I often post more while I'm traveling. So, I've reduced my posting considerably, and I used to know those numbers really well. I had very specific parameters for myself, and I found that, even that was based on what I need. It just was getting in the way of my life.

Thuy Diep:

Nick, you talk about storytelling. Does actually anyone have stories of being busy whether that's funny or crazy or something in the event? Go for it Will.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, those types of things. I mean, it's funny. I look back at a lot of things that I missed, because I didn't have weekends fun the majority of my high school to let's say, maybe seven or eight years ago. You look back at that kind of stuff, and you're like, yeah, that was... it's tough for sure. For me though, it was pain that was towards something or worth it where I have... I don't know, an understanding, and I guess an appreciation for that part of the industry that I

wouldn't if I didn't do that. Because again now for the most part I work at home, and I write strategy, and I'm on calls, and I write large documents, and comb through data. I don't need to be at events.

Nick Borelli:

It's good to have done it because it just gives me an appreciation of it. Also, I can have empathy for people who are in that stuff. So, while you are probably running a team who has to do the worst of the worst part of the job, but the load in, the load out, all that stuff. At least, if you're not there, and you're not with them every step of the way, at least your ability to empathize with them is pretty high.

Thuy Diep:

I have a story. It's not my story, though. I would say... At Danny, we actually had a whole not burning out discussion for Bish Bash for Los Angeles last year. The example he used because he was a moderator was his aha moment when it came to realizing he was too busy was he was texting and driving, and he got to a light, and he actually almost hit someone. He said that's not worth it to figure out if someone wants to be for chicken. And so, obviously that was a funny... everyone giggled at that. But we are so intertwined to just being busy every day that we're not even cognizant or aware, mindful of what's happening around us.

Thuy Diep:

I think that actually takes away from our ability to collide is what Tony Hsieh says to, when we're during a meeting, before meeting actually. When everyone is just on their phone, that takes away that opportunity to put it down, and to get to know your colleagues, or anything of that sort. That was eye opening to me hearing that. You almost ran someone over because you were so busy working. But it wasn't something that was worth a person's life. Dustin, do you have any stories that?

Dustin Westling:

Oh, the stories I have. Yeah. I think those stories are crazy. I'm on the note of being busy and how that affects you. I think I've literally changed my clothes on every parkade in this city, and have duct tape my shoes back together, and crawled on a floor under a stage and then showed up at a client meeting five minutes later. Yeah, busy, busy.

Dustin Westling:

I think now I get to be in a really great space where my team is really, really balanced. They get to take on in a more balanced way, all of the stuff that I used to do by myself. I think back to the beginning of my business, and I go, "How the hell would I have ever done it any differently?" I feel more balanced today than ever before. But the first five years, how would I have done that without working the... Don't tell my health and safety person, working a 56 hour shift through the Christmas season because it was just the way it needed to be. And almost breaking down in tears at the end of the most painful, painful, painful three days of non stop work. I look back on that, and I don't think, you shouldn't have done that. I think, "Well, you did it because you

wanted to get somewhere, and if you were still doing it, I'd be I'd be more concerned about that." I probably didn't answer your question.

Nick Borelli:

For me, I think that's it exactly. I think that there is sort of an inevitability in an aspect of your journey in the events industry being harder than a lot of other ways that you can make a living, busier than a lot of other ways you can make a living. I think what we're talking a lot about is it's just not sustainable for good.

Dustin Westling:

100%.

Nick Borelli:

It's towards something. If it's building a business, or if it's establishing yourself to give you the ability to have more freedom and be able to say, "Look, this is what I'm worth. I've done this for this long. I have this win record." Whatever it is to give you the confidence, to give you the skills. If it's pain for something, then it's good pain. I think that, I do know a lot of people in the industry, however, who have just got stuck in that cycle of the pain. Then they aren't doing it for something, they're just doing it to doing it, to doing it, and they never get off the ride. I think that if you do it past a certain amount of time, and there's not a specific amount, I think it's very subjective to the person and their goals. You should be able to then pivot that into less of the pain parts of the busyness.

Nick Borelli:

I think ultimately, what most of us really need to do is consider being busy in the way that is the negative part of that word is bad for the client too. I mean, it should be part of your sales process to say, "Do you know why you work with us? Because we're not frazzled. When you have the next meeting with someone else that you're talking to, and they're like, "Yeah, I worked 15 hours last week on a Thursday, and they came in the next day and worked an 18 hour day." Just realize that 19 hour day is your show. And do you want somebody just coming off 16 hours? Do you want to work with someone like that? We have a sustainable business. We have a business of people that we treat well, that we've created a balance for. And that means they're sharp for your event. They're vital. They're not burnt out. I think that sometimes with the events people you have to put it in that perspective. It's good for the clients. I mean, if you can't hear that it's good for you. It's good for them.

Dustin Westling:

I agree. My business partner tells me all the time. He loves telling me this. He says, "One day somebody is going to show up that's smarter, faster, and younger, and then you're going to be in trouble." Great message from your business partner. I always respond in the exact same way, and I say, "I know how bleeping hard this was to build. When that person arrives, I'm going to see them come in for a few years," because it just doesn't happen overnight. And there is a

certain part of this that just takes a lot of grit and a lot of work. When I talk to younger people, and I talk to a lot of students that are coming in.

Dustin Westling:

It might be a generational thing. I'm not going to use the M word. But I do get a lot of this, I've been trying for a year. How do I find clients? It's not working. How do I get busy? And the answer is just so simple, you got to work for it. This industry ain't going to hand you anything. And it's not there's no easy road in everything, and every part of this. It's really hard work. But it's only hard for so long, and then it becomes... You become connected. Then you can really start to form a career within this industry, that's really rewarding. But it's not going to come without a little bit of hard work in the beginning.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, I don't see. There are industries where talent is enough. Where if you're just smart enough. I've known some, maybe even... I was going to say lawyers, but they put in a ton of work too. There's a few industries where the talent, and there's literally a book called Talent Is Not Enough. And it talks about this kind of stuff about where the work comes in. But in our industry, I know plenty of people that are fairly successful, and they're not really even talented. They're just bullheaded, and they've just established themselves in their market, and been so pervasive that you just couldn't escape. And they just get the business because they just won't let you not give it to them.

Nick Borelli:

It's a combination of both for sure. But the traction it takes because events are inherently collaborative, you don't do an event by yourself, no matter what it is. It requires the community to buy into you, and that takes some of that shared experience in order to build those bridges.

Nick Borelli:

I think we talked a little bit about perception for exuding balance. If balances is let's say the opposing force of busy, what is intrinsic and special to events that it causes people to not only, I guess, not have... be "busy" and then also feel like they need to tell their people in a way that I don't experience from people, maybe outside of the tech industry, of which those, they're even worse than us than us in my experience.

Dustin Westling:

I wonder if some of this really leads back to as an industry fighting to be perceived as a real industry, and that we have real jobs that matter. That conversation still happens to this day, and I actually think we're nowhere near winning that battle, which I think is a conversation for another time. But I do wonder if it's not... I know a lot of people ask me, some of the shameful things people say to me are, "Oh, you're in events." I would love to work from home. And I'm like, "But why is that the first thing you think of?" Or the, we brought this up earlier, it's how many staff do you have? How many events do you do? How many of this, and then you find yourself defending yourself and defending your industry. And being like, "No, this is a legit

business that employs a lot of people, that manages a lot of experiences." And it matters, and then you get caught in this trap of defending how busy you are as a way to build up this reputation of an industry. Feel free to disagree.

Will Curran:

I'm going to agree and say also, I think the sense of time sensitivity of our industry too that we're constantly trying to make sure that we are... That things are coming to a close at any minute. Oh, the week before, I'm going to be really busy. Oh, as we get closer, you get really busy. Then obviously, not many people work more than one event at a time. So, I feel it can definitely be time sensitivity as well.

Nick Borelli:

The time sensitivity. Yeah, that is an interesting wrinkle to it because busy usually is related to a specific event deadline that's coming up. And also potentially if there's a seasonality to what they do then there's an ebb and flow there. Because I've had lots of conversations where people have said, "Well, I'm not that busy right now." Then they have to immediately launch into why. There's a seasonality in what they do, and the next quarter, which is their busy season, they start talking about that just to reassure you that, yes, I'm not really busy now in February, but that's due to the nature of what they do. That's like immediately, they have to be on the defensive for that.

Nick Borelli:

I do agree that they chip on people's shoulder as far as the legitimacy of the industry in certain corners of it. In other corners of it, it's funny because I jump between associations, and different parts of the events industry. In other parts of the event industry, and for some people that aren't in those parts as much this doesn't compute. But that's a conversation that doesn't happen. The legitimacy of it in the conference and trade show space, they're not really talking about are we legitimate or not? They are. People disproportionately spend marketing dollars on trade show presence because it's an expensive endeavor to do, and there's hard dollars associated with it. And CMOS are part of the discussion, and no one's saying that the internal planner who will be making the choices there is an illegitimate party planner. That chip on their shoulder doesn't exist. It's just an established method of marketing and sales.

Nick Borelli:

In the more social ends where it comes to galas, potentially, that kind of stuff, yeah. In the supplier world that too, the conversations happen all the time. In the internal bits, I'm working with an association earlier today. She's been around since the 1920s, and they've had a show for 60 years. They have 50,000 members in their association. There's no conversations about illegitimacy in what they do, and trying to... It just depends. It really is... In the wedding planner world it's the only thing they talk about it, and I get it. There's kind of a... But the chip on your shoulder part is, it's a real phenomenon. It's just not pervasive.

Thuy Diep:

See, I feel I'm naive to that. I guess I would... I won't say disagree with that Dustin, but I would say it's more about us being so passionate that we lack that balance because we don't establish the boundaries. Because I guess when people say, "Oh, what do you do?" And things like that, I never get a sense of, are you a party planner? It's usually, "Oh, that must be really difficult." Or tell me more about that. Do you just go to events? I'm like, "No way. It's way more than that." But I think that lack of balance comes from we love what we do so much that sometimes it's hard for us to turn off. Especially with the social media that we talked about during this episode, that increases our attention into just constantly see what's new, see what's up, see what everyone's doing. A lot of times we all are posting about the events that we're at. So, if anything is kind of slapping our own hands and saying, "Well, we created our own monster."

Dustin Westling:

Does anybody get the response of, "Oh, that sounds so much fun." I get that more than anything else. So, it's interesting Thuy is saying that people dig in a little bit deeper. More often than not, I get people that say, "Oh, my God, that sounds so much fun. That's my dream job." And it makes me think, what the hell am I... How am I describing my business, and what I do that makes people say that first? Maybe I should be more open to the idea that for some people that sounds like a break from their every day. I don't know. Let's let's unpack that. Help me out.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, yeah. I've experienced this before too where people have said that. Where they've said... I've explained what I do, and people are like, "Wow, you get to impact people's lives in that way, and you get to be creative. And really, you can do anything budget permitting you could creatively come up with, and I work in a cubicle. You get to go and see cool people. You get to hear people that have great ideas, and you get to collaborate." And you're like, "What am I saying wrong that makes you think this is fun?" You're like, it is fun. That's my part. Maybe you're just passionate about it in that moment. You're exuding the passion, and they're connecting to that. They like it.

Nick Borelli:

I think so much of... Especially people that have been in the industry more than 10 years, I think that those people really always want to have their... I'm in that group, obviously, but have their guard up to say, "It's not all roses." And then launch into that. You're like, yeah, let's just take that as a given, and let's spend more time in the... In fact, why are more people coming up to meet you and saying, "I should be doing that." You should do that more. And it's still that kind of energy and passion of what you do because there's a lot of... While we've been talking about all the negative parts wrapped up in the busy part, there's a lot of stuff that's intrinsic to our industry that is so free-

Thuy Diep:

Yes Nick.

Nick Borelli:

... and so meaningful.

Thuy Diep:

How amazing is it that we get challenges, different challenges, and different tasks every single time? Who else can say, "Oh, I'm trying to source a tiger for our pool reception right now. That is not-

Nick Borelli:

I hope nobody.

Thuy Diep:

I have done that. There's a lot of writers involved in that. We get these amazing... Do you get elephants, Nick?

Nick Borelli:

I've done that. No. I used to be more in the wedding side maybe 16 years ago. I've done some large scale Eastern Asian weddings where there's budgets, and also cultural reasons to have exotic animals, including that specific one. Yeah, I've seen weird stuff. Weird, subjectively weird. I'm not shocked by a lot. I've been to a lot of events, and more so recently that I try to attend events that are outside of the norm, and a little bit more fringe because I'm fascinated with the tribalism on all the ways that it expresses itself, because I find that it helps stretch my mind as far as what's possible in designing, and helping designers tell their stories. It's cool. I can say that's a bit of R&D for what I do versus someone who is doing sales training on a specific type of spring for industrial lubricating machines, which is literally a person I know who does that. That sounds like death to me.

Nick Borelli:

We get to be the only people bringing people together in this world right now. That's pretty cool. I think we should talk more about that, and like that, than talk about the grind aspect of it, which is just the thing you have to do to get to the part that's cool. But like everyone else, they have the less physically enduring, but soul crushing part of it that goes on forever. And we don't always have the soul crushing part. There's a bit of the creation part that is unique to what we do. And also bringing people together at what we do that is something that like an actuary has a harder time expressing to someone

Thuy Diep:

We should challenge each other to do that. Maybe that is the catalyst when... That's the conversation starter is to talk about... It's the mindset. It's your perception on things. If you say you're going to be busy or you are... It's a burden to do something then it is what it is. But if you shift your mindset and say, I did something really... It's been really productive, and right now I can't source a tiger for this pool reception. That is eye catching, and that starts really great conversations. We have so many random, and beautiful, and interesting, innovative ideas that

we're trying to make a reality. Why aren't we focused on talking about that? That should be what our busy talk is.

Nick Borelli:

No. I think there's a couple different episodes. Again, the more we have these conversations, the more I see where there's fertile grounds. I think that we should eventually dedicate more time, and maybe we could all maybe get a little bit more thoughtful about this, but have an episode about what are all the things that we should as an industry get out to the world to tell people that we do that only we get to do to attract the brightest minds because that's my fear. My fear is that of all the internal strife, and all the other silos, and negative things on the macro level that people talk about the events industry, my biggest fear is that we're not attracting the bright enough minds to help us reach the next plateau.

Nick Borelli:

I think that if we were to really get our act together as far as language, and put our most passionate people forward and not talk about just the draconian aspects of the job all the time, the tedium, and actually talk about the cool stuff, I think we would be better positioned to attract the people that we need to get us to the next level.

Dustin Westling:

A colleague of mine that most of you know, Carrie Miller, she's a fellow Calgarian. She's led the charge for a, we do a charity golf tournament. It's an industry golf tournament, and the funds that are raised are used for a scholarship, and she targets high schools and puts together programming to go in and talk to high school students about the different opportunities that exist within our industry. She starts at... She's really passionate about talking to young people right at the beginning of their... right when they're starting to think about their career path. She's really passionate about sharing how many incredible opportunities exist in this world that we live in. I agree with you, Nick, I think there's a big concern about what is the next generation going to look like?

Will Curran:

Okay, awesome.

Dustin Westling:

Okay. All right guys. That is a wrap for today. Thank you all for joining us, and for everybody that's listening. Go to eventbrew.com, where you can see show notes, links, and resources and all other things. Links to subscribe in your favorite podcast app, Apple Podcasts, and Google Play. We want to know what you think. Contact us, email us anytime. Use the hashtag Event Brew or email us at Event Brew at helloendless.com. Thanks for listening, and goodbye guys.

Thuy Diep:

Bye.

Nick Borelli:
Bye everybody.

Will Curran:
Bye.

Thanks again for listening to Event Brew. Be sure to rate and review us on your favorite podcasting app. Also, be sure to head to eventbrew.com, and leave us a comment about this week's episode. See you next time on Event Brew.