

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 AB company that tells you how it really is. Now let's brew something up.

Will Curran:

Hey, brew crew, all our tea drinkers, coffee drinkers, whiskey drinkers, beer drinkers out there in the world. This is Will Curran from Endless Events.

Nick Borelli:

Hi, this is Nick Borelli from Borelli Strategies.

Will Curran:

And welcome back to another episode of the Event Brew, where we're going to be having a really interesting topical conversation soon. But before we dive into that, Nick, what do you got in your cup today?

Nick Borelli:

For some reason I'm going with a little bit more of a less energy right now because I'm getting my energy vitamins to stave off the kids' sicknesses. So I'm drinking a cucumber melon sparkling water, that I got from this fresh time farmer's market. And I've been addicted to it like, I think this is like my fourth or fifth case in the last couple of weeks.

Will Curran:

I like it. I like it a lot. Anytime that you're not drinking monster, I think I'm very happy. But today I'm sipping on a tea known as smooth jazz.

Nick Borelli:

Oh boy.

Will Curran:

I know. And it basically on the label it says it's a coffee replacement. Again, like I don't drink coffee, but, it was just really good. I was in the tea shop and they're like, "Here, try this," and I like it. It's got some cacao in it and stuff like that, I guess. And, I should probably look at the label, but if anyone really cares, feel free to tweet me and I'll tell you what it's all about. But I probably need to remember, start bring like the labels for the tea so I can say like, it's got like good cacao and like jasmine in it and it just taste good. It tastes good. That's all I care about.

Nick Borelli:

That's very red ocean of them to say that it is a coffee replacement.

Will Curran:

Like the opposite of blue ocean?

Nick Borelli:

Yeah. I don't know how familiar you are with those two dichotomies in marketing.

Will Curran:

I know blue ocean strategy, like the idea, like you pick something that no one else is in. But then-

Nick Borelli:

Blue ocean strategy is-

Will Curran:

... red ocean is-

Nick Borelli:

Red ocean is the opposite. Red ocean says, I'll give you an example. Like, so you see advertisements for cell phones and you see Apple and Apple has like somebody dancing and having a great time and showing no features, no benefits, just the life that you live, where their products are seamlessly integrated to it. Then you see like a Nokia ad or a Panasonic, and it's like, we have the newest thing. It's \$100 cheaper than the iPhone. It's like, we are a reaction to this other thing. We have no identity outside of where we are in the marketplace. We're just a competing product that has better services, cheaper pricing and et cetera.

Nick Borelli:

So red ocean says, we are a commodity and we live in the world of commodities and we're comfortable with that. So when someone says, this is the tea for, a replacement for coffee, it says, coffee is the norm. However we're going to break you free of that. And it's just a, I don't know. I'm always hyper aware of copy that is declarative like that. It would be like the... So if there was a conference, it would be like saying, we're the more personalized version of CES.

Nick Borelli:

We're the smaller CES, the CES with an attitude, not your dad's CES. That kind of wait to talk about like a technology show, would be pure red ocean and it would be, just as an idea. So anyways, anytime I see copy that references a competing idea, I always think about, like that organization has decided its place in the market is to lean on its strengths, in the features and benefits column which, put it in the idea of that the person writing it believes it is a commodity and that's okay. There is limitations to being a commodity. And I don't know.

Will Curran:

That was probably more time for it. He doesn't say probably more time for another episode for sure because I know we've talked a little bit about commoditization, but-

Nick Borelli:
It's interesting.

Will Curran:
... maybe more in the future.

Nick Borelli:
And tea is the ultimate commodity. It's even a slight...

Will Curran:
It's better than leaves.

Nick Borelli:
... created another government.

Will Curran:
It's true. That's true. Well, that's what we're talking about today. We've got something a little bit more interesting and a little time sensitive as well.

Nick Borelli:
It's one of the shows that I think about the most throughout the year. I don't know about you.

Will Curran:
Like the TV show that we're going to talk?

Nick Borelli:
No, no. I mean, the actual... No, this, example of a technology utilized at this show. I look at, there's a few different events that take place.

Nick Borelli:
Consumer electronic.

Will Curran:
All right. Well, basically we found a Mashable article, that it talks a little bit about an activation that happened at CES for the very, now very popular TV show on HBO called Westworld, which is, kind of the, dystopian view on what happens when a dystopian, more like the realistic view on how maybe artificial intelligence can be used for entertainment, and very, very interesting.

Will Curran:
So I don't think we necessarily are talking about like Westworld and it's impact on potential, impact on the events' industry or anything like that. But I want to talk specifically about this event and activation because, the headline of the article is the most insightful vision of the future at

CES came from HBOs' Westworld. And I also saw a lot of headlines in here like, people were super creeped out, people were blown away. Like, things got really weird. Like there's a quote in here, "This can't be real. Many people murmured under their breaths," and things like that. But, should we kind of give them a basis as far as what happened at this event? We'll link to the article down below in the show notes. But-

Nick Borelli:

I mean, I will say that like-

Nick Borelli:

... potentially impetus for this would be, where do they go from here? Two years ago at South by Southwest, there was an activation, that Viacom via HBO via Westworld did, that it was just unbelievable. They had 100 characters.

Will Curran:

Can you kind of explain what it was?

Nick Borelli:

So it was a really cool idea that I really am enjoying to see more and more where it was a collaborative activation. So there was a number of different companies with the main organization being HBOs' parents, but also Lyft and a few other, I want to say that there was a Verizon or one of the other cell phone companies were involved in as well, and attendees would be picked up in a car by Lyft. And then there was like an audio kind of like introduction of what to expect of this activation.

Nick Borelli:

But they took you off campus, and they dropped you into this huge, kind of like wild West kind of a town that they created. And they had 100 character actors who had I believe something to the degree of like, all in told there's a 400 pages of script, that were kind of gave the parameters for these characters to act within and things they had to say eventually to get to it. But they were to improv and also utilize these lines, similar to like an enthusiasm style improv where you improvise with people, but you also have to get from A to B to C and you have to guide it there. People are blown away because it was completely immersive. You got to wear the clothes and-

Will Curran:

You felt like you were in-

Nick Borelli:

Yeah.

Will Curran:

You felt like you were in the show.

Nick Borelli:

Right. I mean, and the show is very much about the idea of being taken to this environment where there are "actors" who are placing you as a...

Will Curran:

By the way, we should probably put a big, if you haven't watched Westworld, you plan on watching Westworld. This is probably going to have some spoilers. This is probably the one few times we'll say, don't listen to this event brew perhaps. So maybe like putting your bookmarks come back to it after you watch the show.

Nick Borelli:

You can talk about it broadly.

Will Curran:

We just don't want to-

Nick Borelli:

I mean, we can do our best. You're right. Something might slip out.

Will Curran:

There's some stuff in there that we might end up spoiling. I don't want to spoil because this is a great show and I think that it also shows like how artificial intelligence can be used.

Nick Borelli:

The data collection. If we talk about data collection, it's going to give it away. You're right. Especially the ultimate like position of what the organization that puts on Westworld is actually doing. You're right. So there is spoilers here for sure.

Will Curran:

Yes.

Nick Borelli:

It's very much like a black mirror episode, done over multiple episode arcs. And it really took the idea of the original '70s movie which was like basically a slasher movie. Like there wasn't a lot of depth to it. I remember seeing the Yul Brynner version of it many times, because I just like all things sci-fi and that used to not be at a lot of content. And it's okay. This is like similar to, I think this is going to be the idea around data collection and automation of what minority report did for online advertising.

Nick Borelli:

Like it saw it coming, 10 years down, 20 years down the pike and gave you a fictionalized narrative version of what it looks like seamlessly integrated into people's lives. Even though the

main basis for the film minority report was about pre cognition and the ideas of, like, do you have, what am I thinking about?

Will Curran:
Choice-

Nick Borelli:
Exactly.

Will Curran:
... and things like that within-

Nick Borelli:
But the filmmakers-

Will Curran:
... time prediction.

Nick Borelli:
... what's great about like most, Philip K. Dick books is that, they're short or they're short stories, so like it gives other people adapting in the ability to put the flavor in and they went deep into the advertising. And as somebody who has worked in the online advertising world for a number of years, like I just remember thinking back, right when this came about and Facebook starts really getting into the advertising came harder and harder, boy, this reminds me of minority report, the idea that they know stuff about the people who they are putting ads in front of.

Nick Borelli:
And like I could tell you as a marketer I was, I mean, I've worked in a lot of bridal shows as an example. Like it's B to C, we buy billboards. There couldn't be less targeted. We're targeting at what? People who drive, who are in certain areas of the... who look up in certain areas of the city. It's real throwing money at the wind and hoping for the best. I bought a lot of magazine ads and designed a lot of full-page at magazine ads.

Nick Borelli:
I've done television as well and that it gives you targets of like zip codes you can kind of miss or certain when it comes to cable advertising, certain channels that have a little bit more demographic information. That's so not targeted. I mean, where I'm at right now, I used to think, man, that's what we target. I could skip the zip code with this direct mailer because these people are poor and poor people can't afford me. Now it's like, no, I can make people who are, like believe certain things, see my information and other who don't believe it not.

Will Curran:

Well, I think you bring up a good point too that like minority report predicted this idea of like an ad lib like, hi Ethan. Not Ethan. It's that says Mission: Impossible character, whatever his character's name is and-

Nick Borelli:

Hi Tom Cruise. You may just as well say that.

Will Curran:

Hi Tom Cruise. Yeah. Hi Tom Cruise. Like here's this ad and people were like-

Nick Borelli:

You're running out of toilet paper.

Nick Borelli:

You should get some more.

Will Curran:

And now Amazon's like, like at CES they announced like all these devices have weight scales. So when they know when you get low, they auto order.

Nick Borelli:

Have you heard about the Target thing that happened like two years ago with the girl, the teenage girl?

Will Curran:

Yeah. So for anyone who doesn't know that that's story, essentially it was so well-targeted they had so much data on this girl. They knew she was pregnant before she had told her parents. Correct?

Nick Borelli:

Yeah. And then advertisement came in the mail for all these things. Since you're pregnant-

Will Curran:

And being like, all this baby stuff. Since you're pregnant or I don't think I said since you're pregnant.

Nick Borelli:

I know.

Will Curran:

It was like, baby products, baby products, baby products. And she was like, "Why am I getting all these coupons for baby products?" And then they realized that Target was so good at it. And that was just based on purchase data. It wasn't based on like they weren't scraping off the social

media. So let's really get into this activation. So this activation was a two and a half hour long interactive experience, at the Las Vegas Nomad for all our event professionals who are curious where they held this.

Will Curran:

And shout outs to the creative agency, Giant Spoon who put this on. And this was definitely a teaser for season three. I've only read this article. I like to be surprised by TV show. So I haven't watched any of the trailers or anything like that. But essentially it leads with that everyone was hearing about this invite to that from this company called Insight. And obviously if you watch the show, you don't know anything about Insight quite yet.

Will Curran:

But essentially the activation happened that they reached out to a bunch of people who invited them to come, kind of similar to South by Southwest. I'm sure it's based on invite or press list or whatever it may be. And essentially what they did is they sent the attendees a survey and said, "Hey, we want to ask you a bunch of questions." And the big questions that if I remember right in this article that talks about is they asked them about like food preferences, name, last name. What other questions? Whether they feel guilt after eating animals, that they feel anxious about the future, things like that.

Nick Borelli:

You got it so right with words like, fear and guilt by the way too, as somebody who writes a lot of surveys.

Will Curran:

Go to like the opposite end of the spectrum of emotion.

Nick Borelli:

Well, it actually including emotion. So not saying, do you prefer this or do you enjoy, not even enjoy, but like would you like this steak or the chicken? It's, how does steak make you feel? How does chicken make you feel? Like, do you get anxious when you have this kind of stuff? And like anxiety questions. Like questions about emotional feelings. It's so important when you're designing things, especially events because, if we're designing behavioral change, then we need to understand what the triggers are. Anyways.

Will Curran:

Totally. So essentially, people took a survey and I didn't read anything about this being a long survey. I don't remember this being like, and no one said like this was like a multi-page. It seemed like it was really simple. So what's the point that they like talk about with one sentence of this whole article? But then what they did is then people obviously were getting really excited to come.

Will Curran:

And essentially what it was, is it was if to take it to a high level, there was a dinner party with a keynote. That was it. But then it got weird very, very quick. So here's essentially kind of how this all played out. So, this guy is walking in line, he's waiting in line and in the article he talks about how a woman walked up to him that he didn't recognize and gave him a big hug and said how nice it was to see you, how his dog was and how his boyfriend by name were doing. And he spent the whole time talking or wondering, man, did I forget that we had met or-

Nick Borelli:

I think that happens to me-

Will Curran:

... like was this-

Nick Borelli:

... 100 times a year.

Will Curran:

Was this going on already? I know. Exactly. It's happened [inaudible 00:16:02].

Nick Borelli:

Would you roll with that? I would totally roll with that. I would be like, that's great.

Will Curran:

Totally roll with it.

Nick Borelli:

My kid has an Instagram account, has 5,000 followers. I live way on the grid. Like people can find anything they want.

Will Curran:

Totally. But the interesting thing is he says, "Or if had the game had begun." Obviously he experienced the entire event. So he had a little bit of recollection. But like, that was definitely, I think the good thing. But he says that, "It quickly became clear that it was the latter." So, in the article of businesses, "Throughout the night, random folks approached me and my coworkers to discuss personal details of our lives, our work, the articles we had written, the changes in our hair color, and in one case, uncertainty whether or not to move out of their current city was warranted."

Will Curran:

And it says that like, "Essentially they found out that the later they found out there was a 600 page script similar to what they did the last time, that was personally tailored for the entire evening." So essentially what they did is they scour the internet for all the information on these people, and were able to build these epic scripts to personalize their experience. So instantly

people were coming up and talking about things that you don't know them, but they know a lot about you. What's your opinion on that?

Nick Borelli:

So my opinion on this is nuanced with the caveat that personally I'm all for it. Personally I don't believe in, the level of privacy that most people believe in, because I believe that every time you engage with one of these platforms, you are willingly giving up privacy to everything that you publish. I believe that the internet and writing on the internet is not a communications' platform like a telephone is necessarily.

Nick Borelli:

I believe it is a publishing platform, in which we engage in their terms of service, that states whatever it states, and oftentimes when it has no price and it offers a lot of great tools because it's paid for by someone else. It comes with a stipulation that absolutely everything that you give there is open for anyone to find out about. So, I just am not scared, nor am I entitled to a product like a Facebook without paying the Piper in the way that they have designed and I have agreed to.

Nick Borelli:

So for me, if you can find it, and it's great. Like I'm all for it. I don't see the fear. Like I don't believe that, as an example that Facebook has at fault for the election in the United States in 2016. I believe that people are at fault. People didn't check their facts. People are easily manipulated. People give information about themselves every day. They didn't go to the voting machines and vote for them.

Nick Borelli:

What they did is they influenced, they easily influenced by playing into their confirmation biases. But, these are all people and they made poor decisions and their votes were not very convicted based on reality and their entitlement of a product that would protect them and help them and do all this stuff and not pay for, in addition to entitlement of thinking that they deserve unfiltered information without having to do any research, led to lazy thinking and lazy results. So, it's the user's fault to me. It's always the user's fault.

Will Curran:

I can definitely get that opinion for sure. I think what's interesting about this too is that, it took, and if you've ever watched Westworld, you probably watch Westworld, if you're listening to this at this point. If you're like, no, I haven't watched it but I'm planning to watch it, you probably are tuned out. But it has this almost, I don't want you to satire like almost like Silicon Valley was a satire.

Will Curran:

But it has this almost bleak look on almost similar like you said, Black Mirror where it looks at the dark side of it, but then says like, this is literally happening. And they kind of did that.

Basically the keynote came up and said like, "Look, you've been given, we have so much data and so much data. What have you gotten? Nothing. Your life isn't that much better." It's like, "Well, we want to strip you of all your decisions and let us decide for you and provide you exactly what you need."

Will Curran:

And so like in the case of like, for example, the guilt about eating animals, essentially people who felt extreme guilt around eating animals, they've provided them like apparently a big gigantic steak to eat and things like that. And, essentially she gets up on stage and says like, "Look, everyone's worried about the future. Everyone's feeling anxiety around technology and stressed about making everyday decisions." And it's like, we're going to basically use that data to make the best decisions for you.

Nick Borelli:

I mean-

Will Curran:

And I think that brings up a good point about like events. Should we be doing this hyper personalization and using this data and like how can data be exploited for the bad side of the events industry?

Nick Borelli:

It's tricky. So we're in the field of behavioral change. If people are, like you can create art installations where the sole purpose is the artist wants to express themselves, in let's say an experience. And in that instance, there is not a stakeholder involved with the expressed interest on having people want to believe a certain thing or feel differently about a certain thing. Outside of that and one way that an experience could happen, the rest of it is someone paying for an event in order to have people come away feeling a certain way.

Nick Borelli:

And in that instance you're saying that they come in one way and you want them to come out another way. And to do that, you can either say, you could do that poorly by guessing as we've been doing for the last, hundreds of years in events where we do our best, but we do a shotgun approach and we treat all attendees like they're all the same. Or you can do it efficiently with as much means as you can possibly gather and understand who is there and what makes them feel good, and what makes them feel certain ways.

Nick Borelli:

Like, for instance, if you want to incite the emotion of, I don't know, embarrassment or anxiety in people, you can introduce elements into an experience that will produce anxiety for different groups of people if you understand what their triggers are. That anxiety could then potentially be utilized by turning people into consumers of specific products. Advertising on television, specifically around the news does a good job of cultivating people who are at the heightened

fear positions in order to then convert them to products that relief of that types of fear either specifically or just through the consumption methodology alone.

Nick Borelli:

Like psychologists work hand in hand with marketers on productization all the time for this. So this is going on all the time. On a broad level now it's going on into a room where you can say that there are 67 people in a room and we know the 67 most powerful, unique triggers for these people. Not only do we know each one of their names, we know some people are creeped up with the name. So we don't tell them their names.

Nick Borelli:

But they feel good this way because wherever you want. Like they just did it as a show of brute force power of what they can do because it's like a fun activation for a television show. But if you're in a real behavioral, you could see you read certain clues about people and determine that some of this stuff might be creepy. So best to not play your hand too hard and let people know how much you know about them. It'd be subtler while others would like the less subtlety.

Nick Borelli:

That's really where I find it funny with this stuff because I think that every one wants personalization, customization and less friction, and more satisfaction in their experiences. And other people are subjectively creeped out by it going too far for them. Knowing where too far is for other people right now in this period where I think too far is a significant number of people, is going to be the trick. And then I think over time that bar will go further and further back to the point where again, minority report where people aren't really squeamish about it at all.

Will Curran:

I think if you have a good point about like what is considered too far too. I mean, let me know what you think about this. But do you think it's okay to say, let's push it too far and survey people afterwards-

Nick Borelli:

Yeah.

Will Curran:

... and say, what'd you think? But the question is, does that create damage within your attendees to them they don't want to ever attend the event again or do you think they'll just be back next year as long as you say like, look, we took it too far. Sorry?

Nick Borelli:

I think that there are ways to mitigate that risk by creating smaller sample groups and focus groups. Like you don't necessarily have to treat your core attendees like guinea pigs. You can have other guinea pigs in the form of surveys and focus groups to be able to put diverse group of people together in a room who represents the different types of attendees, and push and pull

on them and see what will make them go down the mace for cheese and what will make them stop.

Nick Borelli:

I think that, that kind of work is done all the time by the content that you put out in paying attention to your analytics. Your email response rates and segmentation that you can create there to determine what makes people weird. Like you can introduce those same types of elements in email segmentation and see if people, and have a survey that way. So it doesn't have to be all or nothing, and it doesn't have to be apples to apples. But I think like, honestly, the whole idea of Westworld to me, once they had made I guess realization that this is an experiment not for the benefit of those who are coming to the-

Will Curran:

Park attendees.

Nick Borelli:

Exactly. The park attendees or the Facebook users. Like they're the deliverable. What it really made me think of is boy, like the people who attended the park for the last, I don't know, decades or whatever, they're just a focus group. Because not only are they trying... I was like, well, I think they could replace these people and put them out into the world. And they're like, no. They were thinking way bigger than that.

Nick Borelli:

They were like, "How do we change the views of humanity?" And you do that by having a deeper understanding of humanity. So the park were a series of tests to see what people liked and what people didn't, which to me is a live event. I'm like, this is a focus group and a live event. You put people in there, you see what they're stimuli and what turns them on with these heightened experiences that we have at live events. Like you were at key meeting leaders, right?

Will Curran:

Yup.

Nick Borelli:

So you saw Maroon 5, you saw a speaker that made you bored. You saw people that you didn't want to see and you had to try to avoid. You were hungry. You needed some time to yourself, like you had peak, probably like, what do you call it? Peaks that were higher than mine in the last couple of days of like hanging out with sick kids. So you as a focus group of paying attention to your behavior in those three days would produce much better results of understanding of what makes you tick on the higher ends, because the stimuli was so big.

Nick Borelli:

And I think that that's what Westworld was doing and I think that that's what we can do with the live events. It really is the data exhaust of attendees, measuring that and then applying that to understanding of human behavior and then different types of people in order to, get them to do the things you want them to do.

Will Curran:

Totally. I think this brought up this experiment essentially that they did for this HBO activation brought up that like, that we're in this world right now, oversharing stuff on the internet right now. And then when it gets thrown back in you and says like, look, you shared all this stuff so now we know all this about you, it makes you also then go like, okay, maybe I do need to like, be willing to live with my choices that I've made by oversharing.

Nick Borelli:

I had a guy on Facebook that I know who posted a couple of months ago about how he's fed up with the percentage that he got an increase for his wages and that he's going to start looking for another job. Within two weeks he posted, "Someone ratted me out at work and said that I'm looking for another job. Somebody I must seen it on Facebook who were my friends ratted me out and now they're telling me that there's a replacement coming from me in the next month since they have to protect themselves and I'm looking for another job and I haven't looked for another job yet and I haven't found one."

Nick Borelli:

And then this last couple of weeks it was like, "Well, I have no job and my replacement's almost on and I'm done at the end of the year." And all I thought about was, well that's your fault. Like you used a publishing platform to take your inner most ideas and express them out there because you needed vetting and apparently you don't have like, either a journal or people in your life that you can, vent to, to give you the feedback that you need in order to do that. So you published it on the worldwide web, and not to use like antiquated like, ha ha words of like, I was there when there wasn't an internet. So like I recall the idea of having ideas and not publishing them for everyone to see. And-

Will Curran:

Totally.

Nick Borelli:

... I do it all the time and I do it willfully and I know what I'm engaged in. And unfortunately, Facebook came on fast. I mean, I don't think it came on that fast because I had bolts and boards in 20 years before that, but okay. For the majority of humanity, it came on fast and Twitter and Instagram faster than a lot of other integrations happen. Like the year that the phone came out and then the year that most people had a phone was decades apart.

Nick Borelli:

And then the year of Facebook coming out in the year that most people had Facebook, and at least the US as an example, was not nearly that far apart. It was a year, year or two. So it's coming on so fast that you didn't realize, wait a minute, I'm not paying for this. I paid \$25, \$30 to see a movie for two hours. How much time did you spend on Facebook last month or last week? More than two hours. You spent nothing.

Nick Borelli:

And they're also doing pretty well. He's one of the richest people in the world and he's younger than me, which is disappointing to my parents probably. But I think that we're just so much of technology, I always think about it like this, technology is moving at an exponential increase. Our emotional reaction to technology has no ability to move at the same pace. So it's going to happen. It's moving really fast, but we as a people aren't prepared to grow that quickly, how we react to it.

Nick Borelli:

So it's often used for, negative things at first and it evens out, and I think right now is, maybe there needs to be, unfortunately, because we have to be, people aren't all accountable. We need to have a campaign of awareness of what is the data about ourselves, what we are putting it out there and like where we're doing it. Like when you write someone an email and then using a free email service that's being scrubbed, so look for keywords in order to deliver advertising to you or to understand your behavior more and more.

Nick Borelli:

AI, the show gets into and obviously is a big part of the conversation around CES every year. The problem with AI 15, 20 years ago when people were thinking about it is, it's going to be ruled really, really slowly because it takes too long to manually input data into it for it to learn. Cut to social media age where it's like, no, it has so much human data applicable to it. Its ability to learn about us is like, it's completely like you just turn it on.

Will Curran:

I think it will be interesting to see in the future too. I mean, like being a little bit of guessing what it might look like is that, I mean, all it's going to take is someone to create some sort of realistic system that allows you to collect data, scrub the internet and tell you build profiles on people, and then all they have to do is open an API and then say, insert into my registration system. Insert into my C... I'm thinking for the business sample, it's CRM. So then that way when I get up, when someone requests a quote, oh boom, I know everything about them, all their kids, everything I could find on the internet.

Nick Borelli:

Their behaviors too.

Will Curran:

When do they buy it's coming.

Nick Borelli:

What, what makes them angry, what makes them happy? Like I don't even care so much about like if they have kids or any of that stuff because it's just too big of a group. Like get me down to the point of, this is their fears. This makes them trust. Trust and fear. Those are the two number one behaviors that I'm looking for as a marketer of what triggers those things, because I want to be able to do whatever I can in marketing to take you from lack of awareness to trust as fast as possible.

Nick Borelli:

And like that comes through, personalization is a level of trust. Like, before historically you knew someone, you shook their hand, that's how they knew your name. And that took a level of trust and barriers put in place to be in the same social circles, to, you must know somebody. I know now it's all circles and connections and networks, and it's as fast as light. So, I think that like if face to face has been like kind of a refuge from this type of like thirsty things that come at me in LinkedIn. Like do you see like how flimsy some of the stuff that comes at you in LinkedIn is, it's like, hey, I see that you're an entrepreneur. I offer, and you're like, an entrepreneur.

Will Curran:

Hey, we're a couple of groups or like, hey, I see you're in the events industry.

Nick Borelli:

Let me talk to you about Bitcoin and you're like, ugh. I wish I had an email, Instagram and LinkedIn filter that had the word Bitcoin in it, that would just go in the trash. Like it's always some bro that's like, "Hey man, I can get you some creatine and Bitcoin and coach you about it being an influencer.

Will Curran:

Luckily no one messaged me about Bitcoin, but I think by saying that publicly now-

Nick Borelli:

It's done.

Will Curran:

... I'm about to get autonomous.

Nick Borelli:

It's an index. This is on the internet.

Will Curran:

It's done. Westworld's going to be coming up to me and talking to me about Bitcoin now.

Nick Borelli:

It's so terrible. So-

Will Curran:

Is there-

Nick Borelli:

... I don't know.

Will Curran:

... any other insights at all from this creepy as I'll call it, activation-

Nick Borelli:

I love it.

Nick Borelli:

I love it. I love testing humanity. I love seeing the limits. I think where we're at right now, I think different groups would react to this completely differently. So I think it just comes down to, the execution of it and the speed they have, the more time they had to do with, they could probably curate these conversations and make it so no one's creeped out even though they have tons of information because I know who gets creeped out and who doesn't.

Will Curran:

I'm curious to know, I mean, like probably some more information is going to come out of this in the future, but if anyone who's listening knows anybody who is part of this activation, notice anybody at Giant Spoon, give us a shout. But I would love to hear how much prep time they had, their process for which they did it. How did they... obviously they probably hired some sort of acting company that could like really memorize all the data, like-

Will Curran:

Epic. For sure. So maybe we'll get that one over on event icons if you haven't listened to our other podcasts event icons, just go to eventicons, sign up for that one too. But we'll definitely try to get it. And I'm really excited to see where this potentially can go-

Nick Borelli:

What scares you about this?

Will Curran:

... and everything like that. See, this is the problem. I realized that we probably both have similar pains. I was trying to like-

Nick Borelli:

I have fears about-

Nick Borelli:

... macro fears. I don't have micro fears. I have macro fears.

Will Curran:

What's your like macro fear for it?

Nick Borelli:

That we grow as human beings by, being put in positions. We're offered the opportunity to grow by being put into positions where we aren't comfortable, that we don't let things come out of left field that we don't expect. And we have the ability to overcome it. Like the history of humanity is a history of adaptation to, things that it shouldn't have been able to overcome. And if you have a world that is tailored to based on the things that you've already done to give you more and more of it.

Nick Borelli:

I mean, as bad as echo chambers are for, keeping people's minds small and keeping, people's world view small. Imagine if everything was an echo chamber, like everything was feeding into the biases that you've already established, your ability to grow and for us to grow would be diminished. All we would be doing, is having a bunch of... Like for instance, if you always drank coffee and you had a lot of internet of things, items in your house and it would have the coffee delivered to you the exact way you always like it. And you would do is you'd be built into this, never ending-

Will Curran:

This loop.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, loop.

Will Curran:

The unending loop that you're talking.

Nick Borelli:

You'd be living-

Will Curran:

Which is probably basically what the show is talking about-

Nick Borelli:

Right. You're a robot-

Will Curran:

... in some ways. Right?

Nick Borelli:

... instead of what we really are, which is this messy adaptive-

Will Curran:

But what if someone wants that? What if someone doesn't want to change?

Nick Borelli:

I was in this conversation today honestly, like with somebody who is in like a minority group of people who, he was saying that like he literally posted on Twitter, a friend of mine, somebody I know posted that Ricky Gervais' monologue was great. So I blocked them and I said, "I'm curious. Do you fear what will happen from an echo chamber of you eliminating people who don't like the kind of even comedy that you like?"

Nick Borelli:

And that person said, "Well, since people who are transphobic are trying to attack people like me all the time, it's not a preference of comfort for me. It's just distancing myself from people who would do me harm." And I said, "Okay." For me, I'm like, I'm going to prove his position that no one's trying to do me harm. And it's objective ideas that I just see everywhere. So nothing's really like that painful. So like I had a better understanding of that person's position of curating the information that they see in order to only, protect "this paradigm" that they have and not be subjected to what they believe is something that is negatively and hurtful.

Will Curran:

And everyone wants to avoid pain, right?

Nick Borelli:

Right.

Will Curran:

And they want to protect themselves from it.

Nick Borelli:

But avoiding pain-

Will Curran:

That makes sense.

Nick Borelli:

... makes it so like, when you like imagine in your news avoids pain. Right. If your news avoids pain, then you're like, the world is always exactly like I thought it was and it just confirms your biases over and over and over again. So like I'm looking at this kind of a personalization of like, well, you don't want to see this kind of news, you don't want to get this kind of information. It

could trigger you. It could do this, it could do that. And what you'll end up resulting is a pretty safe, comfortable life where you get from A to B as quickly as possible with the least amount of friction as possible. But again, I look at marked-

Will Curran:
Same with events.

Nick Borelli:
Totally. And we do that, right? Like we design events. What we believe the best events are, the best events that understand what people want and we give it to them. And the reality is, what if we designed events that, challenged people-

Will Curran:
To push them out of the comfort zone.

Nick Borelli:
Right.

Will Curran:
That's a good point. I mean, like I think about it like a lot of the events that I've gone to, the best experience I've had pushed me out of my comfort zone in some ways. Like for example, I think I went to see by myself. I don't usually go to events by myself. I don't like being by myself-

Nick Borelli:
I go to events by myself.

Nick Borelli:
It's weird.

Will Curran:
It's only different sides of the coin.

Nick Borelli:
Totally.

Will Curran:
And what's interesting is that, I think it was a really good experience though because I was by myself, I had a lot of time to introspect and reflect on the event and like just see it.

Will Curran:
And I think that really, really helped a lot. And like, another example of this is, when I went to an event in Panama, I literally had no idea what to expect. There's no electricity, middle of the jungle, worries of getting, Zika virus and all the things like that. But when you're there, it pushed

you so far in your comfort zone, it like released you in some ways. And I think you bring up a good point, like if we... and that's what this article basically talks about. If we take away and strip all choice and just feed people into what they want, are they not growing and experiencing new things? I mean, only the audience can answer that question I feel like.

Nick Borelli:

So like discomfort might be something that we consider in our design, and that is as opposite to the ideas of personalization as possible. I don't know. That's where I believe that events are, a pivot point between art and science. Like, I think that it's your responsibility to understand the science of people. It's also your responsibility to create a kind of a piece of art or something that makes people feel something in the way that it expresses what you believe, in order to, get them to somewhere that they haven't experienced.

Nick Borelli:

You could just deliver the same thing over and over again and optimize it. And you'll find that, you would be in this loop of retention potentially. But if you really want to like make an impact, the next level requires you to make a leap of faith and that's not-

Will Curran:

It's going to break your loop and leave the park.

Nick Borelli:

That's it. Leave the park

Will Curran:

I mean like my only fear as you were asking that question, I kind of started reflecting. I think yours is a really good solid example. I probably would add that to mine for sure. For me, I think like I'm definitely on the bleeding edge. I love technology and I'm actually kind of excited for that moment where technology was scary.

Nick Borelli:

Me too.

Will Curran:

Because it hasn't quite happened quite yet, but it also might be like the optimist in me and things like that and the just the general nerd. But one thing that makes me nervous is in this kind of, we're going to capture data and personalize your experience is kind of stupid. Is the in between before, when we don't have it now, when it starts to happen and when it's perfect and when it does its job well.

Will Curran:

Like the crappy time when it's going to be like, Will really is excited and energetic and he's extrovert. And he starts just putting me in front of people for like the entire conference. And I'm just like-

Nick Borelli:
Nope.

Will Curran:
... burnt out by date one and I'm exhausted and he doesn't realize that I have introverted tendencies. Right?

Nick Borelli:
Yeah.

Will Curran:
And things like that. I think like that in between where it's not going to be perfect. However, I think that all the good technologies we'll all get through it and just knowing how fast technology is moving right now like-

Nick Borelli:
We've experienced a lot of-

Will Curran:
... fixed real quick.

Nick Borelli:
... clunky between iterations of things before and made it on the other side. The only difference of this is potentially, this is at a higher level where we're trying to deal with people's emotions. So, the damage of it might be a little bit more severe, but I take your point.

Will Curran:
And maybe not starting with emotions immediately. Maybe starting with things like for example like, maybe it's collecting. So they did like obviously food preferences in this one for example, like maybe it's taking away the choice of food preferences and when I'm hungry or something like that it automatically brings me food. Maybe the next thing is automatically curating the content that I want to go see.

Will Curran:
Then it starts to break into like super personalization with networking. So we purposely force you to get interacted with people that we think that you would want to see and then maybe then it can start to pull on those emotional heartstrings a bit. So it's interesting to see where... I mean, if you think about it, this is a direct, as weird as it is, like I was kind of struggling whether we should talk about some event tech podcast or not.

Will Curran:

I felt this is more about experiences design, which is more appropriate for this and rather the tech side. But this is definitely a direct reaction or a direct effect from the technology that we've gotten. Like the fact that we have so many social networks, we're publishing so much information about ourselves and that we release this information, it wouldn't have been possible like you said, like-

Nick Borelli:

People used to worry about-

Will Curran:

... 10 years ago or so.

Nick Borelli:

... like the government listening on their phone calls and now we take pictures of our kids and we say, Hey, we're going on vacation for a week. Think about like-

Will Curran:

Totally.

Nick Borelli:

Like I used to leave the lights on and make sure that robbers they think I was still there and all this other nonsense where now we just like literally put it out there. But there's that and then there's the element where we're all doing that. So, it has to like, people have to come through quite a bit of data and because we were all like information overload because everyone's publishing and everyone's doing this, like how do you reach people?

Nick Borelli:

And the only way to reach people really is to do the thing that they're basically saying to do, which is to go personalized because it's what grabs them. Like they are publishing all this information. They're giving every second of their lives out to the world and they're also saying, it's very difficult to put something in front of me or for me to spend any time on anything because nothing is speaking to me specifically enough.

Nick Borelli:

So like the user again is begging for all this stuff. And every once in a while wakes up from this dream saying, what do you mean I have to pay for it with the idea? Like I should be able to have a Facebook, not pay for it, have everything about me hidden and not known. It's just like entitlement. Like it's not a real thing. And like there are search engines that exist that are completely closed off.

Nick Borelli:

Outside of Kevin White, I don't know anybody that in the world that uses it.

Will Curran:

Well, apparently it just surpassed being in terms of usage on Android phones.

Nick Borelli:

I'm sure it's big, right? I mean, I just don't care obviously because I live on the grid. It doesn't matter to me. And I just, again, I'm thoughtful in what I put in, I think. I'm not saying that there's things that are in my life that are not private. I just look at the internet, not as an extension of my body but as a separate thing. And I have at least enough of a trigger and maybe that's being an x-ennial and the difference between a millennial and x-ennial because I really believe that there is a difference, is the knowledge and understanding that these are not like water or I guess even, Victorians wouldn't have thought water was like this, but not just something that's always there and flowing and just a given.

Nick Borelli:

It's a separate thing and when I engage with it, I am actively doing it and I understand the repercussions of what I'm doing and I make that choice and I accept the consequences. I think most people don't. I think that they just look at, and it's easier to like use Facebook to say all these nasty things about Mark Zuckerberg and you're like, you don't even understand what you're doing. Like he gave you the means to complain about the thing that you're using to comply. It's, I don't know.

Will Curran:

It's a definitely, I think, a frustrating time too, for sure. I mean, I'm curious to know too from the audience like, what do you guys kind of think about this sort of data collection? Do you think it's making lives better or worse, or what do you think? Are you almost to ask the survey questions that they have some survey, are you nervous about the future and anxious about where it's going to go? And what was the other question? Do you find extreme guilt around eating animals? But I'm curious to know-

Will Curran:

I think we probably... Anything else that you kind of want to wrap this one up with about this activation and kind of what your any last words and thoughts?

Nick Borelli:

I'm excited by stuff like this that really, I think for the rest of us that organizations like this do these things to produce, strong emotional responses. Like honestly any experience activation, live event, et cetera, that is designed specifically with intent to make people feel something that is, that we can all learn from, is one of the most exciting things I can hear about. And I think frankly, this is the apex of what we do, to create an experience that makes people question absolutely everything that they do in their lives and how they do it and stop and take a moment and tend to reconsider what they do.

Nick Borelli:

And then have other people who aren't even there, like think about it and then talk to, whoever's listening to this about. I mean, that's a ripple effect. So like, I talk about this a lot more because like in the last year or so, I've had my eyes opened as far as what the potential of events are. And for me, I probably say this in many episodes, to become the best events or not experiential events. The best events are events that create movements.

Nick Borelli:

And I think this is the potential to create a movement, about, at least chip away at it or start these discussions because again, it went from an experience that people had that was immersive experiential to other people like being so taken back by it that the world went and heard about it, and then for people like us to tell other people about it, that's a movement. That is bigger than just, trying to change someone's behavior. That's trying to change behaviors of people and turn them into change agents. And, so for me, these are the best events, period.

Will Curran:

I agree. I agree 100%. So let us know out in the audience what you think, whether you think is one of the best events. We want to know. We want you to join in our conversation. Obviously that's what this is all about because we want to, spark some controversy in the events industry and get you guys thinking a little bit. So definitely let us know. Nick, thank you so much for joining today on Event Brew and-

Nick Borelli:

Thanks. You never treat me at all.

Will Curran:

... that obviously. Thanks man. And I'm going to look up a crap ton of data on you and then...

Nick Borelli:

I've got skeletons, they're barely buried. So enjoy.

Will Curran:

So than you for joining me. Obviously Thuy and Dustin too wish they could join us, but they're out on events and out in the world doing the real life things because we all have real jobs too. But thank you audience for joining us as well. If you really enjoyed this episode, make sure to rate and review on all your favorite podcasting platforms, especially Apple podcasts. Make sure to subscribe across whatever platform you feel is best.

Will Curran:

If you're listening to this on the website or you're listening it on YouTube and you'd rather listen to it somewhere else, just head over to eventbrew.com and get all the links to Apple podcasts, Pocket Casts, Spotify, all the things. Let us know. We want you to subscribe and join our family,

the Brew Crew and we'd love to see you there. Also make sure to head over to eventbrew.com because that's where all the transcriptions also the link in pictures from this event if you want to see a little bit more about what they did, and see kind of how they did it and dives a little bit deeper.

Will Curran:

We skimmed over a little bit of stuff. But definitely if you want to know more about this event and how they pulled it off, make sure to head over to eventbrew.com and check out the resource links down below. Well, I think that'll do it for this week's Event Brew. Nick, thanks again for joining us-

Will Curran:

... and let's see you guys all next time on Event Brew.

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.