

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

Will Curran: Hey, what's up everybody. It's Will Curran from Endless Events and I'm joined by the illustrious Brandt Krueger in the house.

Brandt Krueger: Hello.

Will Curran: Illustrious. You're gonna get new superlatives every single show, Brandt-

Brandt Krueger: I like it.

Will Curran: ... be ready for it. We're also joined by the amazing Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey of Pathable in the house as well.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Hey, hey, hey.

Will Curran: Thank you so much for joining us, Lindsay, and for those who have not met Lindsay yet, you have to head over to Eventlcons where you can watch the full episode on who is Lindsey and how she actually just became one of our cohost on Eventlcons. Naturally, we figured we might bring her over onto our new show, the Event Tech Podcast-

Brandt Krueger: Oh wait a second. This show is not just going to be you and I for like the rest of eternity just sitting around?

Will Curran: I know. That's why everyone's like, by episode four, they're like, "I'm getting sick of these guy's voices. Let's see and hear some new voices." Well, the topic that we were actually talking about, Event Tech is all about event apps and we realize like a big part of event apps is the actual implementation and use of them and the utilization of them. And when we met Lindsay in Edmonton, we realized this girl's a pro when it comes to this or stuff.

Will Curran: Naturally, we had to bring her on. Let's jump right on in. And Brandt, I know you're stacked full of questions when it comes to the Event Tech adoption side of things. So why don't you go ahead and drop our first question for Lindsay?

Brandt Krueger: Well, yeah. I was on site actually just this last week and it was one of those things where we had a really great event and we had really high adoption rate on the event app, and it was an audience engagement and they were trivia challenges and it was a whole big great success, and they had about 96% adoption rate from the attendees. And so we were really happy with that. But it got me kind of thinking about how often, unfortunately, we still see events that are struggling with that.

Brandt Krueger: They're getting in the 30s or the 40s or something along those lines, and wanted to kind of have a show dedicated to, even though we've had event apps now for quite a few years, dedicated to what can we do to really bring that adoption rate up. Kind of the best practices for implementing these event apps. And so like, Will said, naturally Lindsay, we thought of you and your experience with Pathable. End of the softball things off, maybe tell us a little bit more about Pathable, how you came to the company and really kind of the origins of the company?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Sure. Pathable is a mobile event app company, but they don't just do mobile events. They also do event websites. One of the things about the internet is that everybody uses the internet differently. And that was one of the reasons that Pathable founders, their CEO and CTO, Peter Brown and Jordan Schwartz, wanted to help make that easier, to shorten the path between two attendees. So they were like, "We don't really care what device you're on, whether you use the desktop, whether you use the interwebs, whether you use your mobile device. We want to make a tool that's going to help it make it easier for you to walk into a room because we hate walking into a room without knowing anybody and do better."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: As an event planner, I am like Brandt, I use all of them. And in fact, in my former life, when I planned events all the time, I've used all of Pathable's competitors. I have really great things to say about some of them. I have frustrations with all of them, but it really, it makes you really think about the things consistently from event to event and platform to platform. What is it that you as an event manager want to accomplish with your event and why that's going to be important?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And I think that for us over at Pathable, that's the question we always ask when we're talking to event hosts. As we're coming in, we say we're not the right fit for everyone. I'm in fact, there are times, a lot of times when I get brought onto the call as the event prof talking between the tech planner and the sales guy, and we go, "Okay, but really do you want to do that? Because if that's the one thing that you're completely sold on engaging your attendees with, we can recommend three really good other groups that can do that because we're not going to be the right fit."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so I think from a starting perspective, that's really what Peter and Jordan, Pathable's founders had in mind. They wanted to find a way to think about creating those social networks, those business networks. What are the ways where you can really come in and think about what makes your event yours, but also what makes your life as the event managers easiest? And like Brandt was saying, 96%, that's nuts.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Most of them with 48% they feel like they're doing good and that's just basically because you got somebody to log into it, but they still want a printed program guide and the daily newspaper and then the paper map to go for the guest scavenger hunt in the gamification, and really a good event app, if you're going to spend money on it, should be able to do all of that and your bag of chips.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: That's the place where we're kind of coming in. I feel like I'm circling, I'm circling around the question, Brandt. Bring me back.

Brandt Krueger: It's okay. Because you hit on the first, what I would call the first step, the first best practice if we're going to start laying them out is, is starting with exactly what you're talking about. With what the hell do you want to get out of this thing? What is the goal, what is the purpose? We hit on that theme a lot in EventIcons, and so it's only natural that if we're going to find a through the thread here. So starting with what is the goal, what are you trying to do? And that's really where the subtleties between this event app and that event app really start to come in.

Brandt Krueger: At this point, most of the event apps that are out there have the basics. They've got the schedule, they've got maybe a map, they've got a way to deliver PDFs and all that kind of good stuff. So the subtle differences between them though is where we're really the fun stuff is for me as I'm learning about there's the hundreds of different kinds of event apps that are out there.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Yeah. Event managers blog does that great Bible every year and they do both one in the spring where it's just event apps and they do one in the fall, which is the one we participate in for event tech. And I like both of them as starting points, especially for someone as event planners who is looking for a new tool or to compare to make sure that the tool you're using is really up to snuff because it allows you to go, "Oh, that wasn't a feature I was using before."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Because a lot of us, we start with kind of that checklist, and instead of like starting with our event strategy, we start with our event feature lists, and I think that almost limits us as we're coming in because we're not folding in the overall event experience we're trying to create for our participants. We're not thinking about the conversations we're wanting them to have before they get on site, the interactions and joys and delights and just basic things we need them to do when they are there at the venue with us, and then really finding a way to keep that relationship going both with us as an organization, but also from an attendee to attendee perspective once you leave.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so that full 365 mentality really does necessitate a strategy before you get into the execution plan of a feature set. I think starting with what works for your event, what's missing from your event and will the technology platform we're looking at help or be an impediment is really a great place to start. And then to ask yourself why. Simon Sinek, his golden circle is really I think something that everybody should bring in when they have conversations about event app implementation.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Are you buying that event app because your CEO says, "Oh, I went to this conference and they played this amazing promotional video at the beginning of it and it

changed my life and let's change our participants' lives for the better."? Because if so, you should run that somewhere else and maybe just put it on your website and send it out through text SMS. Don't put it in your event app, if that's the only reason you're buying an event app because your adoption is going to be terrible, and your CEO will be sad because your video will be seen by no one.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Think very big and then bring it down to it and use those tools to enhance rather than just go, "And we did. Checkbox."

Brandt Krueger: Right, right, right. Those goals can be really, really different depending on the organization, depending on the company, depending on whether it's a sales conference or more educational conference, whether it's medical or financial. All of these variables really affect getting the most out of your event app. Obviously, you represent a product and that kind of thing, but to take a step beyond that, an option, I'm not saying it's a great option, but an option is to also homebrew one.

Brandt Krueger: And I've seen some companies try and do that with varying effect because they couldn't find a product that specifically gave them what they wanted and they had a large IT department. Now, that's a whole other discussion for another day. The pros and cons of homebrewing your own event app.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: But I think it's an important one to have because if you have ... I was talking to an association this last week, they actually for registration, their IT guy, and when they're at the office, he has a server that basically runs everything for registration as their database of record. Then they go on site and he rebuilds the server in order to take any last minute registrations. In event app moving into that, "Right, right," you go, "Oh, bless your heart, you're not leaving anytime soon?"

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: But job security, when you think about introducing other technology platforms that have to work so closely with your AMS, with your database of record that runs registration, your accounting function, some out of the box event apps aren't going to be a solution or the integrations necessary for a custom built solution are going to be so prohibitively expensive. Homebrewing is never a good choice and not one that any one of us on the product side would recommend, but it is a worthwhile conversation if that strategically why you're keeping a closed house, think about that and know that you're going to spend money one way or the other, but what's it going to get you for that and know that we won't make faces at you if you really have a valid excuse.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: We'll ask you questions how you did it because maybe we can learn something from you for that we're not doing, but sometimes it does work. It's very small, but it does work.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. Okay, fine. We'll have the conversation.

Will Curran: One of the things I think about too is yeah like you said, it has to do with your focus on what you want to do too. For example, like we used to have this analogy when we were EO Entrepreneurs Organization groups, people would say, "Do I want to buy my office and own the property or should I just rent all the time?" And then always the argument became, "What is going to be your focus?" If you want to develop that up as an asset and you want that to be your focus and the maintenance and all that, then go ahead and do it, but you're going to become a landlord kind of like company, and do same like with our company, we decided not to own equipment, we didn't want to be in the equipment owning business and have that measure. We weren't good at it.

Will Curran: You have to also ask you to your strengths. Are you good at managing these sort of apps? Do you have the time? Do you have a focus? Yeah. The big, like why bother-

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: The innovation drive.

Will Curran: Exactly. Exactly. If you don't, then it's probably not worth it for you to homebrew. But if you feel like, hey, you're a tech company and all yada, yada, yada, then 100%. And there are tech companies out there that don't even make their own event apps.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. And I'll throw down my 2 cents on this too, is that I honestly have never seen it work very well as well. So it's-

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: On time. That was it.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. And here's the thing is that you may have a tech department that's capable of doing this, but then you have to think about it. It's kind of the same question of like, Will, when you and I talk about owning equipment who's going to take care of it. It's exactly what you're saying. Well, you have to then be responsible for maintaining it. You may have the most talented tech folks in the world, but then that's not their primary job is maintaining your event app. It's their main job is being tech folks for your company.

Brandt Krueger: I'm just thinking of a specific example where a major financial company goes, "Hey, we have the guys that can do this. We've got coders, we've got website builders. We'll just do it ourselves." And it was brutal ever trying to get something changed or if there was a bug or something along those lines because that's not their day job. Their day job is to take care of the website for this major financial company, not the little event app that you're using five times a year or something along those lines.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And then going back to the actual implementation engagement conversation, homebrewing, then it's tougher because the knowledge base, the reproducible use cases you have in other events, every single time when you come in and it's a singular experience, it's tougher to help other people jump on board with you. If you have something

where there is not just your attendees using it, a hundred of them, a thousand of it, but like your event app has been used by hundreds of thousands of attendees, which is most of us on the marketplace that are out there doing this every single day, it makes that adoption conversation so much simpler because not only do we have best practices, when it doesn't work like it should, we can help you optimize in a way because more than likely we've seen your use case of why your people are being resistant to using it. And that can also be an incredibly valuable experience.

Brandt Krueger: It sounds like we're landing on, it's worthy of a conversation, but really be sure it's what it's going to work for you before you start going down the road of homebrew.

Will Curran: Yeah. My next question is like, what sort of tactical advice do you have for getting people to implement and start to be able to actually use their apps? For example, I'll start with a simple question. Are there like, must have features that you think get people to actually utilize the event app and that you think are must haves?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Absolutely. I would say our top three is you have to have an agenda. People always need to know when and where they're supposed to be somewhere. And if they can personalize that agenda, then that's even better. And if they can integrate their calendar onto their own personal outlook or G-Cal right there. It's a hierarchy of needs. Can I do it? Can I make it mine? Can I make it part of my life? And right there. If you've answered those three and really every phenomenal event app will allow you to do that.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: The second one is can I connect with other people or other people's products and services that I need to? The two largest reasons people come to conferences are because they need to get something. They need to get CEU, they need to get business cards from other people. They need to get out of the office. One of these three things are going to help them build relationships of some kind or build their knowledge in a way that's going to make them better at their job, make their organization better.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: You need to be offering kind of the what's in it for me factor, where event apps concern so that the same necessary motivator that's driving them to the event, drives them to use the app in order to access and meet the goal that they're trying to do. They're coming for CEUs. Great. They need to be able to scan in and scan out so that just magically appears in their employee record or their member base so that they could go back in and get their license renewed.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: You want them to come and be able to meet with all these different providers so that they can buy a new service to help ... Like I was at the Houston Independent Insurance Agents Conference last week. They wanted to be able to connect independent insurance agents with providers to make their practices better. You want to be able to set up those one on one meetings, you want to be able to set up that easy way to facilitate a

relationship. Whatever your event app can do, that needs to happen, and then finally you want to make it accessible.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: From a feature perspective, it needs to be able to follow them no matter where they are. Don't make it tough to sign in. Don't make it tough to get in and stay there. Don't make it tough to use it on a phone, on a device, on a tablet 'cause everybody comes with different technology skills ... That's the nice way to say it. Right?

Brandt Krueger: Just comfort with technology.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: There we go. I think about it like I used to run a citywide superintendent's conference. One of the joys of the executive director of that conference was he would get the program guide, which when I first started at the company, before we got rid of the program guide was a 500 page four-color behemoth, that he would come in and literally would go through each page and he would apply sticky notes and colored tabs to the pages of the sessions and he would plan his entire schedule around it, and then he would take that and he would have his assistant color bind it into the four days of where he needed to go so that he always had enough going into it.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: By the time I left, we had transferred the 500 pages into an event app. We had taken away the print doc completely and had basically substituted tabs for that. But in order to plan it beginning, once he got on site, he could definitely use his phone. But he still needed the desktop where he could come in on a very large 30-inch screen and go, "Yes, I want to learn about response to intervention," instead of coming in and understanding what it means for classroom management.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: We had to take and basically replicate that feature of what they used to do it into a feature of how they could do it and make it work. So accessibility is key. Making it part of just the agenda, what do I need day to day and then how am I helping people connect? Whether that's discussion forums, social media, private meeting scheduling. It could look different for different groups, but giving people a way to talk together is absolutely the most necessity thing.

Brandt Krueger: The app itself can have some things that are going to help encourage adoption rates. 'Cause it's obviously, it's gotta be a partnership between what you choose for your vendor and you as an organizer. What are the things that organizers can do in the days and months leading up to the event to help with that adoption rate and help make sure that people are up to speed and using the app before they even hit the show floor?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: We always say, think about the tiger team you have inside your organization or company of the ways that you promote and try to attract registrants. You want to go out and even for your sales meetings, you have to do some kind of internal cheerleading in order to get all the employees to show up. They all have to meet a certain goal. They all have to

come. If you're an association that's running an annual conference and they only come when it's on their west coast, then those types of things, your communication team or marketing team has a plan.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: That same kind of plan should be applied to your event app adoption. And if we come into it with that again, 365 overall look at it, then you really can say, "Okay, on day 45 we're going to start this drip campaign," and then it's going to come in all the way through, and once they move from registrants or they go from prospect to an actual registrant from a registrant to attendee, you take them in deeper and deeper and deeper so that they can have those conversations.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: The event manager knows how their people are going to engage. You can always say, "Oh, people won't read their email until three weeks before because that's when they finally figured out that we need to book the air of travel to get to New York." Those types of things, we have estimates from the product standpoint and we have a lot of tools that we provide. Like I have a marketing plan that we always share with planners when they're adopting an event app for the first time that they can then and kind of like take it and layer it over theirs, but they're going to have to adjust it. And then the next thing is really make it easy to consume.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: So many times the know before you go email is 35 pages long. People aren't reading it even without an event app. You want to have an event app for the first time and then tell people about it, suddenly inside the know before you go, yes your adoption's going to not be good at all. And so come early, come often, talk early, talk often and then make friends. You know who your friends or family are that live inside your event. They're the ones who drive you crazy because they're asking you how they can get involved or telling you ways that you might be able to improve it.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Give them a job, tell them to go out instead of telling me where my ice sculptures need to go. Go out and recruit new people to come in with my event app. And so that way you're leveraging communications, not top-down from your organization, but bottom-up from your attendee pool as well.

Brandt Krueger: Dude exactly.

Will Curran: Silence. I mean, I'm just listening and learning through this entire process because to be honest, as an AV company, we don't get to deal with a lot with them, but when we are seeing apps, it's just so funny because it's, again, they either hardly get used or ... I always joke that, as the person who works the event, when a planner comes up to me and says, "Oh, didn't you download the event app to get the schedule or whatever?" I was like, "No, can't you just print it out for me? I just want to have it my way."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Did you just say, "Can you print it out for me?"? Oh, my God.

Will Curran: Granted, like at the same time though, it's because it's like one app. I don't want to be seen on my phone onsite like, look here, that's for someone who's working the event. I also hardly get to attend events as attendees anymore. And the times that I have, I'd have to download the app obviously and I'll utilize it, but I do find that I think web-based stuff, all the stuff you're trying to talk about or is the stuff that I want to see, that's one reason why I honestly love Pathable, and just so you guys know, Lindsay's not paying to be here.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: I'll say nice things about the other event app companies too, we just won't tell Jordan.

Will Curran: Exactly, exactly. And it's funny 'cause I think the thing that was mind-blowing to me on an adoption rate was that when it came to it, I remember the first time I had Pathable, years ago, it was just as like a busy CEO, oh my gosh, I can just have my calendar all set up and put all my means in it. Thank God it makes my life so much easier for sure.

Brandt Krueger: Well, I think a lot of times when we're saying, "Hey, can I get just a printout of that?" It means there's a failure of the app at doing the most fundamental things that an app is meant to do. If I'm in any way feeling like I need a shorter, more concise, easy way to do this, that tells me that it's not worth my time to pull out the phone, open up the app, go into my schedule. I think sometimes apps are good at the basics and other times they're not. And I think that's a fair criticism is you have to take a look at these apps and how they're actually handling the basics of, "I just need to look at the schedule, I just want to know. Is the reception at 4:00 or is it at 3:30?" And some of that time stuff.

Brandt Krueger: And so I think sometimes that's why we still see the folks wanting to have that schedule at a glance on the back of the badge or something along those lines or to be able to, why we're seeing some of the movement towards chatbots, because we want to just be able to ask, "Hey, when is the reception tonight?" And get an answer right away without having to scroll through 50 pages of scheduling.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: But I think from an event scheduling, like as an event planner, that's one of the things that Pathable does, but EventMobi does it too, it tends to find like when they're trying to help you onboard into the app experience, one of the things that I most appreciate when I'm planning events is other people's perspectives on what makes my events solid. And if somebody takes a look at my schedule and goes, "Oh, are you sure? Because we've seen this in a couple of places and we know it's going to be a problem," I think the strong event planner goes, "Yeah, let's talk about why that could be a problem. My snowflakes aren't going to like this, but let's think about ways we can do it."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Because you are introducing something new into the environment. Even if you use the event app before, if your rates from an adoption engagement perspective aren't where you're seeing it, your implementation is failing. And I always think that sometimes

we don't necessarily take those and pull them into the light of like what that would be if I brought it 48% result to my CEO from selling it for my registration perspective. If I only sold 48% of my registrants seats, would they be happy with me?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: No. No, they would not. So if I take that back and I think in then I think it really has to be a two-way dialogue when you're onboarding in and trying to get the implementation right because you can take your event and make it better. The other thing is if you're really, really concerned about the adoption and engagement, bring the help on site with you. One of the best things you can do is say, "Do you offer premium support in which someone from your staff whose life revolves around how to use this event app well is sitting at my registration desk?" and their job is to go, "Did you register? Great. Oh, you didn't. Let's get your password reset." Because a lot of times it's really simple.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: One guy, I was at an event one time, I actually had to help him install his email onto his phone because he couldn't even get his email, which meant, of course, he couldn't get to the merge uplink that meant he could get into the event app. We went in and I talked to his IT department to actually get him past his firewall, and it's little things like that, that will deter an attendee from doing it or they can't log onto the Wifi. I would say probably 75% of most of the conversations we have when we send people on site it's, "I don't even know the Wifi code," and it's simple, but it's a barrier to entry.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so they go, "I don't need it," because they can access everything else they need and then they'll just look off somebody else's from like, "Where do I need to go to get to the reception?" One person is fine, but then one person leads to 10 more people, 10 people leads to 13, and you've got this big problem. It's the things I think that as event managers we take for granted just like we go, "But of course they're going to read that sign." They never read the signs. Sometimes they can't get onto the Wifi. How do we help them get over those simple things and then it will make your life and your job look that much shinier.

Brandt Krueger: I want to come back to that. But first I want to take one step since we're kind of going through the progression of start to finish on our event. You brought up kind of in passing, and I know a few weeks ago at EventIcons, we interviewed one of the planners from GameStop. And in another conversation we had with her just off site off the air, we were talking about how she was using influencers to help kind of populate stuff. As part of the app, they had a social media feed and things like that. And you kind of touched on that as well.

Brandt Krueger: So I just wanted to take one step back to say, one of the things that you can do to help move things along, it's like you said use people that you know, and so they assigned people that they knew were going to be at that conference to start populating the social media wall, to start getting things going. That I thought was another good thing that Go West did. Is I felt like when we hit that floor there was already a conversation going on in the app, and people were already talking about what they wanted to see and what they wanted to learn and it was a nice community conversation going on by the time we hit the event.

Brandt Krueger: I just wanted to make sure that that wasn't lost 'cause I thought you brought up a really good point on that.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: That's something where if you email me, I can actually provide ... Influencers are a huge part of the strategy that we encourage all of our event managers to use. And I actually started doing it back just when I was in association planner because there's always those people in your association who want to help. But maybe they don't have a good role on-site. So we have about a list of I think it's like 2,500 different prompts you can use under different categories. So if you're looking at discussion forums related to your sessions, discussion forums related to your meals, discussion forums related to your main stage.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so we basically give them scripts of how to get the influencers involved. But then also things that the influencers can say back almost like a social response matrix because influencers sometimes don't want to step on your toes though they desperately want to help. And then from the converse side of that event influencers can go too far and you have a PR crisis on your hands, in which case we all go, "Alex Plaxen, come help us."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: But for most of it you can give them kind of the parameters, but that's one more thing as the event manager you have to put together. Look for those partners who say, "Nope, we kind of have a script of the ways we've seen be successful. Take it, tweak it, make it yours. We use the copy and steal method, case it all. And so that's something that if anybody's interested, we can definitely provide that.

Will Curran: I love it. I love how you guys are able to give the prompts to be able to help a lot, because I think sometimes we're like, "Yeah, influencers, we need to do that. That's the new buzzword to use." And then we're like, "Wait, but how do we do it and how do we make it a great experience that isn't like Fire Festival." I want to bring it back onto onsite stuff. Fast forward now since Brandt got to rewind.

Will Curran: Talk a little bit about having dedicated staff onsite to be able to help with the app, to be able to help with adoption and everything like that. Because I found that the shows that I do at go as an attendee, the ones that I end up utilizing the app the best are the ones that have some sort of dedicated staff. Can you talk a little bit about some strategies for having that dedicated staff onsite?

Will Curran: For example, like at Go West, since Brandt brought it up, you were there on site, and I remember they had you go onstage and talk about what the app does and different features it does, and be aware of it, everything like that. What are the sorts of benefits do you get from having a dedicated team onsite?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: There is two or three of them. There's one a) you have a dedicated voice from someone who knows how to use the tool that you've just bought inside and out. You

don't have to teach one of your staffers are your volunteers how to use this thing. And we have quick start guides where you can go in and basically baptize by fire a volunteer if it's something you don't think about. But from a negotiation standpoint, if you're negotiating the cost of the platform, why not negotiate the cost of the staffer?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: The second thing is, is it puts a human face to a technology tool. We want the event app to be a way that'll connect your people and these voices, especially if you're using the influencer strategies, someone from your staff before you get onsite is great, but odds are your adoption numbers still aren't at peak of where you want them to be. If I have a human person there who's not only sitting at the registration desk asking about it, but that person's also milling around your show floor, they're sitting there talking to people off from your main stage. They're out there at your happy hours going, "Oh man, I took this great picture. Can we selfie it together? 'Cause I want to put on the discussion forum for awesome people I met here."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: It essentially helps make the event app part of Y'all, whereas before it was just a platform you use to facilitate the thing, and so that's really valuable. And then that person who's been dedicated on site can come and then during your debrief after the event can probably give you some useful feedback because we make a lot of assumptions about how people use tech tools. It's the needs analysis when you're going in. We think people use technology this way. This is actually according to my history, how people are actually using it. But there's that place in between and that dedicated staffer can say, "Okay, your history was right here, here, and here. Your assumptions were right here, here and here. But did you know this? Cause this is the really cool aha, that the next time we do this event together, you're going to get so much more out of it."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so you've odds on, already seen improved interaction, but then you'll be able to top that so that your board continues to think that you're a rockstar.

Brandt Krueger: This is the point where I have to do my disclaimer that Event Technology Consulting does onsite program management for apps and other event technology. So we do provide those onsite services. I just got to get that disclaimer out there, but we didn't pay Lindsay to say any of that.

Will Curran: I love it. I love how-

Brandt Krueger: I'm a huge fan though. Otherwise, I wouldn't offer those services because I think it's so important to have that human touch on there. And that so frequently, and this is something I've seen on the consulting side, that there was a lot of people that, especially in the heyday of apps, they just wanted to create an app that they could just have people, pay them by credit card and then sit back and watch the money come in, and they didn't want to provide these service part.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, it's software as a service, but I also believe in service as software so that it's gotta be one of those things where if you aren't ... Event folks, we're willing to frequently to pay money to have our hands held, and have things taken care of us so that we know it's being taken care of and it's being taken care of well. It's one of those things that I am a huge proponent of having people on site, dedicated staff, whether that's an independent contractor or someone who works for the company full time, or even just someone who works for the organization that is steeped in it, so that they're able to answer all of those questions and just know it inside and out. It doesn't have to be somebody that's necessarily provided by your supplier.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Although Brandt, I think you bring up a good question there that as event professionals, we often time are completely willing to pay to have our hands held. But I think a lot of times sometimes we don't ask the question of if it's even an option because it feels like it might be scary or it might be expensive. So people are like, "Oh, but well I think I'm an idiot because we can't even just implement an event app." The answer is no, you don't do this for a living. We do. Don't ever be afraid to ask for help and we promise you it's always probably going to cost less than you think it will. And most providers, if you're buying the event app on top of that, there are ways to make sure that that's not going to be the thing that tips you over.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: For us, that's just a service piece. You're buying the platform. We want to make sure that we aren't sacrificing quality there and quality for us is service, just like it is from a tool.

Brandt Krueger: Now, there are absolutely some planner personality types that want to have their nose in it and handling it all themselves and they want a DIY it, and that's why it's great that there are a lot of event apps out there that let you do that. And so hey it is, you pay this amount, go to town and you're not having your handheld and all that kind of stuff. But it's nice to have the options.

Will Curran: I want to start to then go from onsite to post event as well. And I think that a big huge trend is obviously, people are saying we want to continue the conversation. Like we have to say it on this show. We want to continue the conversation we've had during this podcast so you can keep going. And I think it's one of those things where it's a very big ask, "Oh, hey you just spent all this time onsite, now you're about to go back to your busy life and we want you to stay engaged long term."

Will Curran: What sort of engagement strategies do you think are good for continuing the conversations and kind that longterm engagement as they say?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: This is the question that when we answer it, it always makes the companies roll their eyes. We always say, "Have you hired a community manager?" Because your events team needs to be event pros. And most of them, their job is not to manage the community. That lives in your membership or HR world. And so let people play to their strengths

on that one. They need to have a reason to engage people after they come back to their busy lives. And if you're just doing throwback Thursday posts or you're doing kind of ... Y'all seen those questions on Instagram and Facebook. Oh my goodness. Insert a question here or what did you have to eat this morning? Like the things that don't necessarily promote dialog and close networking, but it shows, "Hey, somebody liked my post."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And so think about it from a vanity metrics perspective. Are we really wanting to actually continue the conversation so that the relationships flourish and then we're continuing this dialogue in a way that is impactful until we see each other again face to face or are we saying we want a 365 year community because our membership department doesn't want to pay for a thing to do that or we don't have the money to sustain it? It can't be a pale facsimile of the other. It really has to, again, just like you come in with an adoption and implementation strategy for your event app, it needs to be an adoption and an implementation strategy for your membership or participant engagement after you leave the site.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Because if you don't have one of those, odds are your conversation's going to die by about four to six weeks out. I can only think of one group that we ... Well, now two. SunTrust does it too. There's two of them. One is Burning Man, the big festival they do out in the desert. Burning Man is just one of those where they use competition because there are a globally based team and they all want to outdo each other. And so their community manager is dedicated to ensuring the innovation sparks for their conferences, and that's how they drive that. But if you aren't using that in other places, the only other one we thought of that's a corporation is a bank that we work with.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: They use it as a private communication tool so that their CEO can talk to staff that he wouldn't normally interact with. And that works because of course, the people who aren't on the same peer to peer level as the CEO are going to make an effort to stay engaged with their C-Suite and of course the CEO because he's wanting to walk his culture talk is going to make an effort to keep that conversation going. In some ways, he's serving as the community manager and they just have someone from HR who helps moderate it. But those are very unique instances of ways that you have it. And I think that that's vitally important that you have very serious conversations about it because it's not something that can be half-assed. Sorry. Language.

Brandt Krueger: No, for the vast majority of events, it's extremely unrealistic to expect people to have any engagement with the app at all whatsoever after the event. I think people, once they get done with the event, it goes to their back. It just sits in their apps folder and then they realize it's seven months later and they uninstall it. Other than some very specific use cases, like you said, it's just really unlikely to expect you're going to get any kind of that year round engagement through the event app. It is possible to find it on other communities. Like you say, if you've got someone who's responsible for stirring the pot on LinkedIn or Twitter or whatever the main kind of community seems to be for your attendees, great. But I think to expect that to happen in the event app is asking a lot.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Yeah. But I mean, most of them won't even uninstall the app. What happens when I go on site, there's been a couple of them where I'm there and I'm consistently the person who comes and helps three or four years running now. The old one just revitalizes. It just comes in and like, "Well, I don't even think I've downloaded it?" And I'm like, "Well, let's see. I saw you last year. There it is." And it opens up and it refreshes and then it comes in. If you think about that, it really is out of sight, out of mind. If they don't have a reason to use it, that's vitally important and necessary, they won't do it. So if you want to do that, great. If not higher logic is fantastic.

Brandt Krueger: Since we're talking about best practices and we have kind of made our way to the end of the event, what do you start then looking at afterward? As far as one of the big things that I hear planners concerned about is making sense of all the data now that we've got. We've got all this data, great, now what do I do with it kind of thing. So what can your event app company or companies like Pathable, do to help make sense of all the data afterward?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: What we do, Pathable, they come in and they do a debrief call because we want to know, it's kind of what was the one good thing, what was the one thing we wish we could change? And then here's a CSV of your data and your metrics so that with your goal that you stated when we first became partners together, we met and exceeded or we met and here's an opportunity for growth to do it. We come in to really always have that as part of the onboarding plan, our account team, which they call happiness managers.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Happiness' job is to ensure that you're happy because most people don't renew if they're not happy. And so we always try to tie it back to that big goal that was given to us. And if they didn't have a goal then to the piece where it looks like that the planner was working towards most frequently, because that's an ongoing check in as the happiness team is talking to the event hosts and even other people on site if they have the ability to do that is, "All right, what's making this work for you? What are we missing?" And so that way we can kind of help them correlate that.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: The biggest ones you should look at are did they use the app? If your dashboard doesn't say how many attendees are registered, how many attendees used it? And you can't able to get a percentage out of that, you probably should find a new event app company. If they can't tell you page views of how many different pages reviewed, if they can't tell you how many documents were downloaded, if they can't tell you how many discussions or private meetings schedules were set up, you should probably maybe think about finding something else from an engagement perspective because they're not really drilling down.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Sometimes it can be like Facebook business manager where they throw all of these numbers at you, but don't necessarily provide context. You need to think about like the four or five solid actions you want attendees to take. Did they use the code scanner to sign in for CEUs? Yes. Great. At what percentage rate did they use that? We have a really great

getting metrics starting guide over our blog where it basically gives you some outlined basics of like what's your return on investment, but also what's your return on attendance.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: If I'm coming in and it's not just me thinking about a non-dues revenue strategy because my events are supposed to make so much money per exhibitor, but I'm also thinking, did my attendees engage and get the most out of their attendance so that when I have this conversation in six months, as we start to think about our registration acquisition strategy for the next conference or event, I'm also thinking about those numbers folded in because I don't want to have to start recreating the wheel for, did my event app adoption work?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: We should just be able to take and build on what was successful last year and where we can grow from our metrics we found this year just like registration, just like your event app, just like your food and beverage strategy. It should all work together towards the next piece rather than be disparate.

Brandt Krueger: To bring back full circle, now we're now we're back into, that's a great question to ask when you're looking originally for which app to use. What am I going to be handed at the end of this? Just as we're talking about what are my goals and what do I want to get out of this, you're going to want to make sure that what you're being handed at the end of it is going to be able to tell you whether or not you're meeting those goals. Is it just adoption that you want to get, is it the engagement that you want to get?

Brandt Krueger: Depending on what those original goals were, now we want to make sure that at the end of it you're getting handed a report of some kind that's going to give you measurable rates of how did we achieve those goals.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Yeah. I always say it's funny because a lot of times, like especially since we've added a chart to the Pathable website, about half the time we'll get, "Well how much does this cost?" And we start to ask questions of, "Tell us a little bit about your event." And it's not that we don't have straight package pricing because we do, but many times the research mode of the event planner brain is incredibly tactical and I say that as one. We get into it and we're like, "Well, I know what I'm talking about," and we forget that other people can bring valuable expertise in a way that will help us probably save some money, but also get better use out of the product we're after.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: If you start the conversation from a price only perspective or a feature only perspective, you're only having about a quarter of the conversation unless you know you used and seen us before. In which case it's totally fine to tell the sales team, "No dude, I've seen your stuff before. I just need to know how much it's like price wise so that I can make sure I'm even within the scope of my budget." But use your words. We would prefer more words than less words. Just like when you're talking to us, you prefer more words than less words because it will help you gather the context.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: You cannot hurt our feelings. We are told no far often than we are told yes. And so we literally just want to make it worth your while and if not, we want to give you a time lottery back on your calendar so you can go find the solution that does work. Because it doesn't make sense for either of us to not speak well of each other once we leave. So it's okay to make it about price at some point because price is important, but it cannot be the only instance coming into it. Even if you're not sure what your goal is.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. Will, it's funny. It reminds me so much of what we see so often in AV where-

Will Curran: Very much.

Brandt Krueger: ... you've got planners that cut and paste the RFP from last year, and this gets cut and paste and then that gets cut and paste. And then we take the equipment list that we use this year and we cut and paste that in the RFP for next year. Just trying to get down to that bottom line without having the conversation of, "Well, wait, why do you need that?" And "Why do you need those?" I got bit by that just recently on one of the RFPs I was helping with where it's like I just assumed that that's what they needed because it was in the RFP, and it wasn't until I kind of pushed back and went, "Wait, why do you need that in there?" And, "Oh well, I don't know. It was just in there from last year." It's like, "Okay, you don't need that?"

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, absolutely. It uses your words.

Will Curran: Yeah, I don't think you could have said it any better, Brandt.

Brandt Krueger: Well, I stole it from Lindsay, so she said. She said it best first. All right, I love that sometimes we kind of close things out on EventIcons with the one tip thing. And I think that's something that I'd like to kind of pull through to this show to a certain extent. We've kind of given the folks a lot of the best practices, but if you kind of had to pick one, that's the most important thing that you can do when you're implementing an event app when you're trying to decide whether ... Okay, Let's take it back. Whether it's trying to decide which one, how you implement it, how you do on site. What would you say is kind of the one best tip when it comes to best practices?

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Just like anything else in the world of events, you are building a partnership base. I have had vendors that I've worked with for almost 20 years because I trust them implicitly. I trust that they won't screw me over. I trust that they'll tell me the truth. I trust that they'll tell me when they're not the right fit. And so for me, it's really about that. You are choosing to enter into a relationship because we don't want this to work if it's not going to work long term.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Our goal and any other event app goal out there on the marketplace is to get better at what we do to better connect attendees and make your lives as event planners

easier. And so we want this to be something, it's not where I see you once. It's where I see your kids grow up and help you achieve what you want to achieve. Make sure that the relationship is worthwhile. Have somebody you can talk to with a platform that's going to do what you needed to do.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: And if it doesn't do, it does almost everything but not almost that, go ahead and ask. And we can have those really frank truthful conversations with people we know and trust because we know and trust them, that's okay. Go ahead and do that. And then take that next step towards building that relationship. Everything else will fall in because the dialogue becomes so much simpler. And if you get a feeling on there, we've all been on those demos where you're like, "There is no way I can ask these questions of that person."

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Either ask because you're really fascinated with the platform. If there's someone else you can work with, it won't hurt our feelings, we want to make a sale. But it also work for you because if it's not working at the sales level y'all it's never going to work at the happiness level when we come in to actually help you produce your event, and your production schedule is nuts anyways. why would you add something that's not going to fit inside of that? So choose a good partner.

Brandt Krueger: You raised one more in. I want to throw this one in because you brought up another great one there in your points of everything looks great in a sales demo. I haven't been demoed a single event app that didn't look fantastic when it was being demoed by the salesperson over go to a webinar or something like that. How it works in reality though sometimes does not match to that. Like with everything-

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Ask for references.

Brandt Krueger: Yes. Don't forget to ask for references. Don't forget to say, "I would love to speak to the last few people that have used your product," in a variety of different situations and venues as well because again, it works great when it's one to one. How is it going to react if you do have Wifi issues, how is it going to react if ... One of the things that we struggled with on this last event was the fact that if guests wandered more than five steps away from the convention area, it bumped them over to the guest Wifi, and that would cause some issues with the app struggling because it was looking for a re-login.

Brandt Krueger: It was looking to say, "Oh, now you're on the guest Wifi. I need your room number and your last name," kind of stuff. And that was causing the app to err out because it was hitting that walled garden stuff. Make sure that you're trying to find references, not only references that are similar to you but ones that might be in some challenging environments.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Absolutely.

Will Curran: Wow. I think we should end it on there for sure. I think that's a good knowledge bomb drop right there. This has been just such an awesome tactical episode to be able to have where we've been mainly talking about like trends and bigger topics so far. But this one's been really hardcore and I feel like this is now like the go-to that everyone should listen to if they going to look at an event app. I don't know if you feel the same way Brandt, 'cause you obviously talked to so many different clients.

Brandt Krueger: This is so much exactly what I want to do with this show, is you have to get a little nerdy, get a little tactical. Like you say, I love EventIcons and we're still going to do those, but those are more general interest topics and more general interest things, but I love the idea that we can get here and just under an hour on one single technology topic. So thank you so much, Lindsay, for joining us today.

Lindsay Martin-Bilbrey: Again, thanks for having me, and maybe we just set up a landing page, Will, in that way if there's anybody who accesses this, any of the resources because there's three of them there and a couple of them come from partners we work with that have been a lot of success. Set that up so that anybody who listens to this, you can not only get your CEU credit, but you can also have something that'll make your event a little bit better.

Will Curran: Awesome. Sounds fantastic. We'll link that down below. If you are listening to this right now and you want to catch all the resources that we mentioned, just head over eventtechpodcast.com, you know what to do. Also, be sure to leave us a review on your favorite podcasting app. Make sure to subscribe if you haven't already. You all guys all know what to do. Just go to eventtechpodcast.com the single place. And also we want to know what you think so far. If you have any topic ideas or you have any ideas on how we can improve, just shoot us an email. We're going to get out of here because it is Monday, and we need to get some work done.

Will Curran: We hope you guys all have enjoyed this week's episode of Event Tech Podcast and we'll see you next week on Event Tech Podcast.

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