

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

Brandt Krueger: Hello everybody and welcome to the Event Tech Podcast. I'm Brandt Krueger, Event Technology Consulting. With me this time more as a guest than anything is Will Curran from Endless Events. How you doing, Will?

Will Curran: I'm just so happy again to be joined by the ingenious Brandt Krueger talking about one of my favorite topics in the entire world.

Brandt Krueger: We're gonna have to give you a book of adjectives. Ingenious!

Will Curran: I'm almost at the point where I have to look up some adjectives for sure. But yeah, for those that don't know, Will Curran from Endless Events, a nationwide AV company talking a little bit more about AV as a guest today more than anything.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, yeah, so I'm excited because this is a little bit ... We've got a little miniseries going on here so we're gonna do one episode this week and then an episode next week that's all about AV pricing, and so today we're gonna talk a little bit about how to save money on AV and then I'm really excited because we've got a crossover episode that I'll tease toward the end of the show here today, but for now let's dive into today's topic. We're just gonna talk about how to save money on your AV bill for your events.

Will Curran: Not a big topic at all. Not a big topic at all.

Brandt Krueger: No, no, no, just a little thing. It's only one of the most expensive parts of an event. So, saving money on it, no big deal, right?

Will Curran: I mean there's definitely a lot of room, I think, for education on this topic and I feel like almost every single topic we ever do related to AV comes back to some sort of way of understanding costs or ... I feel like it's also the number one question that we get. It's either the highest rated webinar and most attended webinar we've ever done is how to negotiate prices for AV and I think number two is, yeah, like tips for saving money on AV.

Brandt Krueger: Right, and probably rapidly followed thereafter by why is AV priced the way that it's priced?

Will Curran: Exactly, exactly, and we've done a tone of education and I'm sure as we're going along I'm gonna be searching through all the blog posts and whiteboard Wednesdays that we've done on this topic, but we figured that if you're tuned into the Event Tech Podcast, I think a great stab at how to save money on AV is a great place to get everything started.

Brandt Krueger: Well, and that's kind of where I wanted to start, is for me, one of the number one best tips as far as how to save money is to start to get educated, and so I know that's how I kind of got into doing some of these podcasts and webinars and things like that and I know that Endless has obviously been producing content on this for years as well and that's kind of how we started getting into each other's orbits, is talking about in a transparent way how do we ... how does this stuff get priced? How do we save money? How do we make sure we're getting the equipment that we need? And for me, a lot of that starts with education.

Will Curran: I can't agree any more. I think that there's a reason why we went into this space around AV and content for AV, is that we realize that there's definitely a gap between the vendor knowledge and the client knowledge. Sure, occasionally we talk to clients and have clients who are really well knowledgeable and that's amazing and I can't tell you how much easier it makes their lives and also makes our lives. Right? When you go in to buy a car, if you have no idea what you're gonna be talking about, you tend to feel like you're always being ripped off. But if you understand what you're doing, you tend to know who's ripping you off and who's not ripping you off and you have a little bit better knowledge, and I think that's the thing ultimately too, is not only just saving the money on that side of things but it's also about the comfortability and the smoothness of the process.

Will Curran: It tends to be, and I think we talked a little bit about ... Gosh, we talked about this on The Icons a couple weeks ago but the idea, RFPing things out as part of commoditization, and it's the idea that sometimes when you don't understand what you're doing, you oversimplify it and it creates this gap of knowledge that can create issues where you're not getting what you need or you're getting too much of what you need and all the sort of things like that. So, yeah, I can't preach enough for people to get educated. I'm definitely gonna self plug here on this one because we are trying to be this space for people to learn about this, but definitely if you aren't already, just go to the Endless blog, subscribe and just go in the search bar and type in "save money on AV" and I just did this just now.

Will Curran: We've already written a blog post on how to save money on AV. I realized we've done an Event Icons episode on how to save money on AV< so this is definitely an area ... and I still feel like there is so much more to cover when it comes to this. Don't hesitate to go out there and teach yourself these things and use the tools that are in front of you for sure.

Brandt Krueger: Well and I think we hear this all the time where someone is like, "Well, I'm just not techie. I just can't learn this stuff. I'm just not capable. I'm not a techie type of person," but for me it's kind of like learning a different language. You never hear someone say, "I'm not French so I could never learn French," you know? It's one of those things where there is a language and it just takes a little time and you don't have to become fluent overnight. You can learn the basics and you can learn how to say "hello" and "where's the bathroom" right? In a language.

Brandt Krueger: So it's the same kind of thing with AV, that you don't have to learn all the model numbers and all the different kinds ... That's why we have technical directors, right? So the people can know you need this kind of model of mixer and this kind of light or that kind of thing. So-

Will Curran: Totally.

Brandt Krueger: Just learn the basics. You don't have to go all in.

Will Curran: And I was gonna say too, I think a suggestion I would have for everyone that comes to this too is don't be afraid to also get a guy, right? Find your guy who's gonna be your techie person. If you're not techie then find someone on your team. Just like I'm not big on finance or let's say for example I don't ... So I have a finance guy. Someone I trust who can help on this sort of stuff, and I'm gonna plug him because he probably ... I'm okay with self plugging but I know Brandt won't do it as much as I do but Brandt's kind of ... Basically you do this essentially, is where you come in as that guy, that third party person, to help evaluate AV bids and help translate things and things like that, and I think that was one reason why I loved what you did and again, why we kind of clicked so early on is that you got it, that sometimes you just need a translator. If you aren't ready to learn the language, get that translator.

Brandt Krueger: Right, and honestly it's one of the reasons that I started working with the event leadership institute on the class that we do there. So we do an actual class. It's a five week class. Couple hours a week online on technical meeting and event production and it's not aimed at someone who wants to get into and be an AV person. It's designed for planners and other executives or admin assistants. It's the people that just want to learn more about it and just kind of add that to their toolbox. Not necessarily want to do it for a living but just be able to learn that language a little bit.

Brandt Krueger: If anybody does want to reach out to me, let me know and I'll get you a discount code on that class. So that's as far as I'll go on a plug.

Will Curran: I love it, I love it, and actually to give it an extra plug, I feel like we're plugging heavy hard on this one today but I promise it's not on purpose but I also fully, truly endorse that class too and I don't get any kickbacks from Brandt so don't worry, but I actually put my employees through his class as well because I think that it's such a great job at educating, taking the complex thing and making it simpler, so I'll stop right there. Let's pivot then, I think ... So people, now they're like, "Okay, I need to get educated. I'm ready to get educated." Let's may drop some of our favorite tips for saving money and if you're okay with it, can I jump with number one as one of my favorite things to do?

Brandt Krueger: Go. Go man, go.

Will Curran: So one of my favorite things to do is if you don't have a guy or you aren't ... You're trying to get educated in this, check out and try this process that we do at Endless called a quote walkthrough and this obviously requires that your AV company is, A, willing to do this, but B, also willing to educate you properly and be a great partner, but I'm a big fan of that actually happening versus not. But basically always ask for what's called a quote walk through. It might sound like it's gonna take a lot of time and it might be like, "I just don't have another hour in the day," or "I have to do this quote walkthrough across five or six different bids that I'm getting," but ask your AV company to sit down with you on a screen share or in person and walk you through every single line item of the quote.

Will Curran: Explain what it is in simple English. "Oh, this is a JBL V or X932 LAP," which sounds crazy, but instead say, "Hey, this is just the main speakers. They're the ones who are doing the highs and mids, and this is the JBL VRX 932 or 9 ..." whatever the model is, "918 SP. This is the subwoofer. It's gonna make a little bit of bass." Things like that. If they can explain it in easy terms as they walk you through it, you will understand what's on their quote but also as well you'll start to learn model names. What certain things do, and what's great about when you do these quote walkthroughs is you can kind of go with your checklist and be like, "Okay, so now I know you're providing this while the other company's providing this," and if something's missing, you can say, "Well, what about the confidence monitor? I saw you guys didn't have one on the quote." "Oh, you know, we didn't include one because it might have pushed it over budget." Well, the other company's providing ... Can you include it?

Will Curran: Now you're having really well educated conversations about your quotes rather than getting it and spreading it across your desk and being like, "All right, let me play process of elimination. Let me try to guess what all these things are," right?

Brandt Krueger: Or worse, this one's cheapest so...

Will Curran: Oh yeah, this one's cheapest. We'll just go with it. Yeah. Whereas oh man, there's a ton of things missing, right? So definitely ask for a quote walkthrough.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, to key off that point and just to emphasize it, this is something that I try to do, right? So here I'm supposedly someone that knows about this stuff and I still like to get that walkthrough because it's something ... When you hear it through their words, of "This is why we put this in, this is why we put that in," it helps you learn their mindset and where they think your priorities are, which maybe they are, maybe they aren't. So even though I'm going through and lining up the AV bids and as much as possible trying to look at my apples and oranges, it's still a great idea to go through and have that conversation. So, a great tip there.

Will Curran: Yeah, absolutely. I think one interesting thing to do about it too is that I think that it really will show the character of the person, your sales person or your account executive that's working with you too because if they're able to simply explain it and they really understand it, then they're gonna be able to teach you really easily but if they're so technical and they can't

explain it, they might be trying to rip you off, right? Or better yet, you might think that, hey, this person doesn't think that I should know how to do this. It also will show the value of time for them. I mean, right? You want to work with a partner who's gonna help educate you the stuff. You're spending so much money on AV. Like we said, it's one of the biggest expenses. Why not get an education for free with it as part of it?

Will Curran: I don't know many great AV companies out there that aren't willing to do this and when we talk about this stuff in our education, I know so many AV companies say, "I just wish I could spend time to do this sort of thing with my clients." Even when I do RFPs, and it's not a part of the process to say, "I'd still love to walk you through the quotes. Can we please set up a time?" And I can't tell you how many times that we get declined, that they don't want to take the time to do it, and then let it be known that most of the time those people come back the next year and say, "We're probably just gonna end up going with you on this one because we trusted your process and we should've gone with your process in the beginning."

Brandt Krueger: Right, and I'll tack on one more thing on the quote walk through, and that is ... I just haven't found a good digital way to do this because it's just so easy to do. I actually like to print out the RFP and the bid, and so as they're walking through the bid, I like to check off the things on the RFP. So we're able to ... So as they say, "This is what we're gonna have in the main room," great, we check that off on the RFP, and then you're able to go through and see what might have been missed.

Brandt Krueger: It happens all too often where they just didn't see a line or there was another room that was earlier on in the RFP and so they have all the general session stuff in there but they missed this one room or something like that, so being able to kind of tick things off one at a time in the RFP and then go back and look at the RFP and say, "Oh, now what about the Smelden Room? Did you get the fact that we needed 72 microphones in there?" You know, that kind of thing.

Will Curran: Do you give them a chance to revise it then at that point, to edit?

Brandt Krueger: Yes, right. Yeah, and so a lot of times I've already kind of seen what's been missing but sometimes when you look at something too long, your eyes just start to glaze over and you realize, "Oh, no, they didn't address this. That wasn't in there," or 99% of it is but they forgot the confidence monitor or something like that.

Will Curran: Absolutely and I think as much as we want to commoditize AV and believe that there's robots that are building these quotes, humans have to manually drag and drop every piece of equipment and think about it and as much as you can have the greatest production designers, quality assurance checks, all those things like that, sometimes things just get forgotten and that's ... I mean, one way to avoid extra costs is that a lot of times the biggest costs that come in to events are last minute additions.

Will Curran: We're not talking about the week of, "Oh my gosh, we need to add a couple extra monitors." We're talking we're on site and you forgot to mention that, "Hey, we actually have ... we added a speaker at the last minute." Okay, now we gotta rush a microphone over. Now you're paying three times the cost it would've cost, right? So, avoid those last minute costs for sure to make your life a lot easier. I love that RFP example and you know, I definitely think that I'm a big fan and I'm not sure if this really helps to save money as much as it helps educate and give people fair business chances, but revisions are always great too because sometimes a company will come in and say, "Hey, this is our quote" and then you come back and say, "Well, there's another company that's coming in cheaper but I really like working with you guys."

Will Curran: A lot of times the AV company's really gonna go to bat and be like, "Okay, you obviously want to partnership with us. Let me make the addition." So I always love being able to come in and make additional revisions and going at bat because if I really want to work with a client and I feel like I can make value and we're not that far off, I'll make it happen.

Brandt Krueger: So I'd like to throw out kind of the next one on my list based on something that you said. We danced around it a little bit in that last one about lining up AV bids and talking through multiple bids with multiple people. That takes a lot of time but it's also one of the ways that I think is one of the easiest ways to start saving money, is making sure that you're getting those competitive bids. There are an awful lot of planners out there that still just get the quote from the in house and go with it. You know, flip to the last page, see that very large number and go, "Well, I guess and it says somewhere in my contract that I have to use them," which we'll have a whole section on negotiating, so I'm just gonna put a pin in that.

Will Curran: Terrifying.

Brandt Krueger: For now. But for me, that's kind of my next biggest thing is making sure that you get at least one more competitive bid, preferably more than that.

Will Curran: For sure, and as much as me as an AV company wants to say I love working with clients who aren't bidding us up against anybody else, I'm always down to be held accountable. My biggest feedback I think I have as a vendor is just make sure that you're doing it apples to apples. Give chances for revisions, and to be honest, one of the best things that you can do, black out the name of the company, black out all the pricing, show the equipment list, allow us to look at the equipment list and tell you what's different about it. I will happily ... I will admit this on air, on recording. I'm happy to lose business when someone's providing great quality equipment, the exact same labor staffing schedule and they beat me on price. I'm happy because it means they figured out how to do this more efficiently than me and I deserve to lose the business because I need to figure out how to do my business better.

Will Curran: The hardest part about losing business is when I have no idea what we lost to and that thing can be not the same thing I provided. It could be worse quality, or it's gonna ... or the

worst is that I'm gonna underbid it and they're gonna hit you with the invoice afterwards which is just the most unfortunate AV practice right now I think.

Brandt Krueger: Right, all the little add ons, add all the little ...

Will Curran: Yeah.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. Batteries, tape.

Will Curran: Oh hey, you forget the competence ... Yeah, tape. Oh my gosh. "Oh, we only budget exactly for your schedule, so now we recommend you add a little bit of buffer and that's gonna be overtime so therefore each day that's gonna increase your budget by 25%." Oh my gosh, the worst. But feel free to black out the quotes and I'll say it too. It says it on my contract, you can't technically share this quote but I will totally recommend this as a practice, is black out all the names, black out everything you can and just show the equipment list or even just copy and paste that equipment list, and that is amazing because I can look at it and say, "Oh, just so you know, that's not a good mixer. I don't recommend it. Here's the issue you might run into," and again, it's educating you back on doing it. I know it takes a little bit more time and it doesn't seem quite fair sometimes, but to be honest, again, if someone is truly doing a great job, I'm happy to lose the business.

Will Curran: But I admit most of the times because it's so convoluted, we don't lose business based on that. We lose business based on underbidding or someone providing a lower quality show.

Brandt Krueger: And you take that with a grain of salt obviously, right? You're competing against somebody so you would want to take your comments maybe with a little bit of a grain of salt but I want to be clear that we're not talking about necessarily doing that for the RFP. We're talking about you've already sent the RFP. You've been given a bid by somebody else and you want to just show it to a third party or whoever to take a look at the gear, right?

Will Curran: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, or like ... Yeah, taking the quotes and saying ... It obviously comes down to the relationship that you have too as well. Yeah, I mean, if you are just going blind bid and that's what you want to do, that's totally cool but what I find is that a lot of times people do crave to have the quote walkthroughs and the relationship and that's where Endless's kind of mentality is too, is let's make the process fun, exciting. Let's make it enjoyable, educational and not just make it a, hey, straight bid, this is where you're gonna go.

Will Curran: But yeah, to be honest, if you're looking to do this truly the perfect way, is yeah, send out your RFP, have everyone send it out. Then have a third party review them and explain what's different and maybe have that third party talk to each AV company about what their choices were and that's ultimately ... I mean, that's truly the best way to do it but a lot of times

people can't either can't afford a third party or they don't think they need a third party and that's where I just recommend a lot of times we will provide feedback on other people's AV quotes.

Will Curran: My big thing too is again, I come from a place of honesty and transparency, not from just truly trying to win the business, and people ... Many of our clients will totally let you know. There's tons of times where we'll say, "We just can't do this business for you. We can't beat their price," and that's the kind of person I hope that you want to work with rather than just someone who's just trying to win the next piece of business.

Brandt Krueger: Well, I'll tell you, the reason that I wanted to clarify that is because kind of the next one that I want to throw out is not cutting and pasting equipment lists from previous years. So, while you were talking about blanking things out and showing them, we're talking about that's for that year, but one of the things that I always do when I'm working with a new client is when I start to see stuff like that, I remove any references to specific equipment, any references to specific types of speakers or projectors or things like that. I might look at the specs and just say 5K minimum or something like that. So, 5,000 lumens minimum for this room but I'll remove any references and this is something that we'll get into ... I'm trying not to tease the next week's episode too early but I'll just say ... I'll preface it that I have dealt with RFPs where clearly this was cut and paste from the previous year.

Will Curran: Totally.

Brandt Krueger: And once you start pushing back a little bit on that and say, "So, do you really need this in each one of those breakout rooms? Do you really need this in each one of those breakout rooms?" With the stakeholders, so not even necessarily with the planner but when you actually get in the room with the people who know what's going on in those rooms, that's when you can really start to get answers to your questions and if you get locked into cutting and pasting of equipment, the AV company is gonna try their best to provide that or something very similar to it and I would much rather get their initial take on, "Okay, we've got a room this big with this number of people in it. It's a general session. What do you think we should have for sound?" That kind of thing rather than locking into specific types of gear.

Will Curran: Totally. I think then that you definitely need to make sure that you have someone to evaluate apples to apples then at that point because somebody can just ... Everyone has their own opinion I think based on what equipment can be going so that's my only cog that I have. I agree with that as well. I can't tell you how many times that I've seen it where we take the bid from last year and kind of copy paste it and let's say for example one company wants to do it big one year and let's say their LED screen for example is free and they're like, "Hey, I want to get this out so I have pictures of it to start selling to other clients. I'm gonna throw in an LED screen for like no money at all, right?"

Brandt Krueger: Excellent point and that's why you can't just cut and paste stuff. Yeah, exactly.

Will Curran: Yeah, and then the next year it's like, "Oh, we want an LED screen," and we're like, "You cannot have that in your budget. They just gave it to you for free." Well we got it for free at this point, and that's something to keep in mind is it kind of creates this rat race of better gear, better gear, better gear, and that's what we see a lot of times too in the industry events too, like a lot of these bigger shows where people are donating, it's, "Oh, well they provided it last year. Why can't you?" And it creates a really dangerous slope I think to go down, and I definitely agree, yeah, not every single venue is the same. The needs change year over year. Just make sure that you have someone to compare it apples to apples, and one thing to always keep in mind is that your AV company should always question your RFP 100%.

Will Curran: If they aren't having asking questions, then they're just becoming an order taker and yeah, if they just take the order and it gets in price, that's great and all but what happens if that's not exactly what you need or you're overspending? I've seen it where we've come in and said, "Well, is this what you really need?" And they go, "Oh, no, we don't actually need that." Be like, "Cool, well we just saved you an extra 10 grand off your quote. Sure, we're gonna be way under your budget. We could've filled it and gotten it up to that point so we could have made that money but you don't really need this," and we've been way under many times and I think that's the place you want to be in, is that you're getting exactly what you need.

Will Curran: Okay, let me try to think of another tip off the top of my head as far as to save money on AV. I think another thing to keep in mind when you're looking at it is saving money is that also quell expectations with your stakeholders. This is a new one that I'm kind of thinking of, is that a lot of times that you ... we come in here, we want to obviously have a better stage than last year, a newer design, things like that. But we all have those stakeholders who see something crazy and say, "I want that," but they have no idea what the cost is associated with it.

Will Curran: The biggest way that you can save money in that situation is to not say yes immediately and to involve those stakeholders in the conversation with the AV company because I've had it where people have said, "Oh yeah, we want lasers." Okay, do you understand what goes into having lasers for example? It's really expensive for a really minimal effect. Instead, you can do this for the budget and yeah, it's not ... I'm doing air quotes right now because you don't have video, "lasers", but it looks like lasers in cool crazy laser beams.

Brandt Krueger: Laser beams.

Will Curran: Laser beams. So that's something to kind of keep in mind but I tell you, I have clients who could save so much money if they just quell the expectation of the stakeholders and we have conversations with them together rather than, "Okay, you're the event person on the team who has to then present to the director, who has to then sell the vision to the president of the organization," right? And then come all the way back down, and a lot of times that's where money gets spent in useless places.

Will Curran: For example I have a client who's always looking to do something different and one of the examples they said was, "Hey, we want to have a runway," and we warned them. We said, "You are not gonna utilize this runway. Runways get used for fashion shows because they have people walking up and down them all the time. I don't know any presenter who will properly use a runway let alone work in the ..." I know people who work in the round but not in a runway. "Nope, the president wants a runway," and we said, "You're going to waste money. We're either gonna have to ..." In this case instead of spending more money, they want to keep the budget the same so we end up stretching the budget, so they end up getting less of a visual main stage and to add all this budget for lighting.

Will Curran: Well, in worst case scenario too is you're gonna end up spending money on something that you're not gonna utilize. The way this would've been fixed is that instead of the conversation just being idea thrown down and brought down to the chain to the AV company, bring everybody together and make it a partnership. So that's a little bit more of a rare scenario but I notice a lot of associations are that way because we want to make sure everybody's really happy. So just quell the expectations of your stakeholders.

Brandt Krueger: Well and you told the story a couple episodes ago about trying to put an Alexa on stage and all the hoops you had to jump through to make it seem as if the Alexa was actually responding and stuff like that.

Will Curran: Want to know something really funny?

Brandt Krueger: Yeah.

Will Curran: That's the same client.

Brandt Krueger: Okay. So you had a runway and an Alexa on ... Okay, nice.

Will Curran: Yeah, basically.

Brandt Krueger: Helicopter lands and ...

Will Curran: Yeah, helicopter, drones. It's just one of those things where it's like yeah, the expectation's gonna just get a little crazy, so I'm just gonna keep that in mind. Let me give a bonus one because that one's hyper specific, I just realized. I think the next thing to do to save on money too is accurate schedules. This is another area that I save clients a lot of money on when we actually do this, is that when you are going into bidding your AV, have the schedule built out with your breaks. When do you need the AV company there? All these things like that. Don't just say, "Hey, our conference is from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM." Okay, I need to know, is there an hour lunch break I can walk away from? When's the AV actually being used? Because a lot of times what ends up happening in cost is related to extra billings afterwards for inaccurate schedules.

Will Curran: So for example let's say that your event is from 9:00 AM to ... Let's make this easy, 2:00 PM, which is a nice little five hour block right there. Well let's say for example you didn't account for the fact that you need the AV company to come in an hour beforehand, right? To set up everything, turn it on, get everything warmed up, get everybody miced up beforehand, right? Okay, so an extra hour you didn't think about. Then let's say everybody leaves the ... The event ends at exactly 2:00 PM. Well, the AV company doesn't just like, okay, stage ends. Button off ...

Brandt Krueger: Fire it down, turn it off.

Will Curran: Walks out. Yeah. Exactly, right? They're gonna sit there, play some outro music. They're gonna sit there, make sure ... Then they also need to talk to you about what does the next ... today, tomorrow look like? Da, da, da. We're talking about a multi-day conference, right? So that's gonna be another hour, right?

Will Curran: So we have two hour rehearsals-

Brandt Krueger: Because the CEO wants to come in and run through a couple things.

Will Curran: Absolutely. People are doing better job of rehearsals and recognizing they need rehearsals but if you show up and say, "Oh, by the way, can you come in an extra hour early tomorrow?" What ends up happening sometimes is obviously that was a five hour block but let's say it was a 10 hour block. Well now you're pushing into every hour after 10 hours is now overtime and time and a half, and then because that's those two hours being added up for the beginning and end, let's say you need to have additional rehearsal time coming on top of that, now you're pushing it at a double time and that's where your budget gets out of control.

Will Curran: What we find a lot of times is that this stuff doesn't get shared and this expectation of, "Yeah, you're probably gonna need a little bit of buffer time" doesn't get shared so therefore it gets added in at the end for that extra invoice and it's boom, it's a huge overtime bill, and we all know overtime can get really, really, really expensive, and we're not ... Even for small times where the AV company has to stay a little bit later, it's always at least \$1,000, \$2,000 and that is not something you want to bring back to your stakeholders and say, "Sorry, actually we went over by two grand." It's not 50 bucks, right? Like, "Okay, cool, let me just use the credit card to pay that off." It's like I have to get approval for that. So make sure that you're sharing accurate schedules with your AV company before you sign the quote, before you sign the quote.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, yeah. That's huge. So yeah, the more accurate your schedule is from day one, the more accurate your final bill is gonna be. Being realistic too and being honest about these things. I see this a lot with annual events where because it's their annual event, the people, the planners, the CEO, all of the execs, they're willing to run and gun for 24 hours a day for three days straight because then afterwards they take a week vacation and they recover and they go back to work. So they're willing to put in ridiculous early hours, ridiculous late hours in

order to do that, but, you know, for the AV folks, this is our day job, right? Your big annual event is our Tuesday and so it's one of the things ... That's why we've got rules for overtime. That's why we've got rules ... Here's one of the big gotchas is turnaround time.

Will Curran: Oh my gosh.

Brandt Krueger: That's a huge one that people don't think about which is-

Will Curran: I just did a Whiteboard Wednesday on this.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah. So turnaround time for those that don't know is ... Think of like an airline pilot, right? They're only allowed to fly a certain number of hours before they're required to take some downtime because the human body just can't work that long before we have to take a break. So turnaround time says that we're gonna break and you have to have a certain number of hours off before you're going to bring me back for another session. So all of a sudden now, though, your rehearsals start going late into the evening because you had dinner and then you had awards and now we need to rehearse for the next day and the CEO wants to go through it one more time before the next morning and show starts at 6:00 AM so we've got to be there at 5:00 AM and all of a sudden it's midnight. That's when you run into turnaround time where ...

Will Curran: It's typically eight hours is the gap you need.

Brandt Krueger: Right, because you need someone to be able to go home and go to sleep and get a few hours of sleep and then come back to the site. Especially a lot of times you've got people that are local so they're literally driving home. They're not staying in the hotel. So you need to make sure that they've got a certain amount of time. Now, the reason that can be such a biter is so, okay, we planned on a really long night so we had six hours of overtime to get us to those late night rehearsals, and then our next day, we'll be done by 2:00. Okay, so no big deal, right? But if you violate that turnaround time, the entire next day is overtime.

Will Curran: Which is like crazy. I remember the first time that we were setting up labor rules for our team and things like that. I was like, "Oh my gosh, that's crazy" but then you realize usually when this happens it's not just, "Hey, we pushed 30 minutes." It's like usually they are gonna get three hours of sleep.

Brandt Krueger: Right, right, right.

Will Curran: And it makes sense.

Brandt Krueger: Yeah, and again, these rules are there for a reason because your big annual conference may be your one thing that you're willing to stay up stupid late and get two hours of sleep and come back, but then again, that's our Tuesday. SO the human body just isn't capable

of doing that day in and day out, so these rules exist to protect AV people from having to do that all the time.

Will Curran: Totally. I'll link down below into the show notes to our Whiteboard Wednesday where I explain this a little bit further as well to go into a little bit of a deeper dive for sure, but understanding those labor ... not laws but sometimes they're labor laws, but labor rules and understanding your company's AV rules is really important. We had to do it as far as we had to start putting it in our contract because even though this stuff is pretty common across AV companies, people would always be shocked. "So wait, overtime exists after 10 hours? I don't understand that." So we started putting it in our contract and you wouldn't believe how many people say, "Well, we want to ax that out. We want to get rid of that," and I say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, the way we set it up is we scheduled out, so according to your schedule, we're good to go."

Will Curran: As long as the schedule doesn't change, we've also included a little bit of buffer time. That's one of my big bonus tips as well is ask your AV company to include a little bit of buffer time because we all know we're never gonna fall on schedule, but we always tell people, hey, this is where the rules are and this is where it has to be. You have to understand where this can go if things get out of control. All right, let's move-

Brandt Krueger: It goes back to just being ... Just to bring it all the way around, it goes back to having that accurate schedule.

Will Curran: Totally.

Brandt Krueger: So if you know you've got that type of group that the execs are gonna want to go through stuff for a couple hours after the dinner party, you've got to get that information out in advance and then plan accordingly, so you either know that it's gonna come or can avoid it by somehow getting the crew in an hour later or something like that.

Will Curran: Absolutely. All right, let me try to think of one more off the top of my head. I'm trying to pick unique ones. We've covered this topic a lot on our blog so I'm trying to think of something really, really crazy and unique. Next thing I think that ... when it comes to saving money on AV has to do with thinking of unique ways to implement technology and scenic design and things like that. So what I mean by this is that a lot of times we come in with an exact vision of kind of what we want when it comes to the look of the event and a lot of times I think that leads to overspending, and what I mean by this is that we say "Hey, we want it to look exactly this way, yada, yada, yada." When in reality if you talk to your AV company and say, "This is what my budget is. I need to make something happen." In being open to the idea and being flexible, a lot of times you can see some cost savings there as well.

Will Curran: So, let me give you an example. A lot of times we hear clients come in and say, "I want that ultra wide, triple wide screen. 30 foot by 10 foot." Super duper common. It's almost at

every conference I see now and it's because it looks good and it looks unique and it's, you know, gosh, like seeing a three by one aspect ratio thing, you don't see those in your house all the time so it kind of creates a little bit of a jaw dropping moment, right? Well what ends up happening though is that it never gets utilized fully because the content's not designed for it. So what ends up happening is you waste money on all these projectors to do that for something that could've been done for one third the cost.

Will Curran: I think that your AV company should challenge you and that's I think a little mini bonus tip as well. They should challenge you and challenge the idea of are you gonna utilize it? But definitely when it comes to things like that, overspending can easily happen and it will totally ... I mean, it will look find. You'll get by but it won't be utilized 100% and that's a great way to save money. Same thing with similar scenic ideas. We'll say, "Hey, we want to have X, Y, Z, this look, yada, yada, yada." Well, we say, "That's kind of expensive to do that."

Will Curran: The bad AV company will just say yes and move on but if you're trying to save money which should be, on this last bonus tip, is that you should have a conversation about it and I'll piggyback that on as well is that no matter what you do when it comes to choosing your own AV equipment, we talk about this as far as having conversations beforehand, quote walkthroughs, is that this should be a conversation that you're having and if you're trying to save money, that should be the conversation from the get go. Hey, we spent \$20,000 last year. We need to get it down to \$16,000.

Will Curran: You have a number in your head you're trying to hit. You share the specs as far as what the event is going to look like, da, da, da, da, da, you share what's been done last year and the AV company should work with you to find a solution. The thing to keep in mind too is never expect the same thing for cheaper. Chances are that company is likely giving you fair pricing the first year. That's why they won the business in the first point but if you're looking to save money, also make sure that you just have a conversation about what needs to be removed and everything like that.

Will Curran: The AV company should offer great suggestions. Okay, if we go from ... You had 25 wireless mics in this room last year. Let's go down to 15. That saves you \$1,000 in that room or whatever it may be. That can be really game changing for you in having that conversation. So, two bonus tips in there in one, is that have a conversation about being open to ideas about changing and have your AV company challenge you but also at the same time as well, have that conversation about saving money from the get go.

Brandt Krueger: So the last kind of section that I wanted to dive into is negotiation. So, talking about negotiation as a way of saving money. Now, we've ... There's been a little bit of that strewn through a lot of these subjects that we've covered today but specifically I'm kind of thinking about where we see things in contracts like venue contracts, where we see you have to use the in house AV for this or you must use us for that. Those kinds of things. What are some

of your best tips as far as how to negotiate out of those contracts? Because I know that's a big topic for you.

Will Curran: Yeah, totally. So, first thing ... We say this a million times. Get us involved earlier. Just get us involved before you pick your venue. Whether you're gonna pick me as the AV company or not, have the three companies you're gonna bid against give you feedback. Super simple. Ask the questions as well, immediately before you sign a contract. Like hey, what does it look like to work within your property? And let the venue know that you're gonna bring a third party in beforehand. That's probably one of the biggest tips that I can have is that a lot of times we want to shroud this in secrecy. We're afraid they're not gonna give us as good of a deal, whatever it may be. Just make sure you just tell them. If you are gonna bring a third party and you're not even considering the in house, just tell them that because if you don't and you get bit on the other end, that can be really, really dangerous on your end.

Brandt Krueger: And they're more likely to dig in than anything that didn't get negotiated out of the contract.

Will Curran: And are we just talking about before the ... like related to venue costs and things like that? Like in house fees and things like that? Or are we talking about contracts for AV companies in general?

Brandt Krueger: I think a little bit of both but I mean, just to your point, I don't know of a single good AV or production company that wouldn't want to be brought in, like you said, even if we don't know for sure if they're gonna get the business. Back when I used to work for a production company, we would always ... Just let us look at that contract. We understand that you may or may not use us for the event but man, before you sign on that dotted line, just let us take a look at it quick to see if there are any gotchas.

Will Curran: Yeah, definitely and I think one of the things to understand as well is that as much as ... I mean, again, I'm an AV provider primarily and I think like an event planner and I've been an event and meeting planner in the past, so I don't do this hugely full time as a meeting planner anymore, but ideally it's almost like this puzzle that's kind of coming together and a lot of times you want to think about it as, "Okay, I'm gonna do the edges first and then I'm gonna do the inside and then I'm gonna do this," but a lot of times it kind of evolves as it goes along and the best analogy I could kind of think of is a lot of times these pieces all kind of come together perfectly and sometimes what we like to think is, "Okay, we've got to book the venue because it's related on dates and dates need to market it, so let's get the venue done first."

Will Curran: What ends up happening is that you don't realize ... You'll be like, "Okay, cool. You're not gonna charge me like crazy for power. Okay, you're not gonna charge me in house fees. Boom, sign on the dotted line." And then you come in and say, "Okay, cool, we're all good to go. Okay, this is the AV we want to do," and then you plug it in and we go, "This venue isn't available to support the kind of setup you're trying to do. It's gonna cost twice as much because

the rigging points are not lining up with where you want to put the stage." All of a sudden there's extra costs and you weren't prepared for it, and it was kind of one of those things where if you had the stage design already picked and you knew how much you were spending on AV and then you went to go pick your venue, we would have told you, "Hey, this this setup you're gonna do isn't gonna fit in this hotel and unfortunately because you've already signed the contract, they already are booked out. There's no more rooms available."

Will Curran: We've had that happen already in this year so far twice where clients have had to completely move rooms or have conversations about moving rooms because their vision and what they're trying to do doesn't fit within the AV. The amount of distance that's needed for this or where the rigging plots are or whatever it may be, so you want to make sure that you have that conversation beforehand. As much as I ... This is a benefit for both the AV company and you but if you have an idea of what you're gonna do next year, like for example, the client that is having this rigging point issue, they're probably starting to look at next year's venues already, right? So just include that and say, "Okay we're probably gonna do something similar. Can you look at the rig plot for me and just let me know if it looks good to go?" To be honest for most planners, you don't want to think about rigging plots when you're picking your venue, right? You're looking at is the hallway space ... is the room block good? Is the catering good? Are there no in house fees?

Will Curran: But you're not looking at the rig plot and you're going, "Yeah, this venue's got a great rig plot." They're gonna be able to do anything they want to do, right? So whereas if they had just said, "Hey, we're gonna be in this venue next year. We're thinking about it. This is our final pick. Can you vet it for us just one real quick chance?" Boom, that's all it takes and to be honest that's what also sets your AV company apart eventually too, is that, look, I want to add value along the entire way and make your life easier because I know that when I add value, you're gonna want to say, "I want to stick with you longer," and you're just giving me more chances to add value whereas a lot of times we get construed into this, "Yeah, the RFP process and buy, sell, blah, blah, blah," whereas reality, it's just let's try to help each other out, make our lives easier. I'm gonna help you out because I hope in the end run, you're gonna pick me and that's how you help me out.

Brandt Krueger: You know, the other thing just to kind of throw a little bit of a wrench in that is I've always said everything is negotiable, whether it's rigging point charges or you have to use the in house for this or you have to use ... What's a little bit frightening to me and we touched on this in our episode about AV mergers and the VSAV encore thing and things like that, and not that this is due to that merger but we are starting to see the trend in the industry of venues saying no to planners. It used to be, like I said, everything was kind of negotiable and more and more often planners that do know better do know that, hey, we want to get rid of this clause that says that we have to use the in house AV. More and more venues are starting to say no, and it's getting harder and harder to find venues that are willing to play ball.

Brandt Krueger: There's a lot of factors that go into this, right? It's not just that they're just trying to gain money, squeeze money out of you. A lot of it has to do with they're prioritizing their daily business, right? Their transient business over meetings and so we're seeing room blocks that are getting smaller. We're seeing people that are unable to expand the room blocks when their attendance goes up. We're seeing people that aren't able to actually remove the clause that says you have to use the in house AV for breakouts and things like that. I ran into that hard on one of the projects I'm working on now where we went as high up the chain as we possibly could and they will not budge. We have to use the in house AV for the breakouts.

Will Curran: And that's totally ... makes sense from a business standpoint too.

Brandt Krueger: It's their prerogative. It's their-

Will Curran: Yeah, for sure, for sure. Yeah, and we can sit here and raise our fists and shout, "I'm so frustrated" all day long but a lot of times-

Brandt Krueger: That's the reality.

Will Curran: It's totally the way it's gonna be and that's the way I think things might shape out in the future, and that's where, too, talk to your AV company too because sometimes too they can look at a venue and be like, "You know what? If you're really just doing this, why don't you just go to blank slate, get a warehouse. We can bring in some generators and save you ..." It just starts a conversation of what we're gonna do. I think the hardest part about this too is people say, "Well, I don't have time for this. I don't have time to do it. I'm trying to save time."

Will Curran: Everyone's trying to eek out a couple minutes here and there to save time but to be honest, too, have a conversation about ideas with your AV company and just say, "What do you think?" And just hop on that call to do that, and I promise, too, this is a way to save money on AV too is just avoid the ... just email back and forth. We just spend so much time writing emails and trying to negotiate stuff over email when in reality, let's just hop on a quick call and let's get way more stuff done. I can't tell you how many times that I hop on client calls with people and they go, "Oh yeah, let's not do the quote walkthrough. Can you just send it to me?" That's usually the first question and I say, "Well, no, we've got to do this." And they go, "Okay, cool. Can I just do this over the phone with you?"

Will Curran: I'm like, "No, let's hop on a screen share. Let me highlight things. Let me draw things for you. Let me show you the pictures" and that sort of stuff. I think the surprise is I think that hour long quote walk through we do for you ends up saving you more hours of time than anything. So yeah, I think the venues will be an interesting future. I think we talked a lot about that during the Encore 8 PSAV acquisition but just be willing to play ball and be creative with things and I think that eventually too, this might breed to the idea of instead of just trying to always be at a new venue and something new and fresh, let's stick with what's consistent. Let's stick with what works.

Brandt Krueger: So I think that's gonna lead us nicely into the tease for next week's episode.

Will Curran: Oh yeah.

Brandt Krueger: So, we've mentioned it a couple of times now. This is the first section, so we've spent a good, solid 40 minutes here talking about how you can save money on AV. So, Will, you and Andrew from Endless have been doing another little side project that I caught wind of. Tell us a little bit about the live AV bid analysis.

Will Curran: Yeah, yeah, so we call it the AV audit and the idea kind of came from a Whiteboard Wednesday that I did really early on which is how to audit your budget, and people loved it. I think that I wasn't even able to cover half the things that I wanted to cover. What we realized is a lot of times when it came to our clients' quotes, they love two things. They love it when we walk them through the quotes because then they got to see everything, they got to understand what it is and I never had someone get off quote walkthrough and say, "That was a waste of my time." Anyways, I've sold the idea of quote walkthroughs a lot, but then something that a lot of people loved is a two-parter. When we helped audit other people's budgets a lot of times.

Will Curran: Sometimes we would lose budget quote and we'd say, "Cool. Just feel free to send us over the quote. I'm happy to lose the business all day long but let me just look at it and I can give you some feedback on it, right?" And people always found that very valuable and then I noticed the same thing too. You do this a lot with your clients. You audit their budgets. You talk through what needs change, you make these sort of things. What we realized is let's do something really controversial because to be honest that's how you make some noise every once in a while. Let's do something that I don't think a lot of people would do as an AV company and let's break down the quotes and all the little hidden things. I'm even willing to share my secrets as far as an AV company, what I would do to do things like hide costs, things like that."

Will Curran: So basically an AV audit is a live ... we do monthly because we haven't gotten to the point where we can do weekly yet and me and Andrew, and Andrew's ...

Brandt Krueger: What, we don't do enough weekly shows?

Will Curran: We don't do enough weekly shows. What are you talking about? Yeah, so every week Andrew's one of our amazing production designers. He literally builds quotes all day long. He literally looks at clients' budgets and says, "How can we fit this in here?" He looks at past quotes and compares it and says, "Hey, this projector's better than this projector." He's the true AV Einstein for sure when it comes to that sort of stuff. I just help simplify it by explaining it easy sometimes.

Will Curran: So what we did is we're like, "Hey, we do this all the time for clients privately. Why don't we do this publicly?" Which I don't think any AV company would really want to do, to share

all the secrets and how this all works, right? What we realized is that a lot of this stuff we thought was very one-on-one, oh, hey, your quote is set up this way but a lot of times if someone could sit in on a conversation, they would learn, "Oh, my quote had that too." So we literally walk people through, we blank out all the quotes, we get rid of the names, we get rid of everything ... Basically all we have left is like equipment and labor lists with prices essentially. We do keep prices on there because we want people to understand what we think is fair and what's not fair on pricing and we basically go in blind and we break down event planners' quotes.

Will Curran: They submit them every month and we pick the best one and we break it down and we talk about what projector model's been taken. For example ... This is a recurring example of when it just says "projector support package." Okay, what kind of projector is it? Things like that, right? These end up being just chock full of so many tactical tips for understanding quotes and what's interesting is that it's actually gotten a lot of buzz in the AV industry, that a lot of AV people turn into it and then they end up joining our conversations in the chat and being like, "Well, have you seen this? Have you seen this? Have you seen this?" And it just turns into this great conversation about breaking down this quote and what might be missing.

Will Curran: What's great is that we're willing to admit first too when things are priced right and done the right way but a lot of times we find as obviously it comes in this episode we've done is that it's not done the right way. So yeah, that's where I think the idea ... and you said, "Hey ..." You watched an episode and said, "This is really, really cool. Let's do one on the Event Tech Podcast" and we were like, "Yeah, we're totally down," so if I remember right, you said you have a quote that you were just gonna send to us right beforehand.

Brandt Krueger: I do, I do.

Will Curran: And we're gonna break it down on recording.

Brandt Krueger: It's a good one. It's a doozy and immediately when I found out you guys were doing this, I was like, "I want to give you this quote so that I can get your hot take on it, especially going in cold."

Will Curran: Totally.

Brandt Krueger: Because there's a lot of things that I think people can learn from in it and it's definitely ... soon as I got it, I'm like, "This one's going in the archives."

Will Curran: I love it.

Brandt Krueger: Because it's got so many things that we can learn from on it. So yes, so next week's episode of Event Tech Podcast is gonna be a crossover episode. So we're gonna do our own version of AAV Audit and I'm gonna send the information to Will and Andrew right before

we start recording so they'll be coming in cold and I think it'll be a lot of fun and then the three of us can just go through it and step through, and I can tell you some of the reasons why things are on there and kind of act as the client in this. You know, where you're able to push back like we've talked about and say, "Okay, why is this on there? Do we need this on there?" And then just kind of go through it and take a look at it live on the air and I think that'll be a lot of fun.

Will Curran: That's awesome. It's weird, it's gonna be so weird having someone else on the line too because we're used to just doing this on our own and obviously interacting with the chat primarily but yeah, we'll obviously, in the next episode too, we'll drop information if you are interested in learning more about how to watch that episode, watch the show and everything like that, but it's gonna be really cool. I think a lot of things that we talked about here will be discussed and we also will get super nerdy with it too because a lot of times too, it's the devil in the details when it comes to this sort of stuff. It's the, "Hey, what about this? Did you think about this?" And it'll be really, really interesting for sure.

Brandt Krueger: Exactly. So I'm looking forward to that and I hope you guys will be able to join us out there for that episode, the crossover episode. It's kind of like when the Harlem Globetrotters are on Scooby-Doo.

Will Curran: It's so great. Those were the best episodes, right? I love it. Well let's wrap it up and get everybody out of here because I think we could talk for another six hours about all this sort of stuff but we at least covered some great topics on here too, so Brandt, you want to take us away?

Brandt Krueger: So what do you think? What are your tips out there in the world? What are your hot tips for saving money on AV? What did we miss? What did we forget? What did we get wrong? Let us know either on Twitter or with a hashtag, Event Tech Podcast, or shoot us an email at [EventTechPodcast@HelloEndless.com](mailto:EventTechPodcast@HelloEndless.com). Leave a review if you're listening to us on iTunes or one of your favorite Pocket Casts, any of the other podcast apps that are out there. Let us know what you think about the revamped Pocket Casts. I've been touting that as being my favorite for years now and they just did a great big redo and people are pissed.

Will Curran: Oh wow.

Brandt Krueger: So let us know, do you like the new Pocket Cast? Do you not like the new Pocket Cast? If you like the show, leave a positive review. If there's something you think we can be doing better, reach out. Send us an email and let us know what we can do, who you want to see on the show, what kind of technology, event technology you want to hear about and I think that about does it. Did I forget anything, Will?

Will Curran: Nope, I think you got it, so we'll kick it away and we'll see you next week on the Event Tech Podcast for sure.

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