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 everyone and welcome to another edition of the Event Tech podcast. I am Brandt Krueger from event technology consulting and he is?

Will Curran:
Will Curran from Endless Events.

Brandt Krueger:
All right. Thanks for joining me as always Will. Today we are being joined by-

Will Curran:
WAIt, Whoa, Whoa, whoa, Whoa, whoa. I didn't get ... What's the adjective of the day?

Brandt Krueger:
I don't know. I was wAIting for you to throw it in.

Will Curran:
Statuesque Brandt Krueger.

Brandt Krueger:
Statuesque. You gotta be faster with those things, man. I'm not going to wAIt all day for it.

Will Curran:
Well, I mean you should. That's literally the only reason why we do this podcast.

Brandt Krueger:
Oh, okay, my mistake. Today, we're being joined by Chuck Elias who probably wishes he didn't want to be on this show after all of that. But he is the founder and CEO of Sciensio, the former business transformation and growth executive for GE, Home Depot, super value and fortune brands and the graduate of Harvard Business School, and the US Coast Guard Academy. Hello Chuck. Thanks for joining us today.

Chuck Elias:
Hey guys, how are you doing? Great to be here.

Brandt Krueger:
All right. So today we wanted to have Chuck on here to talk about not only the work that he's doing with chatbots with Sciensio, but also kind of machine learning and events in general. We're starting to hear the phrase AI thrown around an awful lot, especially when it comes to

marketing and anything technical at this point. So if it has to do with computers or the internet, chances are it's got the word AI involved in the marketing materials at this point. And so a lot of planners are out there, starting to look at their mobile apps, perhaps their audience engagement. Sometimes it's lead generation, a lot of these technologies and saying, “Oh, well that's AI. Do I need AI, what is it, ahh?” Their heads are exploding and we just have to try, and take a step back, like we always try and do on this show. And really break it down, and talk about what do we need to know about AI, what's the difference between AI and machine learning and how is it going to impact our events in a practical way over the next couple of years.

Brandt Krueger:
So once agAIn, Chuck, thanks for joining us.

Chuck Elias:
Sure.

Brandt Krueger:
All right, so let's dive in. If you could kind of expound a little bit about maybe kind of what is AI, what's the difference between AI and machine learning, and maybe even tell us a little bit about how you guys are starting to apply some of this technology at Sciensio.

Chuck Elias:
Sure. When we think about AI, I mean, AI is basically nothing more than computers. The computers kind of finding information or taking large data sets and delivering insights, providing information automatically. So fundamentally it's smart computers that are saying, "Wait, I asked you a question, and I got an answer back." We always separate AI to kind of too broad components. One is natural language processing, natural language understanding. It's what you already experienced when you talk to Alexa or Siri, to whatever level of quality you get from voice to text, and then you can do from text to voice. That's the NLP, the NLU side of AI.

Chuck Elias:
That's really all about understanding, "What did you say" that's all it is. What did you say, and can I interpret that correctly? And then how do I take that information and say, "Okay, what did you say then what need were you trying to get to?" That's the NLP, NLU side of AI. The other side of AI is really around, deep learning, machine learning, neural networks. You can call it a bunch of different things, but really what it's about is going out and looking deep into data and trying to find insights and really actions that you could take that you wouldn't get otherwise. So those are really the two components.

Chuck Elias:
What you see with Watson, you always see the TV commercials on Watson, which screws everybody up because like, “Oh wow, this is easy.” But you actually have a really complex set of things that are happening. You have the NLP, NLU side, what did you ask. And then you have

the back end side of, well, what could the possible answer be. So there's a lot that you got both of those and then inside that, what could the answer be, is that really, really deep insights that you could potentially grab and say, ”How would I act on them?”

Chuck Elias:
So AI really encompasses all of that, but everybody throws it all into the same bucket and it can certainly get confusing.

Brandt Krueger:
So what are more examples of like, things that people think is AI but really isn't AI so that people can get an idea to think like the peel back the curtain and understand how it works?

Chuck Elias:
Well, if you take the bot world that we're in, I was listening to someone the other day was talking about chatbots. At surface, you talk about chatbots and you go, "Oh wow, they must be AI." Well, they actually don't have to be AI at all. Most of the bots that you experience don't really have any AI behind them, not any significant AI.

Chuck Elias:
If you look at some of the conference bots that are done through Alexa or ... there's a little bit of AI, but really what you're doing is you're just scripting a whole bunch of conversations and there isn't a lot of depth behind them. And the way to test that is just how many different ways can you ask a question? I heard the other day somebody said, oh, there's 30 or 40 different ways you can ask, where can I get coffee. There actually isn't. Yes, there's 30 or 40. There's actually thousands and thousands of different ways that you can ask that question. Coffee, tea, espresso, Cappuccino, I mean, all the variations of Starbucks that you can imagine. So you'll see it in chatbots and you go, “Oh, it's there,” but it's not really.

Chuck Elias:
Even some of the early stages work that was done with Siri and those types of things, yes there's AI, but it's very kind of narrow. Very kind of limited. You'll even see this with Alexa and that you have to ask things in a very specific way for it to understand. So you have that world going on, and then, we all use AI when we're using Google search and things like that. But when you put Google search on your website, for example, there's a little bit in there, but you really don't have enough data to really do anything sophisticated with it from an AI standpoint. So that tends to be over 10 people think about it, "Oh, it's really doing something," when it's not doing much more than just kind of really well done algorithms that aren't necessarily AI backed.

Brandt Krueger:
It's funny just even watching around the house how my wife talks to Google home versus how I talked to it versus how the kids talk to it. And what I've learned, at least on my part is the more natural you can make it sound, the better it actually understands you. And when you try to speak to it in a certain specific way, that it actually seems to get more confused. The kids just

grok it right away. They're just like, "Hey gee, Dah, Dah, Dah, Dah," and they practically unintelligible in the way that they see it, and yet most of the time it seems to understand it really well.

Chuck Elias:
Yes. Yeah. It's a common thing. I was actually just at an event last week, and the Google home person who does conversation design was there and was talking about this and his big complaint, if you would, about people that are deploying things in a Google home is they're not really doing enough sophisticated AI behind the scenes to make them really robust. They're very narrow. They're not really great at doing those things. But like you said, natural conversation, the test for me often of AI and chatbots and kind of that interaction, it doesn't feel natural or doesn't feel like a IVR.

Chuck Elias:
Like you went through a call center and you said, "press one." Okay, now you have three options below that, you can, I keep going down that. That's not a conversation, that's just an automated workflow or automated process flow. And that's not really how we want to experience the world.

Brandt Krueger:
Totally. Everyone just wants to speak to a representative. Speak to a representative.

Chuck Elias:
That's it I'm done. I push two buttons. I'm tired. Let me just ... and then I'll talk to the three people deep because I couldn't get to the ... because the person I got couldn't understand what I needed.

Brandt Krueger:
That's where, honestly where I've seen a lot of the hesitation when it comes to event, people using some of these technologies is because I think we've all had that bad experience with a Phone Tree or something like that. And so the idea of putting a "Robot" in between us and in a attendee facing role, is I think where you start to be like, "Well, who wants to talk to a robot?" That kind of thing where really when you pull people, when you talk to people, what do you want? You want the answer to your question. You want it easily and quickly. And so that's what I've found in using technologies, like honestly the bot stuff that you guys are working on is, you're just asking you a question and you're asking it in the way that you're used to asking it, which is, where is the reception tonight or something along those lines.

Brandt Krueger:
So that natural language processing, is really come a long way, in the last few years, I think being driven a lot by the googles of the world. A lot of where their stuff came from, they realized people were searching that way. They were searching in natural language ways and people

were typing actual questions. I think if those of us that grew up gaming search terms, having to know to search for, bagels New York, that kind of-

Chuck Elias:
Boolean search, and minus less this or no, not this, and those types of things.

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah. So in a way that's making it much more accessible. So you don't have to be the person that knows the exact right search terms anymore in order to get what you want. You just ask the question and then it answers it and it's either right or it's wrong and hopefully more times than not it's right. But that's where I've seen that hesitation is that people I think are worried about that forward facing robot that they know that rather than the customer service desk or something along those lines.

Chuck Elias:
Go ahead, sorry.

Will Curran:
I was going to make fun of the ... If you guys ever seen a wired auto complete interview is just like the lack of grammar that happens when people search. Like, it just shows that like it's smart enough to figure it out. But yeah, there's definitely nothing to fear about it. Chuck, you were going to say something?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. No, if you look at the backend and you saw the way conversations happen in, in our texts and our channel, the way people interact with it, it is quite ... We always tell our clients, look, you can see it. You probably don't want to look at everything because a lot of it is just inane or it's ... But the goal here is to have a natural conversation. It really is the way that you speak and that's where you ... If the bot doesn't have a personality, then it's not really doing much for you. Siri has a personality. Alexa has a little bit of a personality and you want to make it fun and interesting. So that's really important.

Chuck Elias:
What we found from a user standpoint, there's two things that are kind of really been interesting in terms of learning. One is that if the bot is not delivering, we typically deliver a 95% plus correct response rate. So if the bot is not delivering into the nineties in a correct response rate, then you start to distrust the channel. We always think about it as a person, so if you're go up and talk to a person and they asked you a question or you ask a question and you get a kind of answer, you're like, I'm not really sure that that's the right answer. It doesn't matter how competent they are, you go, “Wait, wait, I don't know. What do they really know?”

Chuck Elias:

So it's really important that you understand is the bot delivering a high correct response rate. That's the first thing. The second thing that's interesting is, we found that people are much more accommodating of technology of bots than they are humans. So if I actually went up to you and you're an event staff and you're there and I asked you a question, and you don't know it, something simple like where's the bathroom? You're like, "Ah, I don't know. I was walking through here. I don't know this area," you're actually not really happy about that. You ask a bot that and now it'll answer, where's the bathroom, but if you answered something that didn't understand, or in a way that it didn't understand it would say, "I don't understand this. Could you rephrase it, or we can get you some help."

Chuck Elias:
People are very accommodating of that. They'll rephrase it. They'll just kind of ask it in a different way, or they'll just go, okay, no problem. I will go get it somewhere else. So it's really interesting that ... It's really important that you know a bot, it's a bot, it's not a human. Because you actually interact differently with a bot, than you will a human.

Will Curran:
Can you provide some more examples of ways that people do, so then that way people have kind of context.

Chuck Elias:
In terms of what?

Will Curran:
How they interact differently with a bot compared to the human.

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. So a bot, if you were to walk up to somebody, you would say, hi. You just don't generally just jump right in and start telling them something. Once you're connected, it's literally exactly the way we use text, is the way we use a bot. So with our family and friends, you don't ever text say, "Hi. It's Will," I don't say, "Hi, it's Chuck," to my mom right when I'm texting her or something, she knows it is because we only have one conversation. Or I hope she knows who it is. But anyway, so we have that going on. So you had this real Staccato, it's really short or it'll tell you right away, "Oh, that's not what I'm looking for." And you're like, "Oh, sorry about that." The bot will respond. "No, sorry about that. Can you rephrase it?" Those types of things.

Chuck Elias:
So you get really Staccato, really on point. And then they'll also tell you when they're really pissed off. And they won't necessarily do that when you're face to face. They will, you can see them kind of go off in a huff, but it's rare that they'll really tell you that. But you know what, a bot, they'll say this food sucks. Thank you for that feedback. But you're really hesitant to go up to a planner who's frazzled and spent months and months putting this event together. Say, "You

know, this really sucked." But you'll tell the bot and that's actually pretty important feedback that you want as an event producer.

Brandt Krueger:
Absolutely. There's some other examples of that kind of honest feedback that you can throw out.

Chuck Elias:
Yeah, I think that what's interesting is we find that we always talk about ... Most of our bots are SMS, all SMS, everybody's SMS and also on the web generally, but almost 100% of them are SMS. We always say SMS because everyone texts. So a lot of people on Messenger, a lot of people on Instagram, a lot of people on all these other things, but everybody's on SMS. Everybody is certainly attending just about every event can text. So what you'll see because it's low friction, is you'll see an event and we've been in rooms, where the main stage is up and people will text the bot and say, we can't hear the speaker. Well that's a big AV problem. In that situation, when it happened-

Will Curran:
Should have hired Endless?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah, they should have hired you guys. But it was funny, because the sound people were behind the stage. They hear everything perfectly. There wasn't anybody out in the audience. Well what do you do when that happens? Well, we notify the event team and what do they do? They run or they get the radio and they're like, “They can't hear, turn it up.” It's a really simple thing, but people in the audience, you don't have any other way to do that. You're not going to stand up. It's kind of like standing up in a movie theater and going, "I can't hear." You're not going to do that because that's embarrassing. But you will text the bot. If you can access that channel, you will do it instantly. There's a lot of power in little things like that occur.

Brandt Krueger:
Well and the other thing that you would probably do is be looking at the people that are near you and go, "Can you? And then that's that kind of bubbling, percolating discontent starts to pervade, go through the audience and then again, they don't know it's happening. And so it just kind of starts to fester and that can really lead to an unpleasant experience for your attendees. Another great example, I can't remember if this was one that you had told me, or not or if it came from another chatbot company. But being able to kind of solve problems before the problems that you didn't know we're going to be one.

Brandt Krueger:
So there was a specific example I was thinking of where people were asking like, where's the mother's room for the event? The bot ... Well, I'll let you tell the story. If that one-

Chuck Elias:
No, so it was interesting, it was pre event. It was actually for a BizBash event, in LA, and somebody texted the bot, was there a mother's nursing room. Well, that falls into what we call a special needs category. We're always trying to figure out what should be in that category. In that case, it basically said, "I don't have an answer." But since we can monitor all those conversations, we're able to see that that was the case. And then we were able to contact the venue because most places have it, but you would know. And it's really interesting, because you have one person asking that question. You don't know if that was the only person or is it going to be 20 people that are asking that question.

Chuck Elias:
But it doesn't matter to anybody else. But it mattered a lot to that mother. And she could handle it either way. The answer could be no, there's not, and she'll have a solution for that because we go through life and okay, great. Now I know, but if there is one that's that's even better. So being able to put that answer into the bot and we always say generally, when we run across those situations, it'll take longer for the event team to actually find the answer than it will for us to put it into the bot, train the bot on all the variations that you need of that term so that the next time it's asked, it doesn't have to go to staff.

Chuck Elias:
So the real power of this is what you're doing is you're delivering even higher quality customer support, 24/7 on anywhere they are. So pre event, during the event, post event, it doesn't really matter in the bathroom, while they're watching something, they're all on their phone, they're all texting. And so you can support them anywhere they want to be.

Will Curran:
So Chuck, you talked a little bit about training it and I think that's important for people to understand kind of what goes into that. What does it take to in order to train and do this machine learning training that goes on and maybe start at a high level. And then talk a little bit about as far as on the chatbot side of things, how you guys do it, but how does one train a machine to do things?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. So if you're doing, let's say, deep machine learning and those types of things, it goes back to many, many years ago when we're just using algorithms and trying to do data mining in that way. All AI fundamentally is, is just a more robust way of doing that. But what you're really doing is, there's two forms of training. They're supervised and unsupervised. The unsupervised is what you hear in the press where, I think it was Google or one of the AI, they started talking themselves and created their own language. You're like, "Oh, that's a little scary" That's unsupervised. It's going out and is trying to find connections and trying to basically solve for what is the answer? What could be the answer without any input at all, just large data sets.

Chuck Elias:

So when you kind of think about really deep learning machine learning, you'll hear about Google analytics and things that they're doing in the healthcare space and things like that. It's all around looking at large, large, massive data sets and trying to say, oh, it turns out that if you have this one condition and you also have this, then you might have this there. These connections that you would never think about in advance. The best way to think about is if you go back to high school and you go to that member of the scientific theory, hypothesis driven analysis, which is, "Oh, I have a hypothesis and I'm going to use the data and I'm going to create an experiment to test." All right, well that's kind of the traditional way. That's supervised if you would.

Chuck Elias:
Unsupervised is, I don't know, I don't even have a hypothesis, I'm just going to throw it in and see what comes out. That's fundamentally the difference between these things that are really simple. So it doesn't matter whether you like science or not. What we're really doing when we do pure machine learning is we're throwing stuff in and saying, okay, create all the variations that you can think of for this. So, that's great. But you want to control it. We always say, we supervise our bots, our bots go through supervised training and then unsupervised. And then we look at the results and we go, “Okay, it needs more supervised training."

Chuck Elias:
So, the Microsoft, the Twitterbot that Microsoft created is the classic example of just a mass, where it had millions of millions of conversations in Asia. It came to the US and in 24 hours it was homophobic, racist, nasty, it was everything bad. It was because it was self learned, self taught, it was unsupervised, it could create anything it wants. We don't do that with our chatbots and we really don't recommend you do that when you're really trying to push NLP and have real conversations. What we're doing in our side is, we're saying, "Hey, what are the topics that are happening in events? What are questions that people are going to ask?" And because we do so many events, we know those questions as you do.

Chuck Elias:
I'm sure you could think of every single AV question anybody's ever asked. So, fundamentally what we're doing is saying, "Okay, what would people ask? And then how would they phrase that question to get to that response?" And then what you're doing is you're using kind of unsupervised training to create all the variations of that. So we always say really simply, there's more than 45,000 different ways to ask, where's the bathroom? It's a very simple phrase. Bathroom, men's room, ladies room, head, Lou, prepper, John, toilet, water closet. Where's the, do you have, may you, may I use the, can you show me the way to, including I got a pee, which is the same thing. It's a declarative with urgency.

Chuck Elias:
But if I walked up to you and said that you wouldn't ask, "I'm sorry, I don't understand." You would say, "Oh, it's over there." I understand you need that. So when we first deployed our bots, we didn't get that. The user who texted that got an, “I don't know,” the bot said, “I don't know what you're asking. Could you ask it another way?” Then I'm like, "Where's the bathroom?" With

urgency, because it's the same question. And then we go, “Oh, well that's great and let's add that to the BOT. Let's train it on that phrase." And then all the variations you can do that. So there's kind of constant iteration of feedback from users.

Chuck Elias:
What do they use? What's their needs? Are they being met? Do we understand the question? Is the need being met? If it's not, how do I improve it? I heard a line the other day and was just perfect. What's amazing about text and chatbots is that every single text it's sent from every single user is customer feedback. It's, when did they send it? What were they asking? Did they get a response? And that's happening 24/7 365 for as long as this thing is alive. So that is really, really powerful.

Chuck Elias:
And as you start to aggregate that data and that real feedback about what's happening, then you start to say, what would I do differently? How do I message differently? How do I communicate differently? What kind of signs do I use? What things are people interested in? And that's really the kind of where all of this is going, and the holy grail here is, it's about a one to one conversation that's going to create raving fans. That's all we're trying to do. The only reason we're opening the channel and we're using text is because everybody texts, and if I can open up that channel and actively listen and respond to your needs, you're going to connect more with me and we're going to build a business and then we're going to keep getting deeper and deeper. That's really what this is all about.

Brandt Krueger:
That's why I wanted to bring up that story before is because I think one of the really ... It's not hidden, it's the very clear advantages of this type of learning is that, computers never forget and they're constantly improving. Every time you hear a new way of, where's the bathroom that's added. So not only is it going to be able to help you, in reference to the previous story, it's not only going to help you with all of the stereotypical questions that you can think of regarding your event. It's going to help you identify the new ones going forward.

Brandt Krueger:
Then those new ones, those answers have been added, and so now the next time somebody asks that question, it's not an, I don't know. So every time you use it, it's going to get better and better and better at offloading it. It's kind of like a concierge, where like it's going to handle all of those easy questions, and then help you identify some of the ones you didn't think of. I think you would be the first to say this, you still have the people behind it that are able to jump in either in person or via chat to answer the questions and have that human face behind it.

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. I often say that years ago I was on call centers and was the outsourcing crate, right where we moved call centers to India. We moved them to the Philippines. Well, why do we do that? We did that because we couldn't afford basically to answer stupid questions in the US. I

always say that, look, no one goes to high school and says, “I can't wait to work in a call center. I just can't wait.” But a lot of people say, “I can't wait to be able to provide real value to support others.” Well, you're not supporting others really if you're answering ridiculous questions. Like, call in, “Can I get a refund?” Oh, okay. Yeah. That's a pretty low value.

Chuck Elias:
If I can respond to that instantly with the bots or with technology, then that's terrific. The user gets their needs met. I don't know. I should be able to say that. That's pretty easy. So that's super. But what you really want is high value, right? What do you want your event teams working on? You want to work it on the complex problems. Hey, I had this I, this and this occurred to me and I need to do this and you don't want a chat bot dealing with that. What you want to do, is just get them to the person that can solve their problem right away. That's the value. I'm accelerating the conversation to that end point.

Chuck Elias:
This is definitely a role for talent, for people. It's actually a much higher and more rewarding role, than it is just, well you're paying me $12 an hour. I kind of read something that you told me and I get it, but all right, you're paying me 12 bucks an hour or whilst I'm a volunteer so I really don't need to read.

Brandt Krueger:
Right. Well, and that's goes back again to the learning, and the never forgetting aspect of it is that every time you're doing your event, unless you have the exact same staff every time you're able to lean on these technologies to keep that experience consistent that you're able to not have to completely retrain a staff every time with, okay, the bathroom's down there, here's the most general session runs from here to here, and you're not just handing them a piece of paper and asking them to memorize it.

Chuck Elias:
Yeah, there's a really interesting ... If you kind of just apply that thought process and kind of understanding what exactly people are asking and what do they need and when do they need it. I always say this is the true voice of the customer. Years ago I ran Home Depot Z business, and we would spend a lot of money trying to figure out, well, watch, click streams and figured out what people are doing and what they wanted? My team would say, "Oh, that person bought a hammer. So they wanted a hammer." And I go, "How do you know?" They go, "Well, they bought it. Well, you know that's what they bought." But you don't know, could they settle on it? Was that the right hammer they wanted?

Chuck Elias:
So what we know in this kind of amazing kind of text based forum is that people will tell you exactly what they want. Every conversation you could look at instantly. And the only person that should ever respond to that conversation, from a support standpoint should be somebody who's read it in the 10 seconds it takes to read it and knows the answer. So now all of a sudden we're

really kind of accelerating and giving much better ... We're allowing the humans that support staff to be successful rather than having them to memorize this stuff that they don't really care about, and then somehow they're the face of your brand.

Brandt Krueger:
One more thing that I want to throw out on this kind of topic is ... Obviously, I mean, I'm a fan of the technology, that's why I keep kind of going on about it. But the other thing that is impressive to me is the ability to come compile it, I think, for lack of a better word. So kind of as we were talking about before, that if you start to see questions that the bot wasn't trained for, that's the kind of thing, if it was human experience and you just had folks on the floor, you wouldn't find out necessarily about that until at best the end of the day. We're all sitting back in the office afterward and, "Hey, a guy came and he asked me about the thing and the other such and where could I find the-" whatever. And then, "Oh yeah, yeah. You know what? Somebody else had asked me about that."

Brandt Krueger:
So at best you're pulling that together at the end of the day or in a post-con, or maybe even not even immune until the pre-con the next year. So the other thing that I really like about this type of technology is you're able to start to put that together in real times. Wow. Okay. Someone asks me about that, and somebody else asked about that. Someone else asked the bot about that, and then we can formulate that answer and then we don't have to answer that question again.

Chuck Elias:
One of the things we do when we roll out our bots, we basically try to take as much off of the event planners we can. So that's what our deployment teams, that's where our customer success team does. But we look at the websites, we looked at the FAQs, and we put the answers. Now the difference in a chatbot is that the answer has to be really specific. It's not a Google search. It's not, oh, kind of one of these five things. It is, here is the answer, here's where you can find the answer. So it's very specific, and what we do when we launch these, is we immediately find the 50 different things that were wrong on the website. Not because people don't care, but when did you build your website and when did you build your FAQ?

Chuck Elias:
Somebody did in the past, how often are you're really looking at those things, And even when you do build them, as you know, when you show up, I'm sure you guys, every time you show up, "Wait, they said the floor plan looks like this. Well wAit, this isn't what they said." And so you're there, you're trying to do the setup and everything's on the fly. So you're trying to adjust. So the ability to do that quickly and to kind of make those adjustments on the fly and do all those things, it's really, really an important part of why it matters. You're just, you're starting to refine, your hearing ... It's kind of funny. Your customers are telling you what they care about and they want answers for.

Chuck Elias:
So there's probably a lot of other stuff that that is wrong, but they don't care about it. So you shouldn't really worry about it because they'll tell you when they have an issue with it or when they need help.

Will Curran:
Well, I'm curious to know, like is there anything else as far as, machine learning that you want to kind of bring up and share with the audience, and things that you're excited for that ... Where are you kind of see this going in the future and maybe specifically to with Sciensio, like where do you think that the future of what you guys were working on and where this could go?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah, so if you think about what we're really doing, when I always step back and I said, "Guys, what are we really doing? What fundamentally are we doing?" We're using this text channel, which everyone uses, And is not going away. It's actually one of the oldest technologies we have. It was just kind of just passed ... We had texts when we were doing the pagers. So it's one of the oldest technologies that we have. But what we're doing is we have this channel and people are giving us their phone number, the most personal thing you can do. It's actually more personal than a social security number.

Chuck Elias:
We like to say, look a social security number, I might be able to take your credit and apply for loans and all that stuff, but I can't call you. I can't reach out to you and have you pay attention. So we're using this amazing channel, which is text, which we all use, making it conversational, and we open up the first level of support, which is customer support. Ask a question, get an answer. That's first, and that's really, really important. But the next steps beyond that or more important and where all of these other things come into play, how do I actually engage, not engage with everyone? How do I engage with you based on your needs? So if everything you say everything you do in a text or at the event is data, then I want to understand more deeply you.

Chuck Elias:
So, and then the third thing is, now I have a way to reach you with something that is high value. So the days of, let me send out a spam email and hope and I'll get a 3% or a 1% or less click through, it's just gone. It's archaic. It needs to go away. But if I'm an event producer, and I say, "Wait, I've got 5,000 people showing up at my event." What do you know about them? Right? What are they willing to tell you Because they trust you? And how did you save that? Did you store it, and then are you going to do something about it? So a really simple example, which is, okay, so hey, you're connected, Hey, can you tell me your five favorite things that you're interested in learning about?

Chuck Elias:

Well, if I knew that in advance, I would change the entire notification strategy to everyone. So now I'm going to send them a text that says, "Hey, great, while you're here, you might want to check out these three things." That's for you, that wasn't a message that went to everybody, because the sponsors are paid a lot of money to get, "Ooh, hey come stop by." But it was to the 50 people that cared about that topic and now you start to get to one to one. I learned this years ago at Home Depot, which is, the perspective of spam is not whether it's spam or not, it's the perception. Did it feel like spam? I don't care if it comes from a trusted brand or not. If I look at it and I go, wow, that was not valuable to me, it's spam.

Chuck Elias:
So what we're really doing, and I used to tell marketers all the time you have this data, you're not using it. So how do you pull this data in and how do you begin to segment one to one? With a solution like this, with a tool like this where I can reach down and send you something that you will read. 98% of text are read, most are read in under five seconds, then you're going to read it. Well that's a pretty high bar for marketers. Therefore you better send something they care about, or they're going to shut you off. So that's really to me what gets exciting. I start to change the engagement paradigm, one-to-one, I make it lower friction. So, instead of ... you can think about live polls, do you think about, submit a question at events and these types of things, you always have them. Ask the question, well, we do it through text. What do you do? Text one, two, three, four, and text your question. Well, everybody can do that. They didn't have to download anything. They didn't have to learn anything.

Chuck Elias:
They could have ignored every conversation they done nothing with it, but just in time to say, wow, I got something I want to ask, you can do that. So I'm changing the level of engagement. But as we do that, we start to get this massive sets amount of data that really allows us to really begin to hone our messages to the people that are attending. That's really what it's about. You want them to come back because they thought that they learned something, that you cared about them, they had a great experience. How do you know that if you're not really deeply engaged with them one to one?

Brandt Krueger:
There are so many things to unpack. First real quick off the top of my head, is that something that you guys are implementing this idea of, hey, I want to ask like a polling question and have everybody say ... Because basically you'd have to isolate that at that moment in time, I'm just thinking through the logistics.

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. So there's a couple of ways. If you think about the AV side, the simple use case is you shine up on the stage or on the side screen, the session number. You basically, whether it's a hashtag or whether it's S, whatever you want to do, it really doesn't matter. One, two, three, four. If you're connected to the bot, just to text one S one, two, three, four and type your question. Or go to a session a window that'll pop up that you can ask your question. So that's

again, really, really low friction. We have that today. You could turn that on and then you can moderate that because you're not going to put anybody's question up, of course, but you can moderate it and you could throw that up on the screen.

Chuck Elias:
So again, it's just all about ... I always think about it as, how do I get more people to give me the most important piece of information they can, which is their mobile number, so I can actually reach them. How do I lower that friction, so they're going to engage in the event and just keep doing that? We're constantly exploring different ways to use, again, this kind of ugly medium to deliver really rich experiences. And we get excited about that.

Brandt Krueger:
Well, and then the other thing that I would love you to touch on a little bit is how do you help planners, and the attendees themselves kind of move past a lot of the distrust that I think it's coming from. We've had targeted ads for 10 plus years at this point, and it just never seems to get any better. Literally thinking of some of the larger box stores, like the Home Depots where, I'll search for something and then for the next month and a half, "Hey, do you still want to buy this?" It's like, "No, I did buy it. I bought it at your store." My email is part of the transaction, I know some part of you knows that I bought this. How did you know?"

Brandt Krueger:
So, those kinds of ... Like we were talking about the Phone Tree before, everyone has had those negative experiences. So how do you help your clients and just planners in general help to kind of acclimate to this idea of using the chatbots as well as gaining that trust and making it something that is cool, and it's tailored in a way that works.

Chuck Elias:
Right. So what we focus on is, we connect with registration systems to drive discovery. So the way we get you to know about the bot, people put signage up and all of that's really important as a secondary means of driving engagement of discovery. But it's just like anything, if people don't know how to access it, they're not going to access it. So what we do, we tie in to registration systems and once you've registered, we'll send a text to you that says, Hey, I'm Digi Digi now, I'm the Digi bot, I'm trying to think of the names we have running right now. They're always kind of crazy.

Chuck Elias:
So I'm the bot that's running, I'm here to help. That's all it says. I'm here to help. If you want to connect, say hi. We'll send a second message just before the event and if you didn't connect before, we'll say, "Hey, I'm still here to connect." A more progressive event planners. We actually are now connecting into badge systems, badging systems. So if you can scan at registration, that second message we send you will actually be your batch. Just like you do on the Airline. Here you go, here's your boarding pass. So okay, here you go, here's your badge. And I just scan and walk in or, or get your badge printed right away.

Chuck Elias:
So we're really driving that ... It's all about the value. Does the person perceive that is valuable and that it can be trusted, like you said. So we send those two messages, we will not text you again if you don't connect, we're not texting again. But you can always connect to us and now begin that interaction. And so what we find is, you'll see, generally we get about 70% of the people will give cell phone numbers. 60 to 70% of those will engage with the bot, at some time during the conversation. A lot most of it happens before, through those discoveries. But it's all about during the event. Is there a reason for them to do it? So Wifi is the most asked question. People ask Wifi everywhere all the time. But it's in the first kind of third of the meeting.

Chuck Elias:
Hey, “What's the Wifi Code?” And so you get that a lot and that builds ... they're like, "Wow, that was really fast. I got that answer instantly. What more can it know?” Then you talk about polling or submit a question or other types of high value engagement? We did a connect event in Salt Lake City, and it was kind of crazy. They were sending out through the app, and through email basically visit Salt lake gift ... It wasn't a gift card, but it was a discount card. Hey, you're going out to the bars and restaurants if you want to save money, click here. So, that was the message that was going out. And they said, “Hey, can you do it through the bot?” And we said, “Yes, but we can't send a five paragraph message. That's not gonna happen.”

Chuck Elias:
But it was exactly the route we made it really simple. “Hey heading out for the town, want some discounts, click here for our discount card.” We had about, I think it was a 39% click through rate on that message. Why? it was timely. It was just, it was like four o'clock in the afternoon when people were getting ready to ... they were thinking about it. It was targeted. It went to the people that we're connected, and it was high value. Now if we send that same message and we said, “Hey, hope you have a great time out on the town tonight.” Well they would just ... they would spam. Courtesy of visit Salt Lake, there was nothing in it for them. They would not like that.

Chuck Elias:
So what we are really always talking with planners about is, think beyond that just the question and answer. Think about how you're going to interact. What do you trying to achieve, and you're not trying to achieve ... There's very little value in, "Hey, five minutes the keynote is starting," everybody knows that. Everybody knows that. But when something changes, and you got to get the message out, hey, the breakfast room changed from this to this or a speaker canceled or that's really high value, you want to get that out right away.

Brandt Krueger:
So Will you tried to bring us out wider, and then I dragged it right back down into it. So why don't you bring us back out to the 10,000 foot level? But I wanted to make sure that Chuck really got

into some of the details of what their product does because I think it is a pretty cool project. So, Will why don't you bring back out.

Will Curran:
Yeah, totally. So I'm curious to know too, like I think obviously what you guys do is fantastic, but I think people are always curious too. Like where else can this technology of machine learning take us? So Chuck, you're obviously in the weeds with this every single day and you're getting your hands dirty all the time. What sort of other cool stuff are you seeing when it comes to the machine learning aspect of things? Whether it's related to events or maybe even we took it out a little bit further, like things outside of events, but maybe specifically inside of events. What are you seeing as far as...

Chuck Elias:
I think there's a lot of work being done on how do you, if your associations, you know, how do you build better newsletters that are individualized for one to one. Based on the understanding of your association base. So this is why they've shown interest, they've done searches, they've done those types of things. So there's a lot of work that's going on in that, which is really cool. You're basically, how do I curate your own personalized news feed? And we get the question all the time, well, what's to prevent Google home or somewhat Google from doing this, this type of thing that we're doing. Like there's really nothing to prevent them from doing it, except it's for a very narrow segment.

Chuck Elias:
I mean, they're chasing the world. They're trying to solve any question you could ask, but the individual things you're interested in for a specific association is not really high value to them. That's down in the weeds, but it's for high value to you. So I like a lot of the work that's going on there. I think that, I was a consultant years and years ago and we always complained that companies had massive amounts of data and they still do anything with it. And that was 30 years ago. That was a long time ago. We're having that conversation, and you think about the data that you actually have about event attendees, and the interactions they have on your website and through your app or at the site or through a bot. And are you actually capturing all of that information, all of that data, exhaust, all of the stuff that's happening. And are you putting it into a system so that you can begin to do data mining and machine learning and understand what's happening with your audience?

Chuck Elias:
So events are always under pressure, to try to figure out how to do something more. And fundamentally it's about taking the data that they already have and making it usable and making it an actionable. That's really to me where it gets exciting and the tools that you can begin to pull out to say, "Well, show me the insights without me having to be an expert on it." Because the reality is, if you're an event planner, your days are pretty much taken up with just trying to orchestrate the event and trying to get you to learn new technology and it's just not going to work. So it's not intuitive and simple. There's not a whole lot of value in it for you. So, the goal is

always to find this actionable tools that you can actually go and deploy specifically for your event.

Will Curran:
I think you bring up a super solid point to that. The data really needs to be there as well as that far too often I think when we comes to the machine learning we think, well, yeah I'd love for it to do this. And you're just like, “Well where are we going to get the data, and the inputs to be able to do that?” One of my favorite example is to have machine learning, and most people don't think about how machine learning can be used. There's a tool called Algo, A-L-G-O. I doubt either of you guys have heard of it because it's so weird and super niche to like something I would find valuable. But what it does is it uses web scraping to basically take like newsletters and turn them into Instagram stories.

Will Curran:
So essentially you feed it a data, for example, you can say like, take all the stories coming out on, for example, they have on here, like the Guardian. All the new stories that are coming out. It knows where the title is, it overlays that, on Instagram story, it puts a graphic, addS some motion to it, and space a machine learning with a little bit of automation of video editing. It's basically you're just teaching it. This is grab this text, pull it from here, grab this text pull from here, insert an Emoji because of this words being used and boom and the outputs a video. And like that's truly machine learning because it ... But you have to have the data. I think that's one of the most important pieces that you kind of brought up.

Will Curran:
Kind of getting a question in here and I want to kind of figure out a way to fit this in. How can planners tell the difference between AI and machine learning as well? Because like we said, there's a lot of confusion around it and I think a lot of people love to say, “Oh, AI, it's so cool. Oh we have AI at our event.” What's the way to tell the difference and what does it have to go through a checklist, kind of what's your thought process to tell the difference?

Chuck Elias:
I always say it's a pretty simple thing if you just step back, and you think about it and you say, okay, so is it really ... So I love what we do, and I love technology, but I'm not in this because the technology, so when I approach it, I go, "Is it solving a business problem and is it creatively solving it and is using technology to do that?" That's the question. So, if it's really working the way it should, it scales. It scales easily because you don't need ... We always say we do bots for groups of 10 people. We have bots deployed for those, and a hundred thousand plus, same problem. Where do I go, where do I park, when is this, what's the food? Those types of things. So that's pure, that's really where you're using technology to great benefit.

Chuck Elias:
That's really the test, you say, "Okay, great. So if I'm going to deploy this, can I deploy it at this event? And oh, can I also do deploy it at Comicon? Will it still work?" So again, that's not AI, that

is technology being built properly to support your business needs. A lot of it is to me is just make them show you ... I always say, they need to not show you a demo, they need to show you a live thing that's working. So we always talk about DB, our demo bot that's running all the time, and you could text it on our website, you can text it through regular text, and it's been running for more than two years. It never goes down. It's up 100% of the time.

Chuck Elias:
Well, if you can't find that, then it's kind of vaporware. It's like, "Oh yeah, look, we can really do some really amazing stuff for you." "Well, show me." Show me that it actually works.

Will Curran:
Can you define what vaporware means?

Chuck Elias:
So it just means that it doesn't exist or it's kind of in the vapor. It could exist. Years ago when Microsoft and Apple, when apple came up with their Graphical User Interface, on the Mac, they went to Microsoft and they said, "Oh, wait till you see what we have." They had nothing, literally nothing, but they were such a big player that they were able to ... Bill Gates was able to do that and then they went back to the team and said, "You've got to get something now." So that's how that rolled back then, it was just vaporware, you make an announcement, "Oh wait, we could do this," but it's not real.

Chuck Elias:
So that's really where I think a lot of this is, is it real ... And that's one of the interesting things. We didn't come from the event space, but most of the conversations we have now is as we're kind of at these events, we're going into our second or third of event and they're just seeing the bots and they go, “Oh, you're real, you're a technology that actually it's still going to be here.” It's not just this kind of, “Oh yeah, it wouldn't this be great if this works?”

Brandt Krueger:
Along the same lines, if you could have any advice for the planners, we kind of started this conversation talking about how right now every piece of marketing has AI, machine learning and all that kind of stuff. How do planners navigate that minefield? Because a lot of times they're established players with an actual product, but they're just now slapping the term AI on it. So how to planners kind of navigate what the technology is actually doing versus just marketing speak?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah. There's a great kind of really simple business concept called the Job to Be Done. And Clay Christensen, Harvard business school professor, he came up, if anybody's interested in the theory of disruption. Years ago. So when people talk about disruption, he created it. I was fortunate enough to have him as an instructor of mine, and a good friend, but now he works with something called the Job to Be Done. He says, look, fundamentally, we hire companies, we hire

products, we hire tools to do specific jobs, that's what we do. So if you're trying to say, well, what will this technology do for my client or for my end user, for my attendee? Then you simply have to ask the question, well, what other tools could they hire to do that job?

Chuck Elias:
Simple example I give is if you're in a group, and you're at an event and you want to know Wifi, what's the easiest tool you could use? You'd look around and go, "Hey, hey, Will, do you know the Wifi Code?" I'm going to use Will as my tool. If nobody in that group knows it, then you're going to go to the next easiest one. What is that? Well, is that the brochure? Is it on the badge? Is it in an app? Where is it? Or is it in our bot? And so when you think about the tools that you want to deploy or the decisions you want to make about technology or really anything, I mean, even a sign. What tool are people hiring that sign to do? We hire grocery stores. It's a great example of what's a grocery store hired for, It's hard for three things. It's hard for a weekly shop. A stock up. It's hired for "Oh, I'm cooking something and I forgot something. I need to go get it right now." And it's hired for fresh food. That's it.

Chuck Elias:
The second and third one can't easily be displaced by Amazon. That's why they bought Whole Foods. But the first one, the big shop, that's not time sensitive can be. So when you talk about this idea of Job to Be Done is really important. And I think that too often, we're deploying technology and we say, "Oh, it'll, it'll be amazing. Like, well, what job is it going to do? Is it going to speed my check in? Great. Well how much is it going to speed my check in enough that I would go do that. And I think that's the best test I can give for anyone is just think about the job, put yourself in the shoes of the user and say, okay, would I actually use this tool or is there a better way for me to ... Is there a better tool for me to hire?

Brandt Krueger:
Well, I think that ... we were joking before we started recording about the episode that Will and I did on voice assistant staying out of events and with all of the time and money and expense that was put into having an Amazon Echo on stage, or having one on your show floor. You really could just pay someone to sit in a booth with a headset and then just make it go. So yeah, figuring out what is the actual problem you're trying to solve and what's going to be the easiest, fastest, most cost effective way of doing that is really kind of what it boils down to. I think that's a great way of putting it.

Chuck Elias:
That's a great example. It's not that there's no job being done, but you have to say, well, what job is the attendee going to hire the Alexa bot to do? It means it's basically replacing the human standing there, is what it's doing and perhaps it's smarter. Or perhaps like you described, you have a call center somewhere where you got people doing nothing but just they're responding and it's a, basically a video chat for help. That's an important job. It's just, you have to look at it and say, well, what job are people going to hire that tool to do? That's really the way, pretty much we make decisions about everything.

Chuck Elias:
Am I going to hire an Uber, my bicycle, my feet, my car? I'm going to always decide based on what's easiest for me, and it's 100% natural for the way we live.

Brandt Krueger:
Well said, sir. Well said.

Will Curran:
I think Chuck's dropping lots of knowledge bombs today.

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah.

Chuck Elias:
Sorry. I don't ... Hey, I last podcast I did somewhere, I was like so hyped up, really fast talking. So fast talking. The further we go, the faster I talk because I get so excited.

Will Curran:
The knowledge bombs are totally acceptable and that fast talking is totally acceptable too because I talk way too fast already. So everyone's like, man, we didn't want to speed up this podcast when we figure out how to do it at like 0.75 when Will is talking.

Chuck Elias:
Way to go.

Brandt Krueger:
Well, I think we're starting to wrap up. I wanted, I realized I forgot the softball question that we've been trying to start with, which was, what's the craziest fun fact about you that you can think of that people might not expect out of the CEO of a technology company?

Chuck Elias:
The craziest fun fact, would probably be that growing up, we were not in the greatest neighborhood in the world, and all I had was a motorcycle. That was the way I got around. So my mother, the saints, she would allow me to park my motorcycle in the foyer of this big old house that we lived in. So, I would actually drive up the steps, in my motorcycle, opened up the door and then I turn it around. And then the morning I would ease the nose out of the front door, grabbed the door behind me. It is always as I was rolling out on the porch, just slam it shut, pop down the steps and pop the clutch and go.

Chuck Elias:

So that's a true story. My sister will attest because she would hop on the back of it as we were going to school with our snow gear on, trying to stay warm. But anyway, so I guess that would probably be the funnest.

Brandt Krueger:
All right. And then just to kind of round things out a little bit. If you could leave folks with kind of one main tip, whether it's a specific to chatbots or machinery iLearning in general, or AI or machine learning in general, scratch that, reverse it, well, what would you throw out there for folks?

Chuck Elias:
Yeah, I think the biggest thing is just you're never hiring technology. No matter what you're doing, you're not hiring technology. What you guys do, they're not hiring technology, they're hiring an experience. They're hiring a tool to create some sort of an environment that you are trying to do. And so when you look at whatever's out there, whatever you're trying to use to ... whether it's to enhance the experience or drive engagement or to connect really deeply one the one, it's not about the technology, it's about the connection and it's about the value that you bring through that connection that's most important.

Chuck Elias:
That's kind of the universal message. We love the fact that we use text because we think that's a low friction channel to drive high connection. But it only works if you're delivering high value stuff through that channel. So always put your user in mind, your attendee, your exhibitor, what jobs are they trying to solve for and what's the best way to get it done. If you kind of just think about that through everything you do in business, I think you're going to be pretty successful.

Brandt Krueger:
Well said.

Will Curran:
well, I was going to ask one more question too before we head out. Chuck, what's one piece of the technology that you're really excited about too? That's like not even event related, that's probably even better. Just something that you saw you're like, "Wow. Wow."

Chuck Elias:
Well, there's a really cool facial company called Zenus, which does facial recognition. It's a really cool ... we were in London and we lost to them. We've won a lot of awards. What we lost to them, and we're like, “Damn, we lost. Damn, that's a pretty sweet technology.” So they actually do full facial recognition for check in, not just for events, but for companies. You think about coal mines or you think about kind of construction sites, they actually can take a photo of you and can actually know that it's you checking in, however you may look.

Chuck Elias:

So what's amazing about that is they do it and they do it in a way that they're not actually have any of your data. So they don't know who you are. They just know does this face match the face that has been supplied. And so it's a really cool secure way of having check in and kind of 100% certification on that. I love what they do. That's pretty cool. Panos is the CEO. We met, Zenus, Z-E-N-U-S. So I love what they do.

Will Curran:
I love it. And we'll leave it down in the show notes down below as well for everyone to go check out as well. Well, I think that's going to wrap up this week's episode of Event Tech podcasts. Chuck, seriously. So awesome to have you on the show. It's just always a pleasure talking to you. I think we can talk for hours on end every single time we talk. I think it's just so awesome to literally dive into the mind. I think one of the biggest takeaways I had was like what's the business case for us? Like I'm not a tech guy, I'm a business guy and I think that's just so cool because far too often we, we do tend to get excited about tech just for tech's sake.

Will Curran:
I think this was a great example of a use case of technology that needs a business case. So Chuck, seriously, thank you so much for, being on the show really quick before you go, where can people go check out what you're up to, reach out to you? Where's the best place where people to see what you're up to?

Chuck Elias:
Yes. Just go to eventbots.com and you can actually, in the bottom right, you can actually chat with DB there, or you can text Demo D-E-M-O to 25525, so that's an easy way to access DB. That is a live bot for a fake event that's been running for more than two years at Chicago's Navy pier. So if you want it, you can't break it. Ask it a joke, ask it, where do I park? What's the meaning of life? Tell me a joke, whatever you want, and see how it responds and see how natural and kind of intuitive it is and how fast it is. So we're always excited to share that and to have people try it.

Chuck Elias:
And I'm on Linkedin, Chuck Elias, E-L-I-A-S, and obviously I'm always available on texts. So, just reach out to me. We love doing what we do and we'd love to see how we can help.

Will Curran:
I love it. Cool. Well, that does it I think for the Event Tech podcast this week. Guys, chuck, thank you again for being on the show. Brandt, thank you so much for co-hosting this week, pretty much hosting this week. I just sit and listen to all the awesome things people talking about.

Brandt Krueger:
Just sitting in his shades looking cool.

Will Curran:

Hey they're blue light blocking glasses. Let's be honest. But everyone, thank you so much for listening. If you did enjoy this week's Event Tech podcast, make sure to rate, review, subscribe wherever your favorite places are. We're literally everywhere. And if you are curious on another platform, if you're listening, for example, on Linkedin and you want to check out the full episode or you're on a podcasting platform and you'd rather listen on YouTube, just head over eventtechpodcast.com. We have all the links to subscribe as well as an awesome place to sign up to get the bonus content. All of our best episodes, all of our connections invites to our Facebook groups, Linkedin groups, all that stuff. Super duper exciting. Just overhead over to eventtechpodcast.com.

Will Curran:
If you have any questions or ideas for future episodes, you know where to email us. Eventtechpodcast@helloenlists.com and I think we're going to get out of here. Brandt. What do you say?

Brandt Krueger:
Event Tech out.

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