

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 another edition of the Event Tech Podcast. That gentlemen over there, he is the legal Will Curran of Endless Events.

Will Curran:

Well, we're going with some L adjectives right now, and that one over there is the lucky Brandt Krueger.

Brandt Krueger:

Today, we are being joined by the cultural Andrew Latimer from-

Will Curran:

And global.

Brandt Krueger:

And global, I like culturable but ...

Andrew Latimer:

Culturable. It's culturable, good. It's great, yeah.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. So, today we wanted to talk a little bit about ... This is something that's been rolling around in my head for a little while is that as you know, anyone who's been listening to the show, we definitely take a broader view of event tech and event technology, expanding that into audio visual.

Brandt Krueger:

We had a really good couple of episodes. They're actually some of our more popular episodes on saving money on AV and going through the bids and Andrew joined us on that one.

Brandt Krueger:

So, we wanted to have Andrew back to talk a little bit about managing AV crews. This is something that we've kind of touched on in little bits and chunks over the course of the year. And so we thought let's just dedicate an episode to this to really deep dive into some of the ins and outs when it comes to managing AV crews.

Will Curran:

Yeah, and I'm super duper excited for this because literally I think on a daily basis we are comparing AV quotes and auditing AV quotes and I was going to ask well what's the right amount of techs and what is the types of techs I should have and why do they charge this?

Will Curran:

It seems like labor is the most contentious things when it comes to AV gear because I mean to be honest, it probably is too. A gear is gear and you can compare one speaker's price to another speaker's price. But when it comes to labor it's so much more fluffy, right? Cue the it's fluffy GIF right now.

Will Curran:

And I'm really excited to have Andrew on the show because Andrew as I've said I think multiple times on this podcast, very, very smart and really, really knows how to look at things analytically.

Will Curran:

And I'm excited for his experience both in managing AV crews but also being an amazing production designer at Endless to talk a little bit about how he chooses everything. So, Andrew thanks so much for joining us.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah, my pleasure. Glad to be here.

Will Curran:

So Brandt let's ...

Brandt Krueger:

Well Will you bring up a great point and it's something that I deal with as well in the technical producer role is lining all this stuff up. And it's the kind of thing that crews or AV companies whether it's in-house or a third party, they're always able to discount the gear.

Brandt Krueger:

You know, as much as they're able because to a certain extent it's paid for. You don't want to discount it too much otherwise you start digging into your own profits obviously.

Brandt Krueger:

But they're willing to play when it comes to gear. But when it comes to labor, that's a tough one. That's one that they can't really discount too terribly much depending on who's getting paid how much and when because you have to have the people there.

Brandt Krueger:

This is one that actually also came up in our discussions back earlier in the year regarding "shtuff" that AV people say. That was one of the ones that came from a technical director that I

know said don't try and force one AV company to do the same type of labor as a different AV company.

Brandt Krueger:

That it's going to be, each company has different processes, they may have different ways of breaking down the labor, that kind of thing. So, Andrew, one of the things that we wanted to kind of start off with is probably the most common question that I know Will and I get asked all the time, which is talking about the number of AV techs per breakout.

Brandt Krueger:

It's actually comes up much more often than what we'll get to in a moment, which is the number of AV techs for a general session because it seems to me one of those things that there's not a consistent, is it one person per breakout, is it one person per five breakouts.

Brandt Krueger:

So, if you could tell us a little bit about how you kind of approach that question of how many techs do you throw at breakout sessions?

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. That is the million dollar question. I think it's a cop out to say that it's case-by-case but in reality it does become that. So, my dream goal for every single show is I would love to have at least one person in every single breakout.

Andrew Latimer:

The reality often dictates otherwise because that does add up. But I think my mantra that I try to instill in anyone, whether it's a tech or a producer or a client is that a breakout is not necessarily anything less than a general session.

Andrew Latimer:

At the end of the day you still have video, you still have audio, more and more you're having wireless microphones, Catchboxes, audience interaction. We're getting more requests for live streaming of breakouts, recording breakouts.

Andrew Latimer:

At that point you're talking about everything that you have in your general session room and potentially leaving that unattended just, you know, that seems fairly scary. So, even putting that on one person when you phrase it like that, that's scary.

Andrew Latimer:

So, I think it comes down to as a client how important is the breakout experience to you as a brand and to your attendees from a retention standpoint. Is this going to be where you're putting top end speakers from your company, is your CEO going to be talking in these breakouts and having small panels?

Andrew Latimer:

Or is it really just kind of informal meetings where someone is going to give an update, clicking through a bunch of slides, they're not a professional presenter.

Andrew Latimer:

You know you're just going to kind of process 45 minutes of information that your regional manager is telling you about. It's still important but maybe that can come at a lower cost.

Andrew Latimer:

So, how I see that playing out is you may have on the higher end, you might have an audio technician, a video technician, and potentially even a camera operator or a live streaming technician in those rooms. That gets up to a 4 person crew, that better be a fairly sizeable breakout room because your tech riser might be bigger than the entire breakout.

Andrew Latimer:

But what that does enable is to build in a bunch of scenic options, really spice it up. On the flip side, I think you can also start looking at all right, we just have a projector on screen, there is one person on a microphone and they're clicking through their own slides. Now we can start talking about we'll have a floating tech going between say three to four different rooms.

Andrew Latimer:

I think when you get below that it becomes scary. You're trying to turn over a whole bunch of presenters real fast and man that, I would say, it takes about five minutes per presentation to get their laptop set up, get them mic'd up, get them all settled in, and you know you figure you got a 15 minute change over, that gives you room to get to three different presenters, maybe four.

Andrew Latimer:

So, I think that's the range we're typically looking in, is either four rooms per person all the way up to four people per room.

Will Curran:

Wait real quick. I think then the next kind of follow up question I would usually get is okay, well we have a room moderator. Do we need any techs?

Andrew Latimer:

That's really a deep question.

Will Curran:

You know I go deep over here.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah. I think from my perspective the room moderator is great to be able to assist. It definitely is going to make me feel more comfortable having one floating tech per four rooms. Where I would say that it becomes a concern is if you do still have recordings, if you have a lot of wireless mics, you know a lot of times it's people that really do want to help but might not know how to love up a presenter.

Andrew Latimer:

So, if you can get an hour ahead of time to get all of the room moderators together, show them how to change the setting on a laptop to output via the auxiliary cable instead of HDMI, how to properly put a lapel mic on someone, that can really be beneficial.

Andrew Latimer:

I would never say that a room moderator should replace the tech though if it's a situation where it's hey we have records, hey we have a live stream, hey there's switching that needs to go on between graphics. The best laid plans they're just not going to end well for you.

Brandt Krueger:

You know and this is why we wanted to have you on, you said about nine good things in that last chunk. So, I want to hit, just to recap a couple of those as far as the number, what helps you determine it.

Brandt Krueger:

So one, and this is one that I hit on all the time, which is who is doing the speaking. If it's a sponsor that's paid a lot of money to be there and part of their sponsorship package is that they're going to be speaking in a breakout session, is it your CEO, is it your CFO, is it ... Who is going to be speaking? How bad does it look if something goes wrong factors in?

Andrew Latimer:

Okay.

Brandt Krueger:

And then that's what's going to help determine whether or not you need a dedicated person or somebody that can float. So, that's a huge one.

Brandt Krueger:

The other thing is, like you say, is how complex? Is it that we're doing ... Are we actually switching between a video and presentation. Are we doing a live internet demo. Are we bouncing in and out of things?

Brandt Krueger:

Or is it just a plug in the laptop and go kind of thing. How many people are in the room? Obviously is another huge factor. Is it a panel of six different people each on their own mic versus just a single person?

Brandt Krueger:

Then something that you started to kind of touch on and it got my mind going right there at the end is, and I don't even know if ... Well, whatever. What you started to touch on that got my mind going was actually thinking a little bit about the schedule.

Brandt Krueger:

So, you were talking about being able to hit a certain number of rooms in a certain amount of time. If you look, I was working a show recently where the presenters over the course of the day were pretty much the same. That they were doing multiple sessions, multiple versions of their session.

Brandt Krueger:

So, you might be able to do the kind of thing where you've got more crew in the morning, when people are first coming in and getting settled, and then less crew in the afternoon or even later in the day as oh this person has already presented and they're going to be presenting the same thing over and over in the same room.

Brandt Krueger:

So, paying attention to your schedule in that way as well may be able to, rather than having a dedicated person in every room, maybe you do more people in the morning and then slowly taper it off over the course of the day.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah, that's a really great point there and I think what can even play further into that is the opportunity to, if you have a general session crew that maybe it's not a huge session. Maybe your general session is also a breakout, that can be additional cost savings but you can also to an extent as we'll get into later I'm sure, you can utilize some of that expertise in downtime if you're not rehearsing in the afternoon and you've just had a one hour session in the morning you can potentially look at repurposing and now you have a one audio engineer who's going to be assisting you with breakouts. Do they like that? Not all the time.

Brandt Krueger:

Not unless it can cut both ways.

Andrew Latimer:

But it's always an option to a point. Obviously you never want to jeopardize your general session. There is a lot of times where CEOs are going to like the opportunity to say hey, I want to do a 2:00 p.m. rehearsal that nobody expected. Where is our crew in the general session now.

Andrew Latimer:

So, it does have reputational risk but there is an opportunity to consider that as you might scale down people or if you're building your session but you have a pre-conference meeting, maybe somebody can pop over that's either one of your techs or you can pull off two of the guys that are helping to set up your general session. Have them go throw the pre-con meeting up ahead of time.

Andrew Latimer:

You might not need somebody in the room. You might not even need to add on extra billing for that.

Brandt Krueger:

And that's a perfect example of like maybe you just reused some of that crew even again just right at the beginning of the breakout to make sure everybody is up and running and happy. And then after we get through round one, then that crew can break.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah, absolutely.

Will Curran:

I want to kind of unpack something that you started kind of hinting at too, Andrew, is this idea of having levels of different types of technicians and engineers for the job to be done for managing breakout rooms. I mean since we're talking a lot about breakouts, maybe we focus on that.

Will Curran:

But I know we've obviously done a lot of content already on what an engineer is versus a technician and things like that. But I know there's also specific game plans that you can do to manage numbers of breakout rooms. So, what is kind of the ideal scenario?

Will Curran:

So, for example, what I see a lot on AV quotes is a lot of like hey, we're just going to have an AV technician and one of them for let's say four rooms, five rooms. Is that ideal? What sort of challenges does that perceive and then as they scale up a number of rooms, what sort of positions do you like to see?

Will Curran:

I know you have some really creative ways to be able to handle to manage those rooms if there's any highly technical things that end up happening.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah, absolutely. You know I'll say anything I say is not necessarily going to be agreed on universally. There is so much as far as different approaches to how people classify their individual positions. But I will say as a broad rule of thumb you have kind of your top level producers, technical directors, stage management. You can also have a breakout TD, breakout

technical director or a breakout manager. You might see it listed as really any of those positions to oversee all of your breakouts just as a technical director might oversee your general session.

Andrew Latimer:

Below that we have your top level designers that are overseeing the entire creative element of the show. You have your engineers, your programmers, your operators falling below that. Then you have your technicians, which are going to still be a specialized department. Maybe it's a video technician, maybe it's a projectionist, maybe it's an LED wall technician, an audio technician and so forth.

Andrew Latimer:

And still a couple rung, I guess I want to say a rung below that it's still a specialized position to be an audio visual tech and that's what you were referencing Will there, is you know a lot of times you'll see that as your floating technician.

Andrew Latimer:

Now that's not necessarily somebody that's going to be a 20 year industry veteran that spend a lot of time behind an audio console that knows how to run a Spyder E2 or a Spyder or an E2 switcher. It's somebody that can, you know, plug in some microphones, so we'll make it sound all right. They can get the projector running. You focus it on the screen.

Andrew Latimer:

But it's not to the expertise level of your top level technicians. So, a lot of times you'll see that to float around your breakouts and it's a great solution for when you do have that smaller breakout scenario or setting up the displays in your lobby, handling the audio in the meal room. We see a lot of utility in that.

Andrew Latimer:

As the breakout skill though, you definitely want to start thinking about that breakout manager position. I would say even as small as four rooms, you want somebody that's going to be responsible for the delivery of that entire service package.

Andrew Latimer:

We also see a great utility in having an A2 audio technician, potentially even an A1 when you start looking at, for example, we did a show in Los Angeles a while ago where it was maybe 11 or 12 breakout rooms each with between four to six wireless mics in it. Now you're talking well over 60 channels of wireless in one of the most populated and most wirelessly dense cities in America.

Andrew Latimer:

That's something that you really even need somebody that just specializes in RF radio frequency. So, there's a whole lot of consideration when you start to get to that level of all right,



sure, it sounds simple. It's 11 rooms that are all duplicated, what is that going to do to our entire venue though when that's a very confined space.

Andrew Latimer:

So, that's where you can start to kind of lean on maybe some expertise from your general session. But I will also say there is a lot of guys out there that they're going to be an excellent lighting designer. You don't necessarily want to pull them out of your general session and have them start hanging a pair of Lekolites on a pipe in a breakout room.

Andrew Latimer:

Maybe they can answer a question if your breakout has that, but that's ... it's not necessarily a demotion but it can feel that way when you say hey, you're one of the best in the country at designing lights, can you go hang a Leko in the breakout for me.

Brandt Krueger:

Right, yeah.

Andrew Latimer:

It's a weird reputation with your crew.

Brandt Krueger:

Well and I've been, honestly, I've been in that position where I've been brought in as a specific position and a key position and then oh by the way can you monitor these breakouts?

Andrew Latimer:

Right.

Will Curran:

Well it's the worst when you ask them on site too. You know, like they're saying like oh hey, can you do this on site last minute?

Andrew Latimer:

Right.

Will Curran:

Versus like hey, let's have this conversation before the show. So, that's something to be aware off too.

Brandt Krueger:

And that's honestly where I left it, is hey, you know that's cool. I was happy to dive in and help and you know, but if that's something that's likely to happen next year, let's just plan on that and contract it that way just so that it's in my head going into it that yes I'm going to be calling this show but then on the "down day" I'll be down helping with the breakouts.

Andrew Latimer:

I think you guys, I'd be curious your thought, for me when I'm in a tech role I have a very different mindset to a management role, which is still even different than if I am in a breakout where I have to be in customer service focused to someone that's not necessarily a professional presenter.

Andrew Latimer:

Those are three very different mindsets, and that can be exhausting.

Brandt Krueger:

I literally just had that conversation on my last show with the graphics operator. The graphics operator is also a show caller and producer. And he and I had a nice conversation about how hard it is to stay in your lane when you're used to kind of being the person in charge and the person calling the shots.

Brandt Krueger:

And now you're, and this is something I've had to deal with as both a graphics operator or helping out with audience engagement technology. It's like okay, I'm just a polling guy, I need to just keep my mouth shut because I'm the polling guy on this one and not, you know, be offering my two cents on every little problem that comes along.

Andrew Latimer:

Yeah, absolutely.

Brandt Krueger:

So, we've started to move our way into this, but let's break ... Move things out a little bit more into general session land and start talking about how I kind of touched on the fact that every company is a little bit different as far as the, and Andrew you mentioned that as well.

Brandt Krueger:

Everybody is different of how they define each of these roles. So, let's kind of start getting into event managers, versus technical directors, versus graphics operators and engineers and all that kind of stuff when it comes to the general session.

Will Curran:

Well before we even get into that, I kind of want to answer that same question of number of people for breakout rooms.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah.

Will Curran:

So how many times I see other ... Again, like AV Audit has really done a great job at opening my eyes to how different everybody does it. But one of the most common things I see is the one dude to do it all. The one technician, he's going to the lighting guy, the video guy, the sound guy and it worries me sometimes.

Will Curran:

And I always say I think that's a recipe for disaster. So, Andrew, maybe can you just start talking about for a one specific room where you know that there's a lot going on, you know you're talking about this is maybe the only room or it is the main room, whatever it may be. How do you start to scale up and when do you start adding one more person? And maybe we can start to build up towards that with technical directors and graphics ops and everything like that.

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. I think for me in my role I always I'm fighting to go the other way. I want to start with everyone and only trim down as is required to me to budget because what you said is absolutely critical to everyone there, is essential to the success of an individual show.

Andrew Latimer:

Now with that said, it is an important topic because reality is there's budget for everyone and as much as I'd like to have a technical director and show caller on every single show and a lighting guy even if it's just a static wash with a couple of Lekos and a backlight, there is a point where that's not necessarily.

Andrew Latimer:

So, it is kind of at that point hopefully the show is contracted or I have an idea of who's going to be available for it so I can at least get some fillers out because it's definitely going to influence the decision of who I'm putting on a show if I say man I know that this is a great audio person, probably one of the best ever.

Andrew Latimer:

But we need someone that can be an audio engineer and also serve as kind of an A2 almost stage manager, and that happens a lot where the audio engineer that's running the console is also going to be the one mic'ing up the presenter.

Andrew Latimer:

And that always involves the conversation of oh, at that point you're going to probably be asked to teach them how to use the clicker. So, you definitely want to have somebody that's going to be a little more versatile in that role.

Andrew Latimer:

So, I think it comes down to understanding at that point the full scope of the show, where you can make those substitutions, and who on your team is going to be able to fill that best.

Andrew Latimer:

Another example we see a lot is having the show caller might also be the lighting operator and the graphics operator. If it's just a matter of hey we're just going to be clicking through a PowerPoint, there's no video rolls. At most, we might be going to a logo here and there, you know it is pretty simple, as a show caller I'm going to be sitting there and saying all right, well we have to switch at this point to the graphics anyway. It's a matter of one button press and I can do that switch. I might not have to even call the show at that point.

Andrew Latimer:

So, you can kind of double dip and just focus on delivering a good show call to your lighting and audio text.

Brandt Krueger:

I want to pause on that for just one second because that's speaking exactly to what we were talking about with that technical director friend of mine who was talking about that every company is going to have different ways of doing things, every company is going to have different personnel.

Brandt Krueger:

So, while company X might have someone who is capable of doing that, and is able to bridge a couple of positions using one person, company Y might not be able to do that. So, they're going to have ... We don't have an audio person that's going to be capable of also kind of handling the VIPs as they go up on stage.

Brandt Krueger:

And I've actually seen an A2 get released from the show because they were incapable of doing the person-to-person stuff. They were probably a really good audio person but they weren't able to handle putting on the microphones of the VIPs and all that kind of stuff.

Brandt Krueger:

So, not forcing that kind of one-to-oneness from provider-to-provider has a lot to do with exactly what you're talking about. There's different personalities to different people with different skillsets.

Brandt Krueger:

So yeah, you might have a lighting person who's really capable and is able to kind of call the show and keep an eyeball on things versus someone who just, again, stays in their lane and this is what I do, and this is all that I do. So, I think that's a fantastic point.

Brandt Krueger:

And why ... And I know Will you're a huge proponent of this, why it's so important to talk things through with your AV suppliers.

Will Curran:  
Definitely.

Brandt Krueger:

And so that's why you guys do the like hey, we're going to walk through this quote so we can talk through this is why we're doing it this way and this is why we're doing it that way, and why it can be so difficult to line things up apples to apples, and oranges to oranges, and apples to oranges, and apples to pears, is because of all of these very things definitely come into play when we're talking about labor.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I just wanted to kind of interrupt on that and Andrew I'll let you take it back over.

Andrew Latimer:

No, I think that's a fantastic point there and I appreciate hearing other people say that because I can't tell you how many times we get a quote sent to us saying, hey can you match this one-to-one?

Andrew Latimer:

And I think I've seen at least one if not two just today already where it's a general session that has an audio visual tech and that's it.

Brandt Krueger:

Techs.

Andrew Latimer:

Or maybe one tech in total. It's like well, I don't feel comfortable matching this one-to-one. Maybe they were conversations that you had to say hey, we're putting a rockstar on this and we talked about the show flow and it's going to be a podium mic and that's it.

Andrew Latimer:

Maybe that's all happened but if all I'm seeing is a quote from another company, I don't necessarily know about any of that conversation.

Andrew Latimer:

So, again, that kind of gets to my philosophy of when I send out a quote, I'm going to try to put every position on there that I think can be of value and then as you were saying walking through that between the client and the production vendor will identify that all right, you know, we have a lighting person on here. Your previous one didn't.

Andrew Latimer:

This now allows you to have a different look throughout the show. Every time someone walks in you have a different color. Maybe your brand only wants to have a blue backdrop and the stage wash up all day, okay great, we can remove that.

Andrew Latimer:

But until we've had that conversation, I don't want to be pulling anything off because if we get to show site and can't deliver on that, well it's not good for us, it's not good for you as a client. It's not a win for anyone.

Will Curran:

Preach.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, exactly. And you reminded me of one more thing, and then Will I'll let you move things along. But it's another reason, and I know you guys are going to amen on this as well, but it's another reason why you can't cut and paste from last year.

Brandt Krueger:

So, when you're looking at your AV bids from year-to-year, once again, the staffing is going to be different, who's going to be available? Maybe you had that rockstar last year who was able to have nine arms and you know, be able to do this, that and the other.

Brandt Krueger:

But maybe the company that you're looking at this year or the property that you're looking at this year simply doesn't have that capability. So, try not to get locked in to that well we did it with three people last year, why do we have to do it with six this year?

Brandt Krueger:

So just yeah, another way of looking at staffing as well from year-to-year.

Will Curran:

Yeah. So, Andrew, I think one of the common questions that we also get a lot of too is this idea of when do you need a layer of management as well?

Brandt Krueger:

That's all.

Will Curran:

So, there's obviously the idea of when do you need graphics op? Like someone to actually do the job. But at what point do you need one person who manages it all?

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. You know I say it a little flippantly but I do believe that you should always have, even if it's not someone on site, have an ally in your production company that is going to be your hey, I talked to your audio guy, he said it's not possible but now I'm calling you to see can I get this sent out, can we add this at a minimum.

Andrew Latimer:

You want to have a really strong account executive that's backing you even if they're not necessarily on site. But regardless, I would encourage that there should always be someone on site that is in a production management capacity even if it's not necessarily a dedicated person.

Andrew Latimer:

You want someone who can call the shots. Maybe that's you. You see some companies where it's hey, I'm a freelance production manager. I've been contracted to deliver this show for a client and I trust you as a vendor to deliver it for me.

Andrew Latimer:

You know, that changes the dynamic a little bit but at the end of the day you as that freelance production manager still serving in that management capacity to everyone and you'll probably already have that strong relationship with the account exec.

Andrew Latimer:

But I think there's just so much that you can build for the success of the show where your management, whether it's a full on show caller, stage manager, technical director, producer, that's going to be your huge show, or just a single, again, any company might call it a project manager, production manager, technical director, stage manager, show caller.

Andrew Latimer:

I don't want to say they're all synonymous but I've seen them all used synonymously. You know, have that person there that they're going to help you tweak the graphics, they will go the extra mile to put together or run a show, make sure everything is lined up, and that I think is where you can really separate the difference and put a little bit of tangibility saying hey, gear is gear, a QSC K12 is always going to be a QSC K12.

Andrew Latimer:

But an audiovisual technician verse having management who can prepare that audiovisual technician, is just game changing.

Will Curran:

Preach. I just feel like I need a preach sound effect to that so we're just playing all the, preach. Yeah, I mean obviously a lot of stuff I'm going to agree with. Brandt, Andrew and I work at the same company so we have very much the same philosophy.

Brandt Krueger:

What?

Andrew Latimer:

It would actually be really funny if you didn't. Can we stir up some controversy there? Let's do that.

Will Curran:

What do you mean Andrew, that's not corporate policy, how dare you?

Brandt Krueger:

Well one of the other things, I think and if anybody else out there has any specific questions regarding the number of people or the names of people or the types of the roles or anything like that, please do reach out [#eventtechpodcast](#), let us know or send us an email, [eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com](mailto:eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com).

Brandt Krueger:

But I want to try and move things on a little bit, and this is actually where a lot of this topic kind of crystallized for me, is I was doing a lot of thinking about effectively managing the schedule and that's something that obviously planners have a lot of power over is you know how much rehearsal do we have? How often are we getting together? When can we get together? When did the executives come in? Are they doing a full rehearsal or are they doing just kind of a walk the stage and click through kind of thing.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I really wanted to spend a decent amount of time talking about all of this kind of scheduled related things because really when we're talking about managing AV crews, managing labor, how long people are on has a good deal to do with that.

Brandt Krueger:

Whether it's a half a day or a full day or overtime and all that kind of stuff. So, I know one of the ones, and this is one that has been covered both on this show as well as on Whiteboard Wednesdays and things like that, is turnaround time.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I don't want to spend a whole lot of time on that necessarily, but we can talk about a little bit of some of the ramifications of it. So, Andrew if you want to just let folks know what is turnaround time when it comes to labor and then we can kind of take it from there.

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. In simplistic form it's when did we end the last shift to the time that we started the next shift. Commonly you're going to see that as all right, our corporate show ended at 6:00 p.m. today, we come back at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow, so that gives a, is that 14 hours off? Everyone is going to be happy with that.



Andrew Latimer:

The alternative is when you start to get into your awards show that might not wrap up until 11:00 p.m. and coming back for a 6:00 a.m. rehearsal now you're talking about seven hours off for the guys to go home, sleep, get ready, get dressed. That turns into a couple hours of sleep at most and that often is either translated as a one and a half times rate for the following day.

Andrew Latimer:

Some companies even do double time and what they call turnaround time. And basically that's to say hey our guys were run really hard and they are going to be exhausted. So, to get them through this day it's almost incentive pay, I guess.

Brandt Krueger:

Right, and the important key to that is a lot of times when people look at things like overtime, it's almost with kind of disdain. It's like why are you getting paid time and a half? Why are you getting paid double time?

Brandt Krueger:

And it's important to remember, and this is something that I've, man I've been talking about for 10 years now, is that a lot of times for a lot of planners, not all of them but a lot of planners, it's like they have one big show a year, or a couple big shows a year.

Brandt Krueger:

It's like the one corporate national sales meeting and they're just running hardcore for a week leading up to it and working 70 hour weeks and all that kind of stuff.

Brandt Krueger:

So, they're willing to put in the hey I'm going to stay up until 2:00 in the morning to make sure it's good and then we'll get up at 5:00 in the morning and then 2:00 in the morning and five in the morning and 2:00 in the ... That's ...

Brandt Krueger:

But then once that show is done, you know, then it's off to the spa and I'm taking a week off and that kind of thing. Whereas most of these labor rules and union rules and just kind of general guidelines really stem from the fact of hey, this is what we do day in and day out.

Brandt Krueger:

And the human body simply isn't capable of running that hard every day. You just follow ... That's why these rules came about. That we have a 10 hour day and then you work overtime. And specifically talking about turnaround time is yeah, you might have seven hours down, whereas the people that are, the planner and maybe the key personnel from the AV team if you're lucky are just going up to their room and going to sleep, a lot of the time it's local crew and local crew then have to drive home.

Brandt Krueger:

So, that might be up to a half an hour. So, now you've lost an hour off of that time, so maybe you've got seven hours off. Like you said, by the time you get home, get settled, grab a snack and get to bed you're only getting three, four hours of sleep before you're coming around and turning around and coming back time.

Brandt Krueger:

So, that's why these things are in place. And I just like to emphasize that. Anytime we're talking about these things that whenever we start to go down the road of oh, why, why do we have to pay for that, why do we have to do that? It's because the human body can only do so much.

Brandt Krueger:

So, we need to make sure that our crews are compensated for when we do those really long days, and for when we do get a short turnaround time where you've only got a few hours of sleep and you've got to get back up and bright and shiny in the morning.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I think otherwise I think that was a very effective description of turnaround time. The other thing that I like to kind of use as a metaphor is the airline pilots, right? Airline pilots by regulation can only fly a certain number of hours and have to have a certain amount of time off because we don't want sleepy people running our airplanes.

Brandt Krueger:

And to a certain extent it's kind of the same thing, right, we don't want a sleepy bored tech. And I'm not going to lie, I've seen the bored tech that was run really hard the night before falling asleep the next morning because the content is talking about insurance and how the dividends have gone from 20% to 30% over the course of the ... You know? And then you look over and you see the head bob going on.

Brandt Krueger:

So, anyway. I just wanted to kind of interject on that particular topic because it brings up a lot of kind of sub topics as well.

Will Curran:

One comment I was going to say too is that I don't know many techs who are excited to go in a tight turnaround too.

Brandt Krueger:

Right, yeah, yeah, I'm going to get paid double time.

Will Curran:

Maybe occasionally it's the techs is like really oh my gosh, I'm really busy. Yeah, he's like yeah. Usually they're like, all right, can I just not? Can I go home early?

Andrew Latimer:  
Right.

Will Curran:  
I help avoid that. I don't really hear them be really that excited.

Brandt Krueger:  
I would trade that time and a half for the next day for an extra hour of sleep.

Andrew Latimer:  
100% and I think a lot of times too we're seeing it because about two weeks ago we were on a show where, the phrase I like to use is we'd gotten to the point where it was a PowerPoint by committee during the rehearsal. And we were 13 hours into rehearsal but had only really run through about one presentation.

Will Curran:  
Wow.

Andrew Latimer:  
So, now we're in double time, we've gone past overtime. It's 11:30 p.m. we have a 6:30 call the next morning, you know? It's just a human condition that we want to feel valued.

Andrew Latimer:  
That we want to show off our best work and it's, I don't want to say insulting in a mean and intentional way, but it almost feels that way when you're sitting there for a whole day and you can't really contribute anything.

Will Curran:  
Right.

Andrew Latimer:  
And then you're paying the price, you don't get to go home and see your family or you don't get to call your wife or your significant other before you get to bed. It does take a very human toll whether it's turnaround time or not.

Andrew Latimer:  
I think there is a very significant human factor that in other conversations we've had has been addressing the mental health of the production industry and this definitely factors into that.

Brandt Krueger:

You know I wanted to touch on that later, but now is a good a time as any, and maybe we can come back to some of the other aspects around turnaround time. But I definitely wanted to talk about rehearsals in the context of this kind of time management and crew management because that's exactly it.

Brandt Krueger:

I've been in that exact same position where the executive team is using "rehearsal time" to go through the PowerPoint bullet by bullet and say well is that really the messaging that we want to be using on that. I don't really like that graphic. That's not my thing.

Brandt Krueger:

And you've got 6, 8, 10 people literally sitting around doing nothing.

Will Curran:

Getting paid really high wages per hour.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, getting paid decent, yeah, getting paid decent money to sit there. And as much as you'd think that there's a lot of people that we'd just be going yeah, well great, I'm getting paid to sit around and do nothing. That's really not how it works.

Brandt Krueger:

All of us, like you said Andrew so eloquently there, is we would much rather be contributing, we would much rather be being effective and trying to make the meeting better while rehearsing it so that we are making sure that we're hitting the cues and making sure that we're doing all that we can to make that executive team look good rather than sitting around and listening to them go through their PowerPoint bullet by bullet.

Brandt Krueger:

And I definitely wanted to bring that up as well because I've also been in that position where yeah, you're going to one o'clock in the morning then you're sending your crew into turnaround time and having to do time and a half the entire next day for things that could be worked out in a hotel room over a beer or would be best worked out in a hotel room over a beer.

Will Curran:

Right.

Brandt Krueger:

And probably would get people to chill out a little bit.

Will Curran:

I totally love that.

Brandt Krueger:

You know? And then you've got a fresh crew. So, I wanted to bring ... I'm glad you brought up that. That's definitely something that I wanted to bring up as far as rehearsals is being respectful of the crew's time and being respectful of the fact that you've got 10 people sitting around and doing nothing.

Brandt Krueger:

On a similar note to that, I want to talk about call times. You know, usually the call times are being set by the technical director or whoever so that we're ready by a certain time. If we're going to have rehearsals in the morning, we want to make sure that we're ready to go before those rehearsals. If we have no rehearsals and it's just doors at a certain time, we want to be ready to go by that certain time.

Brandt Krueger:

And usually that's something that the crew can kind of work out on its own. It's like all right, maybe the projectionists need to come in a little early to get the projectors warmed up, everyone else can come a half an hour early or something along those lines.

Brandt Krueger:

But sometimes, for whatever reason, that's coming from either the show producer or the client and saying all right, I want everybody in at 7:00 a.m. when there's not really any reason to do that.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I'm a huge fan of letting the AV company, letting the production company kind of set those times internally of I need you to be ready by this time, have the crew call be whatever it takes to be ready by that time, for me personally.

Brandt Krueger:

And then you're avoiding, again, that situation of people sitting around. Maybe not everybody has to come in at that particular time and stagger the crew times so that it's easier so that you don't, again, have people sitting around doing nothing.

Andrew Latimer:

And I think you bring up a great point there too that talks back a little bit to our conversation earlier in the episode of what is the value and when should you have management on your show.

Andrew Latimer:

And that's I think another case for it right there, is if you have a turnkey solution whether it's through that freelance producer, freelance production managers bring together a team, whether it's through a turnkey AV company, that becomes an opportunity for them to step into that role.

Andrew Latimer:

It even gets back to the stage management to avoid that PowerPoint by committee to kind of step in and say hey guys we want to continue with our rehearsals but we understand you want to keep working on your content. How about our graphics guy sits down with you at the end of the day and we can work on it there.

Andrew Latimer:

There's so many opportunities to engage that management in setting your effective call times and advising the crew or advising the client and the crew of hey, we're about to go into overtime, who can we cut, who's not essential to the continuation of this rehearsal.

Andrew Latimer:

We might have a master electrician on the call sitting back at dimers just in case the light turns off they can troubleshoot it. They might not need the crew overtime that night.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah, and we can even down the crew?

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. And I think that's a really good reason that you want management on your show because it does avoid that surprise of what do you mean we got an extra \$7,000 of overtime? We just thought that we could rehearse all day because we have the room on a 24 hour hold, the AV equipment was already in there.

Brandt Krueger:

No, it's a fantastic point and it's one that Will, you and I, bring up all the time in our AV Smackdown Session.

Will Curran:

All the time.

Brandt Krueger:

Where we pit against the in-house versus third party models is that a lot of times when you're working with that third party they're going to have kind of baked in that manager of who's keeping track and hey just so you know.

Brandt Krueger:

And then, and this isn't just ... Well I guess it is a knock. I was going to say it's not a knock, but it is a knock on in-house AV, is there does tend to be in my humble experience, sometimes they're not going to just jump right out and tell you hey by the way we're going to go into overtime if you go past this time.

Brandt Krueger:

Less of an incentive to let you know because they know you're on the hook for it. They know that it's going to go the master account and you're going to have to take care of it one way or the other.

Brandt Krueger:

And I've absolutely been in that position where I know for a fact there was not a soul around after five o'clock but everybody on the crew checked out at 6:00 because by the time they got down to the clock it was 5:01.

Brandt Krueger:

So, well that's an extra hour and so it's kind of like okay, yes I suppose it could have possibly if you walked really slow been 5:01 by the time you got down to the dock and clocked out.

Brandt Krueger:

So, it's another really good reason for even if you don't have a dedicated person, even if you don't have a dedicated person managing the crew, at least having someone on your team responsible for keeping an eyeball on the clock and having someone on your team responsible for just going up to the crew and saying okay, you guys are on a seven, I'm assuming a 10 hour day, what's the turnaround time for you guys? All that kind of stuff, just someone being responsible for keeping an eyeball on the clock with that stuff.

Will Curran:

I think for everyone who doesn't know too, obviously hopefully you've been listening to every single Event Tech Podcast episode since our first episode together, but Brandt actually hires a ton of in-house AV companies for the work that he does.

Will Curran:

So, I want to make sure everyone knows that that opinion is not just biased because he has worked with third party companies but also agency booked events.

Brandt Krueger:

Yeah. You know we hit around of the things that I wanted to hit regarding time around time kind of in that discussion of rehearsals. Things like just again to being respectful of the time, maybe we can let some people go.

Brandt Krueger:

Hey folks, maybe this is something you guys could work out in your hotel room and then come down. We'll come down an hour early, something along those lines to take care of it so that we're not doing that.

Brandt Krueger:

And then again also being respectful of the do we really need to be set up at seven o'clock in the morning when it's an 8:30 doors or something along those lines?

Brandt Krueger:

But I want to give you the opportunity, Andrew, just if there's anything else you want to throw out there kind of before we tie a bow on all of this as far as tips and tricks that planners need to know or maybe producers need to know or anybody that's having to deal with crews regarding managing AV crews and technical crews in general.

Andrew Latimer:

Sure. I think the solution that I really like to a lot of crew management that comes more out of the theatrical and concert world, and I feel has almost fallen by the wayside in corporate events is the idea of a crew chief. You so rarely see it on anything smaller.

Andrew Latimer:

But it's something that gets to a lot of the points we were talking about as an additional option of having somebody that is dedicated to managing those hours, making sure that they're hitting their meal breaks, that nobody is running into overtime that doesn't need to be.

Andrew Latimer:

I can't really even remember ... Well I guess I did have a crew chief a few weeks ago and they were my best friend. I was a project manager on this show and they were able to take care of the human factors that I was not able to do because in my role I was running around dealing with equipment that got stolen from one of the breakout rooms and had just a hundred different things going on, and they're saying hey I know our guys aren't going to be able to get out right now, the meal breaks we already had dinner, we're in the late rehearsal. So, I'm just going to call in a food order for them.

Andrew Latimer:

And whether it is actually a crew chief or not, having somebody that can serve as your crew mom, crew dad, just looking out for people, human factors are such an important thing to our whole industry and that's what we are doing as our job is trying to engage other people senses and feelings and sense of belief and purpose.

Andrew Latimer:

You know, one of the kind of bitter slogans that I learned from a friend is that we give up our dreams to help the dreams of other people come true.

Brandt Krueger:

Impressing.

Andrew Latimer:

So, it's just giving back a little bit to us. I mean the smallest things go a long way. So, staying out at overtime when you can, making the rehearsals useful. Acknowledging that hey, if we're going



to go late tonight, let's take an extra half hour so that you can call the family. In fact, that goes a long way.

Brandt Krueger:

It so does and even I've been in a position where we knew it was going to be a long day and even just having an hour off to go walk around the building and see what the sun looks like, you know, because so many times we're just stuck in these ballrooms for 24/7 or in a, even just in the property, in the hotel room.

Brandt Krueger:

I was all set to wrap this puppy up but Andrew you brought up one more really important point which is breaks and crew meals and things like that. And it's something that I frequently say in my education sessions is that it just goes such a long way to include the crew in the meals.

Brandt Krueger:

There's something to be said for walking away and getting your own dinner. But there's also something to be said for providing whatever you're getting the guests, just tack on an extra 10 meals.

Brandt Krueger:

Usually that's well within kind of the range of what you're going to need to get for your catering anyway. It's not like it's a huge additional cost or at the very least, you know, the flat meat sandwiches, those are always fine too.

Brandt Krueger:

But it just goes such a long way toward making the crew feel like they're part of the team, to be there eating the same meals that you as the planner are eating or the attendees are eating.

Brandt Krueger:

It has the side benefit of in case of emergency, oh my goodness the CEO just walked in and wants to run through the slides one more time. You know? I don't want to emphasize that, but it's true, you know?

Brandt Krueger:

Really the better part of it though is just making the crew feel like they're part of the team. It's not just like okay, by the way you've got an hour to go get lunch and great we're at a resort so again I got to drive 20 minutes into town or eat at the resort restaurant for \$100 for a cheese burger.

Brandt Krueger:

So, I highly recommend that. And you touched on just that it makes people feel more fulfilled and it makes people feel part of the game and invested in it, and I think it just goes a really long way toward garnering that kind of investment from folks.

Will Curran:

I cannot agree more. That's why I definitely will give away as much food as possible just because I know food makes people happy.

Brandt Krueger:

Doesn't it though?

Andrew Latimer:

It's true.

Will Curran:

Everyone who knows Will or has worked with us knows that Will feeds everyone.

Brandt Krueger:

And it's so much better to have taco night. Like you know, so you're on a week show and it's like hey, it's pizza night, it's taco night, it's ... Even if it's flat meat Monday, who cares?

Will Curran:

Yeah, right, totally.

Brandt Krueger:

At least you're all on the same room, you're all sharing and so many times something creative or amazing happens out of that conversation because you've had a chance to shut your brain off for a minute and then that problem that's been nagging you for the last two days I know how we can make the set stand up straight, you know or whatever it was that has been bugging you for the last three days is when you've got a chance to just switch it off.

Brandt Krueger:

But to be in the same room as other people, is just a huge thing. So, I'm glad that you brought that up Andrew and thank you so much for joining us. I really appreciate it. We kind of called you on last minute notice and it was like hey, do you want to do a show about managing a crew, and you were gracious enough to join us. So thank you so much.

Andrew Latimer:

My pleasure. Thank you for having me. It's always great to be able to kind of share our side of things.

Will Curran:

Yeah, absolutely. Thank you so much Andrew. As always you were fantastic and I'm sure this won't be the last time that everyone gets to see you on this podcast. So, we appreciate you man.

Brandt Krueger:

Heck no. We're already got some ideas for the pre-show.

Will Curran:

Awesome. All right. Yeah, no, so many. So many more. So many more. Well everyone, thank you guys so much for tuning in as well, every single one of you for listening. I hope you got a lot of value out of this, a lot of tactical tips.

Will Curran:

If you did really enjoy this, and you aren't subscribed yet, make sure to head over to [eventtechpodcast.com](http://eventtechpodcast.com). That's the best place to go because not only is that where you get all of the links to every single podcasting platform, iTunes, Pocket Casts, Google Play, Spotify. Oh my God there are so many. That's where you can go to check them all out.

Will Curran:

But also we have the ability for you go to sign up and get exclusive content. Go over and write your email inbox, all the show notes, all of the links to all of the additional resources for example all the Whiteboard Wednesdays we discussed that dive in these topics a little bit further.

Will Curran:

So, make sure that you go to [eventtechpodcast.com](http://eventtechpodcast.com). Sign up right there right now. And you know what? If you want to talk to us, like Brandt said, if you have ideas or questions or you want to dive into something specific, we are doing a little bit live broadcasting on LinkedIn right now. Thanks to everybody for tuning on LinkedIn.

Will Curran:

But I'm getting a lot of questions in there about other episodes. Well, if you have ideas for other episodes make sure to contact us [#eventtechpodcast](https://twitter.com/eventtechpodcast). You can also shoot an email directly to Brandt and I at [eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com](mailto:eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com).

Will Curran:

And you know what? You out there, you listener, you, thanks for tuning in. Thanks Brandt so much for co-hosting with me today.

Brandt Krueger:

Love it as always man.

Will Curran:

And thank you guys again and we'll see you guys next time on the Event Tech Podcast.

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Brandt Krueger:  
Event tech out.

Will Curran:  
Out.