

Welcome to the Event Brew, where event professionals from different backgrounds talk about the latest, most controversial and interesting topics dominating the minds of the industry right now. This is a candid conversation the likes of which can only otherwise be found late at night in host hotel lobby bars during industry conferences, so relax and drop in on what event pros really say when no one else is around. This show is brought to you by Endless Events, the event AB company that tells you how it really is. Now, let's brew something up.

Nick Borelli:

Hello again, everyone. This is Event Brew, coming to you from all corners of at least North America. We are excited today to talk to you about a topic that is very loaded and it's potentially controversial and everyone has a lot of different angles on it. So hopefully, you are ready to hear something that you might not agree with and you might find some common ground, or you're ready to start your own arguments at home based on what we talk about today.

Nick Borelli:

I just want to let you know that I am Nick Borelli from Borelli Strategies and Event Brew, we talk about the things that we're drinking today. We're recording on a Friday, so I think everyone's allowed to be drinking alcohol if they would like, I'm giving you permission. But if you're not like myself, then that's fine. I actually am drinking a gift. It is Colombian coffee from a friend of mine and a client, Harvey Tran, who went to Colombia for a couple weeks and brought home coffee for us, which is really great. It's Cafe Simbolo, and then there's lots of other Spanish that I can't read on it, making it legit to me. It could say anything. It could be haha, dumb American blend. That would be great, I would buy that.

Dustin:

Me too.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, right? How about everybody else? Who else do we have on today, and what are you drinking?

Thuy Diep:

Hi everyone, this is Thuy Diep with PRA Business Events, and I am drinking my usual. But because we were talking about how I bring tea bags everywhere I ran out my green organic green tea, Yogi Green Tea. And so I actually ran through my computer bag and grabbed my extra ones that I keep everywhere in my bags. And then it happens to also be in this cup, aspire to inspire and actually it's a part of Feed6, which is nonprofit and it feeds six people when you buy their products.

Nick Borelli:

I love that. I have a lot of... That's the mentality behind the sock purchases that I make.

Thuy Diep:

Oh! What company?

Will:

Is it they put socks on people?

Dustin:

Is it not there's-

Thuy Diep:

No. You buy socks and the proceeds get to do something special.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, any brand that, well, if you buy one somebody else gets one, that kind of thing.

Will:

Like the Tom's Model?

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, the Tom's Model. There is a socks equivalent, there is a mattress equivalent. So you're saying that this is a coffee or tea company rather than that?

Thuy Diep:

No, it's the mug that I'm drinking in.

Nick Borelli:

Oh, just the mug?

Thuy Diep:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nick Borelli:

Okay.

Thuy Diep:

I just feel like this is all very much who I am, like inspirational saying on my mug and organic like honey in my tea.

Nick Borelli:

Oh, okay.

Thuy Diep:

I love that you say all walks of North America too because then Dustin, what are you drinking?

Dustin:

Well, I am the very hydrated token Canadian, drinking water again. But before we hit record, we made a pact that I was going to pick up my drinking habits for this recording. So by next time I'm going to take some inspiration from Nick because I'm so proud of him that he's not drinking some crazy energy drink.

Thuy Diep:

Yay, Nick.

Dustin:

I'm going to step up my brew for the next one. But for today I am drinking a one liter SodaStream bottle of beautiful carbonated water.

Will:

I've never liked carbonated water. Am I in the minority?

Dustin:

Ow, come on.

Thuy Diep:

You ain't got that fancy, Will. I drink carbonated water.

Will:

That's like I'll take hose water. Is that available on the menu?

Thuy Diep:

I feel like people who are dedicated water drinkers are like no, that water tastes different.

Dustin:

Oh, really?

Thuy Diep:

Dustin, you're the water king. Is that true? When you drink it, [crosstalk 00:04:31] would you drink sink water?

Dustin:

I would in most places in Canada.

Thuy Diep:

Really? Mm-mm (negative).

Dustin:

Not the Flint, Michigan-

Will:
Especially Vancouver.

Dustin:
You can drink right out of the tap here, it never bothers me. Nobody slam me for this, but when I'm in the States I don't drink the tap water. And it's-

Thuy Diep:
We are not slamming you.

Dustin:
... mostly yet because-

Thuy Diep:
Us too.

Dustin:
Yeah, don't knock me for saying this, but I don't drink tap water in America. Probably has something to do with Flint in the back of my mind. But generally speaking, I steer clear of water in big buildings and I'm staying in hotels, and I don't know what that's about. I've got no data. I hope the American Association of Water Police don't come after me for saying that. But yes, when I travel, I generally drink bottled water, which is actually another interesting point about staying healthy when you're traveling and, which is probably a great episode for us later in the future. But I do avoid anything that could be a bit sketchy because getting sick while you're away sucks.

Nick Borelli:
Now the AAWP, the water police, they are-

Thuy Diep:
The official water police in the United States.

Nick Borelli:
... they're pretty crazy, so hopefully this doesn't get to them. I was not unable to be on the last couple episodes because I was out of town and doing a bunch of things. But I caught up and now I'm hyper aware of acronyms in every part of my life. I had a three and a half hour drive, and I was like I had a lot of problems with acronyms, I really need to tear down. But yeah, now I want to make them. Things that aren't and then tear apart the ones that I use.

Will:
Oh my gosh, I feel like for the rest of the show we're going to be making acronyms for the rest of our lives. Well, speaking of acronyms, I am drinking...

Nick Borelli:

ETRs, we should talk about those eventually, but okay, I'll tell you what that is in a second.

Will:

Okay, okay. All right. Well, while we're speaking of acronyms, I'm drinking a GMC. Yeah, that's the tea I'm drinking. And if you've listened to the last couple episodes, you know it's the exact same tea I've been drinking every single show, which is the Genmai Cha tea, which is the popcorn tea. Since I didn't go to movie night last night, I'm having my popcorn now.

Will:

Oh, and since we're talking about mugs, people can learn a little bit about me. This mug is from a company called Gong. It's a software company that makes sales intelligence software, and pretty much half of the clothing I own and half of the products in my life are all free products from software companies because I own so much software.

Dustin:

I have acronyms on all the things that I have that are free, so it's all the association swag. It's a disproportionate amount of it and I remember speaking of that previous episode when the Dramatic Association changed that we all know happened. I remember looking at all my swag of different chapters going, well, I don't need ISIS rally cups or ISIS pins and all this other stuff anymore. I can make way and a couple of years later now I've replaced all those with what is 21 Chapters that I visited with the ILEA banner.

Thuy Diep:

That's a rule for me is I don't keep tchotchkes. I have to really love it, it has to be an inspirational mug or branded. Anything with my name on it I'll keep, Dustin, just so you know. But talking about mugs, my Event Brew mug is actually dirty right now. I used it last night, so mine says aspire to inspire. And I want to hear Nick's mug because his is hilarious and very much who he is.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, mine is it's for words. I often use the acronym of that all the time. In a given day I'd probably say TMNT I don't know, 30, 40 times. That is Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles because that's where I live. And it's art from the original comic from Ninja Turtles, of which today I bought a 48 inch Michelangelo that is staring directly at me. And hopefully I can make it say things with voice balloons that will inspire me to look away.

Thuy Diep:

Nick so wanted to be on the acronym episode.

Nick Borelli:

It was-

Thuy Diep:

But what are we talking about today? No, Nick, you missed it. Stop being so involved in the industry and trying to impact society in such a positive way.

Nick Borelli:

I was with a bunch of acronyms including S.E.A.R.C.H. and ILEA and a bunch of other groups over the last seven days. It was in Forsby.

Will:

I didn't know S.E.A.R.C.H. was an acronym.

Nick Borelli:

No, and don't. I shouldn't have brought that up. Because by the way, half of the board doesn't know what it means.

Will:

Well, there we go.

Thuy Diep:

We just changed that. But being on the marketing team we are going to let you guys know and educate everyone on the new meaning of S.E.A.R.C.H.

Will:

Well, I was going to say, Thuy, you probably put an interesting point about getting rid of tchotchkes. That's so trendy of you to do. You did it, it's such a good trend.

Nick Borelli:

Segues are a trend.

Thuy Diep:

Trend segue.

Will:

What are we talking about today?

Nick Borelli:

Well, we're going to talk about ETRs, event trend reports. Please that catch on.

Thuy Diep:

That's not a thing.

Nick Borelli:

I like to think the things that aren't things and then disassemble the ones that are. This is the time of year for me where I am at in my life, where half of my emails seemingly are asks to contribute to someone's trend report and the other half are other people contributing to trend reports. So my inbox is split between automatically what is newsletter stuff. And what our direct emails and my newsletters all seem to be other people's trends and then my inbox seems to be full of contribute to this event marketing trend report or this event trend report or that kind of thing.

Nick Borelli:

And yeah, I don't know, I find just the word trend when it comes to live events to be such a loaded word. I have a lot of baggage with that word, and I have a lot of feelings about that word. And most of it's probably not a real problem. But I don't know, I feel like everyone has as some feeling when it comes to trends, especially if they are asked about them and how to contribute to them. And I don't know, I'm curious to see if anybody here has had that same emotional response to seeing the word trend show up on something associated with their live events.

Thuy Diep:

Before we dive deep into it, what's everyone stand, viewpoint on ... Are you for or against it?

Will:

I will say that our company produces one of the top ranking trends guides every year, so from a marketing perspective, very for them. I also really like thinking about them and talking about them. It's almost this really bad drug almost, that is I don't know if that's at all good analogy, but it just feels like it's something that's good and also bad at the same time. And there is such thing as too much, but in moderation it's okay maybe. I don't know.

Will:

I also have very specific qualms when I see specific trends guides and I go, what the heck? I get frustrated when I see the same things year after year, or I see that someone ... there's a bunch of other rants I can probably do about them, but there are certain things I think I have specific qualms with them. I don't necessarily hate the guides as a whole, but I hate when I see specific ones done poorly, I think. But it's interesting because I struggle with it because also we produce one as well.

Thuy Diep:

What about you, Dustin? Are you for or against it?

Dustin:

I think there are certain ones that will catch my attention. I will look at a tech trend because it's a thing that I know the least about and the thing I want to know more about. You could never get me to open a design trend report, ever. You couldn't pay me to open one. And it's not because I'm better than that, it's just I just have zero interest in them and I find that they never really inspire you or give you a resource. Whereas a tech trend, you can actually learn something new

about technology that I didn't know about. And I think because I don't live in that world as much, but it's something that I want to ensure that I understand.

Dustin:

So I guess it really depends on the report. I'm very well aware of what the purpose of these reports are, or sorry, the reports. So yeah, my time is valuable, my inbox is valuable, and it's got to be something really worthwhile to catch my attention.

Nick Borelli:

Does anybody here not believe in the concept of a design trend? That you don't believe that they are ... You think that they're wholly manufactured, actually there's not science behind it? That there's other motivating factors or it's just one influential person or group's intentions to kick something off, as opposed to an actual thing that is occurring? Like most people are ... I don't know. Like there's more blues or I don't. I'm really poorly when it comes to event aesthetics. But do you know what I mean? Does anyone have the thought that they're potentially not actually true, that there isn't a trend? It's just somebody with a platform saying what they think things are, or they have a limited window and it's just their experience. But they're influential so therefore they're actually not reporting on trends. They're creating the news, not reporting on the news. Does that make sense?

Will:

So for an example it would be like as if I pushed and said LED screens are the big trend right now in AV, and everyone has to have an LED screen, it's the future.

Nick Borelli:

Did you just buy some LED screen?

Will:

And I just bought a crap ton of LED screens. I think it's something like that.

Thuy Diep:

I feel like that happens all the time. I feel like these trends, regardless of what niche it is, is so saturated. There are so many, and I am constantly asking myself, well, what's the resources? Is there any data behind that? Is that just your opinion, and you did get a bunch of LED screens and now you're just trying to sell the product and the services that ...? Initially, what's the intentions behind it? So for me, it's trying to find really the ones that have backing to it.

Thuy Diep:

And in our industry I feel like we ... I don't know, just the whole going into design, we want to be a creative industry, but I really feel like we aren't, and that's so sad to say. That could be a whole nother topic. But I feel like a lot of people when they read these trends, I feel like it's just a part of their job that you should know what's going on in the industry. But if you were really creative or really into what's going to happen in the future, you should be looking outside our

industry. You should be looking for articles and videos from all sectors of the market, not just feel like it's a standard to know what's going on now, what's going on within our events industry.

Thuy Diep:

But really if you want to get into what's going to happen in the future, you need to look at tech and what they're doing right now with cars and just everything.

Nick Borelli:

I like that. No, that's great. I think the more specific it gets, the less I am likely to use the information, or use that. If it's broadly speaking I'm much more interested in it. For me, from a programming perspective on conferences, the idea of inclusiveness is a quote unquote trend because there is outside forces thankfully, pushing this to the front of the agenda and there's lots of conversations about mantels and about representation. And it is a trend in as much as there is progress being made from external forces pushing that to happen. But it's not saying the trend is super specific of technology conferences are having a 50% this and a 50%.

Nick Borelli:

The more specific you get to it, the less I listen. Or you could say, I don't know, there are technology trends that are impacting live events, from the sake of frictionless registration. But if you start saying that there's a specific technology that is a trend, then I'm less likely to listen to you just because there are so many different budgets, client goals, and that kind of thing. And the client's goal part is the part that throws me off. I don't know, but because Dustin, you're in this space a lot, it throws me off on the trend. Because if the client is looking for a certain solution, they're not looking for a trend.

Dustin:

Yeah, I agree. I really love what you just said about trends are often put in these categories of design and tech and probably a few more. But the real trends that are going on are more about ... I'm ripping off a conversation I had with Stacey Wyatt, who's the editor-in-chief of Canadian Special Events Magazine and produces a conference, I think one of the longest running event conferences in Canada.

Dustin:

We were on a phone call yesterday and we were talking about this exact thing, about how the trends that we should be talking about should be about inclusivity, they should be about social issues, they should be about, she used the terms global citizenship, and those really are the trends we should be talking about. And it's not about being trendy, it's about what we need to know to run a successful and inclusive business. So I think that is the trends that I would love to start talking about.

Dustin:

And then I think on that note too, I think if you're in the events industry and you're looking at other event people for design trends, you're probably way too late.

Thuy Diep:
Yes.

Dustin:
If the event industry has it, it means that it has already existed somewhere else for a long time.

Thuy Diep:
Absolutely.

Dustin:
And if you really want to know what is trending from a design aspect you got to look at other industries. You need to look at the fashion industry, you need to look at typically, so much of what we use. A little bit the marketing and graphic design industry before it even gets to us, so it's almost like when we get it we're the last people to touch it and then we use it to death. And then we put it on Pinterest and then it lives forever, and that's not a trend. We're the trend garbage can.

Nick Borelli:
Mason jars that are ghosts haunting Pinterest. That's what I'm thinking of right now. Mason jar ghosts that are just floating around saying I'm the ghost of trends past.

Thuy Diep:
And Dustin, it's so great. I'm so glad that you bring that up because it's true. It's our perspective and our mind. Not even our mindset, but the vantage point in which we look at stuff. We're so specific, and a perfect example is Mason jars. But I actually just recently had a conversation where someone said, "Wow, I found this new product, it's so cool. It's like a blender bike, you have to get your smoothie, whatever and you have to ride it. And as you pedal, then you make your own juice." I was like that was four to six years ago when wellness was actually the theme and that people wanted to be more active in that. And so that is one thing.

Thuy Diep:
And the other thing is I was going to use fashion because fashion is one thing that I'm constantly in the loop of. That's what inspires me and I actually look at Avant-Garde, and the high, the Chanel's and talking about just their fashion and runway shows and their collection launches. Those are what's so innovative. Stage production on those are incredible. But I feel like as an industry, and I'm on everyone's team, but we're like the H&M, I feel of that. When we're not researching and really having that vantage point, we're just now trying to copy. I feel like we're a little behind on things because I think we are restricted in our role as planners, as supplier partners that are contributing to all of this. I feel like we're in the day-to-day so much that we're too, quote unquote busy to be innovative and to have those discussions with the decision makers to then go there.

Nick Borelli:

Well, we have a lot of other things that artists don't have to worry about. Artists don't have to worry about things like we talked about with active shooters, they don't have to worry about food allergies, they don't have to worry about egress. Design is maybe the most fun, the most fulfilling. It's an aspect of what we do, but we don't get to be pure designers like your Avant-Garde designers. And I think that to give us credit, we have a lot on our plate when it comes to logistics and realities and commercial goals of stakeholders. Do you think the Avant-Garde artist is like yeah, but what about all my stakeholders when I design stuff? They're upside down painting something on drugs they made up. They are the pure artists.

Thuy Diep:

We're talking a lot about drugs this episode.

Nick Borelli:

It's Friday. It's where my head is. So again, I give us credit because it's really easy to say we're less than and maybe feel we're the redheaded stepchild of the design world. But the reality is that we also hold the attendees lives in our hands, and have to worry about things like safety and about other emotional security. So we have a lot of complex stuff, and at the best as we further commoditize I think to the positive end of this stuff and of the realities of the logistics, I think that we get to be better and pure designers.

Nick Borelli:

Because in the 20 plus years I've been working in events design and the conversations that we talk about around design even being able to mention Avant-Garde in a sentence and not feel embarrassed, I think we can finally start bridging those gaps because we've eliminated a lot of the kind of ... I don't know, just the pure logistical things as we use technologies to get their registrations faster. We just have a lot of time freed up. And I think hopefully that will be put into more creative pursuits.

Nick Borelli:

But honestly, I think that talking about trends, and saying that trends are only this, what most people are doing right now, the disingenuous aspect of it to me is that I think it discredits a lot of what our real powers are. And that is taking in what the client wants and the client needs and being able to actually say look, I will say right now that the solution to someone's goal may be a Mason jar.

Dustin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I agree.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, right?! And that is almost crazy hilariously controversial now because you're well, that's passe, that's old like a donut wall, but okay. I literally worked on an event that was a 100th anniversary of the ... what do you call it? The bubble packaging. So we use that in the designs

of all the things because it had to be integrated into their history. And while it aesthetically looks like something that people would be like, you've wrapped everything in bubble wrap, you're like sort of, yeah. There was a play of infusing their century of their family's work into the certain designs. There's no way that ever falls on a trends list. And if it does, who cares? Because it was still the right solution at the time.

Nick Borelli:

So anyways, my bloatedness of the word trends discredits to me, at least sometimes, from a design standpoint, at least, what we really do, which is take in what's appropriate and what is right for an event and offer that up to the clients in a creative way.

Dustin:

I heard a few years ago, our creative director was working on something and she put Mason jars in something and I was actually shocked that she had done it. And I was like, "What the hell?" And I was like, "Isn't the world telling us not to use Mason jars?" And she said, "I don't give a shit what the world is telling me. This is the solution. This is the perfect solution for what we're doing. I don't really care," and I actually had a lot of respect for that to be like, okay, you want to use Mason jars, you go right ahead and do it.

Nick Borelli:

That's great.

Dustin:

Who cares?

Nick Borelli:

Mason is a company, they produce it. And I'm sure they have an annual event. Do you think they drink out of cups?

Dustin:

No, I hope not.

Nick Borelli:

If they're your client, right? I mean, so, you know-

Will:

So it looks like just don't do trends to do trends, right?

Nick Borelli:

Right.

Dustin:

Yeah. I think one of the things that keeps striking me is that, in so many of the events that happen, we're so restricted to what you can buy off the shelf. And I think that's where we end up in this trend captivated audience because you can only do what you have access to. And of course, there's an exception to that. And there's big custom shows that the sky is the limit. And you can be that artist that can do whatever the hell you want.

Dustin:

But in every corner of our industry and I think I'm talking more tech and aesthetic, you can only turn a screen so many times before it's just a screen. You can only put a stage in so many ways before it's just a stage, and we really are in so many ways stuck to what we can get and what we can buy off of the shelf. And I have a company that is, and I get shit on by people like Nick that say you're not a true designer because you own product, and the goal is to push your product and, which is not true and a bit ignorant to the way my company actually works. But with the reason I own product because if I didn't, I wouldn't have access to it because I'm not in a huge market. I don't have court in every corner of my market to get what I need. So if we don't own that stuff, and we don't stock our shelves with great things to be able to produce for our clients, then we don't get them.

Dustin:

Then I get the same three styles of sofa that belong at the two rental companies in our city of 1.4 million people. So I think there is a challenge there where you're restricted by budget and access, and that's where these trend mongers get to exist. It's because you're really only telling people what they have access to. And it's also why the trend reports are important because it tells you what you can get. Because in most cases, you're restricted to only what you can get.

Nick Borelli:

I feel like I need to jump in. But no, I definitely say some variation of that all the time, and I'll point a percentage of that at organizations like what you do. But I will point a disproportionate amount of that at rental companies who I think are further down the line as far as the designers and when their designers put stuff together.

Nick Borelli:

My wife works for Crate and Barrel and they have designers on their team and they design a room and I'm like, "Oh, is it ever anything that's not in your inventory?" They're like, "Well, of course not." I'm like, so their sales, they're just creating an optimum sales. And then I think that there's a 100% pure, like that's all you ... not all, but that you're a salesperson to a designer and everyone has to have design thinking applied to what they do just like we talked about with the event forum report.

Nick Borelli:

But I just think that there's totally pure like the Avant-Garde artists that's out there that doesn't own a thing, that is just like I don't know man, this is the solution to your problem because and I'm free of any burdens. And then there's incremental stages because it makes sense. But I

thought about that as you were saying that. It is true, we don't often have the opportunity for fabrication out of whole cloth, is a rarity when on the whole scale of events. Do you remember the Gantry Bike?

Dustin:

I do.

Nick Borelli:

Ever see that thing?

Dustin:

Yeah.

Will:

It sounds like a dead trend.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, right. But it's a thing. It is. It's this giant bike that will go over an audience and people can do trapeze acts above you as it bikes over your event. And it has all this trust structure built into it. And I remember seeing it one year at TSC and going, that's interesting. And then I remember I think they had some variation of it again at some other show, and I remember someone saying, that's done. Because I already saw that at TSC, and I'm like, what are you talking about? None of us are the clients. If this is done ... Do you know I mean? Even if it's the same city people are like, somebody already did that in the city. I'm like, who cares?

Nick Borelli:

Not only could it be the right thing for the theme, number one, but also, we are in such a jaded, awful place where we see something twice meant for a person to buy it in Iowa one month, and the next month for someone to use it in LA, not that it usually happens in that order. But we are so hyper nose-turned-up at old things, but the reality is, is our clients, they don't experience this heightened special events that often. So I think we also have to take a step back and say, the doughnut walls have been around forever. I'm like, yeah, but the average person has probably seen it once or twice in their life, period. Not years of it. Even we haven't seen it.

Dustin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, if that, right?

Will:

I think one of the best things you can ever do is to take someone who isn't even in the events industry, not even parallel to it. Completely not in the industry. Take a teacher to one of your

industry galas, their minds explode. They're like, wow, my God I've never seen this. But then it's funny because then you're there and you're like, yeah, whatever. This is normal. They're like, this is normal for you? What the heck? So I think definitely important.

Will:

And to circle around an idea that you guys were talking about too is that looking outside the industry, I think it is really important as you guys were talking about. I think we spend as we talked about in the Association chat, so much time talking to ourselves.

Will:

One of my favorite stories is that Brandt has a trends guide that he put together, and his is like the anti-trends guide. And what he does is he takes everybody's trends guides that's already out, he puts them in a word cloud, he says, what are all the things everyone's talking about? And most of the time, it's the same five to six things that are being said over and over again. And I think that you brought up a really good point, Nick, that a lot of times, and you guys were talking about access and everything like that. I think these trends a lot of times are based in zero reality. We're talking about AR and VR for events-

Nick Borelli:

VR.

Will:

... guys.

Nick Borelli:

VR is my Mason jar for technology tech trends-

Will:

For the technology, yeah.

Nick Borelli:

... when it comes to events because I'm just like, hey, by the way was this year the year? I've done that show with you, Will and Jim Spellos and Will Corbin at Cobra ball at the end of the year. And we talked about the projecting event trends based in technology and someone brings up VR every year and I laugh at it. Because I'm generally fairly more on the futurist side and more on I can see where things are going to some extent because I think that there are signs.

Nick Borelli:

I am such a Luddite when it comes to my belief in what VR offers to live events, I think it offers next to nothing. And all the tech people want it so bad that they put it in there because it's fun and crazy. And they saw too many episodes of Next Generation or something like that, and they're like, they want it. And every year someone's like, this is ... I'm seeing this and I'm like, it has not been used, it will not be used.

Nick Borelli:

And again, if you said that about anything else that's not true. They're like, the internet is a fad, so I know I'm poised to sound stupid in five years. I just don't see where immersing yourself in a false reality in the midst of a live experience makes sense. But even still, in the last four years of doing that, it hasn't happened in those four years, and every year it's brought up. Anyways, that gets me.

Dustin:

I leave the room when somebody says VR. I just know that we're not having a serious conversation, and the minute I see it on the top of a trend Report, I'm like, all my instincts were right. This is not good. And for all of those reasons, Nick, I think that it is going to find its way and it has found its way in small doses into live experiences. But it's already a very basic tech. It doesn't excite me. I've had a VR experience once in my life, that sounded really weird, once in my life, and I was like ... that I think I was on a mountain or on a roller coaster or something, and I was like, okay.

Nick Borelli:

Roller coasters are the worst first experiences ever.

Will:

They make sick.

Dustin:

Yeah, I just don't, I cannot. That's how we've-

Nick Borelli:

I have a VR set right here. I think I like VR. I think that it has lots of potential. I think it has, and this is what I think people ... because they want it to be so much part of live events because that's the sector they're in, they want to talk about the things that other technology organizations are talking about. I think the only place that has in a significant way is part of this sales experience to buy something to get someone to an event, but the actual experience design bit for the attendee, I don't see it like. Could you sell a destination to somebody, well, in Honolulu while you're in Japan? Yes, that's great.

Dustin:

Of course.

Nick Borelli:

Yeah, but we're still not talking about experience design yet. You're talking about ways to sell rooms and what AllSeated does. That makes total sense to me. But the actual slapping on a headset and then bumping into people at a live event or sitting in a chair, other than a little trade show booth-like tiny experience thing and the like ... I shouldn't say tiny, shouldn't be diminutive,

maybe in a trade show setting, where again you're doing sales really fine. But outside of that, what's the mass appeal of bringing people together and having them all check out?

Nick Borelli:

Anyways, to me it's the big one where I'm like, you want this so bad that I think I see The Emperor Is Naked. I have doubts about this whole thing.

Will:

To pivot into another thing that you guys were hinting at as well, I've just been taking notes along the way, I heard things that you guys mentioned is that far too often too, we come at this decisively. This is the time of year that this is happening. Like November, December, January because by January, everyone's already googling for 2020 trends and it's already over. But a lot of people just wait for the beginning of the year to look at what are the trends for the next year? But in reality I think, Thuy, you bring up a good point that we need to be looking at this stuff year round, that we need to be looking at things are shifting and changing and moving all the time rather than just one time of the year. We'll see what's going to come up over the next year and then I'll recheck in a year later.

Thuy Diep:

I love that you say that, and Dustin brings up a good point with your colleague is for me, I want to know the big picture items when it comes to ... When it's like when it was wellness and sustainability and diversity and inclusion, now I feel like it's behavior science. Those to me, it affects what's going on around our society too, what's happening on a day-to-day, and so you do have to constantly think about that, not just in November and December. And so once you know what ... that's what I want to know, and then it goes. I don't need to know what the ... I don't know, the chain of then the Mason jar and the lemon because at that point, if I know those higher pitcher things, it ends up filtering down to then, well, what are these items that would be supportive of what's going on and what people are talking about?

Thuy Diep:

Because it's true, it's who. When you are creating that program or that meeting or supplying those things to the client, it's looking at the audience and why they're there. And then from there, if it is a Mason jar, if it is that LED wall, then you can incorporate it in there. But if you don't have a sense of why and who, then you can't really go into then creating those solutions, those creative solutions, those strategies to then complete those things.

Thuy Diep:

And so for me, that's what I'm looking at. And I'm just like, why are there so many guides too? Why can't there be one under the umbrella of like ... Is there a governing body of the event industry where they're saying after all this research and talking to the Bureaus and convention of these destinations and globally, this is what we've come ... Is there anyone that's doing that? Nick is checking us out in disgust. No?!

Dustin:

Endless Events in the future.

Nick Borelli:

It's a lot of companies like all of my clients and Endless Events, it's content marketing ultimately. You know that if your mission is to improve events and improve your clients' experiences and make your client have more valuable resources in order to get their business because you're seen as an expert, then you create these pieces. And then look, there's a huge difference as far as volume of means that people have to be able to do that well. But ultimately, there is so much noise because there is no barrier to entry when it comes to the events industry, or to content marketing. So anyone can do it from anywhere, and then there's varying results.

Nick Borelli:

Is the EIC putting together a piece? That's the Event Industry Council, acronyms. Are they putting together a piece of new definitive words that we're using in events? No. Should they? Yes, that's who they are, they should be. Oftentimes my finger ends up pointing in that direction. And then because that's not done, then people just do the things they can in the Wild West that is the events industry.

Nick Borelli:

But I want to see people trends for events, I want to see things like vocabulary changes, I want to see things like different usage of people selecting their own pronouns at events. I want to see stuff like that, where you're like, this is where we are as a people. These are behavioral trends number one, and there's less behavioral trends because most people are consistent to their own behaviors. But there are macro people trends, and I think that stuff is interesting. Because if you want to design, you have to know two different things. You have to know the end goals of the behavioral change that you're trying to impact from your stakeholder, and you also need to understand people and how to change their behaviors.

Nick Borelli:

And people, they aren't static in how they believe things and what they want out of things and what they're experiencing that's jading and changing them. So you have to have your thumb on the pulse of humanity. It's one of the reasons I pay attention to things like meme culture. You see language changing on a dime in that regard.

Thuy Diep:

Yes, I love that.

Nick Borelli:

That's an existential question. That's a great question. In a blue ocean strategy, doing it really well and just making the decision to do that would be all you would think about. And you wouldn't really worry about the marketplace. As far as your idea, keep it really unique and out

there. And if there's a vacuum of that, then you don't worry about everything else around you and why it's not working. You just do yours really well.

Nick Borelli:

But what I think it would take would probably be because it's big, because it's not just this trends report. It's a symptom of a bigger problem of events people not paying too much attention to the details on this stuff and not enough attention to actual people, and not having a person who attends their events and just takes in what the attendee experience feels like for them as a reporter. Things like that where you're just like, why don't we care more about the emotional feelings and responses to the stimuli that you create, instead of just doing it and then scoring it on some ticket sales?

Nick Borelli:

So all that's aside, I think it takes the organizing bodies of people, be it associations or potentially it would have to come from an event journalism trend of enough people in think groups like that Even Manager Blog, BizBash, Smart Meetings alike, or really being forced to think about that. But to get the clicks, honestly, I think to start the conversation, I think it probably takes multiple pieces, not just one really well done one, but that all are centered around the same idea. And there's also silos in the industry.

Nick Borelli:

There are certain parts of the industry that talk about this a lot more. I would say the conference organizers probably do talk about this stuff a lot more. Mostly because they're disproportionately in the business of content distribution as the end goal of their experience design more so than a trade show, which is looking for CRM lead retrieval style metrics for success or social, which is looking at pure design subjective aesthetics that make people feel things.

Nick Borelli:

So I think it takes root in the different parts of the events industry at a different speed. But I don't know, it could start with us, right?

Dustin:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nick Borelli:

It could start with people that are listening. This year, I've told quite ... I'll tell you a secret, or not really a secret, but all of my clients as I'm helping them draft what their content calendars look like for 2020, I'm like it's the start of a new decade. Please use that sentence, please say what you need to know going into events this decade, what you need to know for registration for the next decade. The decade word has a shelf life of it being something that gets your attention. And we're in the midst of right prior to being inundated with a ton of it.

Nick Borelli:

In the next month, you're going to see not only the trend reports you always see, you're going to see the word decade creep up into it, because there's no way I'm not the only content marketer who's trying to abuse that word. So I don't know. You could talk about the next decade of events is human sciences, and then you build there.

Dustin:

You mentioned that conference content planners are talking about social issues and human issues? I find that those conversations are always siloed into one track and it doesn't spill over where you can go to a session on this instead of this being in every session, and this being a focus that everybody is talking about in whatever corner of the industry they're in. And I wonder if that's not a stronger mandate to those that are building out conference sessions and content to start thinking about the human element and the social issues that we're facing. And never again will you stand on a stage and talk about design or tech trends, but you're going to infuse that with what we need to know about where we're at as humans and how that's changing.

Nick Borelli:

I think that still event industry no matter what corner of it still lags behind in designing around the idea of an organizing principle, and the majority of the events industry is really still really hip to the idea of a theme. Themes are attendee facing, they're dominated by aesthetics and visual realizations, organizing principles are, why are we here and what is going to infuse itself into everything that we do? I think that call it that, call it a mission statement, that kind of thing, but that the organizations and events that live that and then have a person or every one on the team culturally who every decision that is made say yes, but does it live up to this, these words?

Dustin:

Or how-

Nick Borelli:

That's what it would take.

Dustin:

How is this going to make an impact? How is this experience or this part of a show going to make a positive impact on the world?

Nick Borelli:

Right, and then you could define those in some values, and in not platitude, not marketing, but in a true way that is part of the design experience to be able to integrate certain values and a specific mission into what you do. It has to be higher than theme, it has to be higher and, which then below theme is things like tracks like you mentioned, where you see certain speakers talk about that, but only isolated silos. It has to go to the very top and it has to be culturally something that event organizers are looking at and buttoning up at the end of every decision. They go, great. Okay, well, we talked about this, we like this now, the final gate. Does it help us

blank? Does it help change the world? Does it help ignite excellence? Does it help whatever the organizing principle is? And then if it doesn't, then you go back to the workshop.

Nick Borelli:

That design, you could argue that why isn't that happening? And that's we need to fix. And I'm going to tell you, that's a big problem from my world of the strategy world. Bottom line is that we need to get out of the idea of the purely in the world of the commodities of the stuff, of the trends in stuff, and we need to think about the strategic trends, the people trends, and we need to think about if we're talking about the way things are moving. Do we know within, let's say destination events, do we know the geopolitical landscape of where we're having our events? Not what the CVB tells us as far as how many restaurants there are and how many beds? But do we know if there's any unrest? Do we know if there's any political issues going on there? We should know that. Like we know fire safety, we should know political climate.

Nick Borelli:

But then what would be the go-to place for that? It's one more thing. I'm never trying to make event planners do one more thing, but it's a tough job. I don't know, I always come back to that. I always try to give credit where credit is due. It's a tough job. But I think that that's where ... the more I was thinking about those three phases that came up in that hour episode about the Global Event Forum, that's where it really takes organizations taking a very specific amount of time with strategy, a specific amount of time for design and a specific amount of time for execution. And not trying to boil them into one piece. If you do that, then at least there is an opportunity for the seed to grow.

Will:

I like it. I'm not sure if we have time for one more little side conversation to be had before we wrap up.

Dustin:

I think we do. Let's do it.

Will:

All right. One thing I think that's really interesting, and we always are talking about it at the end of every single trends podcast, or discussion on trends is that every year we always say, man, why did we never follow up on the trends from last year? Or why didn't we ever admit that that one trend didn't end up becoming a trend? Well, we said that this was going to be the thing and it ended up not being it.

Thuy Diep:

I would that.

Will:

I just think it's really interesting that A, no one ever falls up. No one ever comes out with a 2019 reflection guide saying look, this is where that trend went. It was not a trend, especially people being willing to admit when they're wrong. If you look at the episode with ... We did a episode on Event Tech Podcast with Amy Webb talking about what it's like to be a futurist. And she mentioned that a lot of times she's wrong. She throws things out there, and she says this is what it is. But she's one of the leading people who are supposed to know what's going on. But a lot of times it's throwing out in the dark in some ways, but-

Thuy Diep:
Before you-

Will:
... I don't know if you guys-

Thuy Diep:
... counter that, Nick, I love that. I would read that at the end of the year versus what's going on into the next year. Here are the things that didn't work or here are the things that did after gathering all of that and putting it into the experiment for the year. If anyone wants to do that I will be your first reader. That is something that I think is so fun. And so we don't do a follow through or a follow-up on the trends that everyone's predicting. Did they come true?

Thuy Diep:
And if anything, I would love to see then who was right in that and why they were and how much research they did. Because then that shows credibility and then that's the trends guide that I would want to read the following year then.

Dustin:
I think I would want to see who the trends that are put forward instead of I don't really care what trends didn't work. I don't find that interesting. But I would find it fascinating to know what in this year did we do with that trend? And how did the trend evolve and who was successful using it? And some proof points to say here's company XYZ that executed in this way on this trend, and this is how they made it for themselves. I think that would be really fascinating to see. Just because somebody's saying this trend worked and didn't work, it's just more opinion. It's no different than the initial report. It's just more people talking about themselves, like us.

Nick Borelli:
Yeah, trend examples. That's awesome. What it does is it's actionable. And when you say this further illustrates it, and it makes it tangible, saying that this trend didn't work isn't actionable. You go, okay, great, as far as the consumer of the content. I will say, here's why there isn't a lot of organizations drafting pieces outside of the fact that it's not really actionable information.

Nick Borelli:

The other reason is that this is mostly content marketing and the content marketing's goal oftentimes is to set up the person as an expert in order for you to go from awareness to trust, and that doesn't do anything for trust. You could argue that yes, saying that you don't know everything creates the transparency. Yeah, but if you're in an early part of understanding who somebody is, it's early in the buyers journey. Then it's just confusing like, we're right some of the times. But you know who does this all of the time? It's sports.

Nick Borelli:

At the beginning of the year, whatever the sports organization, an ESPN Or Fox Sports or whatever, they'll have their analysts and then they'll make predictions for the year, and they do religiously go back to them at the end of the year and they'll, you had these predictions at the beginning of the year. How many of them were right? So they make entertainment out of it. But that's because that's the product unto itself, it's the entertainment bit of the prediction and the credibility is over the long haul, not just for that engagement.

Nick Borelli:

So there is a template I suppose, out there for this guessing. But to Will, I would say that if you go back and listen to ... I don't know how because you put out a million pieces of content per week, if you go back and listen to The Event Tech Trends report that we've done for the last couple years, that's part of it. We've gone back on that. And I swear, you could do a super cut of four years worth of, well, VR didn't really hit this year, but next year ... Those guys want it so bad. And it's like they're just seeing every other industry just going crazy for VR. And I'm like, we're in the opposite business of that.

Nick Borelli:

I would say that it's funny. You've got a lot of irons in the whatever irons go into. And I just want to pat you on the back. You do it.

Will:

Thanks. I think that term you're looking for is irons in the fire.

Nick Borelli:

There it is. I don't put irons in fire, I put irons on ironing boards. But it's probably a different kind of iron, and that's really the only one in my life.

Will:

I love it. I love it. Well, I figure we can wrap this one up with if there's any sort of places that you guys do like to find trends or discover things. I figured it'd be cool to share that with our listeners. And feel free to say something off the wall, but just so you know, where do you guys go to get information on what's going on in the world?

Dustin:

I've been subscribing to Corbin Ball's email since I became aware of it. Outside of him and every other technology person being into VR, and he's pretty reasonable with it actually, but outside of that, I think that he's really spot on just because he's in a lot of councils for larger organizations and has been for decades. So he gets to see the behind the scenes of maybe some product roadmaps and just where the industry is going before it makes its decisions. Because that's his position as a veteran consultant. So I subscribe to Corbin Ball's emails. And I get trends every time one of those come out, not just in December.

Nick Borelli:
Thuy?!

Thuy Diep:

For me, it's about going to experience. I think a lot of times as an experienced designer I forget to be the attendee. So for me, like tomorrow going to 29 Rooms, I'm constantly going. I was at a concert the other night. For me, it's trying to analyze the feeling of why something makes me feel a certain way. And that helps in creating those whatever, quote unquote trends are. Those are the things that inspire me. So for me, yeah, going to all those, and outside of our industry too. I don't gain inspiration from attending our monthly meetings, Association events. I go to just the most random topics that don't really apply technically, but will then inspire me to create. What about you, Will?

Will:

I don't have a specific one single place that I go to. I think that's what really helps me in keeping it diverse. But I do have a general tip, is that I use a tool called Feedly, which is an RSS reader. Basically you subscribe to multiple blogs. I think I'm subscribed ... I should find out the exact number, but I'm probably subscribed to over 100 different sites at this point. It's sounds like a lot.

Thuy Diep:

I'm unsubscribing. I'm doing the opposite. I'm unsubscribing to all those things.

Will:

Well, one of the differences is that it shows them all as individual feeds, so when I'm bringing it up, I'm always seeing the latest stuff. And I know I think I've mentioned this to Nick, on Slack, but they have a really cool feature that like it's using some machine learning to be able to say, you can plug in topics that you're really interested in. So I have things on it that I really want to stay on top of, and I plug them in as keywords and it surfaces those articles first for me, which is really helpful almost like a Google Alert. But in a sense that it's making sure there's no duplicates.

Will:

Let's pick it for example, to this week. Motorola announced a new folding phone, it's taking over my newsfeed, it's making sure that I don't see a 1000 articles on Motorola's folding phone. I only

have to see one from the one that's the most popular article. But if you like that, it really helps. I just have an ingrained habit that when I'm on the toilet admittedly or bored.

Thuy Diep:

Nick is-

Will:

Or waiting.

Thuy Diep:

Wow, did we just get really close, you guys?

Will:

If anyone doesn't read when they're on the toilet or do anything when they are on the toilet and you just sit there, you're a crazy person. But I just read a lot of articles. And sometimes it's not reading the full article, it's seeing headlines and seeing what people are talking about it, and then save this for later, put it in my Pocket, which is another tool I use. And that's my flow for me to stay on top of things.

Thuy Diep:

Put it in your pocket before or after you wash your hands?

Will:

Definitely before I wash my hands because I'm still on the toilet while I'm reading it. Pocket is a tool that allows you to save things offline for later, for the metaphor. Anyways, but that's how I do it, that's my process. And I honestly don't read a ton of events industry related stuff. I usually find like you guys have talked about all throughout this tired show, that we're a little bit laggard and we're a little bit behind, so I'm more so looking at what's going on outside the industry.

Dustin:

I have a few online blogs and stuff that I follow. Designboom, I always find to be really good for setting out great examples of architecture and embedding technology and architecture together. There's another one called Cool Hunting that I follow.

Nick Borelli:

It's so good.

Dustin:

And then Fast Company and Design Milk are probably the four more architectural or design based. But I am with all of you and Thuy specifically, as I make sure that I'm always out experiencing everything that I can, and the good, the bad, the ugly. I have a big fascination with self-organization right now, and I have a big fascination with the comeuppance of these groups that are self organizing and finding their own way and building their own experiences.

Dustin:

So I like to tag along with that as much as I can, and I generally try and avoid event industry related stuff. Because I think as a designer, as a producer if I'm looking at that so is everybody else, so I need to not follow the same path as everybody else's.

Nick Borelli:

I pay a lot of attention to event industry goings on, but not from the standpoint of design, and it's more of just what are we as an industry doing in different destinations? I have a disproportionate amount of information I get, it's about the hotel world and the destination world just because it impacts a lot of my clients.

Dustin:

Right.

Nick Borelli:

But, man, am I jealous of your upcoming 29 Rooms experience, Thuy. If anyone doesn't look at that as a place to get inspired, you're missing out. They do some amazing installations that really understand people and what people are. That is design oftentimes that is expressing what's going on in the people trends world really well.

Dustin:

There's one more place. I missed the opportunity to go to 29 Rooms in Toronto by a day, and I could have squeezed it in and I didn't. I'm totally regretting it, so I guess I gotta go to whatever.

Thuy Diep:

Oh my gosh, you guys. Field trip. Come on down to LA.

Dustin:

We got to come to LA and get it done.

Will:

(singing).

Dustin:

They do it at New York Fashion Week. New York Fashion Week is very protective on the events that are allowed to take place within a certain amount of miles. Not only very protective, but it's like illegal to produce events because of a deal they have with the City of New York.

Nick Borelli:

Interesting.

Dustin:

... that are within a certain amount. It's way more than out boarding penalties. They have some real stiff penalties on producing events that take place within. And there is some small circles, but circles go up in New York. Anyways, they do a coordinated event with New York Fashion Week that each year I look at as far as the designs of it because in my world where I look at design, I'm looking at the people things. Because I want to work on designs that make people intuitively want to share their experiences with the people that they are in contact with online. And I think it's good to design when you know what people will do and they think they came up with themselves. I think it's poor design when you tell them what to do, so I have to understand people first, and they do it probably better than anybody.

Nick Borelli:

Cool. Well, we all either agree or disagree or probably somewhere in between about event design trends and trends in general when it comes to organizations, putting this stuff together. Hopefully, everyone listening to this has their own take on it. And we would be really interested to hear what yours if we missed an angle of it that we didn't really get into. User experience design, and there are trends there. There's lots of different angles we didn't even touch upon, but we'd love to hear more about what your takes are on trends and trend reports.

Nick Borelli:

If you go to eventbrew.com you can check out the show notes, links to all the resources that we shared today. There is a transcript for every episode, and there are links, so you can subscribe to the platform of your choice. While you're on that platform, please rate and review us on Apple Podcasts, Pocket Casts, Google Play, Spotify. You can see my review on Apple Podcasts of our own show, so that's a fun little Easter egg for you to find. This helps us a ton though, with people finding our podcasts so we can hopefully, make a bigger impact.

Nick Borelli:

Let us know what you think and contact us. You can use [#eventbrew](#) any given point and our team and ourselves, we'll engage with you there. And our email address is eventbrew@helloendless.com. Anybody else have anything?

Dustin:

2020 is going to be the year of VR. I can feel it. It's going to happen.

Nick Borelli:

But-

Will:

Definitely VR for sure.

Nick Borelli:

The next decade of events in VR.

Will:
Yes.

Nick Borelli:
I'm going to tell somebody to write that just to see if they will. Cool, everybody. Thanks for your contributions and thanks everybody here for listening.

Dustin:
Thanks, Nick.

Will:
Thanks, Nick.

Thuy Diep:
Thank you.

Nick Borelli:
Bye.

Dustin:
Bye.

Will:
Bye.

All:
Bye.

Nick Borelli:
Bye.

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