Will Curran:
Hey everyone, this is Will Curran from Endless Events, and welcome back to another edition of the Event Tech Podcast. I am sitting across, virtually as he is recording in the most inconspicuous location ever, from the macabre Brandt Krueger, which I thought was a noun and actually is an adjective. I had to look up what that word meant too. I'm not going to lie. Do you knew what it meant? You know what it means?

Brandt Krueger:
Well, macabre is... I believe it's macabre as opposed to macabre, but I could be wrong.

Will Curran:
Google says macabre.

Brandt Krueger:
Is it? Okay, all right. Well, I'm going with macabre.

Will Curran:
I'm wondering what you think the word is. Maybe we're talking about different words.

Brandt Krueger:
Well, it's dark, and spooky, and evil. That's my understanding of how it is.

Will Curran:
Yeah, it says, "Disturbing and horrifying because of the involvement with or depicting of death and injury."

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah, yeah. Because the macabre is kind of Victorian era novels is how I think of that.

Will Curran:
Interesting, apparently there's a macabre dance too, which right before the podcast, I was doing a little bit of dance and I realized I was doing kind of a macabre dance, which is like a procession of skeletons apparently.

Brandt Krueger:
So if I am the macabre of Brandt Krueger of Event Technology Consulting, that gentleman over there is the mountainous Will Curran of Endless Events.

Will Curran:

That's pretty fitting, just the fact that I just got back from all the mountains in Ireland and everything was hiking mountains and all that sort of stuff. So yeah, it's definitely, I feel mountainous. I'm feeling quite mountainous today, with my beard and my pickaxe and my flannel on for sure.

Brandt Krueger:
There you go. There you go.

Will Curran:
So today we're talking about little bit of news that broke this week, not related to the events industry. You guys seem to be liking these news stories that we break and that's not related to the industry, and now we are breaking it to you. This last week there was some interesting news about how Google, Amazon Alexa, and a few other partners kind of worked, said, "Hey, we're going to fill up a standard for smart home technology," which has kind of been fragmented a little bit over time, and we are looking for a way to bring it all together.

Will Curran:
So we figured this might be a great parallel to the events industry and might be a great way for us to be able to tie into this idea of maybe there needs to be an events standard, a tech standard for the events industry as well. So yeah, if you missed the news, the article basically said that Google, Amazon Alexa said, "Hey, we're going to try and create standard across all these technologies." I'm hugely into smart home technology, I know Brandt is as well and essentially trying to take these technologies such as, ZigBee and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth and let's find a way to bring it all together. Brandt, what was your reaction to the story?

Brandt Krueger:
I was really surprised, to be perfectly honest. It's one of those things where, when all of the key players in an industry with their own little fiefdoms actually start talking to each other in any way, shape, or form, it's one of those things where you're like, "Wow, that's actually really amazing." So it was surprising news. Each one of these companies has at one point or another tried to say, "Hey, follow around." But it's like more like, Follow around me. Hey, here's our open standard and here's our open standard and here's our open standard."

Brandt Krueger:
And anybody who's familiar with the Xkcd cartoon, there's a cartoon about this, it's a very nerdy cartoon if you've never seen it, that basically, "Hey, we've got 14 different standards for whatever this protocol is. What we need to do, we need to get them all together." One day later, "Now there are 15 standards." So it's very difficult anytime you're trying to get somebody together, everybody on board to the same page, because everyone's worried that somehow they're going to lose their market share or something along those lines. So I for one am really glad to see that at least they're making the effort.

Will Curran:

Yeah, totally. I mean, as a smart home nerd too, I'm excited for this, because I can't tell you how hard it is. You have to pick very specific products and be very deliberate about it. You can't say, "Oh, this is the best smart bulb light I want to use." And then, "Oh, but this is the best switch." Sometimes you have to compromise and say, "this isn't the best of this, but because it works with this and uses the same standard, I'm willing to make that sacrifice on there as well." I think really interestingly too with this story, as we relate it to the events industry and we'll kind of tie it all together, is that a day later, one of the players raised his hand and it was a standard called Z-Wave. And again, we're probably not in a home automation podcast, so we don't have to get into this stuff as well, but Z-Wave considers themselves an open standard, but it jokingly isn't 100% most open, but they kind of wave their hands and say, "But what about us?"

Brandt Krueger:
"We've got an open standard. We've got an open standard."

Will Curran:
"We want to be part of this too." And then I think they ended up coming out and saying what was interesting about those forced them, because they didn't get to play ball, was because the standard said, "Look, you haven't been 100% open." So the next day they announced, "Oh, just kidding. We're going to open up the door just a little bit so we can start connecting a little bit more." I just thought that was the most fascinating thing, is that this standard, not only did it bring together and say like, "Hey, we're going to all figure out a way to create one single open standard." But it also forced one of the players that wasn't open to be open, which I think is the perfect case of what you want when it comes to this sort of stuff.

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah, it definitely feels like kind of a day late and a dollar short of just like, "Well, no, we're going to open things up just a little bit more." But it raises some interesting possibilities and as we are want to do on this show, let's dive in a little bit, first from the IoT standpoint and then we'll work our way out. One of the things that really bothers me in IoT world is the fact that we've got all these different standards.

Brandt Krueger:
If I'm trying to get in my lights on one thing and then we've got the Nest doorbell, and then we've got the Google Home hubs and we've got all of these things, and they're all sort of talking to each other, but not really. And I've got a physical hub for this and a physical hub for that. It gets really messy really fast. And as consumers, you want things to be easy, right? I want to be able to just screw in the light bulbs and talk to Madam A or what did we decide Senor G was?

Will Curran:
I like Senor G.

Brandt Krueger:

So Senor G or Madam A turn on my lights and make it go. It's difficult as a consumer understanding these things, and you and I we're enthusiasts and sometimes it's difficult. These lights don't work with that one, and if you're going to do the dimmers, then you need to make sure you're getting the right kind of dimmable LED bulbs. And I remember very early on in my explorations of IoT, I was messaging you every other day going, "Why is this not working? Why are these lights flickering?" And you're like, "Oh, well, you've got to get the right kind of dimmable LEDs, and they don't work well with the Lutrons." And so the more that we can standardize this kind of stuff, I think it's going to be ultimately better for consumers.

Brandt Krueger:
Now, the blowback on all of that is, like I mentioned, the losing of market share and I think there's ways around that. And this will definitely cycle back as we bring it back to events. But this idea that if we try and do an open standard we're somehow going to lose out, you can still make your products better than the other products that are out there and have features that are enabled, if you're running it through a pure Senor G system. If you're running it through a full Google system or you're running it through a full Amazon system or you're running it through a full Apple system, that there are benefits to that. But that if you do have this kind of mixed household of a little bit of Apple and a little bit of Google, you're not losing out on core functionality.

Will Curran:
I think it also... We obviously had the episode earlier this year was talking about a Jack-of-all-trades system or something that integrates a lot and obviously I think I was leaning towards more of the best in class that integrates a lot. My hope is that with this sort of thing too, that kind of bring parallels to it, is that even though it technically does lose market share, I think it hopefully causes them to work harder to build better products, because now it's not...

Will Curran:
Nest for example, I love Nest, because everything just works really well together. Well if that 100% opens up and now you can use a Ring inside the Nest app or whatever it may be, that'd be awesome. But I think what it means is that now Nest can't be like our only feature fact that we integrate well. We have to actually make sure it's the best camera, it's the best of this feature. And my hope is that it spurs the innovation of better products along the way.

Brandt Krueger:
I think that's exactly it. And I think the first major company to start thinking along these lines was Microsoft, that the last couple times they've done major keynotes, they haven't mentioned the word Windows at all. That they're understanding now that they are a service that you can layer on top of other things, and so they've really been very intentional over the course of the last couple years of making sure that Office runs well on iPad and it runs well on other systems, but it runs the best on the Microsoft systems. And so I've been slowly getting sucked deeper and deeper into the Microsoft ecosystem, because of how well my Surface works and how well it works with the Office apps and how well it works.

Brandt Krueger:
But if I am on my Android phone, I can still access all of that information. It's just not going to be quite as amazing, but it's pretty darn close. Gone are the days where Microsoft Office was really, really awful on Mac. It's still not great. There's still a lot of things that need to be done, but it's definitely to the point where we're getting closer and closer to parity, and I think they've had that kind of paradigm shift where, I hate that phrase, but it's actually accurate in this instance, where they're very intentionally saying, "We don't care where you run our stuff as long as you use our stuff." But it's going to be best on a Surface device, on a Microsoft device and running on Windows.

Will Curran:
Yeah, definitely. I can't agree anymore for sure. I think a great example of this is we had the conversation about the Neo and Duo, but the fact that it, I believe it's the Neo, it's the smaller one, is running Android but it's a Windows device like so cool. I mean that's the perfect example of collaboration across multiple platforms that are technically competing, but then figuring out a way for them to integrate. And I feel like that's needed way more in the events industry. Just to reel it into an analogy, or not analogy, but an exact instance of this, I think they're a listener of the podcast as well, but we were at a conference, we were speaking, and the person said, "I really want to do this but it has to integrate with this."

Will Curran:
And we said, "and I instantly, like you're nice mainly you hear him charger that texted before me." But you said, "well your choices are now limited to like two choices, right? You don't like the one that they make. So we need to file on the integrates and that doesn't work." And I feel like that conversation is having more and more of I want this, but it doesn't integrate with it and there's no standard for what it needs to be done. And you would think it'd be easy because we have API's now and all these things like that, but it is not and it's because everyone's using different standards of database entry and I don't even know that the super technical side of things, but it just doesn't exist right now as well as have you been noticing that too that people that say, "I want this tool, it has to integrate with this." But there's nothing that integrates with it or something like that?

Brandt Krueger:
It's been a struggle in event land and event app land and but also just in business in general is that, the integrations between platforms has been I think it's that same fear, right? Is that we want to be open but not too open because then we want to lock people into our own ecosystem. And again, it goes back exactly like you said to that juggernaut conversation of like if we're going to own a registration platform and then an event app and a room block a designator and we want people in that ecosystem and so there's less incentive to open things up. And so that's why when you see an alliance like this come through, it really starts to be very pro-consumer in a way that a lot of times we don't see we mentioned Amazon, we mentioned Apple, we had mentioned Google.

Brandt Krueger:
But the other part of this alliance is ZigBee, which is already in alliance. And so that alliance brings on board Ikea, LA Grande. I'm reading this from Stacey and IoT, Stacey on IoT which is my go-to IoT blog, StacyOnIoT.com the Samsung smart things. So if you're in the Samsung ecosystem, that brings you into this world. So imagine being able to have your Samsung phone and quickly and easily set up, not only Android based systems, but also anything that's compatible with Apple, anything that's compatible with Alexa and then IKEA has that actually have been very strong lately in their IoT offerings including light bulbs and plugs and all that.

Will Curran:
And you hear the news this week yeah, what happened?

Brandt Krueger:
No, I don't know if I did, bring it.

Will Curran:
Yeah, so IKEA announced that their future business model is 100% pet on smart home. They didn't realize like, "Hey we've kind of tapped out the inexpensive furniture pack model and we know that people know us for it, but if we want to expand and grow, we know that we need to be also known for these affordable technologies." And they just, I think they doubled their like product lines in the last week or so. But yeah, it's really crazy. I honestly like for somebody who's really passionate of smart home and stuff, I've been very far behind. But mainly because it's also one of those things where like "yeah, I almost got fatigue of trying to set up things because they weren't standard and you know I end up having installed like basic computer server that runs a connection of multiple systems but be honest. So the thing that I crave is just to have it all run through the Google home and work through one single standard rather than run through my server and maintain it. That was the thing I got sick of visits."

Will Curran:
And that's why going back to the... Oh gosh, going back to the knowledge of event tech is that I had to set the server. It was a lot of work to be able to do it. I finally got it set up. It was good to go, something broke on it I have to redo all the work. And I just feel like that's the same way with Alliance Integrations is like, "Oh, something broke either on one end or the other or something needs to be updated or I missed an update or something got screwed up and I didn't back it up properly and now boom, like twice as much work that has to be done to be able to do something as simple as control my damn blinds. And I just want to be able to open my blinds."

Brandt Krueger:
And the alternatives to that are even further out of the average consumers reach. I mean it was funny, I sat down with a guy who was transferring. There's an organization that I've gotten involved with and he was like, "Oh, you're the young guy, so I'm going to transfer all of the technology over to you and so here's how to access the web administration, here's how to

access the roster and all that kind of stuff." And I expected it to be a fairly dry hand off of someone who didn't really know what they were doing. And just kind of was the last person who was techie in the group and this guy was like hardcore engineer from like the 1970s and so he's still very active, still very learning, completely rolled his own IoT. So like he's literally using Arduino and you know these other like small off the shelf micro computers and has his own server running in the basic.

Brandt Krueger:
I just, I don't really like the idea of being on someone else's cloud. So completely rolled his own IoT to run his blinds and the LEDs and he's got temperature sensors everywhere and all this kind of stuff. And I was just like, "dude, you rock." But the average person can't do that, right? We're not going to know how to program an Arduino to make our IT go. What we want to do, and this is why it's perfect for IKEA, is to just go to IKEA and go, "Oh, here's a smart bulb. I can hook up to my smart phone." Great, that's what I want. It fits their brand really, really well. If this, I think of Ikea, I think of like European style compact apartments and condos and things like that with a little bit of European flair. And so bringing the idea of the smart home to that mentality I think is a perfect match for that kind of brand.

Will Curran:
Yeah, I can't agree more. I mean it's one of these things too. You buy a couch you're probably going to buy a lamp and you want to buy a light bulb. Well, IKEA has sold light bulbs for years. It's now it's just a matter of like, "Hey, now I want a smart ball because that's the cool thing to do."

Brandt Krueger:
Exactly, all right. So let's start bringing this around to events. We've spoken about on this show and on others about the interactivity level, about the fact that we want our IT provider, not our IT but our technology providers to get along better, to play along better and to be able to get... Just because I want best in class of everything. So if I want best in class registration and I want best in class room diagramming software and I want best-in-class this. I know if I'm the type of person that wants to pick and choose, I want all of those things to talk to each other and we're just not there. So what do you think Will? Do you think this kind of alliance could happen in the event industry? Do you think that we could actually get to this point we're like the big names you get your CE events, you get your quick mobiles, what would have been the double Dutch ask those types when they were still a player could we get the big names around the table to really start integrating together, at least with the basic functionality?

Will Curran:
I think it would take a serious amount of client pushback to happen for sure. I think that the Event Tech Podcast is mocking going to be able to convince these tech companies to do it. And even the techie people aren't. But the planners, the more they give push back and say, "I'm not choosing you because you don't do this or I want this." Then that's why happened. And I think that's probably what starting to happen with why a smart home stuff happened is that users

weren't willing to adopt it because it was too complicated. And these companies said, "we need more people to adopt it."

Will Curran:
And the number one thing that everyone kept saying is like, "I just don't know. This doesn't integrate with this. This doesn't integrate this. I have to say this on." And I think the same thing needs to happen in the events industry that you if you're a planner out there, you need to start asking for a sort of thing. If you're like, "yeah, why doesn't this exist?" That's the only way I feel like this is going to happen. And the question, can it happen? I think when there's enough push from the market, the market can help dictate these sorts of things.

Brandt Krueger:
I think the other pushback would be that if you ask these companies they'll say, "Oh yeah, we integrate with each other." That's why I think they frequently already say that they do. And so we don't need any kind of alliance because we have an open API and we allow people to get their data in and out. Well, yeah sort of I can export it to Excel spreadsheet or worse a CSV, which if you know what that is, you don't want to know what that is and being able... Well and then you have to import it and attach this field to that. So there's these loose ways of getting data in and out. And then there better ones there.

Brandt Krueger:
There are ways to use APIs and things like that, but I think it's still kind of a hodgepodge and kind of a mess as far as how you're getting your data in and out of these systems. And so I think it's one of those things that until you get this kind of moment where they can all come together and they can get in a smoke filled room and say, "all right boys and girls, if we get a lot of them, if we can corner the market." That kind of thing because I think that's ultimately what kind of happened. In these big giant say, "none of us are... We're all getting 1%. Maybe we could each get 20."

Will Curran:
Yeah, I think you bring up a super solid point to that. Like everyone always says, "Oh well yeah we have an API. Oh yeah, you have the ability to export and get your data out." That's not integration in any sort of way because if it requires the user to do more, as much work to get the data out and connect it. It's not an integration that's just cool, you have a slightly open system where we're talking about, it's like it truly just works together. I'm trying to think of like a really, really good example of this. But I don't know if this is necessary a good example. But let's say for example you have a Google or you have an award document that you're writing and you're putting this together what seems like now would be like, "Oh yeah, you can we have an open API to Google docs where you can use another tool that can convert the word doc into a Google doc."

Will Curran:

That's not integration, integration is you drag and drop the word doc and it says, "Hey, do you want convert as a Google doc?" Boom, it's done. It's all in one tool. And that's definitely two standards working together on that end. I'm trying to think of like other really, really great examples of this as well. But maybe computer components might be like another good example of this, I don't know. Brandt, do you have any other kind of good examples of what you think are like truly seamless integrations and kind of consortium's of standards in the technology world?

Brandt Krueger:
Wifi.

Will Curran:
Yeah.

Brandt Krueger:
I mean that's one of the best examples I think. I think some of these technologies that we take for granted and we take them for granted because of the fact that a consortium sat down to figure it out and make sure that's a standard that everyone can get behind.So as we look at, wifi five and now wifi six and that's part of the problem is that it takes five years to agree on a standard and get it all figured out. 6G or 5G I guess at this point. So wifi six, 5G. So 5G is cell technology is, is still a mess even after sitting down and figuring it out for five years. USB is an open standard.

Will Curran:
I was going to say USB too.

Brandt Krueger:
And even there, it's not fully there. But I think it's the same idea though where the basic functionality is agreed upon. And then if you use USBC on an Apple machine, then it's thunderbolt and you get all of these other features enabled as well. And not just charging your phone and basic data transfer. And that's where frankly, companies still have an opportunity to shine. And so I would love to start to see that happen in the technology in our industry where we can agree upon the basic fundamental data transfer. And there's still plenty of opportunity for you to show that your product is a superior product. How easy is it to use the registration system? How intuitive is it? How fast is it? How accurate is it? There's all of these measurements that can be used to quantify how, whether or not this is a good fit for our organization as opposed to just, does it work and can I get my data in and out of it?

Will Curran:
Yeah, I know that you and I aren't Apple users, so we can't really comment on the positive side of this. But like, let's look at lightning cables for example the big standard now is USBC, everything's works across everything. Everything printed has USBC. In fact like people who don't have USBC has still are using micro USB people get frustrated with, but what's even probably more frustrating for me is when there's a lightning cable I'm like, "I don't have a

lightning cable dac." But if we all worked together and had this basics, it would be like absolutely fantastic. And I think you bring up a good example let's talk about USB, USB cables is probably a humongous market, right? It's probably at least a billion dollar market I'm guessing. And being in the fact that cables aren't expensive, but you would never think that you can make money off of making USB cables.

Will Curran:
Well, I love to use example like nomad cable, they took this market that yeah, a $5 cable, who's people buy us all the time, it's very commoditize. But then they made such a perfect cable and it's prayed with Kevlar and things and they're turning $40 for it. And I'm willing to pay for that because it's just such a better cable for what it needs to be done. And I think that same thing needs to be done for event tech is have a standard that works perfectly and allows you to do what you need to do, but then make it so damn good that no one can turn away from it.

Brandt Krueger:
Yeah, and it's so funny to me that there's so many examples of exactly what we're talking about and yet there's so many examples of industries that are resistant to do it. Same way with cables. Like I just to have struggled and have gotten cheap cables that break after two minutes. And so I tend to go back to AKI and anchor because they tend to last and when they break they just send me a note and that totally... It's been less than a year sure.

Brandt Krueger:
We'll just send you a new one. Do I have to send the old one back nah, don't bother that kind of stuff. And then if I really did want to go into the world of that if I really didn't even want to mess with having to have a new one sent out, that's the road you can go down. Phone cases. Same thing with all this stuff there's the cheaper ones they get the job done, but then there's the ones that you know are going to actually protect your phone in the case of a fall.

Will Curran:
Absolutely, absolutely. Well, I think this is kind of our petition to the event technology. If you're an event technology provider out there like let's start to see some better alliances between everybody. And we're not talking about just three vendors. We're talking about everybody all together. And when you see new vendor come apart, they feel like we need to start stepping up and saying like, "Hey, reach out to them early on when they're a little small tiny company." And say, "Hey, we want you to be a part of this movement that we are to integrate altogether."

Will Curran:
And I feel like that's the only way as if all work together and we talked about a little bit on like event brew for example, having a voice as an industry, but as event tech we have to have the voice in order to provide a better solution for the customers. Because technology I think we've talked about so many times, it's complicated. There's so much happening. We don't need to make it more complicated for people just in order to keep our markets. If you make it simple and

easy to understand like Apple did with the iPhone or give that a million other tech examples, those companies flourish. And I feel like that's what we need to get to.

Brandt Krueger:
And I'll throw one more example of this and I was just meeting with a company that does audience engagement and they're capable of being embedded in basically anyone's app at this point because it's all web based, but they're still limited in how they can get data in and out of each one of those platforms. And so they've got a customer coming to them saying, "we want to import all of our, not only all of our attending names, but also which group we've placed them in within our registration platform. Okay, here's the salespeople, here's the regular attendee, here's the VIP attendee."

Brandt Krueger:
All of these subgroups and being able to get those things in and out in a case of being able to get that data in and out effectively and they're just, "Oh no, yeah. We want to be doing that." That's not on our 20 year roadmap or whatever. It's all God. Your client, your client is asking for this. It's not that we are asking for this is that your client is asking for this. And so being able to do that effectively as one of those kind of middle companies is something that they're struggling with as well. And that's not the first time I've heard that from those types of companies that are embeddable within the greater event app.

Will Curran:
I feel like people, it's far too often to are just ignoring the simple fact of, listen to your customer and they're going to tell you where you need to go. And I feel like for example, the best thing you can do is just be close to your customer and hear what they want. And maybe we're wrong, but like I feel like we hear it all the time from people's customers and the customers just go tell the companies directly and maybe they're not listening and that's why I think they're telling us. But we go to... Listen to your customers and everything's going to get better.

Brandt Krueger:
Exactly, all right. Any final thoughts on this before we put this one to bed?

Will Curran:
Oh man. I mean, I just feel like I came out with a pitch Pitchfork on this one.

Brandt Krueger:
It's tough. It's tough because I understand the business side of it, of like we want to... We want our silos, we want our ecosystems, but it's really anti customer. And so for me it's at least a positive sign that we're seeing the likes of... What is this? The fangs, the Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon whatever. And being able to at least talk to each other a little bit and to go down this road of, "Hey, wouldn't it be nice for the customer if we were to putting this all together?" And it's not just the basic functionality, like literally some of the things on the list that they want to take care of is onboarding and making that a seamless experience, updates,

security updates is a huge problem. And so having some kind of standard around security updates for IoT devices I think would be huge.

Will Curran:
Yeah, I definitely think, I mean man, we haven't gotten that point, but we definitely always have our soapbox with security, but I feel like this is going to create a huge potential for a better secure future for sure.

Brandt Krueger:
Exactly, exactly. All right, I think it's time to put this one to bed. Will thanks as always for joining me on this one.

Will Curran:
Thanks for having me Brandt as always it was great to talk tech with you.

Brandt Krueger:
All right, and we want to know what you think. What do you think the future of alliances might bring and coming around on this idea of open standards, is it something that the event industry can do? Is it something that we can actually put some pressure on our tech vendors to start working together better? Or is it always going to be this kind of thing where there's that pressure on these companies to get you into their ecosystem and to lock them in so is it possible? We want to know what you think hashtag Event Tech Podcast reach out Event Tech Podcast@helloendless.com let us know what you think the future of event tech alliances or event tech open standards might be able to be. Thank you always for listening. We want to keep you listening so if you want anything to subscribe, be sure and check us out on Apple podcasts, PocketCasts, Google podcast, Spotify, all of the various platforms.

Brandt Krueger:
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