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

Will Curran:
Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to the Event Tech Podcast. We have an exciting episode, very timely ready for you guys and we have a little bit of a different setup today. We have an additional cohost who is helping out today for today's podcast, joined via the awesome thing known as social isolation remote recording. That man sitting over there is the hilarious Andrew Latimer of Endless Events.

Andrew Latimer:
And as you're all well accustomed to is our longtime host, the warm and whimsical Will Curran.

Will Curran:
Was this a hyphenated or was that multiple, you pick like three words?

Andrew Latimer:
I picked two.

Will Curran:
Cheating a little bit.

Andrew Latimer:
There was some good ones on there. It just kind of felt like it needed two to catch me up on-

Will Curran:
All the adjectives that you've been missing out on.

Andrew Latimer:
That's my first chance to get to do that. Even though I've been here a few times before.

Will Curran:
Definitely. So if you haven't yet, go back and listen to that episode with Andrew, where we've talked about AV and all these crazy topics and things like that. So definitely go back if you aren't familiar with Andrew's amazing knowledge. But today, we're doing things a little bit differently. There's a lot going on in the events industry , there's a lot of transition happening. One of those biggest transitions is the transition from in person events to virtual events. So we wanted to do an episode to talk a little bit about all of the things that we've been talking to our clients about. It seems like every five minutes we've been doing client calls and talking about a lot of similar strategies and capabilities and things like that. So we wanted to give people an idea of what was possible, because that's what it seems like the number one question that we get is, "What

is possible when it comes to virtual events? What is all the different possibilities?" All that sort of stuff.

Will Curran:
So I wanted to bring Andrew on, because he's been literally talking with clients and implementing these strategies literally from everything from a simple web stream, more webinars set up, all the way to a fully complex virtual event, complete with networking and all that jazz. So Andrew, are you ready to start dropping some knowledge bombs for everybody?

Andrew Latimer:
Absolutely. Let's do it.

Will Curran:
All right. So obviously we've been talking beginning with a lot of clients and we've been saying, "Hey, when it comes to virtual events, it's time to close your eyes and start dreaming about what's possible." Starting to kind of walk everyone through at a basic level, what is the most simple version of a virtual event and what is possible with that very, very simple virtual event?

Andrew Latimer:
Sure. A lot of people experience virtual events on a daily basis in their office and corporate meetings already. So you can join a webinar through Zoom or Skype or WebEx. So I think at the most rudimentary level that would qualify as a virtual event. When you know the C-suite of a company's getting together in the conference room and the rest of the company joins from their desks, it's still an event. Now with that, there's obviously limitations. The platform that you're viewing in, whether it is Zoom or Skype or whatever it may be that is built for web conferencing. So you're going to see people's screens popping in and out. There's not a lot of control to it. You could have a couple people that are just not paying attention and you see them in the background wandering off. It's not going to be professional, to me that's just like wandering into a board room. To me, a virtual event really does start once we go one step above that.

Andrew Latimer:
That would be your more traditional live streams that you see them on YouTube or Facebook or Twitch or any of these social media platforms already. Now, we're just looking at a broader marketplace of what companies, bands, gala's, birthday parties, weddings can utilize those platforms. Again, looking at the most basic level there, you have these out of the box players, whether they are on social media or a tool like Vimeo's Livestream, where anyone with a laptop can put their webcam on and send to these tools and some have basic reactions built into them, likes thumbs up. Livestream offers rudimentary levels of analytics, password protection on their first step of the paid plan. So you can get a little bit of feature to it. But at the end of the day, your basic virtual event is more or less a livestream that we've seen in a lot of forms before.

Andrew Latimer:

Where you can really get a lot of power out of that, but still keeping it as an affordable option is investing a little more in preproduction of your content, getting some graphics together, getting an AV provider and right now there's a lot of those out there that are eager to assist with your event. The in-person events market's freed up a lot of personnel and gear and we'll look at it in that positive light for now. So, you can fairly quickly and easily deploy a single camera in your office, and stay six feet apart from everyone, and be able to bring in some graphics on screen, a lower third like you see on the news, flash the PowerPoint up, play a video, all of that can be done in office or even remotely and then sent to the livestream with without really breaking the bank.

Will Curran:
So there's so many options when it comes to these virtual events. You can talk a little bit about breaking the bank a little bit. So I guess to have an idea so far as you're scaling things up, they start to go up in budget typically as well.

Andrew Latimer:
Absolutely. So when, when we start looking at the Zooms and Skypes, a lot of that can be done within the resources your company may already have. If you're looking at it from the perspective of a band, you might be wanting to go on to Twitch or Facebook Live. Someone might already have some basic camera equipment and your band, you can kind of multipurpose that and jerry rig something together. If you're looking for a little bit more professionalism there, you're probably going to want to rent a camera, rent out a studio, some basic audio mixing equipment and microphones and so forth.

Andrew Latimer:
Then you start talking to a couple thousand dollars there. I think looking at your general livestream, single channel we're just going to talk in front of this open platform for two hours or four hours, whatever it may be, and a couple hundred people are going to watch it. We're going to keep it pretty simple. You're talking in the low thousands, you could see it go up to 10,000, 15,000 once you start having that onsite studio, where you have some professional technicians running your graphics in and out. Again, still not getting anywhere near what you might've spent in a traditional marketplace of a two screen setup in a ballroom for a day or two days. That's usually going to be more than that at that point. So it's still providing you with some savings and on the plus side, I think it gives a broader market.

Andrew Latimer:
1,000 people can watch a live stream, 100,000 people can watch a livestream. The only difference is you're paying for some extra bandwidth. There's really not a fixed cost that, "Man, we need to add an extra 30 seats in a ballroom. Well, now that doesn't fit in the ballroom and we've got to revise the whole event." That's not a worry anymore. You're talking, maybe you have to pay an extra a hundred bucks for the extra bandwidth of those folks.

Andrew Latimer:

Now, obviously once you start getting into some of them more advanced technologies that I'm sure going to talk about here as we go through, those numbers can go up. So, I think you would still be considering if you're having an expo hall, a one-on-one in person networking sessions and general sessions, multiple breakouts and everything going concurrently and all of that being wrapped into a beautiful platform. Rather than having a massage room, you have a yoga instructors doing morning sessions and all that, you're still looking at most of the same elements that you would have had in your in-person event. The only real difference being that your venue rental costs are going to shift to internet and networking rental costs and your meal budget is probably going away unless you're...

Will Curran:
Shipping meals out to attendees. UberEatsing everybody. Well, you kind of teased a little bit about the step up from livestream. So, start to talk about that transition you go where you start to add additional elements and what that looks like.

Andrew Latimer:
Sure. I think a very popular option that we're seeing, and please get at us if you're seeing other options too, whether you're a company, a production company or doing this as your event, we'd love to hear what you're doing. But I think what we're seeing a lot of is ultimately still a livestream but packaged up with some fancy tools that make it feel more like a broadcast, more like something you're used to interacting with online already. So what that would entail is you might have a couple of different presenters coming in either remotely or all going to a single studio site and then broadcasting out from there. You can actually do a mix of those. If you want to think about all of this, almost like a newscaster, the daily show or any of those late nights, there's a lot of options within that to conceptualize your key experience at your event.

Andrew Latimer:
So, we still have the livestream element of that, but we can add in all the graphic enrichment we already talked about. But then also bring in question and answer platforms. Chat boxes in rudimentary forms. You can do some basic registration as far as using Google single sign-ons and capturing a bit of data from that. Most of these streaming platforms out there will give you some level of analytics, so you'll be able to see how many people viewed it, where their IP addresses were from, which unless they're doing some weird sleuthy stuff on the internet, should represent where they actually are. It gives you a little bit more of a package there. The question and answer formats can really be engaging. There's a variety of tools out there. One that I like is called a Slido that lets you have question answer.

Andrew Latimer:
There's a beta for an ideas board right now. There's some polling options for it and it lets the crowd contribute as the event goes along, they can even view the livestream inside of that. You can put the presenter slides there for future reference. It gives a lot of power in that package. Then, you can start looking at your breakout rooms as maybe that's a place that you want to use these Zoom or Skype tools, but still host from inside a webpage that has all of this information

on it. So, where your conference page may be right now. You might be looking at something more like an agenda, your speaker bios. But then under that you have a general session tab and then a breakout rooms tab. There's also a really interesting pivot from a company called Brain Dates that a lot of people who have been out to the variety of meeting planning conferences have probably experienced their in-person experiences.

Andrew Latimer:
They are pivoting to provide similar one-on-one or small group focused sessions in an online platform. I think that's a really interesting add on that breaks that wall between, "Okay, this is the live stream on the internet. We can bring in a band and cut to them." There's variety of songwriting bands that are out there. That's all fun. It feels like a broadcast, but at the end of the day you can't replace the one-on-one interaction with just a live stream. That's where something like a Brain Dates or even just in that most rudimentary form, still encouraging people to log into Zoom Rooms around certain topics at certain times can be really impactful. Again, as that all scales up, we start seeing more and more cost.

Andrew Latimer:
One stream is great, multiple streams, I guess you can think of like channels on your television, each of those is going to be a similar hardware costs. So you're not necessarily doubling if you add a second stream, but you are going to see additional cost related to that. It's probably fair to say that if your conference was previously a general session for three days and 10 breakout rooms and you had an expo hall, you're probably going to end up spending as much on AV plus also the networking costs you might've been paying for attendee internet. A lot of that budget I think is still going to translate. So it is important to keep that in mind. If this once was a revenue generating event for you, you might have to be more strategic with what you're doing and pare it down to we see some people going single day TED Talks, let's cut some of the presenters that might not have been fantastic presenters but they had good information.

Andrew Latimer:
You can relay that information to someone who is a skilled presenter or really dial it back into, "All right we're going to go to this person who has some interesting updates about this latest software that we're deploying. They can spend five minutes on it rather than 45 minutes plus a 15 minute question and answer in a breakout room that 20 people are sitting in." Now, your whole organization can see that five minute update and really get the high points of it. There's probably a little more strategy that has to go into your session selection. That's a doozy of a word for me right there.

Will Curran:
Say it seven times fast.

Andrew Latimer:
Strategy selection session. I think you can really benefit from just coming at it more in that TED Talk broadcast style, than thinking of it more in the scope of a traditional event.

Will Curran:
So when it comes to these virtual events too, a lot of what you've been talking about so far has been very synchronous and everything like that as well. What options are out there for people that maybe want to do a little bit more asynchronous of an event? So what we've talked to a couple of clients about too is like, "Hey, our event is normally three days, well, you can't keep someone's attention for 10 hours for three days." So they're going down to one day. But also we're seeing as well, maybe an hour each day for seven days or something like that as well. But also let's talk about the fact that sometimes these events can be launched and they could last forever or whatnot. Can you talk through what you think that looks like?

Andrew Latimer:
Yes, I think that's a really interesting area that we're as an industry just beginning to explore because, as you were talking about, we're all used to, okay, this session takes place at 9:00 AM, we'll send out the slides afterwards. That's the extent of the capture of it. This gives a whole opportunity to not only bring in the larger audience that we were talking about, but also most of these platforms, it may be included or maybe an added cost, they will record and potentially even give you a DVR ability. Like TiVo used to be a couple of years back where you could come in 30 minutes late, scroll back to watch the start of the program. You can do that. But it's also all going to be recorded on demand from really most, if not all, of these platforms.

Andrew Latimer:
If someone's not giving you that, I would challenge the use of that platform at that point to be honest. That will let you have really anyone come back at any point to review it. If you had 60 breakouts before you could still do that and give everyone the option to attend all of them. You don't have to really be super considerate in your timing of them and obviously as long as it's not the same person presenting two at the same time. You could have a 9:00 and a 10:00 that once you know had to be separate, they could go back to back now because someone can come back and view it later. I think where that starts to encounter some challenges would be in your moderation and question answer of it. Obviously live a presenter can respond to questions instantly in that moment.

Andrew Latimer:
But I think what an interesting solution that we've seen already is that you can keep the question and answer page live and either communicate times where the presenter will come back and answer the questions in that platform. Potentially do an additional stream, or you can kind of get a summary of maybe you had the West region was doing breakouts for a day over here. Well, you can kind of pull all of their questions together and say, "All right, we did all of that on Wednesday. On Friday, let's all come together for one hour and we're going to do a question and answer session with the six breakout presenters all on one panel." That's a pretty easy technology solution from the delivery side. It's just wrapped in the same broadcast wrapper where you have question and answer, and a viewing platform on a page. People can come back

and get all those questions answered that might have come up during the rest of the conference.

Andrew Latimer:
That's a really interesting opportunity to drive more value than you might see in a normal, "Okay, we did our breakouts on Tuesday, now we do general session on Wednesday and awards on Thursday. There might be questions going unanswered." Well now, we can bring that all back around and talk to it on a more strategic level as a company.

Will Curran:
I like that. I think it brings back memories of encore sessions at conferences, where it was, "Hey, this presentation was so popular, we're going to bring them back again. You can see them again. They do it again." But almost what you do is just take that recording. In fact, Brandon and I did a recent presentation on 5G. They recorded it and then they said, "What we're going to do is we're going to restream it and Brandon I, we can hop in the chat and we'll be able to answer questions live, as if we're there as well." I think that people really appreciate that. I think a similar mentality, well people actually do that, if you go to Reddit and they do the AMA sessions, a lot of times they announce and say, "Hey, for example, Bill Gates is going to be on at this time to this time answering questions." And they do it, and people are totally cool as submitting text questions, then the presenter just ferociously typing in the background and now you're just layering additional content on top of that.

Andrew Latimer:
Exactly. I think it's an experience that we've seen at a fair number of larger conferences, but now it's really accessible to everyone. Again, like we talked about earlier, you're really just paying for bandwidth at that point. Depending on your technology deployment, you might have some additional costs in keeping personnel around to send out that link and monitor your presenters. But compared to, "We have to extend the general session by a day to do this, that's going to be a $60,000 cost and it's not going to be anywhere near that." I think there's a lot of opportunity that we're just beginning to scratch as far as repeatability of content. I think that can even apply towards people attempting to earn continuing education credits. There's some platforms, again, it's going to be a premium feature for a lot of platforms out there because it's going to require some integration and some more detailed analytics and logins.

Andrew Latimer:
But it is possible to track and say, "Okay, as long as the person logs into their livestream." We'll know that login is viewing a page and it'll be able to, most likely, depending on your platform, tell you, "Okay, this person watched the whole time." Or you could even integrate quizzing at the end of your session of, "Okay, you have to get a 80% to earn credit for the session." Now, anyone could go back at the end of the show and watch all of them. If they really want to knock out their CEUs, then they'll watch all 50 breakouts, answer all the quizzes. It's a great opportunity that in a virtual environment you really couldn't do onsite at an event.

Will Curran:

I love it. I love this. This is so cool. Because I think it just opens up so many possibilities of, honestly, what's possible. I know that makes no sense at all as a sentence. But this is super duper exciting what is coming down the pipeline.

Andrew Latimer:

Absolutely. I think we're just going to keep seeing more and more innovation in the space as a lot of the companies that previously delivered onsite experiences start to consider how they're going to do that live, or virtually, sorry.

Will Curran:

That's one of the great things right now is we're in this golden age of virtual events that now, virtual events were seeing maybe 1% of the market, 2% of market. Now, they're seeing 100% of the market or maybe 80% cause there's, there's still events I haven't quite converted over. Andrew, can you talk a little bit more about the what's possible? Is there anything else that you think that is absolutely crazy that you can see happening with virtual events? Or things that people don't know as possible? Anything that you think is really exciting?

Andrew Latimer:

Yes, I'm very interested to see where this goes as far as the scale of how the content is presented. Because we have seen TED Talks before, but I think there's going to be a lot of interesting synergies. E-sports has been getting bigger and bigger. That kind of mentality and gamification is going to start translating into virtual events. As far as I know, and if anyone out there knows of technologies that are leading edge on this, I'd love to know more about them, but I think you're going to see a lot of gaming elements brought into these virtual conferences. I think we're also going to see a very heavy concentration of fitness programs, employee wellness, that it may not even be a virtual event.

Andrew Latimer:

It may be companies that now that they have employees sitting at home, they might say, "Okay, well, we used to have a gym at the office that five people used regularly and that was it. Well, we know everyone's sitting at home. We can offer you this one hour session each morning. Tuesday's Zumba day at home, Wednesday is circuit training at home." There's a whole lot of intermediate, not necessarily conference events, bands can get on and present themselves in new ways, doing question answer with their fans. That whole realm is just beginning to be opened, as far as how you're going to participate in this from home. Since it does look like right now that this may be going on for at least a couple months if not longer. I expect once people see how easy it is to do this, that it's going to be more frequent. You used to come together for a quarterly regional meeting that everyone had to travel for. Let's be honest, a lot of people didn't really want to do it, because you're sitting in a ballroom and an off city hotel, but it was inconvenient to get to.

Will Curran:

Andrew, are you speaking from experience right now?

Will Curran:
Well, we'd go to coffee shops rather than ballrooms.

Andrew Latimer:
Yes. We keep it fresh. Even if it was a little chilly in Chicago. No, you see so many people that dread going to their smaller meetings because you're not experiencing that flare that you know, "We're going to give away trips to Cabo for the top sales leaders. We have this a list band coming into play for you all." It's more three hours of content delivery, or three days of 10 hours a day of just content delivery from a stage from the regional execs. It's not always engaging, but now you can do this all virtually and a lot of people are going to be forced to do and realize like, "Maybe we don't need to spend that expense. Maybe we can have a little more fun with it and provide option that's not 30 hours of speaking from a stage and feeding people coffee for the entire time to try to keep them awake."

Will Curran:
You bring up such a good point too about this idea that a lot of this might be resembling itself, now, I have to remote work and what's possible with remote work too. We're obviously seeing two booms into industries, virtual events and then also the idea of remote work as well. So I think definitely it's smart for you to say like, "Hey, let's think about this from not just a one time event thing, but maybe a continually running thing." That's sort of options as well. What other stuff do you got from the creative side of what's possible out here?

Andrew Latimer:
I think there's revenue streams that are not normally available at conferences and pulling a little bit actually from the concert and festival market, they've been going more and more virtual for years. So, you see the live streams a lot of the major festivals now. Well, I think we're going to see people start to borrow from that idea of, "Okay, we can have a conference merch store. We're going to have a festival merch store and have that online and exhibitors can sell through it and the conference can sell through it." Or you can work with a fulfillment company to make sure all of those elements are getting delivered. A lot of them even have a kind of embeddable or they'll build the store and provide login to it. So, it's a service that's not necessarily hard to set up.

Andrew Latimer:
That's going to be an interesting revenue generation opportunity. It's also going to be interesting to watch people that are in the digital ad space, start to learn how to monetize this as well. Because where a conference vendor might've once said the 15 minute speaker slot on stage, I think there's some mixed reactions to that and mixed impact of it, depending on how engaging the sponsor is. The marketing team of these companies could put together a 30 second ad spot, or a two minute ad spot, or whatever you want to give them. You can now have your sponsors advertising in your conference videos. Because I think a lot of people are going to want to take

breaks after 15 minutes, after 30 minutes. We're all conditioned to that from television and not subscribed to top end Netflix or Hulu streams.

Andrew Latimer:
We get those ads there too. It's almost conditioned and expected. That's a great revenue opportunity to still keep key sponsors on with you that may be like, "How do we get value out of this? How do we get placement here?" We can put you on the webpage of course, but we can also give you ad rolls in the middle of our content and just send a little chat from your software, "We're coming up on 15 minutes. We're going to take two minutes off, refresh the presenters, get them water in between. Come back from the ad just like a TV spot."

Will Curran:
That's awesome. I love it. That's fantastic. Andrew, I think you're full of so many ideas and what is totally possible with these virtual events. One of the big things that you hit on is really anything's really possible when it comes to this. Correct?

Andrew Latimer:
Yes. I think there's very few parts of an in-person conference that can't be replicated in some form or fashion, effectively. So, I'm trying to think off the top of my head. From our side, we don't have to push from a loading dock into your ballroom anymore. So, that's pretty exciting.

Will Curran:
Bonus.

Andrew Latimer:
Don't have to unload any trucks. So, we're excited about that. But, I think there's going to be some growing pains as with any major industry shift. It's unrealistic at this point to expect that events are going to go perfectly and that all the integrations that you possibly could want are there. I think a dream is going to be a lot of companies are using their CRMs, whether it be Salesforce or HubSpot or any of those, there will be a day where all of that can integrate into your viewing platforms and you can collect the data from those as you would on your websites and landing pages.

Andrew Latimer:
It could be done now, but it's going to be a little painful. There's a lot of web development aspects behind that. So some of the data that you desire is going to be tough to get I think in the near term. I would imagine fairly quickly, six months to a year that all of that is going to be considered put out there.

Andrew Latimer:
It may provide even more metrics and more connection than you've ever been able to get on site. You go to any of the conferences lately and it's, "How do we get data from people? How do we see who's subscribing to what, who's interacting with what vendors?" There's all this beacon

technology that's starting to take off. There's interactive things that are honestly are capturing your experiences and how you're interacting with them and using that data. Now, all of that is done through a computer that they can embed in, as long as you're compliant with California GDPR and any future legislation around that, then, it's a captive audience with willingness to already share data with you. That's an area that's going to be a tough point for people, but will eventually become a great asset.

Will Curran:
I couldn't agree any more. Andrew, seriously you have been so awesome. I know we're coming to an end of our time together. I wanted to thank you for coming on the show. I know we're probably could be doing a lot more episodes on virtual events. I have a feeling coming in the future, so I'm sure we're going to be walking back to talk a little bit more about specific technologies and what is possible, but if you're curious, I'd love to know if you've seen something that we haven't seen, you can reach us directly at eventtechpodcast@helloendless.com shoot us an email and let us know if you've seen something that we didn't talk about that you think is really, really cool. Or you want us to explore. Or "Hey, is this possible?" And you want us to talk about it, we'd love to know. Then let us know too if there's any topic related to virtual events that you want to know on a technology standpoint. You know that the event tech podcast is a place to go. So we hope to see you really soon. Andrew, thank you so much for coming on the show.

Andrew Latimer:
Absolutely. Thank you for the opportunity to be here and I hope it helps alleviate a lot of concerns from people that are having to present a virtual event to their board.

Will Curran:
Absolutely. Well, stay tuned. We've got more event tech podcasts coming soon and we can't wait to see you guys all next time on the Event Tech Podcast.

Speaker 1:
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