Scaling Smart: Sustainable Growth Strategies for Event Tech Start-ups

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Main Topic: **Scaling Smart: Sustainable Growth Strategies for Event Tech Start-ups**

Our panellists shared their journeys and strategies in the event management industry, emphasising the importance of niche focus and customer trust for long-term success. They explored various business challenges including bootstrapping versus external funding, team growth, and market positioning, while highlighting experiences of overcoming obstacles and achieving growth through perseverance and customer satisfaction.

Event Management Strategies and Niche Focus - The conversation highlighted long-term commitment to a specific area of a platform to enhance its core offering. By focusing on one type of client, businesses can build niche expertise, improve client trust, and respond effectively to market feedback. The panellists explored how balancing niche focus with overall business growth—while staying true to your specialised area—can lead to greater client loyalty and long-term success.

Adapting to Client and Market Needs - Serving a wide range of clients and trying to meet multiple use cases can lead to inefficiencies and reduced profit margins, often due to the increased need for customer support. Panellists discussed the importance of adapting to market changes and listening to long-term client feedback as a foundation for sustainable growth.

Bootstrapping vs. External Funding Strategies - The panellists shared insights on the pros and cons of bootstrapping versus external funding. While internal funding provides full control, it also involves personal financial risk and slower scaling due to limited resources. In contrast, external investment can accelerate growth but may also shift focus away from customer needs. The discussion underscored the value of growth strategies that prioritise customer relationships and product integrity over investor demands.

Start-up Growth and Investor Challenges – One key takeaway was that external investors often lack specific domain expertise, which can hinder product development. Founders must also carefully balance the desire for fast growth with mindful hiring and team expansion, particularly when bootstrapped. Trust, proven market fit, and customer satisfaction were noted as key enablers of investor confidence and team resilience.

Refining Target Market Strategy - Targeting enterprise clients too early can be a mismatch for smaller companies. Real-world experience showed that focusing on mid-sized businesses—who benefit more from off-the-shelf solutions and shorter sales cycles—can lead to more sustainable success. Persistence and belief in the value of your niche offering are essential in overcoming scepticism from clients and stakeholders.

Top 10 Tips

1. **Build for Scale, Not Just for Now** – Learn how to design products and systems with long-term scalability in mind, not just immediate functionality
2. **Founders' Lessons Learned** – Listen to other insights into what worked—and what didn't— in their growth journeys
3. **Sustainable Business Models** – Understand what makes a growth strategy *sustainable*, from pricing models to recurring revenue and cash flow planning
4. **Hiring at the Right Time** – Tips on when (and who) to hire to support growth without overstretching resources
5. **Tech Infrastructure That Grows with You** – How to avoid "tech debt" and make smart platform decisions early on
6. **Balancing Customisation and Product Consistency** – Hear how others manage client demands without de-railing core development
7. **Funding vs. Bootstrapping** – Weigh in on how to finance growth without losing control or focus
8. **Culture and Vision During Growth** – Maintaining your values and team alignment while expanding quickly
9. **Data-Informed Scaling** – What metrics matter when deciding to grow, and how to use feedback loops to improve products
10. **Networking and Community Support** – How building industry relationships can accelerate growth through partnerships and shared knowledge

Thank you to our speakers: Geoffrey Campbell, Managing Director of **Oxford Abstracts**, MESA Member / **Kerem Baran,** Co-Founder & COO of **Eventpack**, MESA Member / **Joe Atkinson**, Director and Co-Founder of **Lineup Ninja**, MESA Member.

Moderated by **Jelmer van Ast**, Founder & CEO of **Conference Compass**, MESA Patron Member.
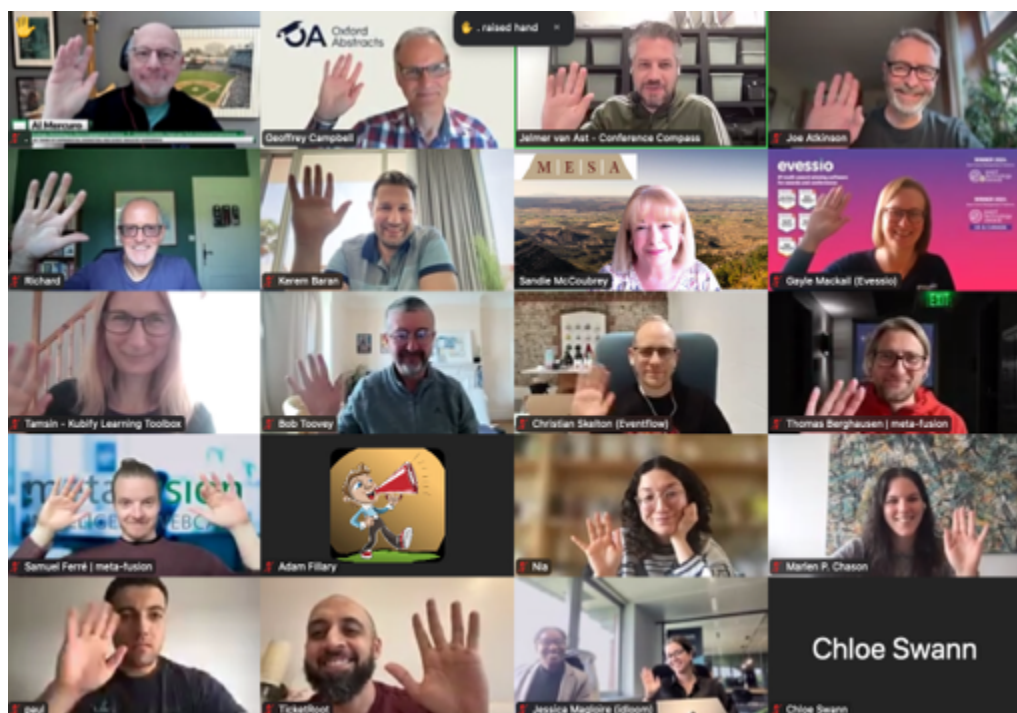
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Tuesday 17th June - Raise Your Profile: PR Tips to Stand Out in the Events Industry with Guest Speaker: **Paul Colston**, Managing Editor, **Mash Media** / Moderator: **Richard John**, COO of **Realise** MESA Member
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