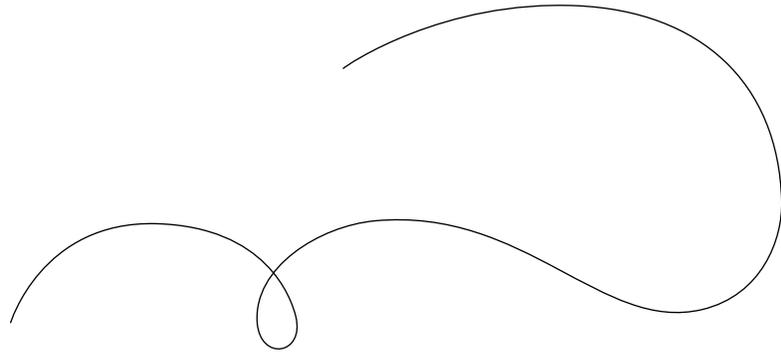


2025



The Event Management Software Buyer's Guide

Everything you need to evaluate,
compare, and confidently choose your
next event software

Sizzabo

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An introduction by our Co-founder and CMO

The way organizations approach events is shifting again. Today's leading teams are no longer focused on one-off experiences. Instead, they're building 360-degree event portfolios designed to drive year-round engagement and long-term impact.

According to Bizzabo's [2025 State of Events and Industry Benchmarks Report](#), enterprise and mid-market organizations hosted 52% more events in the first half of 2024 than they did during the same period the year prior. In the first half of 2025, Bizzabo customers hosted 27% more in-person events compared to the previous year. This growth was driven largely by a significant 34% year-over-year increase in smaller gatherings like regional [field events](#) with fewer than 150 attendees. Mid-market companies led the trend with an impressive 50% surge, while enterprise organizations followed with a 25% increase.

At the same time, attendee expectations continue to evolve. In-person experiences remain a powerful channel – [78% of attendees say conferences offer the best networking opportunities](#) – but digital formats are growing, too. Webinar participation is on the rise as audiences look for flexibility, accessibility, and more ways to engage. Today's event leaders need technology that's agile enough to support everything from large-scale conferences to intimate digital touchpoints.

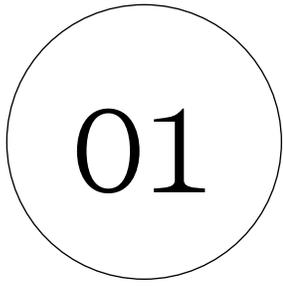
With so much at stake, selecting the right event software has never been more critical. [Nearly 69% of organizers say their technology plays a major role in event success, and many are reevaluating their platforms this year.](#) The stakes are high, but the opportunity to elevate your [event strategy](#) is even higher.



Alon Alroy
Co-founder, CMO,
Bizzabo

This growth isn't limited to your team. The global event management software market is [projected to more than double by 2030, reaching \\$17.33 billion.](#) Industry analysts are taking notice, naming the top platforms and surfacing new solutions to explore.

That's where this guide comes in. Whether you're scaling your event program or building something entirely new, this resource is designed to help you navigate today's vendor landscape and make confident, future-ready decisions so you can deliver exceptional experiences, again and again.



Choose a platform that aligns with your goals

Your event management platform should be more than a collection of tools; it should be a strategic partner that helps you execute a year-round event strategy. The right all-in-one solution supports every format, from [in-person](#) and [hybrid](#) to [webinars and on-demand](#), while offering the flexibility and insights event teams need to scale efficiently.

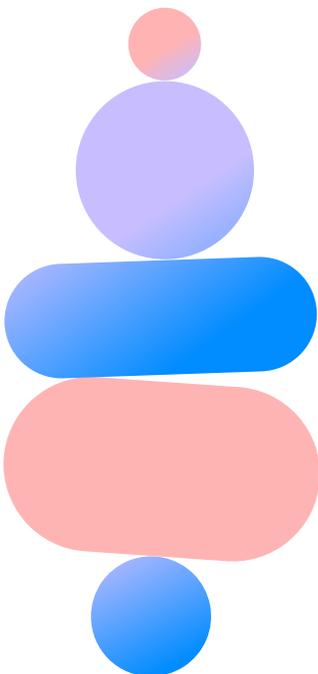
To support your goals, look for a platform that delivers across three key areas:

1. Event management and marketing

Start strong with intuitive tools that streamline complex planning workflows. Look for customizable registration flows, branded websites, email marketing, and a content management system that lets you launch quickly and make changes on the fly. [Deep integrations with your CRM](#), marketing automation, and other core systems are essential for ensuring data continuity and driving smarter decisions.

2. Event experience and engagement

Exceptional experiences start with personalization and connection. Prioritize platforms that offer dynamic agendas, mobile apps, and engagement tools like [live polling](#), Q&A, and matchmaking. For in-person events, features like [wearable technology](#) can transform networking and session tracking into frictionless, high-value interactions.



3. Event success, security, and analytics

Measuring impact is critical. Look for a solution with real-time analytics that surfaces meaningful insights across your entire portfolio. Enterprise-grade security and stability are non-negotiable, especially when handling attendee data at scale. And don't overlook onboarding and support; access to responsive, expert help can make a significant difference in long-term success.

With the right platform, your team can deliver more impactful events, streamline operations, and unlock the full potential of your [event strategy](#), all while keeping the attendee experience front and center.

Here's a full breakdown with more details:

1. Event management and marketing features

Feature	Why it matters	What to look for
Event management	Centralizes planning, reduces complexity, and scales with your program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intuitive interface;• Support for in-person, virtual, hybrid events, and webinars;• Integrated sponsor and speaker management;• Automated task reminders;• Cross-event analytics;• Support for both paid and free events
Registration and ticketing	Maximizes registrations and revenue through flexible options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customizable, multi-tier ticketing;• Personalized registration pathways;• Progressive data collection;• Support for promo codes and hidden tickets;• Real-time analytics on registration performance
Marketing tools	Enhances brand visibility and drives registrations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No-code website builder;• SEO-optimized and mobile-responsive designs;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated email marketing with automation; • Social media integration; • Customizable event agendas
Content management	Streamlines planning and enhances attendee experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drag-and-drop agenda builder; • Speaker portals; • On-demand content library; • Role-based permissions; • Reusable content modules
Video production	Delivers high-quality virtual and hybrid event experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studio-quality live and on-demand streaming; • Interactive features like polls, Q&A, and chat • Backstage greenroom for speaker preparation; • Customizable layouts and branding; • Support for multiple speakers and breakout sessions

2. Event experience and engagement features

Feature	Why it matters	What to look for
Engagement tools	Keeps attendees actively involved and enhances experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time polls, chat, reactions, and social sharing; • Customized polling and chat channels; • Q&A and automated surveys; • Integrated social sharing
Networking	Facilitates meaningful connections among participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI-powered matchmaking; • 1:1 messaging and virtual breakout spaces; • Real-time and scheduled meetings; • Automated scheduling

SmartBadges	Revolutionizes networking and data collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touchless contact exchange; • Real-time data syncing; • Gamification features; • Advanced attendee behavior analytics; • Customizable branding
Virtual venue	Provides an engaging virtual destination for participants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleek, modern UI; Easy navigation; • Attendee-driven design and content; • Engagement features like polls, chat, Q&A, and surveys
Mobile app	Enhances the attendee experience by delivering real-time updates, engagement tools, and on-the-go access to event content and networking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private-label branding; • Personalized agendas; • Push notifications; • Speaker and session discovery; • Live engagement tools (polling, Q&A, chat); • In-app networking and messaging; • Sponsor visibility and lead capture;

3. Event security, analytics, and onboarding

Feature	Why it matters	What to look for
Infrastructure, security, and compliance	Ensures data protection and compliance with regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data ownership; • Secure cloud infrastructure; • Compliance with SOC 2 Type 2, ISO 27001, PCI DSS SAQ D V.4, GDPR, and CCPA; • Role and permission settings; • Audit logs

Reporting and analytics	Provides insights into event performance and attendee behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time campaign performance and registration metrics; • Detailed, easy-to-read reports; • Cross-functional analytics; • Customizable reports; • ROI/ROE metrics
Third-party integrations	Enhances functionality and streamlines workflows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open API; • Native MAP and CRM integrations; • Reliable, scalable, and secure integrations; • Partner and developer marketplace
Support and community	Ensures smooth implementation and ongoing success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge center with live support; • Comprehensive onboarding services; • Access to a community of event professionals; • 24/7 support via email and chat



02

Identify your must-haves and nice-to-haves

Once you've explored the range of features available, it's time to get specific. The best way to choose a platform that truly supports your goals is to map your feature needs against your strategic priorities. With so many tools and capabilities out there, it's easy to get distracted by the latest innovations. But the key to making a smart investment is to stay focused on what your team actually needs to succeed today and as your event program evolves.

Start with your must-haves

Every platform brings something different to the table. Defining your non-negotiables will help you cut through the noise and stay aligned with your event objectives. These core features should support the end-to-end planning, execution, and measurement of your events.

- [Registration and ticketing](#)
- [Onsite check-in](#)
- [Custom badge printing](#)
- Branded event website
- [Mobile event app](#)
- Email and event promotion
- Sponsor and speaker management
- Content and session management
- Customizable branding



- Agenda builder
- [Attendee networking tools](#)
- Real-time engagement features
- [Analytics and reporting](#)
- Martech and CRM integrations
- [Video production and streaming tools](#)
- [SmartBadge technology](#)
- Reliable customer support
- Platform stability

These features provide the operational foundation you'll need to run seamless, engaging events and [demonstrate ROI](#).

Then define your nice-to-haves

Once your must-haves are locked in, create a list of features that could enhance the experience, even if they aren't critical. This list is especially useful when comparing multiple platforms that meet your core requirements.

Examples of valuable nice-to-haves:

- [Gamification](#) and [engagement boosters](#)
- AI-powered personalization or insights
- VR/AR integration for immersive experiences
- Venue and resource management tools
- Live translation and closed captioning
- [Sustainability](#) tracking and reporting
- Localization

Many platforms don't offer these features natively, but do support them through third-party integrations. As you evaluate options, take time to review the broader ecosystem. Partnerships, APIs, and available integrations all contribute to the long-term value of your [event tech stack](#).



03

Total cost of ownership (TCO) analysis

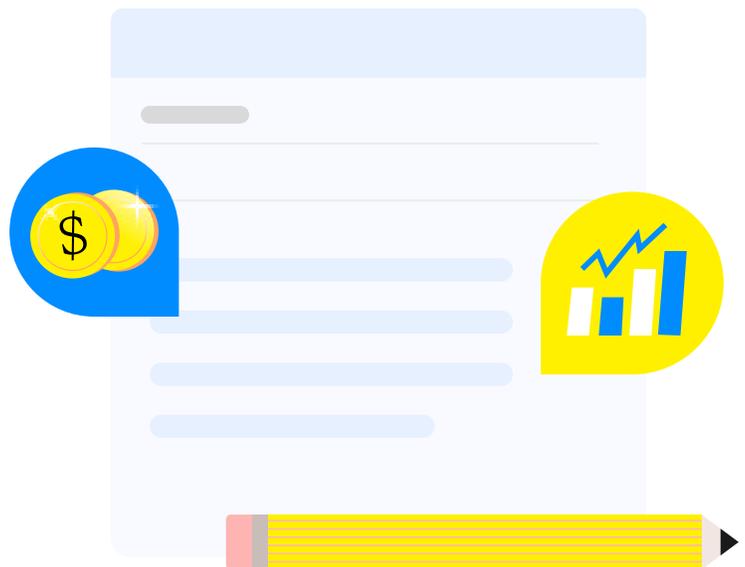
Choosing an event platform isn't just about features — it's also a financial decision. A comprehensive TCO analysis helps stakeholders understand the full investment, including short- and long-term costs.

How to use it: Create a TCO worksheet with real vendor quotes and internal benchmarks. Include this in your budget approval packet to show your stakeholders a realistic and compelling case for investment.

TCO breakdown:

Cost category	Description	Estimated impact
Licensing and subscription	Annual or monthly base fees based on number of events, registrations, or users	Typically the largest upfront cost
Onboarding and training	One-time implementation, training, or support packages	Can impact time to value significantly
Add-on or usage fees	Costs for additional modules, registrations, or storage	Important for scalability planning
Integrations	Cost of integrating CRM, MAP, payment gateways, and third-party tools	Can be included or require custom development

Professional services	Fees for premium support, onsite services, SmartBadges, or success packages	May vary depending on event complexity
Opportunity cost	Time saved through automation, error reduction, and streamlined workflows	Impacts overall productivity and efficiency
Long-term ROI	Gains from improved attendee engagement, lead generation, and retention	Helps justify investment to stakeholders



04

Research and evaluate event software vendors

When evaluating [event management software](#), it's essential to consult trusted industry analyses to inform your decision. Two of the most respected sources are [Gartner's® Magic Quadrant™](#) and [Forrester's Wave™](#) reports, which assess vendors based on criteria like execution, vision, and customer satisfaction.

Gartner® Magic Quadrant™

Gartner's® Magic Quadrant™ evaluates technology providers across two dimensions: Ability to Execute and Completeness of Vision. In its 2025 report, [Gartner recognized Bizzabo as a Leader](#) in the Event Marketing and Management Platforms category for the second consecutive year. This placement reflects strengths in continuous innovation, flexible pricing strategies, attendee experience enhancements, and advanced integrations with marketing automation and CRM tools.

Forrester Wave™ Report

Forrester's Wave™ report provides a side-by-side comparison of top providers in a market. In the Q4 2024 evaluation of all-in-one event management platforms, [Bizzabo was named both a Leader and a Customer Favorite](#). Forrester highlighted the platform's modern, unified nature and praised the speed and quality of its customer



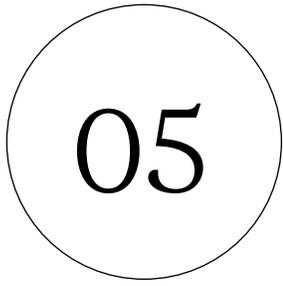
Key considerations

When researching event software vendors, consider the following:

- Feature alignment: Ensure the platform offers the essential features you need, such as [registration and ticketing](#), onsite check-in, custom badge printing, event websites, [mobile apps](#), and real-time analytics.
- Ease of use: Look for intuitive interfaces and straightforward onboarding processes.
- Integration capabilities: The software should seamlessly [integrate with your existing marketing and CRM systems](#).
- Customer support: Assess the availability and quality of customer support, including 24/7 assistance via email and chat.
- Stability and security: Review the platform's uptime history and security protocols to ensure reliability.
- Scalability: The solution should accommodate your growth and adapt to various event formats, including [in-person](#), [hybrid](#), and [virtual events](#).

By focusing on these areas and consulting reputable industry reports, you can make an informed decision when selecting an event management software partner.





Vendor comparison matrix template

A vendor comparison matrix allows stakeholders to objectively evaluate top platforms across consistent criteria. This tool helps streamline decision-making and supports alignment across teams.

How to use it: Encourage teams to fill in the remaining columns during demo calls or vendor research. This side-by-side format makes it easier to visualize platform differences and align internal stakeholders on priorities.

Evaluation criteria	Bizzabo	Vendor B	Vendor C	Vendor D
Event Format Support	In-person, hybrid, virtual, webinars			
SmartBadge or Wearables	One-time implementation, training, or support packages			
Mobile App	Private-label, iOS & Android, full engagement suite			
Registration Flexibility	Multi-tier, conditional logic, branded flows			
Marketing Features	Website builder, email, agenda builder, SEO tools			

Evaluation criteria	Bizzabo	Vendor B	Vendor C	Vendor D
Content Management	Agenda builder, on-demand content, speaker portal			
Video Production	Native studio, Simulive, backstage tools			
Real-time Engagement Tools	Polls, Q&A, chat, networking			
Analytics and Reporting	Real-time dashboards, ROE metrics, cross-event insights			
Security and Compliance	SOC 2, ISO 27001, PCI DSS, GDPR, CCPA			
Integrations	Salesforce, HubSpot, Marketo, Eloqua, Slack, Open API			
Customer Support	24/7 global support, onboarding, success manager,			
Analyst Recognition	Gartner Leader, Forrester Leader			

06

Ask these 28 questions during the software demo

You've narrowed your list; now, it's time to dig deeper. Demos are your opportunity to evaluate not just what a platform offers but also how well it aligns with your team, your goals, and your [event strategy](#). We recommend limiting demos to your top three to five options to stay focused and avoid decision fatigue. Use the questions below to surface critical insights and get a true sense of what working with each platform will feel like.

Use the questions below to surface critical insights and get a true sense of what working with each platform will feel like.



Platform capabilities and user experience

1. What are the biggest limitations of your platform compared to others?
2. Can I track registration, ticket sales, and campaign performance in real time?
3. How easily can I build and launch an event website without relying on designers or developers?
4. Is the website responsive and optimized for all devices and operating systems?

5. Can I fully customize branding across registration, emails, and the mobile app?
6. How flexible is pricing and ticket configuration (e.g., early bird, VIP, promo codes)?
7. Can I build [personalized registration flows](#) for different audience segments?
8. Can I manage invite-only or private events with restricted access and visibility?

Engagement, networking, and experience

9. Do you offer a [mobile app](#)? Is it included in the core platform or an add-on?
10. What data do you provide on app adoption, feature usage, and attendee engagement?
11. Does the platform support wearable tech like [SmartBadges](#) for [lead capture](#) and networking?
12. What [event networking](#) features are available for both in-person and virtual attendees?
13. Can I showcase [sponsors and exhibitors](#) in ways that drive engagement and provide measurable value?
14. How does the platform support content access control (e.g., on-demand sessions, attendee tiers)?

Integrations and analytics

15. How well does your platform integrate with my existing martech and CRM systems?
16. Are integrations native or third-party? Are there additional costs or setup requirements?
17. What analytics are available out of the box? Can I generate reports without needing a data expert?
18. Do you offer insight into attendee behavior across event types (e.g., session attendance, [networking activity](#))?

Support, stability, and scale

19. What levels of support are available for organizers and attendees? Is it 24/7?
20. What's your onboarding process like, and what ongoing [customer success resources](#) do you provide?
21. What's the largest event your platform has supported? How does it perform at scale?
22. When was your last service outage? How was it handled and communicated?
23. Do you publish uptime statistics or maintain a public status page?

Contracts, pricing, and transparency

24. Do I have to commit to a multi-year contract? What is the cancellation policy?
25. Are there any fees to retrieve my data or transition off the platform?
26. What's included in your base package? Are there per-user or per-event fees I should know about?
27. Can I speak with other customers in my industry who use your platform?

Bonus: Analyst recognition

28. Has your platform been recognized by third-party analysts like Gartner or Forrester? What was the most recent evaluation, and where did you rank?



07

Switching event platforms: what to know, what to expect

A significant number of event leaders are reevaluating their tech stacks to better align with modern expectations, streamlined operations, personalized experiences, actionable insights, and seamless integration across event types.

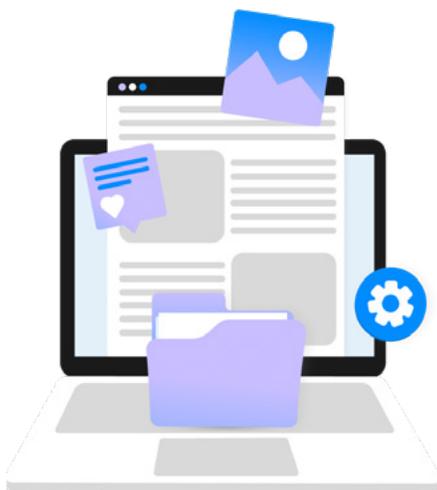
Whether you're scaling your program or responding to shifting team needs, switching platforms can feel like a big leap. But with the right strategy and the right partner, it can be a transformative step forward.

Here are the common challenges teams face during a switch and the long-term benefits that make it worthwhile:

Data migration

The challenge: Consolidating attendee history, engagement data, and registration details from multiple tools can be complex.

The opportunity: A unified platform makes it easier to preserve and activate your data. Structured imports, dedicated onboarding, and robust APIs allow you to unlock deeper cross-event insights and improve personalization across every touchpoint.



User adoption

The challenge: Getting internal teams up to speed can be a hurdle, especially when workflows are changing.

The opportunity: Intuitive platforms make adoption easier with fast onboarding, self-service learning resources, and responsive support. Once in place, new workflows can increase efficiency, collaboration, and visibility across teams.



Integration rework

The challenge: Reconnecting your CRM, marketing tools, and payment systems takes time and coordination.

The opportunity: Modern platforms come equipped with native integrations and open APIs that improve data consistency, reduce manual work, and help close the loop between events and business outcomes.

Short-term costs

The challenge: New licenses, onboarding, and possible downtime require upfront investment.

The opportunity: The long-term return includes reduced reliance on multiple point solutions, more automation, better data access, and lower operating costs over time.

Downtime and disruption

The challenge: Mid-cycle platform transitions can create operational risk.

The opportunity: With the right timing and support, the transition can be smooth and low-impact. Leading platforms offer near-zero downtime and are designed to support multiple events simultaneously, so you're always moving forward.

The bottom line

Yes, switching platforms takes effort, but staying on outdated or fragmented systems carries a bigger cost in lost opportunities, inefficiency, and attendee dissatisfaction. Making the move to a modern, all-in-one event management platform isn't just an upgrade; it's a competitive necessity.

08

Checklist for implementation readiness

Ensure internal stakeholders are prepared to launch and maximize a new platform.

Checklist:

- Stakeholder alignment confirmed
- Event goals and KPIs defined
- Historical data identified and prepped for migration
- Training schedule mapped out
- Roles and permissions established
- Martech and CRM systems reviewed for integration setup
- Support resources and contacts confirmed
- Initial pilot event selected (if applicable)
- Success metrics defined for first 90 days
- Internal communication plan prepared

09

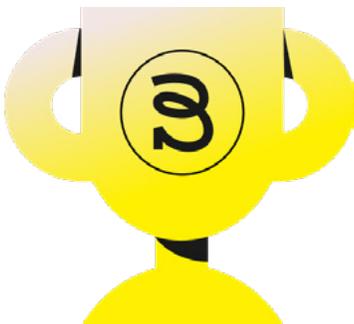
Bizzabo: Your end-to-end platform for modern event excellence

Bizzabo is the Event Experience Operating System (OS) designed for teams who need to deliver high-impact, insight-driven events at scale. Whether you're running global conferences, executive summits, webinars, field activations, or hybrid experiences, Bizzabo empowers you to plan, execute, and optimize your full event portfolio from one unified platform.

Comprehensive event management and marketing

Bizzabo helps you manage every element of your event, regardless of format or size, from a single, intuitive dashboard.

- Centralized Command Center: Plan, execute, and monitor multiple events in one place. Easily switch between events and manage timelines, content, communications, and [analytics across your portfolio](#).
- Customizable registration: Build personalized, scalable registration flows with options for hidden tickets, conditional logic, and targeted pricing tiers (VIP, early bird, etc.).





“If our events were just about the session content, we’d run them virtually, but delegates need (and ask for) in-person events to allow them to forge connections and partnerships with other delegates.”

[Denise Hibbard, Senior Marketing Manager, DJI](#)



“The oohs and aahs that came from the attendees were so much fun to hear. You can be very intentional about how you use Klik to make your event more fun.”

[Kelsey Wind, Deputy Director of Events, CMP](#)

- Branded websites: Create SEO-optimized, mobile-responsive event websites without developers. Choose from templates, build from scratch with flexible widgets, or invite your agency partners to write custom HTML and CSS.
- Speaker and sponsor portals: Simplify coordination with built-in portals that streamline speaker content, deadlines, and sponsor activations.
- Email marketing: Automate pre- and post-event emails with branded templates, triggered communications, and performance tracking.
- Full martech integration: Connect with Salesforce, HubSpot, Marketo, Eloqua, and more to sync data across your funnel and enrich your pipeline.

World-class in-person experience, powered by Klik

Bizzabo’s [Klik SmartBadge™](#) technology transforms the onsite experience and helps you measure real-time engagement like never before.

- One-tap networking: Attendees exchange contact info or connect to sessions by tapping badges—no app downloads or awkward moments.
- Instant lead capture: Sponsors and exhibitors gather qualified leads with one touch, with full post-event access to notes and scoring.
- Real-time behavioral data: Organizers get heatmaps and movement insights to optimize traffic flow, content relevance, and space design.
- Sustainable and scalable: Reusable and recyclable SmartBadges reduce waste and work seamlessly for events from 50 to 50,000+ attendees.

Seamless hybrid and virtual events

Whether you’re running a [webinar](#) or a [fully hybrid](#) conference, Bizzabo offers immersive digital tools that keep virtual attendees engaged.

- Virtual venue and studio production: Deliver broadcast-quality virtual experiences with backstage tools and breakout sessions.
- Engagement features: Interactive Q&A, polls, live chat, and virtual networking options mirror in-person engagement and drive participation.
- Content management: Schedule on-demand access, gate content by registration type, and transform session footage into evergreen assets.



“It’s a great choice — very comprehensive. Bizzabo is a true partner for your event and can help you get off the ground and guide you.”

[Claudia Oliva, Senior Manager, Creative Design and Production, Agora](#)



“I used pretty much every feature in Bizzabo — the onsite software, full registration, website widgets. Once attendees register, they then start receiving Bizzabo emails that include their tickets, know-before-you-go content, where to book your hotel, and all the information they need without any complexity. I wanted to make it easy.”

[Ashley Ronkowski, Senior Manager, Strategic Events & Field Marketing, Experity](#)

Integrated mobile app for on-the-go engagement

- Private-label app: Offer a branded mobile experience with personalized agendas, push notifications, speaker/session discovery, and live engagement tools.
- In-app networking: Browse attendees, take part in matchmaking, schedule 1:1 meetings, and connect through SmartBadge™ integrations.
- Sponsor visibility: Deliver measurable ROI through in-app placements, lead gen tools, and post-event reporting.

Event analytics that prove ROI

Bizzabo delivers [real-time data and customizable reporting](#) to help you demonstrate value to stakeholders and improve future event performance.

- Unified analytics dashboard: Access attendee data, session popularity, engagement rates, and conversion metrics from one place.
- Custom reporting: Tailor reports to show outcomes by region, persona, or event type – perfect for executive summaries or board reporting.
- Integration-ready: Feed data back into your CRM and MAP to close the loop on campaign attribution, lead scoring, and post-event nurture.

Enterprise-grade security and compliance

- Certifications: SOC 2 Type II, ISO 27001, PCI DSS SAQ D V4, GDPR, CCPA compliant.
- Data control: You own your data. Bizzabo is a data processor, not a controller.
- Access controls: Role-based permissions, secure single sign-on (SSO), and identity verification for attendees and staff.

Award-winning support and success services

- Onboarding and implementation: Fastest implementation rating on G2. Includes both guided training and self-serve learning resources.



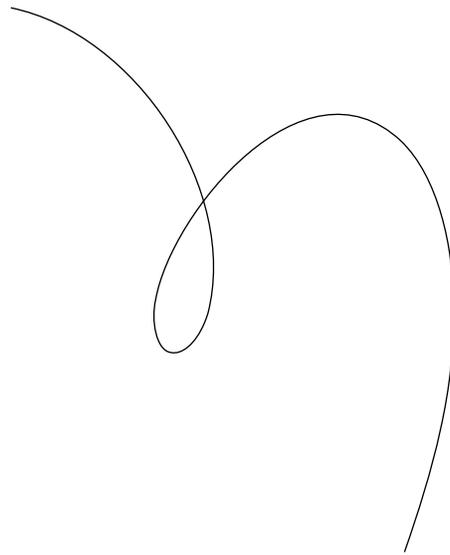
“My favorite thing about Bizzabo is that the team proved to be a very solutions-focused partner when it mattered the most.”

[Kim Perretta, Senior Digital Production Manager, Global Events, HubSpot](#)

- 24/7 global support: Access to expert support via phone, chat, and email, with a median response time under 20 minutes.
- Onsite services: [Full-service support](#), including Bizzabox shipments for self-managed check-in or full-scale technician support.

Why event leaders choose Bizzabo

- Recognized leader: Named a Leader in the 2025 Gartner Magic Quadrant™ for Event Marketing and Management Platforms.
- Award-winning innovation: Recognized by Forrester, G2, TrustRadius, and Event Technology Awards for ease of use, value, and advanced features.
- Proven at scale: Trusted by brands like HubSpot, Siemens, and Dow Jones to power high-stakes, high-impact events.



Ready to drive business outcomes, not just attendance?

Bizzabo gives you the tools, insights, and support to deliver events that truly matter.

Bizzabo

Start planning events that matter with Bizzabo

Contact us to learn more

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