32 Questions You Must Ask Any Virtual Event Software Vendor Before Signing On The Dotted Line

BigRedVirtual

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An Open Letter From Jeff Johnson
President, Big Red Media

Dear Colleague,

   Choosing a Virtual Event Software Company isn't easy. There is no shortage of horror stories about bait and switch pricing, unscrupulous sales practices and downright incompetence with some of the vendors out there. The fact of the matter is, the current companies out there were just struggling to get by until Covid-19 hit. Nobody was interested in taking their event online. Now they're living in "hog heaven" in a. sellers market, where they can get away with oftentimes shady sales practices and price gouging for their inferior software packages. I'm sure if you talk to your fellow colleagues that have put on virtual events, you will get an earful about the unfortunate experiences they have encountered in this area.

   Why is this? Because up until just recently, the virtual event software platform was the "ugly duckling" of the software industry. Event organizers only wanted to do live in person events, because… well… in person events are simply better (if we can have them). On top of that, as an event company that has been forced to use some of these platforms in the past, I'm amazed at how out of touch many of these companies are with what it takes to put on a great event. They designed what they thought would be "cool" instead of designing usable software for the event industry.

Buyer Beware: You MUST Ask The Tough Questions Of These Software Providers Before Signing A Contract!

   The virtual event software industry is hot as can be right now and YOU can get burned if you come in unprepared to ask the tough questions of any vendor you're considering – **which is why it's so important for you to arm yourself with the information contained in this report**. The 32 questions I've included in this report will give you the tools you need to make an informed decision, so that you can deliver the event experience your attendees deserve and need.

Dedicated to your success,

Jeff Johnson
President
Big Red Media

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Software Company Before Signing On The Dotted Line

Software Features

Q1: Can I customize my event platform to match my event branding or am I stuck with generic templates?
Our Answer: Yes, 100%. And you absolutely should want to customize the look and feel of your event. While it's a good idea to start with templates and designs as idea starters, you should never have to conform to another person's design ideas. Your event theme, company colors, branding and style should be reflected throughout the site. With the Big Red Virtual software platform, we make it super easy for you to design YOUR EVENT to fit you and your attendees for the best virtual experience possible.

Q2: Will my event have the look and feel of an in-person event?
Our Answer: Let's face it, nothing can fully replicate an in-person event, but you can design your event to look and feel as close as possible to what your in person event would look like (or does look like if running a hybrid event). This includes everything from lobby design, to main stage design, including company personalities and more. The more that your event feels like "normal" for your attendees, the more engaged your attendees are likely to be.

Q3: How streamlined are the look and feel of main stage and breakout rooms? Do I have to click multiple times to watch the live stream? Are session handouts located on the same page or do I have to look elsewhere?
Our Answer: We have designed Main Stage and Breakout Rooms to have exactly what you need from a design and functionality standpoint. These rooms include a large viewable screen, full room chat functionality, up to date session descriptions and documents, and can even include sponsorship and branding. Unlike other platforms, everything is in one place where your attendees can enter the room and have at their disposal everything they need, no matter how long they stay in that room. No clicking to open windows, navigating to other pages for downloads, adding documents to a "virtual briefcase" or any of the other annoying "features" I've seen in other platforms.

Q4: How easy is it to create or modify the event schedule? Can I change the schedule on the fly?
Our Answer: Additions or changes to the event schedule can be done in a simple admin only user interface. Once done, they are reflected in less than a minute throughout the entire platform. Additionally, the event schedule is auto-generated for attendees on the Event Schedule page, on the Main Stage and Breakout Rooms, and even in a session archive room. You make the updates in one place and you're done!

Q5: Does the event schedule show in every attendee's time zone?
Our Answer: Yes! This is super important for a virtual event. With attendees streaming in from all around the world, your schedule of events needs to be in THEIR TIME, not the time of the event organizer. Keep everyone on the same page with automatic time zone adjustments.

Q6: Can your vendors design and setup their own booths or do you have to concierge the process?
Our Answer: Yes, we work with you to train your vendors to design and setup their own booths in an easy to use booth buider system. As an event organizer, the exhibitor booth setup and design can be one of the most time consuming components of setting up your event. Our system allows you to offload this to your vendors. They have the control from start to finish and everyone in happy!

Q7: Are vendor/sponsor booths interactive? Do they include the ability to post documents and videos? Chat with attendees? Include live video chat?
Our Answer: Yes! These are MUST HAVE vendor booth functionalities. Not only do you need to have these functions available, they also have to be easy to setup and administer. Our system checks all of these boxes.

Q8: Can vendors add their own booth reps? Or do you have to concierge the process?
Our Answer: Yes, absolutely. As an admin, you setup and assign a booth admin to every vendor booth and then they have the ability to add additional booth reps to work the booth during your show.

Q9: Do your booths include virtual badge scan capabilities?
Our Answer: Be sure to ask this and get the details of what exactly this looks like. How do attendees scan their badge? What information is given? What information can my vendors see if a badge is not scanned? How quickly can they get that information? With Big Red Virtual, we include easy badge scanning functionality in your booth with real time instant reporting to your vendor admins.

Q10: How customizable is the vendor exhibit hall lobby?
Our Answer: There are a lot of bad, clunky designs out their. We opt for the straightforward easy to use approach in our vendor exhibit hall lobby templates to create a positive user experience for both attendees and exhibitors alike. We also give you the full flexibility to design the exact look and feel that you want for your event.

Q11: How do I add attendees?
Our Answer: We offer plug-and-play integrations with Infusionsoft CRM and Cvent for instant registration and attendee upload. Alternatively, you may directly register and upload attendees direct in our attendee interface.

Q12: How do I prevent non-paying attendees from getting into the event?
Our Answer: Security of events must be a key functionality in any virtual event software platform. All users are protected by an individual single use username/password combination. In addition, for those interested in increased user level security, we offer single sign-on capabilities through our API connector.

Q13: How many attendees can your platform handle?
Our Answer: Our platform has performed wonderfully under load management testing of up to 25,000 concurrent users and we have all of the scalability and load testing documentation to back that up. Your virtual event platform vendor should be able to provide scalability documentation to prove ahead of time that they can handle your event. We learned this the hard way with another vendor where our system crashed for more than 50% of attendees as they flooded into our event. That should NEVER happen.

Q14: How do you handle situations where more people attend than originally anticipated?
Our Answer: We use advanced auto-scaling functionality in our AWS cloud architecture to ensure that your event never overloads the event servers, even when you get an unexpected extra large crowd of attendees. We've got you covered, no matter who shows up.

Q15: Where is my data stored and how secure is my data?
Our Answer: Every event within the Big Red Virtual platform has all event runtime data stored in standalone databases (or clusters) which isolate their data from our platform clients. Additionally, you have the ability to store your data on our Amazon Web Services account or on your own provided account for additional segmentation at no additional charge.

Q16: What security measures are put in place to secure the platform?
Our Answer: The Big Red Virtual software platform implements the following (and many more) strategies to secure your event:
- We use Amazon VPC for networking.
- Amazon Elastic Load Balancer for SSL termination and load balancing.
- Separate security groups are used to isolate web servers from database servers.
- Only necessary ports are open to the outside world (http/https).
- SSH is only permitted via VPN or selected IPs.
- AWS Account is locked with multi-factor authentication on all login accounts
- No ports on any of our servers are open to the public.
- All servers sit behind Amazon Elastic Load Balancer.
- SSH is key-only and open only to authenticated VPN users or static IP addresses
- Amazon S3 buckets are configured with versioning enabled to protect against accidental data loss.
- TLS 1.2+ is supported (at the time of this writing)
- Only select (sysadmin) team members have access to production systems; developers do not.

The bottom line, we have security covered for your event. Upon request during the sales process (before you sign), we can provide our Scalability and Security Memo upon request.

Q17: How much time do you realistically need to setup my event?
Our Answer: Depending on the size of your event, the complexity of your event agenda and the number of exhibitors on your platform, we require 4 to 8 weeks of lead time to have your event up and running. Right from the start of our conversations, we'll give you a firm deadline of when we must get started in order to pull off an excellent event for you.

Pricing

Q18: Can I use my own streaming service or am I stuck using your service? Is there an upcharge for using my own streaming service?
Our Answer: You absolutely have the option to use your own streaming service at no additional cost. We'll never force you to use our streaming platform nor charge you for using your own (which is very common in the industry).

Q19: Is video streaming included in the price of my event? If no, how much will it cost?
Our Answer: This is a BIG ONE and where many other platforms ratchet up your price dramatically. They'll even convince you that using their streaming service is the best service option for you, even if you're paying a premium. I've seen a quote for a 2-day event with a main room and seven breakout sessions come out to $189,000 just for the streaming service! (and this is not an uncommon occurrence). And many times your streaming costs are not disclosed until after you've signed the deal. With Big Red Virtual, we provide you with 2 economical options because that's how we would want to be charged. Option 1 is our "Bring Your Own Streaming Service". You provide the html code from your streaming service and we'll get you connected free. Opton 2 is our full concierge A/V service which includes your streaming. We'll give you a quote on your full streaming and A/V charges BEFORE you ever sign on with us!

Q20: Do I have the option to host my own data on my cloud servers? If yes, how much does this cost?
Our Answer: Yes, you can absolutely bring your own AWS account to host your event. We'll work with you to set this up at no additional cost.

Q21: Is there an upcharge for additional vendor booths?
Our Answer: Everyone's event has different vendor/exhibitor booth needs. One size does not fit all. During the initial meetings with you, we'll scope out your event needs and determine an overall fixed price for your event that fits the exact number of vendor booths that you need for your event.

Q22: Will I have to pay extra if I add more virtual rooms? (Breakout rooms, lounge, informational pages, etc.)
Our Answer: No! We'll make sure that we "right-fit" your event package for exactly what you need from the start. We'll never nickel and dime you on something as basic as room setup.

Q23: Can you provide virtual a/v resources or graphic design for my event?
Our Answer: Yes. These are two of the most critical components of a successful virtual event. We have both of the services available on an as-needed basis.

Q24: Can I add additional events at a discounted rate?
Our Answer: Absolutely. If you have the need for more than a single event, we offer a monthly unlimited event subscription as well as prepaid discounted additional events. Whatever your needs, we've got you covered.

Reporting

Q25: What reports are available to me?
Our Answer: While most other virtual event softwares give you a ton of mostly irrelevant built in static reports, we give you a real-time reporting on what you need, when you need it. From real time reporting on attendee activities, to sessions they've attended, total number of attendees in every room and exhibitor booth visits and activities. We also include an easy to use custom report generator tool - if there's a report you need from the system that is not included "out of the box", your dedicated project manager will assist you in setting up the reports you need for your event.

Q26: How easy is it for me to pull admin reports?
Our Answer: You will have access to all of your reports in real time throughout your event. You'll never have to wait until the end of the day or end of your event for your report.

Q27: Can I pull attendee reports by location or sessions attended?
Our Answer: Yes. Our platform uses realtime presence technology that allows us to determine who is in what room, booth, or location on the platform at all times. This allows you to get actual accurate reporting of who is anywhere in the platform at any time, along with downloadable reports with the same data.

Q28: What is the process for providing vendor booth reporting? Visitors, leads, clocks, video views, chat logs, badge scans, etc.
Our Answer: Unlike every event platform we've reviewed, in our system your vendors have realtime access to all booth visitor reporting including badge scan information, click or download information, video views, chat logs and more. This gives them everything they need to get the most out of your event and takes the load off of you in having to constantly answer their questions about booth traffic. As an admin in the system, you also have the ability to pull these same reports on demand.

Support

Q28: Will I have a dedicated project manager to help setup my event?
Our Answer: Yes. You will have a dedicated project manager from the start of your project through a debrief of your event after you're done. They will provide you with a right-fit project plan on day 1 and will be there with you all along the way to ensure your event goes off without a hitch!

Q29: What will the process look like once I sign up?
Our Answer: Immediately after you sign up, we'll schedule a kickoff call with you to go through the entire event project plan with your Project Manager. They will custom design your plan to ensure that your event is ready to go without a big last minute rush to the finish line. Their job along the way is to use our experience as an event driven company to guide you, encourage you and to provide the support needed to make sure your event is fantastic.

Q30: What type of tech support will I have during my event?
Our Answer: You will have a direct line to your project manager and our team all throughout your event. If there are any issues that arise, they have a direct line to our technical team to get them fixed ASAP.

Q31: Will I have a 9-1-1 Emergency Line in case I have any problems during my event?
Our Answer: Yes. You'll never have to submit a ticket online for an emergency and hope that someone will get back to you. If you need assistance, you'll have a direct line to get in touch with your project manager right away.

Q32: What guarantees do you offer?
Our Answer: Most will not guarantee anything. Our guarantee is that you'll know the EXACT cost of your virtual event software before you ever sign on the dotted line. No surprise bills or upcharges. You'll pay one flat rate, guaranteed!

A Personal Invitation

We'd love the opportunity to earn your business. To that end, I'd like to offer you a FREE 60-Minute demo of our event platform to show you what we've built and how it will fit for your event. We'll demonstrate all of the features and functionalites, ensure that our software is a good fit for you and what you're trying to accomplish (in some cases, it's not) and if it makes sense to do so, at the end of the call, we'll provide you with a fixed price quote on what using Big Red Virtual will look like for you upcoming event(s).

This demo is completely free, with ZERO obligations or expectations on our part. Would we like the opportunity to earn your business? Of course! But I personally guarantee you won't be strong-armed or pestered to move forward unless it's the right fit for both of us.

How To Request A Custom 1-On-1 Demo
(Or Just Get More Questions Answered)

Go online to: www.BigRedVirtual.com/demo

Or e-mail me direct at jeff@technologymarketingtoolkit.com

Looking forward to meeting you,

Jeff Johnson
President
Big Red Media / Big Red Virtual