

# STOVA

THE ULTIMATE

# Event Technology Selection Guide



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Finding the right event technology for your unique goals has become an exercise in filters and keywords in recent years.

There are hundreds of event software solutions now, and despite their different naming conventions, many sound alike and promise the same results. From "robust" to "award-winning", how do you tell technology partners apart? Which are the true award-winners, and which know how to use buzzwords to fill out their bottom line?

## How do you find the right solution?

- You could compare capabilities but that won't tell you what their people are like to work with for client service and support.
- What if an end-to-end solution better fits your needs  
but you have a strict budget for the quarter?

Choosing the wrong software is risky. What if your new solution frustrates attendees, so they drop off? Or, what if an outage occurs during your event?

To find the right event technology partner, consider factors like reliability, support, data security, and overall value.

## That's where this guide can help:

- ✓ Find 15 questions you can ask to find the right solution that meets your event's goals, no matter the size or format.
- ✓ Access key considerations to find a solution that provides exactly what you need.
- ✓ Learn critical tech features for success in today's market.

Use this guide as a reference when evaluating platforms. It'll help you build a shortlist of two or three good candidates.

You'll simplify procurement and be on your way to finding the ideal technology for all your events.

# The Challenge: So Many Options

The growth of event technology solutions in the last few years was astronomical, but the return to live events in recent years was a boon to the events industry. We now see the marketing beginning to even out.

Our industry responded swiftly with technology advancements in the virtual space. Solutions poured into the market throughout the pandemic, and now we see a vast spectrum of options. Event technology vendors grew a [staggering 400 percent](#) from 2020 to 2021 alone.

# Simplify Technology Sourcing

Choosing the right solution is vital. Industry research shows 90% of planners agree technology helps drive event success.

Great software boosts planning efficiency and improves return on investment. It streamlines events for attendees, too, and delivers more engaging and relevant experiences. Despite all the options, finding the right platform doesn't need to be complicated. You don't have to understand every tool out there.

This guide can help. It provides 15 questions you can ask yourself to eliminate solutions that aren't a good fit.

**IT'S BETTER TO CURATE TECHNOLOGY  
AROUND YOUR EVENTS.**

As event tech races forward, it gets more inspiring. Organizers and providers are pushing the envelope to deliver more enriching experiences than ever. Vetting providers may take a little time, but finding the ideal partner will free you up in the long run and give you innovative tools for extraordinary events.

## QUESTION 1 | What events do you produce?

Start by thinking about the events you manage. Are they customer conferences, trade shows, sales kickoffs, workshops, webinars, or something else?

Every event type has its own technical requirements. For example:

- An **onsite** conference may require check-in, registration, badging options, production, and a companion mobile app.

• A **typical virtual** workshop calls for filesharing, live Q&A's, chat, and collaboration tools.

• A **hybrid** trade show needs an e-commerce solution and on-demand demos.

When assessing platforms, look for a provider who guides you to solutions that fit your event type, audience, and goals.

## QUESTION 2 | What's your event technology budget?

Buying event software is like buying a car.

You may long for an infotainment system with game and theater options that lets you watch Netflix in your parked car. But do you need those features? Can you afford them?

When you shop for a car, you begin with a price in mind, right?

The same is true with event tech. Start by establishing your budget. With so many features to choose from, your budget provides a true roadmap for what you can do.

Next, consider your event goals and decide what matters most. Let the provider know:

- ✓ What's essential
- ✓ What would be nice to have
- ✓ What you want participants to see, hear, feel, and do.

See what's available at different budget tiers. Maybe you want something straightforward with chat and Q&A's. In this case, Zoom would provide a sensible option.

Or, maybe you want a more sophisticated solution. There's a lot you can add – for engagement, networking, gamification, attendee insights, AI matchmaking, and more.

**THE BEST PROVIDERS ACT AS TRUSTED ADVISORS. THEY LISTEN CAREFULLY AND GUIDE YOU TO SOLUTIONS THAT GIVE YOU THE MOST FOR YOUR SPEND.**

## QUESTION 3 | How many people will attend your event?

Hybrid and virtual platforms give you great flexibility. There's no need to limit your events to the number of people who can fit in a ballroom.

New technologies let you host as many attendees as you like online, regardless of location.

When reviewing solutions, look for a virtual/hybrid platform that can handle unlimited audience sizes. This can vastly expand your event's reach.

For example, Stova has hosted conferences with more than 350,000 virtual attendees. Online career fairs have drawn 85,000+ participants on a platform that supported interviews with companies eager to hire.

**QUESTION 4 | What's your preferred format?**

In fact, [90 percent of event professionals](#) say they will or expect to use an online-event strategy even now, as live events are in recovery. Experts agree the return to live events won't follow a linear path.

VIRTUAL WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A ROLE — GIVEN ITS ABILITY TO DRAW WIDE GLOBAL AUDIENCES AT MUCH LOWER COST AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.

One lesson learned from the pandemic is that we don't always know what lies ahead. Giving attendees an online option is your failsafe. If conditions change and they can't travel, you can switch on short runway to a virtual or hybrid model.

It's no surprise hybrid events are gaining traction now. [73% of planners](#) agree these gatherings will become even more common in the future.

**Key Considerations:**

- For maximum agility, find a provider that handles digital, onsite and hybrid events on the same platform. An all-in-one platform lets you switch formats at a moment's notice.
- You want a solution that integrates with your mobile event app as well to bring virtual and onsite audiences together. Whether attendees are in the same room or across the globe, they can access content and network real time through video conferencing and chat.

For example: Stova's mobile app integrates seamlessly with your event tech stack, including your CRM and marketing automation softwares.

- Ask how the vendor supports the different formats of hybrid events. Why is this important? Livestreaming your entire gathering would cost a bundle and spread resources thin. To manage costs, categorize sessions in three buckets:
  1. **Live:** For your most important sessions like keynotes
  2. **Pre-recorded:** For viewing later on-demand
  3. **Simu-live:** Pre-recorded and scheduled at a dedicate time

**Simu-Live in Action**

Stova's simu-live feature gives attendees 1:1 time with experts. Speakers mark themselves as available to connect via audio or video chat. Attendees get answers during live conversations with experts. Speakers in turn gain an opportunity to deepen connections with quality leads.

## QUESTION 5 | How will you measure success?

Digital events highlighted the importance of tracking attendee behavior to enhance the experience and quantify value. As in-person events resume, stakeholders are heightening their focus on measuring how these gatherings achieve their goals.

When analyzing event ROI, look beyond attendance.

### LEADING PLATFORMS PROVIDE VALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO THE COMPLETE ATTENDEE JOURNEY.

Depending on your event goals, for example, track exhibitor booth visits, scheduled meetings, session check-ins, dwell times, question submissions, new product sales, sponsor revenue, and more.

Ask your mobile app provider how they stack up against the competition. Do they utilize NFC technology or QR codes? Do you have the ability to control session attendance and track dwell time with their event app?

#### Key Considerations:

- For a complete picture of event program value, identify a provider that measures success for gatherings of all types and sizes. Get analytics across the board, from small, straightforward virtual meetings to large, complex live trade shows and hybrid conferences.
- You want a platform that captures key metrics before, during and after the event.
- Also consider how you'll share information with stakeholders. Modern platforms make reporting a breeze. Create customized reports in a few keystrokes.

## QUESTION 6 | What is the lead time needed to build an event to specification?

While all pivots can be tricky, some are more complicated than others.

- **High complexity** is switching from virtual to onsite. Lead time to make this switch can be anywhere from 12 weeks to 6 months. You'll need to secure a venue, travel information, food and beverage, offsite activities, entertainment, and more.

Safety protocols add to the complexity. When choosing a provider, ask how they can help you create a safer experience. For instance, do they have tools for contactless check-in and lead retrieval? Can they help you conduct efficient and comfortable health screenings onsite?

- **Low complexity**, by contrast, involves setting up your event for hybrid from the start. This format gives you maximum flexibility. Bump up your onsite attendee list if pre-event surveys show registrants want to meet in person. Or flex in the opposite direction if restrictions change.

Hybrid offers an opportunity to grow your audience through the power of choice. Meaning, you no longer need to lose attendees based on dates. Let's say an executive has a favorite three-day conference. But the last day conflicts with a family trip. She can attend in person for two days and take in the third day virtually, wherever she likes.

### HYBRID HAS CREATED A NEW EVENTGOER — THE MIXED ATTENDEE TYPE.

This is someone who experiences the gathering both online and onsite. Mixed-attendee ticketing presents a great opportunity to grow your audience moving forward.

**QUESTION 7 | How complex is your event?**

Many platforms claim to be easy-to-use, but do they offer the functionality you need for complex events? For instance, can they help you manage multiple tracks, time zones, languages, and concurrent sessions?

The best providers offer powerful solutions, while keeping the process simple. They also work with you before, during, and after your event to deliver white-glove professional services and support.

Here are three common factors that can add complexity to event planning. You'll also find tools to help you manage the intricacies with ease.

**1. Different Time Zones**

There's no doubt about it. International event planning with live sessions in multiple time zones is challenging. Prime time in one region is after hours or the middle of the night in others.

**Solution**

As mentioned, simulated live sessions offer pre-recorded content at a designated time. The presenter is available live to answer questions and chat with the audience while the content plays.

Simu-live sessions generate the same fear of missing out (FOMO) as live presentations. These sessions aren't available on-demand, so attendees feel an urgency to attend. What's more, your entire audience receives the same message regardless of time zones, and the live component keeps content fresh.

**2. Different Languages**

With attendees participating from across the globe, it's important to make your event available in many languages.

**Solution**

When assessing providers, find out if they offer real-time interpretation capabilities to attract diverse audiences. Modern solutions translate presentations on the fly in more than a dozen languages. Also ask about multi-lingual closed captioning you can display in real time with live sessions.

**3. Complex Agendas**

We love giving attendees options to choose their own journey. That said, events with multiple tracks, breakouts, dates, attendee categories, and more can create complex agendas.

**Solution**

Make sure your provider can deliver personalized attendee agendas and multi-track events with loads of concurrent sessions. No matter how complex your agenda, a robust set of filters helps attendees search and find the ideal content that matches their preferences and queries with ease.

Advanced search filters simplify attendee registration as well. Plus, putting eventgoers in the driver's seat helps keep them engaged in the content they choose to experience throughout your event.

## QUESTION 8 | How customized are your event tech needs?

When considering providers, see if their offerings will satisfy your need for customization.

For instance, is the vendor constantly innovating? Can they brainstorm and help you bring virtual and onsite attendees together? Do they offer ideas to break out of the standard livestream-and-chat format and create a unique virtual event design?

These considerations are important if you want to offer something exciting and new year-to-year.

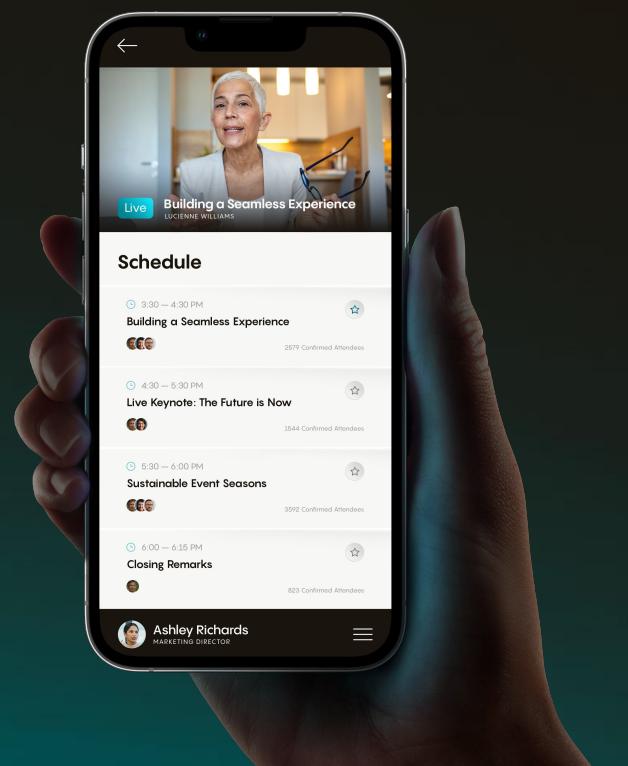
For hybrid and live events, learn about the provider's mobile event app. Can it be tailored to meet your event requirements and goals? Drawing from basic to advanced functionality, a good provider will help you customize your mobile app to make your event a huge success and generate a higher ROI.

For your onsite events, it's also important to consider your needs for badging and registration. All-in-one event ecosystem solutions offer flexibility, giving your organization the ability to use one provider for everything from marketing your event to post-event analytics. Also consider if you will be repeating this event. Stova, for example, offers bespoke technology at the click of a button. With our marketing websites, you are able to clone an event. This saves you time and money in the long run.

Whatever mobile app you choose, make sure it integrates with the rest of your event tech stack. The most effective platforms provide seamless data flow from your app to the rest of your event management platform, so you get the data and insights you need to make informed decisions and deliver events that engage and delight attendees year after year.

For example, here are some features [Stova's event app](#) offers. Organizers choose what they need to put the right tools at attendees' fingertips and make the most of their time at events:

- ✓ Attendee profiles
- ✓ Direct messaging
- ✓ Content downloads
- ✓ Push notifications
- ✓ Polls and surveys
- ✓ Activity feeds
- ✓ Photo booths
- ✓ Live streaming
- ✓ Session chat
- ✓ Q&A's
- ✓ Expedited onsite registration
- ✓ Personalized agendas
- ✓ 1:1 video meetings
- ✓ QR code contact sharing
- ✓ Attendee session tracking
- ✓ Proximity networking
- ✓ Attendee matchmaking
- ✓ Interactive maps and wayfinding
- ✓ Customized gamification



**QUESTION 9 | How will you create a comfortable, safety-first experience?****BRING YOUR UMBRELLA AND HOPE YOU DON'T HAVE TO USE IT.**

Plan hybrid and onsite events through the lens of safety following these best practices below. Make sure the vendor you choose can give you full support.

**1. Use data to inform your decisions.**

Conduct ongoing surveys pre-event to gauge registrants' comfort level with meeting in person. Choose your event format based on their feedback.

**2. Have everyone at the starting line together.**

Bring in your planning team, event agency, and technology provider at the outset, so they can make changes in real time, as you gather data.

**3. Create backup plans.**

Avoid figuring out what to do while also running your event. In the current environment, you don't just need a Plan B; you need Plans Z as well.

**4. Bring your umbrella and hope you don't have to use it.**

Remember, your brand name is on the line. You wouldn't want it associated with an event where people got sick, and you weren't prepared.

**5. Involve senior leadership**

In the planning process, include senior leadership and stakeholders, if applicable, to ensure you follow guidelines and meet important metrics along the way.

**6. Give attendees choices.**

The past two years have shown people love options. Empower attendees to choose their own journey and consume content in the way they feel safe.

**7. Over-communicate health and safety requirements well in advance.**

Your event technology provider may have email marketing capabilities in their solutions ecosystem. Ask about their pre-event marketing solutions.

**8. Rethink on-property touchpoints.**

For example, separate registration from badge pick-up for extra space.

**9. Let onsite technology add protection and streamline processes.**

For instance, use tools that allow touch-free fast-pass check-in and traffic flow management for physical distancing.

**10. Stay flexible.**

Safe in-person events may need you to switch formats on short notice. Stay agile to meet evolving needs.

## QUESTION 10 | How will you combat screen fatigue?

During hybrid events, onsite attendees find plenty of fun things to do. There are live bands, great food, and serendipitous meetings in hallways, to name a few.

This isn't so for virtual attendees. And no one wants to stare passively at a computer screen for a long conference day.

Audience expectations have changed during the past two years. In response to the pandemic, technology leaped forward 10 years in the span of 18 months. The pace of innovation was especially fast in our industry. And event tech took planners and attendees along with the advances.

**ATTENDEES EXPECT MORE FROM EVENTS. THEY WANT INTERACTION, NOT JUST A ONE-WAY CONVERSATION FROM SPEAKERS TO THE AUDIENCE. SO HOW DO YOU COMBAT SCREEN FATIGUE AND ATTENDEE DROP-OFF?**

Find a provider that can help you create interactive virtual experiences that mimic what people love about onsite events. Here are some examples from Stova.

- **Hallway Chatter:**

The ideal partner will have experience in virtual, in-person and hybrid formats. A deep understanding of online and onsite models makes hybrid events easier.

- **Branded Virtual Photo Booths:**

What if your portfolio includes both simple and complex events? Some providers like Stova power the gamut, from small internal meetings to large, high-stakes user conferences. This gives you flexibility to scale smoothly from a DIY to full-service model.

- **Next-Level Gamification:**

Looking for a fun way to support event goals? An internal, five-day virtual sales kick-off meeting created a scavenger hunt featuring avatars of senior executives throughout the platform. No passive viewing for this event. Avatar pop-ups enticed attendees to engage and learn for a chance to climb the leaderboard and win prizes.

## QUESTION 11 | What are the most important features to you?

The secret to successful hybrid events is to give each audiences a comparable premium experience. To this end, let's look at some key roles to include on your roster.

Picture your event as a live television show. Your virtual team produces the program, and onsite attendees are your studio audience.

As mentioned, online attendees have high expectations. They'll leave in a flash if the broadcast doesn't meet their standards. To ensure high-quality video, your virtual team should include the following roles:

- **Executive producer** who keeps the digital parts of your event running smoothly.
- **Audiovisual support** for clear audio and varied camera shots. Use multiple cameras to showcase speakers, attendees, networking, 1:1 interviews, sponsors, exhibitors, and behind-the scenes views.

Like a live TV audience, onsite attendees expect a VIP experience. As such, a winning in-person team includes these people below:

- **Organizers** who ensure everything goes off without a hitch at the venue.

• **Onsite tech support** to collaborate with your virtual team. This role also ensures critical technical aspects – like wi-fi, streaming, sound systems, and presentations – are trouble-free.

• **An emcee** to keep audiences energized. Of course, speaking through a screen to remote attendees is different than talking directly to a live audience.

• **A speaking coach** can help ensure your emcee and speakers know how to play to the camera and relate to both audiences.

## QUESTION 12 | What are your staff augmentation needs?

Assess your team's skillset and fill in the gaps. Here are a few options:

- **Large internal teams** have a graphic designer, video producer, and planners. Recently, some have added an event technologist – a tech-savvy planner who understands virtual and hybrid events. With a strong internal team, a do-it-yourself solution can be a cost-effective option.
- Downsizing during the pandemic left many organizers with limited internal resources. And so, they augment staffing with an **independent planner or small agency**.
- **Full-service agencies** are another great resource. They provide creative, strategy, production, and audiovisual support. Agencies fill other key roles, too. These include project manager and client service manager to help execute and take your event to the finish live.

While creating your team, keep in mind working in silos won't achieve your goals.

YOU WANT PEOPLE WHO MAKE THEIR OWN PARTS FLAWLESS AND COLLABORATE WITH THE REST OF THE TEAM. THE BEST PARTNERS GO ABOVE AND BEYOND TO CREATE AN EXPERIENCE THAT'S EXCEPTIONAL ACROSS THE BOARD.

## QUESTION 13 | Who will manage your event tech?

Some providers offer cost-effective DIY solutions for small, straightforward meetings. Others present end-to-end platforms for pre-, during, and post-event. Some offer both a DIY option and an Enterprise solution, such as Stova.

The right solution depends on many factors, including your event goals, audience, complexity, customization, desired impact, and processes you can simplify through automation.

### Key Considerations

To find the perfect platform, consider the following:

#### 1. Broad skillset

Leading a large team of partners can be a challenge. With hybrid events, you not only oversee technology. You may also be responsible for an events agency, production company, onsite planners, and more. That's a lot of work!

AN END-TO-END PLATFORM STREAMLINES YOUR VENDOR PARTNERS AND HELPS YOU THINK THROUGH THE ENTIRE ATTENDEE JOURNEY.

**2. Expertise**

In today's fast-changing market, the ideal partner will have deep expertise in in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats.

**3. Flexibility**

What if your portfolio includes both simple and complex events? Some providers like Stova power the gamut, from small internal meetings to big, high-stakes user conferences. Meaning, you can scale smoothly from a DIY to full-service model.

**4. Trust**

Successful events today involves technical factors outside your control. Team up with a partner with whom you have tremendous trust.

QUESTION 14

## What are the most important technology features to you?

Event technology is advancing at a breakneck pace.

To help you sort through the options in 2022, Stova surveyed 1,703 event professionals. The aim was to find out what they want most in their event management software.

The research revealed 70 percent of planners prefer an end-to-end platform to manage their events, start to finish, from registration and marketing to post-event reporting.

### What Organizers Want

After more than two years of uncertainty for the industry, reliability and support take center stage when it comes to partner relationships in 2022 and beyond.

Along with an end-to-end platform, these are the attributes organizers value most in technology today, the Stova survey revealed.

- ✓ Reliability
- ✓ Training and support
- ✓ Customization
- ✓ Ease of use
- ✓ Data security

The fact is, stitching together a patchwork of tools that don't work in sync creates extra work for organizers. It can also provide an inconsistent, frustrating attendee experience and deliver an incomplete picture of event ROI.

## QUESTION 15 | Do you need to connect virtual and onsite audiences?

For hybrid events, [71.1% of event organizers](#) say connecting onsite and virtual audiences is their No. 1 challenge.

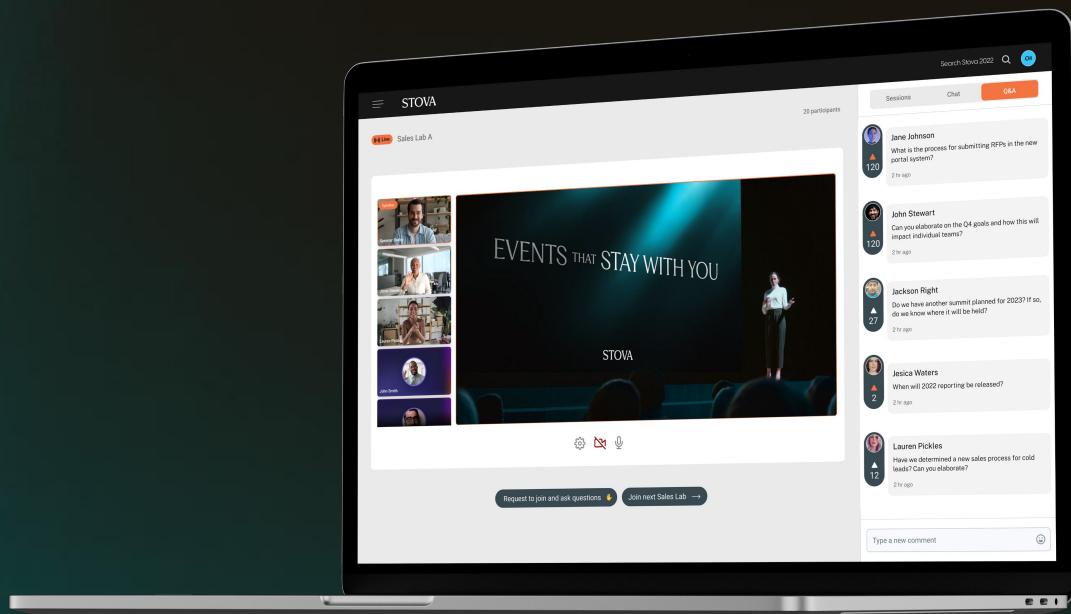
Event technology plays a critical role in joining the two worlds and enhancing the experience for both audiences.

With this in mind, look for a tech partner that merges the digital and in-person experiences with ease. For instance, modern solutions handle virtual, hybrid and onsite technology on the same platform.

With all solutions working as one, technology brings both audiences together with the click of a button. Online and onsite attendees connect and share the experience real time, using tools like live video conferencing, Q&A's, gamification, polls, and chat.

With an end-to-end event management solution, you also:

- ✓ Ensure all tools in your system are compatible
- ✓ Simplify workflows
- ✓ Merge data across in-person and digital activities
- ✓ Gain deeper customer insights
- ✓ Get a complete picture of event ROI
- ✓ Use the same provider to troubleshoot issues on any part of the platform
- ✓ Reduce risk of software failures and security breaches
- ✓ Improve reliability



# CONCLUSION

In today's booming event tech market, you have hundreds of vendors to choose from.

This guide provides 15 questions you can ask yourself to filter out solutions that aren't up to the job. By identifying platforms that don't provide what you need, you'll cut down your choices to a few top picks.

The fact is, today's technology offers more opportunities than ever for inspiring events.

We hope our guide helps you find the perfect partner – one that goes above and beyond to power extraordinary experiences across your events.

To see how Stova answers the 15 questions, contact us today and talk to an expert at [stova.io](https://stova.io)

A dark orange-to-black gradient background with white text. The text reads: "STOVA IS THE DEFINITIVE EVENT TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM".

STOVA IS THE DEFINITIVE  
EVENT TECHNOLOGY  
ECOSYSTEM

End-to-end solutions designed to flex for any event no matter the size or location.

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