

# Rethinking event platforms: The Escape experiment

Event platforms are expensive. Often unnecessarily so. When BBD's internal team started planning another hybrid event, one engineer asked the question we were all thinking: Why are we paying so much for something we might be able to build ourselves?

And just like that, the Escape platform was born.

**The idea was simple:** Build our own internal event platform – complete with streaming, speaker tracks, and user engagement features – but do it fast, do it affordably, and prove that it could be done by a team of junior engineers using the latest cloud-native tools.



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# Objectives



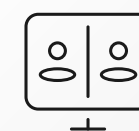
Prove we could build a working, scalable event platform using our own people and tools – without breaking the bank



Explore new Azure tech in a real-world setting to better understand where it fits in our toolkit for clients



Empower a team of junior engineers to deploy software into production using managed services and modern practices on a tech stack they're still learning



Centralise all event engagement in one platform: voting, chat, Q&A, speaker ratings, and more



Build in smart access restrictions



# A platform built to do more with less

From day one, this wasn't about just finding a cheaper option. It was about seeing how far we could go with a simple, well-considered tech stack – one that allowed a young team to get building without worrying about infrastructure, scaling, or DevOps overhead.

We used Azure Static Web Apps and Cosmos DB to keep the architecture clean, modern and cloud-native.

- Azure SWA gave us pre-wired serverless back-ends and CI/CD out the box, requiring no fiddling with environments or pipelines
- Cosmos DB, as a lightweight NoSQL database, handled our data needs at a fraction of the cost of traditional relational databases

This setup meant Azure did a lot of the heavy lifting — spinning up environments, managing auth, handling scaling and reliability — which freed the team to focus on what mattered: features and user experience.

Now in its third year of use at the hybrid Escape conference held simultaneously with speakers and attendees from across five countries, and available online to attendees from anywhere globally, the platform has grown to include the following features:

- Live speaker sessions with track switching
- In-platform chat, Q&A, voting, and feedback
- Profile browsing and speaker social links
- Access control for exclusive event content



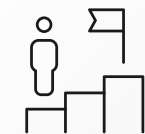


# Benefits



## **Low cost, high value**

We delivered everything we needed for a fraction of what third-party platforms cost, and did it quickly



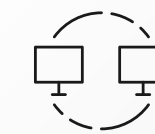
## **Simple and scalable**

The platform handles unpredictable traffic with ease, thanks to native cloud features baked into the architecture



## **Small team, real results**

A small team of four junior engineers from our Grad Programme wrote the bulk of the code, on a tech stack that prioritised accessibility and best practices. Perhaps most impressively, they had the platform up and running in two weeks



## **Flexible by design**

We could opt out of any managed component as needed. This is great for testing, and even better for production, especially considering how the event streams from multiple locations and various rooms in each



## **Community- ready**

The platform has become the central hub for attendees, whether online or in-person. This improves the overall experience and engagement throughout the day



# Azure platform in action

The experiment worked. Not just technically – culturally too. We proved that you don't always need a license, a contract, or a vendor to deliver a world-class solution. Sometimes you just need a little bit of time, an idea, the right mindset and the right tech stack.

We've already reused parts of the Escape platform in client projects and have tested streaming options in AWS. We're also exploring skinnable themes for future events. And yes, we're looking at expanding Escape into a full event platform with ticketing, push notifications, and more.



# The takeaway?

The Escape platform project proves that with the right cloud-native architecture, a small, dedicated team can build a robust, scalable event platform in record time. Leveraging managed services like Azure Static Web Apps and Cosmos DB meant we could move fast, stay flexible, and focus entirely on delivering features — not fighting infrastructure. It's a clear example of how modern tools, used well, can replace bloated third-party platforms with smarter, leaner alternatives.

## Get in touch

If you'd like to engage with us on your cloud development needs.

✉ [bddsoftware.com/contact-us/](mailto:bddsoftware.com/contact-us/)



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