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AI analysis

# Ops Interrupted: The AI Hype, the Infinite To-Do List, and the Missing Strategy

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Founder at The Ops Nest

**VOXO**

## Ops Interrupted: The AI Hype, the Infinite To-Do List, and the Missing Strategy

Thursday, 13 November 2025

# Summary

The session addressed the challenges and opportunities in event operations, focusing heavily on the integration of AI, workflow automation, and strategic planning within the operations sector. The discussion began with participants introducing themselves and sharing their backgrounds, which ranged from event operations management to founding technology solutions aimed at streamlining operational tasks. The central theme revolved around the persistent struggle for time and efficiency in event operations, highlighting the infinite to-do lists that often hinder innovation and strategic thinking. Ilaria Basile shared her recent experience with workflow automation tools like N3N, which helped streamline repetitive tasks, such as requesting exhibitor logos and sending reminders, saving substantial time per event. This sparked a conversation about the necessity for operations professionals to carve out time for learning and experimenting with new technologies despite their hectic schedules. Lou Kiwanuka emphasised the importance of transformation in operations, noting that learning and innovation are crucial but often neglected due to the continuous show cycles and the relentless to-do lists that leave little room for strategic thinking and development.

Adam Jones discussed how his platform, FAIR, addresses some of these time-consuming tasks by automating reminders and ensuring data accuracy. He shared insights on the efficiency gains his platform provides, such as achieving a 97% task completion rate and saving customers significant time by automating processes like risk assessments and exhibitor profile management. However, he also noted the challenges in integrating such technology seamlessly within large organisations where operations teams often face resistance from other departments, particularly IT. This highlighted the need for a more collaborative approach to tech adoption within event operations.

The conversation then shifted to the broader implications of AI and automation in the event industry. Lou Kiwanuka shared findings from the Ops Nest's State of Ops report, which revealed that while a significant percentage of operations professionals are using AI and automation tools, many are doing so independently and without a cohesive strategy. This fragmentation leads to inefficiencies and missed opportunities for broader organisational improvements. The discussion underscored the importance of standardising processes and centralising operations within organisations to enable more effective use of technology and data.





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Ilaria Basile elaborated on the cultural shift needed within organisations to prioritise tech adoption in operations. She argued that leadership must recognise the urgency of integrating AI and automation into operational workflows, not as a novelty but as a necessity. This includes standardising processes across teams and creating a centralised system that can be effectively managed and utilised. Basile also stressed the importance of understanding the specific needs of operations teams and ensuring that tech solutions address these needs rather than being driven solely by trends or external pressures.

Lou Kiwanuka and Adam Jones discussed the role of industry associations in supporting this transformation. Kiwanuka noted that while associations like UFI are beginning to address the role of AI and automation in redefining event formats, there is still a lack of concrete action plans and dedicated working groups focused on operations. Jones echoed this sentiment, suggesting that there is a significant opportunity for a dedicated association for EventTech to better serve the needs of the operations sector. This would help bridge the gap between technological advancements and practical applications in event operations, ensuring that tech solutions are effectively integrated and utilised.

The session concluded with a discussion on the future of event operations and the potential for AI and automation to reshape the industry. The panellists agreed that while there are significant opportunities for efficiency gains and improved event design through technology, there is also a risk of losing strategic focus if these tools are not adopted thoughtfully. They emphasised the need for a balanced approach that prioritises learning, experimentation, and collaboration across teams to ensure that technology enhances rather than overwhelms operations. The session underscored the importance of leadership in driving this change and the need for a cohesive strategy to integrate AI and automation into event operations effectively.

# Takeaways

## The necessity of workflow automation in event operations

Panelists highlighted the significant time savings and efficiency gains achieved through workflow automation tools like N8N and FAIR. By automating repetitive tasks such as requesting exhibitor logos and sending reminders, operations professionals can free up valuable time to focus on strategic planning and innovation. This underscores the importance of integrating technology into operational workflows for improved productivity.

## The cultural shift required for tech adoption within organisations

Participants emphasised the need for leadership to prioritise the integration of AI and automation into operational workflows. This involves standardising processes across teams and creating centralised systems to manage and utilise technology effectively. The discussion highlighted the urgency of adopting tech solutions not as a novelty, but as a necessity to stay competitive and meet the evolving needs of the event industry.

## The role of industry associations in supporting tech transformation

The session discussed the potential for industry associations like UFI to play a more active role in promoting AI and automation in event operations. While there is growing recognition of the importance of technology in redefining event formats, concrete action plans and dedicated working groups focused on operations are still lacking. A dedicated association for EventTech could bridge this gap and ensure that tech solutions are effectively integrated and utilised within the operations sector.



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