



#ETLLondon25



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**LONDON**

AI analysis

# Publishers vs pure play tradeshow businesses. The new rules of the game.

Louise White  
COO at Sift

**VOXO**

## Summary

In this session, Louise White, COO at Sift, discusses the competitive dynamics between publishers and pure play event businesses, offering insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. She begins by outlining her personal journey to the stage, highlighting her frustration with the current event exhibition model, which she finds inefficient and outdated. Louise then delves into the competitive landscape, explaining that while publishers envy the operational efficiency and scale of event companies, event companies covet the data, community ownership, and diversified revenue streams that publishers enjoy. This mutual envy shapes the strategies and perceptions within both industries, leading to misconceptions and missteps in their attempts to emulate each other's successes.

Louise emphasises that publishers possess a significant advantage in their ability to engage audiences year-round and through various channels, which reduces their risk compared to event companies that rely heavily on sporadic revenue from events. She argues that event businesses often misunderstand the true nature of subscriptions, which are not merely about selling information but about fostering ongoing customer relationships and predicting customer behaviour. This mindset, she suggests, is the key differentiator that allows publishers to thrive and maintain high retention rates.

One of Louise's core arguments is that event companies should focus on adopting the subscription mindset rather than trying to mimic publishers by creating year-round content. She proposes that instead of hiring journalists, event companies should invest in subscription marketers who can apply the same principles of customer engagement and retention that publishers use.





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Thursday, 13 November 2025

This shift in focus would enable event businesses to better predict revenue and enhance their valuation by improving rebook rates and customer loyalty.

Louise provides practical advice on how event businesses can implement this subscription mindset. She explains that understanding customer behaviour and implementing metrics similar to those used by subscription publishers can significantly improve retention and rebook rates. Event companies should treat their customers with the same level of attention and engagement throughout the year, rather than just focusing on the event days. This approach involves analysing customer data to predict churn and proactively addressing it through targeted engagement strategies.

In her conclusion, Louise urges event companies to rethink their approach to customer retention and engagement. She highlights that the secret to publishers' success lies not in their content but in their processes and the way they deploy their teams. By adopting these techniques, event companies can achieve similar levels of customer loyalty and predictable revenue, thereby reducing their operational risk and increasing their competitive edge.

The session ends with Louise reinforcing her argument that event companies should hire subscription marketers to transform their business models. She leaves the audience with a final thought on the competitive advantage that Sift holds in the accounting market, thanks to their mastery of the subscription model. The session closes without any questions from the audience, suggesting a consensus or a lack of immediate counterarguments from the event professionals present.

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# Takeaways

## **Mutual envy shapes strategies in both industries**

Publishers envy the operational efficiency of event companies, while event companies covet the data and diversified revenue streams of publishers. This mutual envy leads to misconceptions and ineffective attempts to emulate each other's successes.

## **Adopting a subscription mindset is crucial**

Event companies should focus on ongoing customer engagement and retention, similar to subscription publishers, rather than merely creating year-round content. This approach can improve rebook rates and predict revenue more accurately.

## **Customer behaviour analysis enhances retention**

Understanding customer behaviour and implementing metrics used by subscription publishers can significantly improve retention and rebook rates for event companies. This involves proactive engagement throughout the year, not just during event days.



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