

OPERATORS

The Operator's Handbook

The guide to accelerating your career in BizOps, Strategy, RevOps, and other Operations functions

1st Edition, 2024



Introduction

The Operator's Handbook is your guide to accelerating your career as a professional in BizOps, Strategy, a Chief of Staff role, RevOps, or any other operations function. This document empowers aspiring Operators with the knowledge and tools they need to succeed. It covers a wide range of topics, including process documentation, analytics implementation, performance monitoring, issue identification and prioritization, solution development, and execution.

Whether you're thinking about a career in Business Operations, Revenue Operations, Financial Operations, or another of the many Ops disciplines, this guidebook will provide invaluable insights and practical advice to help you choose a path and excel in your Ops career.

About Operators

[Operators](#) exists to empower operations professionals to excel in their work by connecting them with a supportive community, offering engaging coursework and guides, providing access to job opportunities, and discounts for popular tools.

We manage two communities for Strategy & Ops professionals, the [Chief of Staff Network](#) and the [BizOps Network](#). We also run the popular OpsJobs newsletter that goes out to tens of thousands of subscribers every week.

We exist to help you navigate your career in Ops & Strategy. As a starting point, [we recommend you take this assessment](#) once you're done reading the Handbook to determine which Ops functions might be the best fit for you.

Stay tuned for our longer format course that will discuss the ideas presented here in much greater detail, with actionable steps and peer- and expert-support to help you get into the role you want.

The Optimization Process

The core focus of this guide is to teach you about the common Optimization Process that all Operators use as the backbone of how they get work done and improve the firms they work in:

1. Shadow and document processes
2. Set up tracking & analytics
3. Review metrics on a regular cadence
4. Find & prioritize issues
5. Identify & recommend solutions
6. Execute your solution

We'll go through each of these steps with examples and then talk through the various sub-disciplines of Operations, covering salary, number of roles, exit paths, and more.

1. Shadow and document processes

The first step of the Operator's Optimization Process is to understand the processes within your business. The core art of Operations Management is observing the messy, *human* chaos of business and applying order to it.

To create order, you'll start by understanding what people are actually doing within the business. And it's not simply enough to ask them; in order to capture the variances between workers and the small tasks people think not to mention, you'll have to actually shadow them and watch over their shoulder how they work.

Optimally, you'd work with team leads to find multiple people to shadow and take notes on how each person does the process, especially how they differ. From there, you can distill your observations into a standard process that people must follow, while accounting for possible deviations that may be required (e.g. if A, do B, but if X, do Y).

What could this look like across operations disciplines?

Business Operations (BizOps): Identifying and documenting cross-departmental processes that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Revenue Ops (RevOps): Shadowing the go-to-market motion and the customer journey.

Financial Ops (FinOps): Creating checklists for compliance-related processes.

Legal Ops: Mapping out contract management workflows.

Marketing Ops: Understanding how marketing campaigns get set up.

People Ops: Documenting HR and recruitment processes.

Product Ops: Shadowing product development cycles.

2. Set up tracking & analytics

Once you have documented your processes, the next step is generate data on those processes. You'll first decide what you want to measure as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Sample KPIs include "average time to complete process", "rework / defect rate of process", "slowest step in process", and "fastest / slowest time and person to complete process."

When you know which KPIs you want to track, you'll have to determine what tools you will use to track them. In some businesses, tracking is as manual as punch cards. More commonly, you would set up analytics within the apps that your staff already uses, so you can capture data without burdening them with more work.

Finally, once you've collected a dataset, you will set up reports and dashboards to track your KPIs over time. Frequently, business apps have reporting & dashboard engines natively; other times, you'll export your data to spreadsheets to analyze.

What are relevant metrics for each operations discipline?

BizOps: Customer NPS scores, revenue growth rate, M&A pipeline efficiency

RevOps: Customer lifetime value, customer acquisition cost, sales pipeline conversion rates

FinOps: Cost of goods sold, cash conversion cycle, burn rate

Legal Ops: Contract cycle time, legal spend as percentage of revenue, percent of compliance tasks performed on-time.

Marketing Ops: Return on ad spend, lead generation rate, time to produce content, website and blog traffic

People Ops: Time to fill roles, employee NPS scores, employee turnover rate

Product Ops: Software feature adoption rate, factory production efficiency

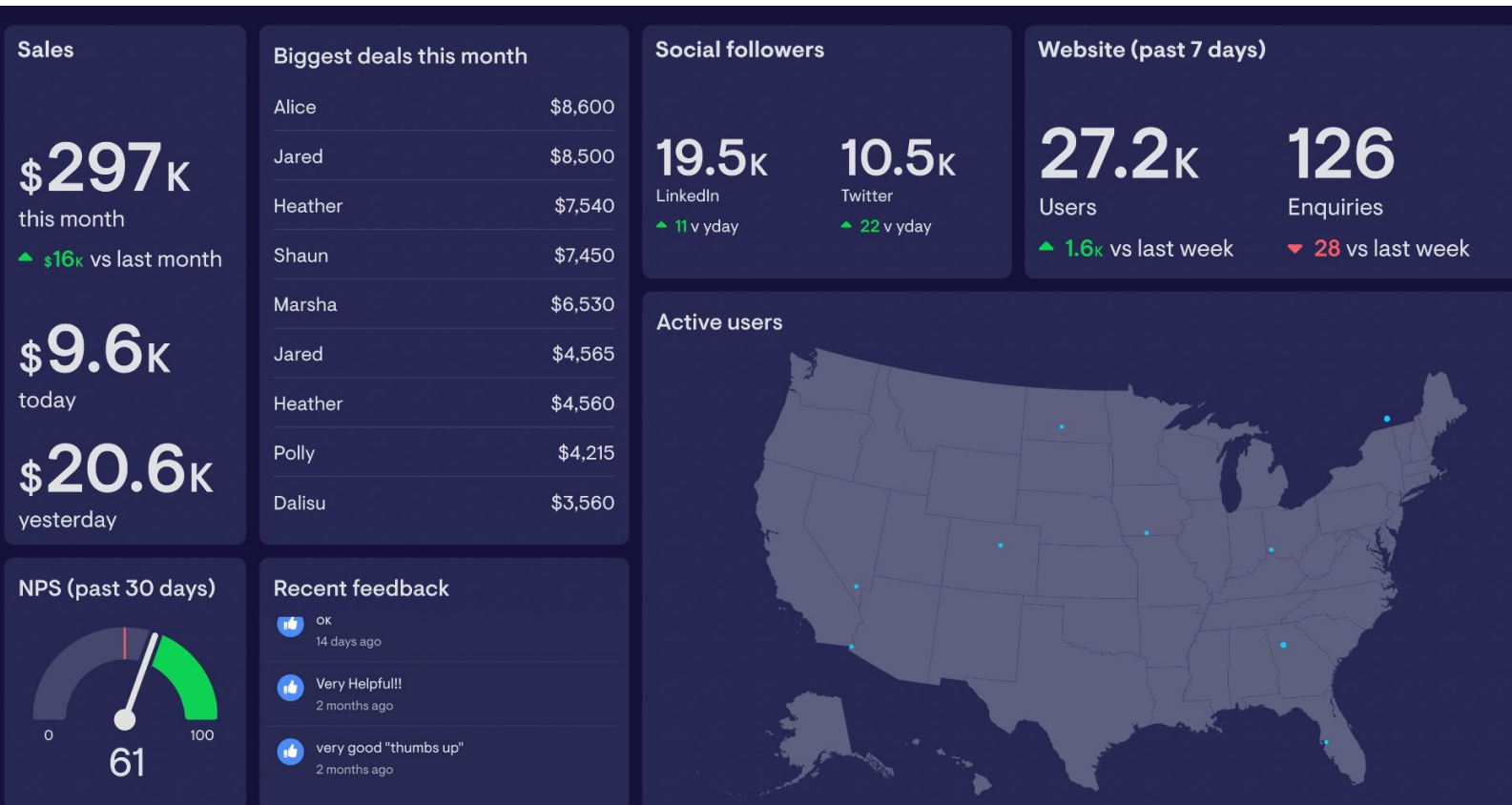
3. Review metrics on a regular cadence

After you've documented your processes and set up analytics to track them, you'll need to review your data on a regular basis. These check-in moments are often included in the "rhythm of the business" as monthly or quarterly business reviews (MBRs / QBRs).

In some cases, you might be able to automate alerts from your reports based on certain criteria; for example, if your revenue declines by 5% or your customer acquisition cost (CAC) spikes 12%, you'd want to know that immediately.

You'll also want to be mindful of metrics that are predictive of (or "leading") other metrics. In the examples above, we're looking at lagging indicators, which means you might be too late to stop the problem; instead, you might want to track "qualified leads" which is predictive of revenue or "marketing campaign spend" and "sales payroll" which can be predictive of CAC.

What might a Marketing Ops dashboard look like?



4. Find & prioritize issues

No one is infallible, and therefore, you'll never see 100% adherence to process. In your data and observations, you'll likely see anomalies and deviations.

When those deviations accumulate, you may be clued into a problem with your process or personnel. For example, if the second step of our accounts payable process takes an inordinately long time, that suggests there's a bottleneck to resolve. Alternatively, if a step takes everyone 2 minutes, it may be possible to automate it entirely. Process data can also help find people / training issues; for example, if Alice has a very high re-open rate on customer service tickets, it may be time to retrain her to better resolve inquiries the first time.

Note, whatever you find won't exist in a vacuum; you'll have to slot it in to your other projects. To prioritize your issues, you may use simple "t-shirt sizing" and estimate the effort to solve and the impact of solving the issue vs. letting it persist.

What problems might each operations discipline focus on?

BizOps: Inefficient cross-departmental communication leading to project delays, manual data entry processes causing errors in reporting

RevOps: Inconsistent sales and marketing alignment affecting conversion rates, slow deal desk impeding deal closures

FinOps: Manual invoice processing causing delays in accounts payable, data collection issues slowing down month-end close

Legal Ops: Slow legal request turnaround times affecting other departments

Marketing Ops: Content creation bottlenecks due to lack of streamlined approvals

People Ops: Employee onboarding inefficiencies affecting new hire productivity

Product Ops: Lack of communication between product and customer support

5. Identify & recommend solutions

With your issue(s) in mind and their prioritization, you'll also need to think about constraints - what *aren't* you able to do to solve the problem? Constraints might include a certain budget, not swapping out a certain tool, or requiring a certain process step for compliance reasons.

Within your set of constraints, you can now find solutions. Solutions might look like removing extraneous steps from a process, teaching employees how to work following best practices, or introducing new tools and automation.

Often, you'll have to pitch your proposed solution internally to get others to buy into your plan. You'll need to use information from your prioritization to tell them why the problem matters and why it should be solved now. You'll also articulate the options you looked at and within what constraints; finally, state your recommended option, why you recommend it, and what your implementation plan is.

Using the Pugh Matrix

The Pugh Matrix, developed by Stuart Pugh at Unilever in the 1960s, is a tool that uses weights to rank possible solutions against required criteria. You can use it to identify which solution will work best for your situation.

Criteria	Solutions / Ideas				Weighting
	Solution A	Solution B	Solution C	Solution D	
Can it be implemented quickly	+	+	S	S	1
Will solve the problem fully	-	S	S	-	5
Costs less than the budget	+	+	S	S	1
Wont impact the customer	+	+	S	+	2
No regulatory risks	-	-	S	-	1
Weighted Sum of Positives	4	4		0	
Number of Sames	0	1		2	
Weighted Sum of Negatives	-6	-1		-6	

How to complete a Pugh Matrix

- 1) Finalise** the selection of solutions, assessment criteria and weightings that you will include in your matrix
- 2) Choose** a solution that be your standard
- 3) Compare** each solution against the standard and note whether you think it is better, the same or worse
- 4) Calculate** the Weighted Sums
- 5) Focusing** on strongest solutions, look for opportunities to combine the best aspects of different solutions

6. Execute your solution

Once you have approval to proceed, it's time to implement your solution. Typically, at this stage, you'll have a project plan and teammates you can call upon to assist you. Operators are most often project managers; you'll be in charge of making sure that people are staying on task and delivering results, while also completing your own tasks.

But responsibility is a double-edged sword. You'll also be the one who shoulders the burden of delays, cost overruns, and other snafus. To manage this, you'll need to keep stakeholders apprised of status proactively, while also setting the drumbeat of progress for your team and managing roadblocks for them.

Finally, when you've delivered the solution, you'll also work on change management, or helping people understand why the change was made and troubleshooting any issues they encounter with the new way of doing things.

What might this look like across operations disciplines?

BizOps: Implementing a new documentation tool like Notion across the company

RevOps: Selecting and implementing a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool and training the sales team on how to use it

FinOps: Designing a new accounts payable process to pay vendors on time

Legal Ops: Implementing an e-signature tool to templatize common contracts

Marketing Ops: Setting up a data pipeline to collect LinkedIn & Google ad ROAS

People Ops: Creating an onboarding guide that enables new hires to ramp up much faster

Product Ops: Setting up a product feedback survey tool to collect user pain points and identify areas of improvement

About the Operations Functions

BizOps:

- **Total professionals globally:** 700,000
- **Executives globally:** 4,100
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$86,000
 - Manager: \$151,000
 - Exec: \$210,000+
- **Common exit paths:** Head of Strategy, Founder, Product Manager, Head of Ops
- **Who you'd work with:** CEO, COO, senior leadership team
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Analyzing business data to inform decision-making, implementing strategic initiatives, optimizing operational processes, and facilitating x-departmental collaboration.

RevOps:

- **Total professionals globally:** 18,000
- **Executives globally:** 230
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$75,000
 - Manager: \$130,000
 - Exec: \$175,000+
- **Common exit paths:** CRM Consultant, Head of Customer Success, Head of Revenue
- **Who you'd work with:** CRO, Head of Revenue, Head of Marketing, sales & marketing teams
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Managing and optimizing the sales funnel, ensuring data accuracy, analyzing sales data to identify trends and opportunities, and aligning teams around revenue goals.

FinOps:

- **Total professionals globally:** 102,000
- **Executives globally:** 11,000
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$65,000
 - Manager: \$135,000
 - Exec: \$250,000+
- **Common exit paths:** Investor, Head of FP&A, Strategic Finance Director, Fractional CFO
- **Who you'd work with:** CFO, Controller, Strategic Finance, AP / AR
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Budget planning and monitoring, financial analysis to guide decision-making, managing costs, and ensuring financial compliance and reporting accuracy.

Legal Ops:

- **Total professionals globally:** 20,000
- **Executives globally:** 407
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$74,000
 - Manager: \$145,000
 - Exec: \$235,000+
- **Common exit paths:** Director of Compliance, Risk Management Lead, Legal Tech Manager
- **Who you'd work with:** General Counsel, Outside Counsel, Compliance Officer
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Streamlining legal workflows, managing legal documents and contracts, overseeing legal technology implementations, and optimizing legal spending.

About the Operations Functions (cont'd)

People Ops:

- **Total professionals globally:** 39,000
- **Executives globally:** 416
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$64,000
 - Manager: \$98,000
 - Exec: \$179,000
- **Common exit paths:** HR Business Partner, Compensation Manager, L&D Director
- **Who you'd work with:** CHRO, Head of Recruiting, recruiters & HR team, external PEO
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Employee onboarding, performance management, employee experience initiatives, policy development, and analytics to inform people strategies.

Marketing Ops:

- **Total professionals globally:** 240,000
- **Executives globally:** 1,700
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$79,000
 - Manager: \$101,000
 - Exec: \$160,000
- **Common exit paths:** Content Strategy Director, Growth Hacking Lead, Head of Marketing
- **Who you'd work with:** CRO, Head of Sales, Head of Marketing, marketing & sales team
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Selecting, implementing, and optimizing marketing technologies, reporting on performance metrics, increasing efficiency of processes, and budget tracking.

Product Ops:

- **Total professionals globally:** 49,000
- **Executives globally:** 824
- **Compensation by level:**
 - IC: \$121,000
 - Manager: \$176,000
 - Exec: \$225,000
- **Common exit paths:** Agile Coach, UX Lead, Director of Product Marketing, Head of Strategy
- **Who you'd work with:** CPO, product managers, engineers, production staff (factory)
- **Day-to-day tasks:** Facilitating communication between product and other departments, managing data and insights, and improving development workflows.

Data Sources

- Total professionals globally: LinkedIn
- Executives globally: Apollo.io
- Compensation by level: Pave, Salary.com, Comprehensive.io, Payscale, Legal.io, RevOps Coop, Glassdoor, Ziprecruiter, Levels.fyi
- Common exit paths: Proprietary Data
- Who you'd work with: Proprietary Data
- Day-to-day tasks: Proprietary Data

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Take the [Ops Navigation quiz](#) here.

This free assessment will help determine which Ops functions might be the best fit for you.

