

By [Blink Staff](#)

The global ResOps community

In early 2018, user researcher [Kate Towsey](#) set up a Slack group for researchers to discuss the operations part of their work. Researchers from all over the world — mostly working in UX but in other disciplines, too — joined a growing conversation around one central question: What is research ops?

"As time went on, we deliberately moved away from discussing and deciding 'what is Research Ops,' as we realized that this was a question that needed more than just a Slack channel," explained [Emma Boulton](#), a leader in the #ResOps community, in her [Medium post](#) on the subject. "A core group came together to set up a [series of global workshops](#)."

Blink and Microsoft ask, “#WhatIsResOps?”

[Braxton](#) joined the ResOps Slack workspace in March of this year. “As a research and design consultant, some of the most rewarding work that I get to do is helping partners find ways to level up their ability to apply human centered design methods within their own organizations. Since research into user’s needs is the cornerstone of human centered design, I am always keen to find new insight into how we can remove barriers to doing design research and how we can do it better.

The event drew senior UX researchers from leading tech companies throughout the region. The workshop focused on sharing best practices and challenges and, foundationally, defining research operations. Here’s what a few of the participants had to say:

"We defined ResearchOps as infrastructure that makes research teams more successful. So we talked about ResearchOps doing recruitment, being responsible for community building, providing all kinds of tools — the licenses, the software, hardware, tools, audiovisual support — providing an insights repository... It's a place where we can also support activities from our teams...documentation...[a place for] providing resources for our stakeholders, resources potentially for onboarding... and [a place for] defining roles on our teams and creating partnerships."

"I didn't want to write a list of all the things that ResearchOps would do, so instead I wrote the outcomes that I would want from great ResearchOps. At the end of the day, there are two that kind of capture it: ResearchOps lets researchers be researchers, and ResearchOps makes products better for our customers."

"It's almost all the things that [aren't] research."

Razel Agustino, a UX research intern at Blink, was struck by how many participants brought up the need to justify the value of research to their collaborators. "There's a logistical component to doing research that comes with its own challenges — such as finding the right participants or staying on budget — and we did talk about that. It's an important part of ResOps. But another challenge that stuck out to me was the struggle of getting non-researchers to understand what researchers do and what their role is," Agustino says. "How can researchers communicate their work and help others understand how it fits in with everything else? I think that if the issues were addressed, it would help a lot with other parts of the puzzle, including logistics."



The Seattle #WhatIsResOps workshop on Thursday, June 28, 2018.

After the workshop, a ResOps panel

Following the workshop, Blink hosted a panel discussion, moderated by [Agarwal](#) and featuring Joe Munko, John Dirks, Amy Alberts, and Matthew Duignan. The panel discussed the evolution of research ops through their careers and shared insights for the audience in the room and via the livestream.

"I think the turning point for me in user research is being asked by someone teaching an MBA program to come and teach in her class," shared John Dirks, Head of Research at Blink, during the panel. "Over the last two decades, user research has become a very accepted part of the development process. We've grown up."

You can watch the full video of the panel on the [Blink YouTube channel](#).

There have been other #WhatIsResearchOps workshops all over the world, including [Berlin](#), [Brighton](#), [Barcelona](#), [Tokyo](#), and [Philadelphia](#).

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Blink's panel discussion

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