



## Roundtable Report

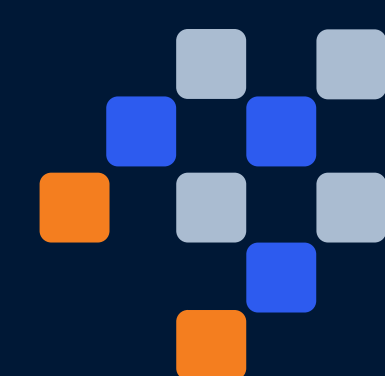
# Industry Leaders Perspective on the Impact of Automation on Ad Revenue & Ad Operations

Theorem hosted an exclusive roundtable, bringing together decision makers from top brands in media and retail media networks to discuss how automation is reshaping ad operations and contributing to revenue growth. Leaders on the roundtable brought unique perspectives from their roles across Ad Operations, revenue, and client success, sharing insights on automation's impact on efficiency, team structures, and overall business performance, as well as their real-world experiences implementing it.

### The discussion explored:

- Persistent challenges holding teams back
- The role of automation in improving efficiency, accuracy, and scalability
- Strategies for successful adoption
- The evolution of Ad Ops roles in a human-tech hybrid environment





## Roundtable Report

# The Current State of Ad Operations

### 1. The Grind of Manual Tasks: A Productivity Killer

Repetitive, manual tasks dominate daily workflows, draining time and energy. One participant shared that their team spends up to 10 hours a week just searching for information, time that could be spent on higher-value work. ***"It sounds simple, but it's tiring to do again and again."***

### 2. Disjointed Tools, Disconnected Workflows

Many ad operations teams rely on platforms that don't integrate, forcing them to manually transfer data, cross-check reports, and reconcile mismatches. These inefficiencies slow operations and increase the risk of errors. ***"We have so much manual stuff... It's not super sophisticated, it's just transposing data from one format to another."***

### 3. Scaling complexity: Growth shouldn't equal chaos

As campaign volume grows, inefficiencies become more exposed. Instead of streamlining workflows, teams compensate with more manual work, leading to bottlenecks and delays. ***"We chuckled about the complex process of billing, but if just one step is missed or broken, the whole process falls apart."***

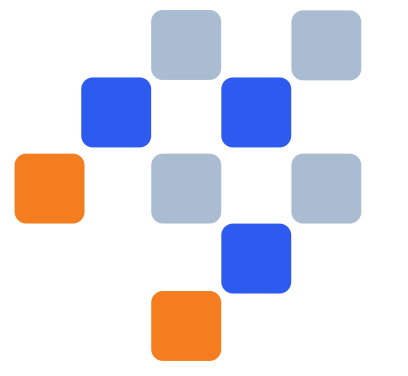
### 4. The AI Overload

Some participants said that instead of focusing on their automation wish list, they were using internal AI tools. However, rather than simplifying workflows, AI-powered tools often add another layer of complexity. ***"You have to ask ChatGPT the right questions; it's the art of the prompt."***

Without automation solutions that are purpose-built for ad operations, teams are drowning in tech that doesn't integrate seamlessly or deliver consistent, accurate data without time-consuming human oversight. ***"Executives were advised to stop using standard ChatGPT and upgrade to enterprise-level AI suites just to ensure compliance and data integrity."***

One participant shared a statistic that even less than 1% of data error can majorly impact the success of your automation. If teams can't trust the data, they can't use it, limiting their ability to scale and optimize performance even more.





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# The Real-World Impact of Automation

### Reclaimed Time and Increased Efficiency

Participants emphasized that automation isn't just speeding up processes – it's freeing up time for higher-value work. By tracking task times, teams identified inefficiencies that strengthened the case for automation.

Another participant noted that simply understanding where time was being lost helped optimize workflows, cut unnecessary steps, and lay the groundwork for more strategic operations.

### Improving Collaboration Through Centralized Workflows

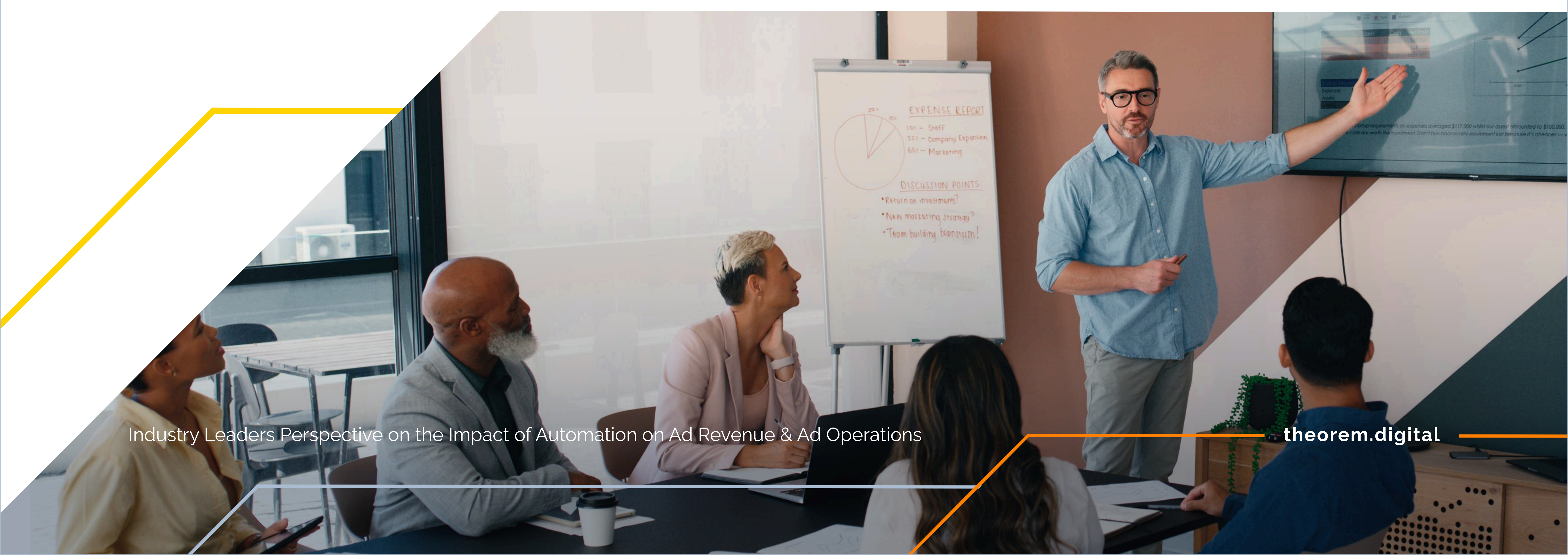
Disconnected systems force teams to manually transfer data, reconcile errors, and work in silos. Participants shared how automation helped:

- Reduce time lost switching between platforms
- Eliminate miscommunication caused by inconsistent data
- Ensure smoother collaboration across teams

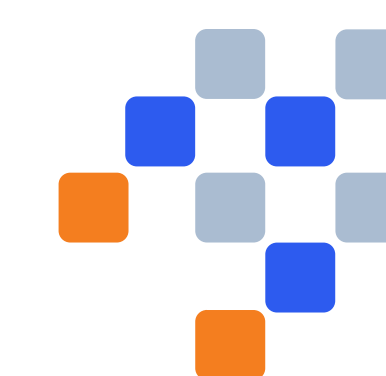
One participant highlighted that automation improved workflow alignment, reducing errors caused by fragmented systems.

### Cutting Costs Without Offshoring or Adding Headcount

One professional in the roundtable talked about the constant push for offshoring as a solution for cutting operational costs. However, implementing the right automation solution has the potential to not just eliminate the challenges associated with offshoring – constant training, turnover, backfilling roles, it is arguably less costly in the long run and typically doesn't require adding additional headcount. ***"The real thing now is avoiding additional headcount, and a struggle to get OK on backfilling roles."***







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# Overcoming Barriers to Automation Adoption

**If automation can unlock efficiency and growth, why is adoption still a challenge?**

Roundtable participants explored the biggest obstacles standing in the way – and how their teams are working to solve them.

### Cultural Resistance: When Change Feels Like a Threat

Employees hesitate to adopt automation when they see it as a replacement, not a resource. A participant noted that without clear messaging, their team assumed automation was a cost-cutting tactic, leading to resistance.

One leader emphasized that early communication was critical. ***“We’re not trying to take work away from you – we’re trying to give you different work.”*** By identifying champions within the team who saw automation’s potential, they were able to shift the narrative and build trust over time.

### Disjointed Workflows & Legacy Systems: Roadblocks to Automation

Participants stressed that automation doesn’t fix broken processes – it amplifies them. One operations leader shared how their team struggled with adoption because workflow inconsistencies became more visible once automation was introduced.

Another team realized that without standardized processes, automation created more inefficiencies than it solved. A participant also highlighted the importance of cross-skilling and upskilling ad ops teams – not just to implement automation, but to elevate their roles beyond repetitive tasks.

### Governance & Long-Term Success

One of the biggest misconceptions about automation is that once implemented, it runs itself. Participants agreed this was far from the truth. Without governance, adoption stalls, and efficiency gains can fade.

Teams discussed the importance of governance structures to keep automation effective, with some highlighting the need for ongoing refinements to prevent inefficiencies from creeping in. Without structured oversight, automation can create new bottlenecks instead of solving them.

### Shifting from Execution to Strategy

As automation takes over routine tasks, ad ops teams are shifting toward strategy, optimization, and revenue-driving initiatives. One participant highlighted the importance of cross-skilling and upskilling ad ops teams – not just to implement automation, but to elevate their roles beyond repetitive tasks.

They also emphasized the importance of understanding the process manually before automating it: ***“You need to have done it manually at scale first before automating. You can’t just start with automation.”*** Those who invested time in learning the manual process first were better equipped to optimize automation for long-term success.



# Automation Is Reshaping Ad Operations Now

Roundtable attendees emphasized that automation is already reshaping Ad Operations. Teams are scaling without adding headcount, engaging earlier in campaign planning, and improving accuracy. Those integrating it now are working faster, collaborating better, and eliminating bottlenecks.

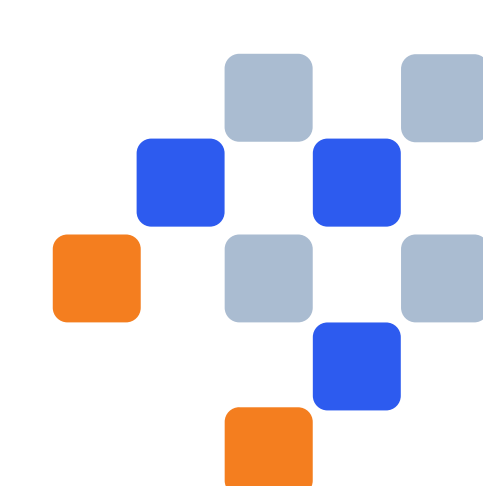
But success depends on more than implementation. Participants stressed that the biggest gains come when organizations invest in training, align automation across departments, and foster a culture that sees it as an opportunity, not a disruption.

## Ready to Optimize Your OTC Process?

The roundtable made one thing clear: automation works when it is purpose-built for Ad Operations. Every organization has unique challenges, and success comes from solutions that integrate seamlessly into existing workflows.

**Let's talk about how Upward** can help you reduce inefficiencies, improve scalability, and drive real business impact.

[Contact us to continue the conversation](#)



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