

Event Debriefs by Iain Morrison

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The loudest praise at most event debriefs goes to the person who fixed the thing that broke.

You know the moment. The entry gate collapses at 19:40, the queue starts backing onto the road, and someone sprints across site and has people moving again inside four minutes. By the time the debrief comes round, that is the story. The save. The person who ran. Everyone in the room nods, because they all saw it.

Now think about the area manager whose sector ran clean all night. No surge, no crush point. The radio barely used their name all night. They get a quick good work and the meeting moves on. There is nothing to point at. Nothing broke, so there is no story.

That is the problem with how we measure good operations. We reward the visible save and we overlook the invisible prevention. The firefighting is legible. Everyone can see a crisis being solved in real time. The planning that meant there was no crisis in the first place leaves no trace. It is just a quiet night that nobody thinks twice about.

Here is what took me too long to understand. When your pre-production is done properly, the day gets boring. The gate that did not fail was specced and staffed weeks before the doors opened. The crush point that never formed was designed out on a site plan in a quiet office back in March, long before anyone bought a ticket. None of that is visible on the day. All of it is the actual work.

And that is the trap. If the reward goes to the person who is seen saving the day, then being seen saving the day quietly becomes the smart move. Not consciously. Nobody sets out to run a messy event so they can be the hero. But when drama gets you noticed and prevention gets you a nod, people drift towards the drama. That is how hero culture keeps reproducing itself. Not through bad people. Through a scoreboard that only counts the fires and never the ones that were never lit.

I have watched genuinely good operators get passed over because their events were uneventful. And I have watched people build a reputation on rescuing situations they helped create, because the rescue was loud and the cause was quiet. Neither of those is a fair read of who is actually good at this job.

So the fix is not to manufacture drama. The fix is to make the invisible work visible on purpose.

Start with the debrief. Stop only logging what went wrong. Log what did not. Name the decisions made in pre-production that removed a risk before the day arrived. The gate spec that got changed after a walkthrough. The supplier swapped out in week two because the first one could not answer a straight question about load-in. Those calls prevented the exact incidents you will never get to write up, and they deserve a line in the record just as much as the save does.

If you lead a team, this part is on you. When a sector runs clean, do not just move on. Ask what planning made it clean, and say it out loud in front of the room. Reward the quiet night. Make it clear that the absence of chaos is the result of work, not luck. Your people are watching where the credit lands, and they will give you more of whatever you choose to praise.

None of this is soft. A day that does not need saving is the hardest thing to build in this industry, and it starts months out, in the planning that nobody sees. It is why I put scheduling and pre-production at the centre of how I teach operations, rather than treating them as the boring bit before the real event. The truth is the other way round. The real event is decided long before anyone arrives on site.

The operator you want on your next job is not the one with the best war stories. It is the one whose events are quiet. Learn to spot them, because they will not put their hand up. Then hold onto them.

The best work you ever do might be the work nobody notices. Do it anyway. Then find a way to write it down.