

Bruno Pavelja

Operations & Product Leader | COO (Early-stage)

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

COO-level operations with 10+ years in IT, turning unclear business problems into executable strategy. Scaled a remote-first company from 5 to ~30 people, owning hiring (25+ hires), delivery governance, and people operations. Built business models and go-to-market strategies for investor-backed SaaS initiatives, shaped product narratives in investor meetings, and drove product prioritization. Pushed adoption of modern infrastructure practices (CI/CD, containerization, static generators, edge platforms) before they became team defaults. Known for calm, individualized leadership and adapting approach to each person while keeping teams aligned through uncertainty.

Focus Areas

- Operations & People: org design, hiring, performance cycles, compensation, retention, restructuring
- Financial Planning: budgeting, scenario modeling, runway management, cost control, crisis response
- Product & Delivery: GTM strategy, roadmap prioritization, business modeling, delivery governance
- Stakeholder Management: CEO partnership, cross-functional coordination, team communication

EXPERIENCE

CRIONIS LLC — COO (Early-stage) | Product & Operations

Jan 2015 – Present | Croatia / Remote

Operating Leadership (Company-wide)

- Led full-company operations for a design and product development studio serving external clients while building internal SaaS products; scaled remote-first team from 5 to 30+ people
- Built remote-first operating practices from scratch: async communication norms, productivity tracking.
- Owned full people operations: recruited and onboarded 25+ people across design, engineering, and product teams (typical 30-day hiring cycle); managed performance, compensation, and offboarding
- Acted as primary operational partner to CEO: translated strategy into executable plans while maintaining delivery continuity and team stability.

Crisis + Financial Planning

- Led company response to loss of primary client (95%+ of revenue): built multi-scenario operating plans, implemented cost controls, and extended runway from ~10 months to 30+ months
- Executed staged workforce restructuring: role eliminations, timeline planning, and exit communication
- Owned budget planning and financial forecasting; provided regular runway projections to CEO to inform strategic decisions
- Maintained transparent team communication throughout 18+ month transition period, preserving core team retention

Product + Delivery Leadership

- Served as CEO's primary operational partner on product decisions: scope trade-offs, delivery feasibility, and go/no-go calls
- Owned product prioritization and GTM planning for internal SaaS initiatives; balanced scope against delivery capacity and budget constraints
- Introduced lightweight product operations practices: intake process, planning cadence, decision documentation, roadmap reviews
- Coordinated cross-functional delivery across engineering, design, and marketing teams during resource constraints

Independent / Client Work — DevOps & Platform Consultant

May 2018 – Dec 2025 | Selective contract engagements

Technical consulting for SMBs: Infrastructure-as-Code (Terraform, Ansible), CI/CD pipelines (GitLab CI), monitoring (Prometheus, Grafana, Loki), and cloud migrations. Improved client system availability from ~90% to 99%+.

SELECTED PRODUCTS & INITIATIVES

NEWSDROP - News Aggregator SaaS (Public Launch 2020)

- Owned full lifecycle from concept to launch; achieved #1 Product of the Day on Product Hunt (Dec 2020).
- Delivered 4.8 App Store rating and 15% free-to-paid conversion rate
- Chose a cost-efficient infrastructure approach over the initial team proposal, cutting projected monthly infra costs by ~78% (from €2,000 to ~€450).
- Led data-driven discontinuation decision when acquisition costs exceeded sustainable unit economics

CRIO - UI/UX Design Tool (Pre-launch, ~\$1.2M Internal Investment)

- Contributed to CRIO product strategy, discovery, and pre-launch execution during an active investor search; the initiative was company-funded (~\$1.2M internal investment).
- Led teams analyzing and categorizing UI and UX components across existing products to identify differentiation opportunities.
- Built and owned the business model, go-to-market strategy, ARR projections, and financial plan end-to-end.
- Participated in 15+ investor and mentor meetings; contributed to product narrative and competitive positioning.
- Addressed productivity bottlenecks caused by skill imbalance within engineering teams by driving team-structure decisions that improved delivery efficiency.

GDPR Consulting & Informer

- Took ownership during peak GDPR regulatory demand; led positioning, launch execution, and eventual planned shutdown as market normalized

EARLIER EXPERIENCE

Vermilion (2016–2018) — Co-founder & Developer

Co-founded IT agency; led client acquisition, project delivery, and web development.

ODIN d.o.o. (2013–2014) — Operations Specialist to Project Manager

Started as front-end developer, promoted to operations and project management within 12 months.

Arthur d.o.o. (2010–2012) — Web Administrator

Web development, SEO, IT support, and marketing graphics.

SKILLS

Operations: Org design, hiring, performance management, budgeting, scenario planning, crisis management, remote team leadership

Product & Delivery: Roadmap prioritization, GTM planning, product ops, delivery governance, stakeholder management

Technical: Linux, Terraform, Ansible, Docker, GitLab CI, Prometheus/Grafana, AWS, DigitalOcean (hands-on infrastructure experience)

Tools: Google Sheets, Excel, Trello, Hub Planner, Figma