

COMMERCE & GROWTH

Paid traffic leak audit

From advertisement to a useful business outcome

Examine the gaps between campaign targeting, the promise in the ad, the landing experience, conversion measurement and the team responsible for follow-up.

THE WORK

Trace a defined campaign and customer task through the actual page, transaction or enquiry, analytics records and downstream outcome.

THE RESULT

A prioritised set of evidenced fixes that separates measurement faults from customer friction and weak operating follow-through.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

02 Scope and outcome

04 Landing and conversion

06 Verification checks

03 Targeting and message

05 Measurement and follow-up

07 Finding and action record

Audit scope and business outcome

Begin with the action the business needs, then verify whether the campaign and reporting are actually optimising for that action.

Choose a coherent campaign slice

Record the campaign, market, offer, audience, device group and observation period. Separate materially different landing routes or conversion tasks. Keep the analysis narrow enough to trace the records from click to outcome.

Include the period in which conversions and follow-up can reasonably complete. A recent click cohort may still contain unresolved work; comparing it with a mature cohort can create an apparent leak that is only timing.

Build a connected evidence set

Gather the ad and targeting configuration, destination pages, conversion-event definitions, transaction or enquiry records and follow-up outcomes. Use identifiers to connect stages where collection and use are permitted.

Record differences in attribution windows, time zones, counting rules and consent coverage. Advertising, analytics and operational systems can legitimately report different totals. Reconciliation should explain the difference before a performance conclusion is drawn.

Define a useful conversion

State what counts as the intended outcome: a completed purchase, an accepted enquiry, a booked appointment or another observable business result. Keep intermediate actions such as a button click or page view distinct from that outcome.

For lead generation, agree acceptance and disqualification definitions with the receiving team. An inexpensive form submission has limited value if the business cannot contact the person, serve the need or identify the request.

Separate the kinds of loss

Classify a finding as audience mismatch, promise mismatch, page friction, transaction failure, measurement error or follow-up failure. More than one can apply, but each requires different evidence and an accountable owner.

Do not estimate lost revenue from an unexplained drop-off alone. First establish which users were eligible to proceed, whether the event was measured and what business outcome was actually available.

Targeting and message alignment

The ad should reach people the offer can serve and make a promise the destination can immediately explain.

Inspect where the traffic comes from

Review the available search terms, placements, audience settings, geography, language and schedule. Compare them with the offer's actual service area, availability and eligibility.

Look for patterns that the campaign structure conceals: unsuitable enquiries from one location, accidental traffic from a placement or a device route that cannot complete the task. Use available evidence rather than assuming every low-performing segment is invalid traffic.

Trace the promise into the page

Compare the ad's product, price claim, benefit, conditions and call to action with the first meaningful content on the destination. Confirm that the selected variant, location or promotion survives the click.

The page should answer the questions created by the ad. Make material conditions visible before the visitor commits, and ensure the next action matches the intent that brought the person there.

Check exclusions and availability

Verify that exclusions reflect the current offer and do not remove valuable users unintentionally. Confirm that ads do not continue promising an unavailable product, expired promotion or unstaffed response route.

Align the campaign schedule with the service's operating capability where immediate response matters. If enquiries arrive outside service hours, the destination should explain the next step and the receiving team should have an owned queue.

Inspect the actual destination route

Follow redirects, tracking links and mobile destinations. Check that they reach the intended page, preserve necessary campaign context and avoid broken or expired parameters.

Review the experience for a first-time visitor, including consent choices and overlays. A page that works from an internal bookmark may behave differently when reached through the campaign's real URL.

Landing experience and conversion task

Inspect the complete task rather than treating the landing page as an isolated design.

Make the decision information available

Check whether visitors can understand the offer, suitability, price or commercial next step, relevant evidence and the action requested. Use truthful product and business information; decorative trust claims cannot repair missing substance.

Review mobile layout, loading behaviour and stability during interaction. Watch the page on the devices and connection conditions that matter to the campaign. A fast initial screen can still hide a slow or failing form.

Verify the operational success event

Complete the form, checkout or booking through its actual connected systems. Confirm that the submission is accepted, a retrievable record exists and the customer receives the correct next step.

Test a server error, duplicate submission, timeout and a missing required input. A success screen must not appear when the business has no record, and a retry must not create an unintended duplicate transaction.

Remove unnecessary task effort

Identify the minimum information required to fulfil the request. Explain required fields and provide useful error messages. Preserve valid entries after a correction and support the input formats the audience actually uses.

Check keyboard navigation, focus, labels, zoom and assistive-technology access. Overlays, fixed buttons and date or selection controls can block an otherwise clear conversion route.

Review abandonment with context

Use consented analytics, authorised recordings, support themes and task observation to locate friction. Identify whether users could proceed, lacked information or were not a fit for the offer.

Treat an observed pattern as a question to investigate. A field where people stop may be confusing, sensitive, unnecessary or simply the point where unsuitable visitors realise the offer does not apply.

04 / BUSINESS HANDOFF

Measurement and follow-up integrity

The audit is incomplete until a recorded conversion can be connected to the work the business actually received.

Verify conversion-event behaviour

Document what triggers the event, which system confirms success, the counting rule and any value or currency passed. Test one completed action and a repeated page load. Check browser and server-side events for duplicate reporting.

Review which actions the campaign uses for optimisation. A collection of intermediate actions can inflate reported conversions while steering delivery away from the intended business outcome. Confirm the actual goal configuration, including any custom goals.

Trace the lead or order handoff

Confirm the receiving queue, owner and acknowledgement. Check duplicates, failed integrations, incomplete records and requests arriving outside operating hours. The team should be able to see the offer and customer context needed for the next action.

Measure a meaningful response event. An automated acknowledgement may be useful, but it is different from a qualified person responding or an appointment being confirmed.

Inspect attribution boundaries

Check campaign parameters, redirects, cross-domain journeys and third-party booking or payment steps. Confirm that the supported measurement configuration preserves continuity where permission and platform behaviour allow it.

Record limits caused by consent choices, blocked tracking, delayed reporting and attribution models. Respect those boundaries; do not turn a measurement gap into a reason to bypass the user's choice or collect unnecessary information.

Use downstream outcomes carefully

Connect accepted leads, completed sales, cancellations or refunds back to the campaign where permitted and technically supported. Keep the definition and observation window consistent.

Prioritise the verified break before increasing spend. A repaired handoff or event definition may change the reported result without changing demand; explain what changed and avoid presenting a measurement correction as incremental growth.

05 / REVIEW

Paid traffic verification checklist

Mark each item only when the campaign, customer task and downstream record have been checked together.

01	Traffic matches the offer's service boundary	Verified	☐
	Review actual available traffic evidence against geography, audience intent, availability and eligibility.	Evidence to retain A defined mismatch or a supported fit, with the affected campaign segment identified.	
02	The destination fulfils the ad's promise	Verified	☐
	Follow the campaign URL on relevant devices and compare the offer, conditions and next action.	Evidence to retain Correct destination, preserved context and consistent decision information.	
03	A conversion creates the intended business record	Verified	☐
	Complete the task and test error, retry and duplicate behaviour through the connected systems.	Evidence to retain A retrievable accepted record, correct customer status and no unintended duplicate.	
04	Reporting counts the intended outcome	Verified	☐
	Compare event triggers, optimisation goals, values, counting rules and browser/server reporting.	Evidence to retain One explained outcome with documented measurement limits.	
05	Follow-up has an owner and measurable result	Verified	☐
	Trace a received enquiry or order through acknowledgement, qualified handling and final disposition.	Evidence to retain Current ownership, relevant context and a consistent downstream outcome definition.	

06 / WORKING RECORD

Paid traffic finding and action

Use one record for a verified leak or a clearly stated investigation. Keep personal and transaction data in approved systems.

Campaign, route and review period

Intended business outcome

Observed break and evidence identifiers

Affected task, segment and consequence

Agreed change or next investigation

Acceptance measure and guardrail

Owner, dependency and review date

Compare results using the same conversion definition and a suitable observation window after the change.