ConvertLab360

Meta Ads 2026: Practical Manual

What actually changed after Andromeda, GEM and GenRecs — and what to do in your ad account this week. No theory: rules, thresholds, decision tables, benchmarks, an account rebuild plan and worksheets.

FREE MANUAL · 28 PAGES · NOVEMBER 2026

01 · Essentials
10 rules, first week, diagnosing a drop

02 · How it works
3 stages of delivery, timeline, myths

03 · Structure & creative
Consolidation, concepts, formats, fatigue

04 · Signal, money, tools
CAPI, budget, scaling, benchmarks, worksheets

THE MOST VALUABLE PAGES COME FIRST

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How to read the labels

META — Meta Business Help Center or an official Meta publication. PRACTICE — agency experience and industry data; not a platform rule, so test it on your account. CALCULATION — derived from Meta's rules with arithmetic.

How to use this manual

If the account is dropping, start on p. 5 (diagnosis). If you are launching or rebuilding, go in order: rules → structure → creative → signal → budget; the rebuild plan on p. 24 puts it all into a 4–6 week sequence. Print the worksheets (p. 27) and fill them in with your numbers.

IF YOU READ ONLY ONE PAGE

10 rules with the biggest impact in 2026

01 **Merge ad sets until each one gets ~50 results a week** META

An ad set exits learning after about 50 results in the week after its last significant edit. Fragmented ad sets sit in "Learning limited" for a long time and pay more per result.

02 **Count concepts, not ads** META

Too many ads means worse results: each gets fewer impressions and exits learning less often. Put variations of one concept into one ad: up to 10 creatives plus several text options.

03 **New creative must be materially different — and don't pause the old one** META

For fatigue, Meta recommends a new image or video "materially different" from the original, and notes that keeping the original active may give a better overall result.

04 **Add new ads in one batch a week** PRACTICE

Every significant edit sends the ad set back into learning META. So collect new ads into one weekly launch instead of adding one a day.

05 **Daily ad set budget ≥ 7 × target CPA** CALCULATION

50 results in 7 days ≈ 7 results a day. With a smaller budget, exiting learning is mathematically impossible, however good the creative is.

06 **Pixel + Conversions API with deduplication, one optimisation event** PRACTICE

The same `event_id` in Pixel and CAPI, hashed email and phone, Event Match Quality 7+ out of 10. Without a clean signal, nothing else works.

07 **Broad targeting ≠ "no rules"** META

Andromeda scores only eligible ads, and eligibility is still set by your targeting rules. Broad audience — yes, but exclusions (such as existing customers in acquisition) remain your lever.

08 **Judge by the week, not the day** PRACTICE

Spend and cost per result fluctuate daily. Decide on pausing or scaling over a full 7 days and after the ad set exits learning.

09 **Don't manage by CPM** PRACTICE

If you optimise for conversions, a cheap CPM guarantees nothing. Watch cost per result, ROAS and profit, and Conversion Lift for incrementality.

10 **Scale with new concepts, not just budget** PRACTICE

Meta publishes no "safe" budget increase. In practice teams stick to +20–30% every 2–3 days, and most growth comes from new concepts in the campaign that already works.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

A 7-day plan for an account built "the old way"

The most common picture in accounts set up before 2025: too many campaigns and ad sets, lookalike audiences instead of creative, and a Conversions API that was set up once and forgotten. Start simple, and change creative only after structure and signal are clean.

Day	What to do	Result
Day 1	Count 7-day results for each ad set. Those with fewer than ~50 are merge candidates. Add the "Last significant edit" column.	List of ad sets to merge
Day 2	Describe every active ad in one sentence, without colour, font or button text. Same sentence = one concept.	Your real number of concepts
Day 3	Fold near-copies into one ad as creatives (up to 10) or text options. Remove lookalike layers and interest stacks.	Fewer ads, more data in each
Day 4	Events Manager: double Purchase, CAPI, Event Match Quality, events without `value`. Set up the comment filter (p. 19).	Clean signal
Day 5	Brief new concepts using the decision table (p. 16): fatigue status first, then each concept's share of spend.	3–6 new concepts
Day 6	Launch the new concepts in one batch.	One learning reset instead of five
Day 7	Evaluate the full week on cost per result or ROAS, not daily CPM.	Decision for next week

Five things with the fastest effect PRACTICE

01 Simplify the structure first

Merge campaigns, cut ad sets, remove lookalike layers. Do it before you change creative.

02 Pixel + CAPI together, and a monthly Events Manager audit

Bad conversion data is the "silent killer" in the Andromeda era.

03 Never reply to spam comments — hide them

Set up a keyword filter before launch.

04 Build a creative pipeline, not a one-off campaign

Strong accounts launch 20+ new ads a month.

05 Advantage+ sales campaign — from ~$100 a day

Below that: one broad campaign with 6 strong creatives.

ROAS FELL, CPA ROSE — WHAT TO DO

Check in order, not all at once

The most expensive mistake is to panic and pause campaigns, relaunch them or rewrite the creative. Each of those actions restarts learning. Go through six steps, and by the second or third it will be clear where the cause is.

#	What to check	Where to look	What to do
1	**Learning**	"Delivery" and "Last significant edit" columns: does it say "Learning" or "Learning limited"? META	Don't touch it until it exits learning. If "Learning limited", merge ad sets or raise the budget to ≥ 7 × CPA.
2	**Creative fatigue**	Status "Creative limited" (cost per result above your past ads, but less than double) or "Creative fatigue" (double or more) META	Add a materially different concept, keep the original. Or broaden the audience.
3	**Signal**	Events Manager: is Purchase firing, are there duplicates, did Event Match Quality drop, did someone break the site or checkout?	Fix tracking first. Optimising on broken data is money down the drain.
4	**Period and pacing**	Comparing day to day? An ad set can spend up to 75% over its daily budget on some days, but no more than 7 daily budgets a week META	Compare 7 days with the previous 7, after the attribution window closes.
5	**Metric**	Did you judge by CPM or CTR? Meta says that when optimising for conversions, CPM may not reflect results META	Main metrics: cost per result, ROAS and profit. Incrementality: Conversion Lift.
6	**Season and auction**	Q4, Black Friday, holidays, competitor activity, a change of offer or price. Meta's average price per ad rose 12% year on year in Q2 2026 PRACTICE	In peak weeks retention and warm audiences matter more; move aggressive acquisition to January.

Don’t do this in the first 72 hours of a drop

- Don't pause your historically best ads: learning rests on them.
- Don't duplicate the campaign "to restart the algorithm": you just start learning from zero.
- Don't change budget, audience and creative at once, or you won't know what worked.

When the problem really is the account

- Signal and learning are fine, but CPA has risen 2+ weeks in a row — most likely your concepts have burned out.
- Over 80% of 14-day spend goes to one concept and cost is rising — you need a new concept with a different message, persona or format PRACTICE
- Meta has not published negative Andromeda effects for individual accounts: "Andromeda killed ROAS" is a practitioner report, not Meta data.

AUTOMATION OPTIMISES WHAT META CAN MEASURE

Three blind spots when Meta's AI runs the account

RISK 1

The platform's own report card

Conversions in Ads Manager include people who would have bought anyway. Results in the account look better than in your revenue. **What to do:** an incrementality test (Conversion Lift) on your biggest spend, and MER at business level.

RISK 2

Weak concepts hide behind a winner

When one strong creative carries a consolidated campaign, weak ones quietly spend money next to it. **What to do:** look at results per concept every week so each concept earns its budget.

RISK 3

Brand drift

Without limits, the system leans toward the cheapest action, which pushes creative toward discounts and away from your positioning. **What to do:** set brand "guardrails" before scaling: what you can promise and how you speak.

Opportunity score and Meta's recommendations

Meta delivers creative fatigue recommendations through the **Opportunity score** in Ads Manager. Meta itself stresses that the score, even a high one, does not reflect actual or future performance and guarantees nothing META. Treat it as a list of hypotheses, not an action plan.

- Fatigue recommendations work only for ad sets with one creative, excluding Advantage+ catalog ads, dynamic creative and Advantage+ app campaigns. With the Sales objective they are unavailable before the ad set is active META.
- If fatigue is likely within the first 7 days of a campaign, Meta shows a warning before publishing META.
- Possible recommendations: create another ad with materially different creative, broaden the audience, turn on Advantage+ creative. Advantage+ creative is available only for the Traffic and Sales objectives with a website destination META.

What Meta asks of the advertiser

All of 2026's improvements reach the account automatically, with no settings and no new campaign types. But according to Meta, the return depends on three things: what you optimise for, the quality of the data you share (including how you measure), and how much optimisation you hand to the models. The system understands people and products better, but still needs you to tell it what winning looks like for your business META.

SO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU INFLUENCE

How Meta picks an ad: three stages

Stage	System	What it decides	What you control
1. Retrieval	Andromeda	Which few thousand of tens of millions of ads are eligible for this impression at all	Creative concepts, formats and messages; campaign structure; targeting rules
2. Ranking	GEM and ranking models	How likely each shortlisted ad is to deliver the desired result	Optimisation event, conversion signal quality, creative quality
3. Auction	Meta auction	Which ad wins the impression and at what price. Takes into account bid, ad quality and estimated action rate	Bid strategy and budget

If an ad didn't make the shortlist at stage 1, its bid doesn't matter at all. And the biggest bid or budget doesn't win automatically: the auction also weighs quality and estimated action rate META.

What Andromeda ”reads” in an ad

PRACTICE

- **Visual:** composition, colours, who is in frame, product category cues
- **Text:** tone, language style, how the problem and call to action are framed
- **Audio:** music genre, voice-over style, emotional tone
- **Video structure:** hook format, pacing, completion

Since November 2026, according to Meta, GenRecs also describes each ad's text and image as "semantic tokens" (brand, colour, cut, style), so new creatives find people faster META.

What Andromeda rewards

- **A deep pool of eligible ads.** Every genuinely different ad is one more candidate to match with a person.
- **Clear creative:** what you sell and to whom. Show the product in use, name the problem, put someone who looks like your buyer in frame.
- **Real interaction.** People's reactions flow straight back into the model, so the first seconds of an ad matter most.
- **Variety for personalisation:** separate messages for the price-driven, the premium and the time-poor buyer.

Stop thinking

"Who is my audience and how do I reach them?"

Start thinking

"Which signals in my creative will bring the right buyer — and am I giving Meta enough variety to find them?"

FIGURES ARE META'S CLAIMS, PLATFORM-WIDE AVERAGES

What changed in 2024–2026 and what follows from it

When	What Meta announced	Stated effect
Dec 2024	Andromeda: a new ad retrieval system on NVIDIA Grace Hopper hardware and Meta's own MTIA chips	10,000× model complexity; +6% recall; +8% ad quality on tested segments
Mar 2025	GEM — a generative recommendation model in Facebook Feed and Instagram	up to +5% conversions within a few months
Q2 2025	Andromeda rolled out to Facebook Reels, more personalised retrieval	almost +4% conversions in Facebook mobile Feed and Reels
Oct 2025	Retrieval and early ranking merged into one model	+14% ad quality on Facebook
Q4 2025 (report)	Andromeda runs on NVIDIA, AMD and MTIA chips	compute efficiency almost ×3
Q2 2026	New user-understanding models + GEM + sequence learning	+8.3% clicks and +15.7% conversions on Facebook
Aug 2026	Multi-stage sequence model in GEM (long history of views, clicks, purchases)	+6% Instagram conversions, +3% Facebook, +3.5% Facebook clicks
28.10.2026	New generation of Andromeda: "expert" models, scoring *every* eligible ad, over 1 billion ads per second; GenRecs in retrieval	Andromeda since 2025: +2.4% Facebook conversions; in Q3: +1.37% Facebook, +0.24% Instagram Reels; GenRecs: almost +2% in Facebook Feed

Andromeda

Retrieves candidates for an impression. Now scores **every** eligible ad — over a billion ads per second.

GEM

The foundation recommendation model for Facebook, Instagram, Reels and off-Meta conversions, for all objectives. Since 2025: up to +18.9% conversions and +12% CTR.

GenRecs

An LLM "reads" an ad's text and image. New creatives and products start working faster, even with no history.

What it means in practice

- Creative still has to pass retrieval to be shown at all. After retrieval, ranking relies even more on conversion data.
- Campaigns with few conversions now learn from signals across the whole system (GEM). That doesn't cancel the ~50 results a week rule, but it helps with deep-funnel objectives.
- The percentages above are platform-wide averages. A given account may see none of them if it has a dirty signal or three concepts in the whole account.

Sources: Meta engineering posts and Meta for Business news, Meta quarterly reports 2025–2026

WHICH POPULAR TIPS ARE TRUE AND WHICH ARE NOT

Popular claims vs what Meta says

Claim in guides and on social media	What's actually true
"Andromeda replaced the auction"	No. Andromeda is the retrieval stage. Ranking and the auction still run as before.
"Targeting no longer works, open everything up"	Targeting rules still decide which ads are eligible. Broad audience is a recommendation, not a ban on exclusions.
"Similar ads get merged into one Entity ID"	Meta's Andromeda posts don't use this term. It's a practitioner observation, though the conclusion "make different concepts" is right (p. 12).
"Andromeda runs in under 300 ms"	Meta gives no such figure. "300" appeared as "300 times less compute", not time.
"Never raise budget more than 15–20% a day"	Meta publishes no such percentage. It's a rule of thumb, not a platform limit.
"You need at least N creatives per ad set"	Meta gives no number per ad set. It says not to inflate the number of ads but to keep creative diverse.
"Andromeda 2.0 crashed ROAS"	Meta publishes only average gains. A specific account's drop is almost always explained by steps 1–6 on p. 5.
"Andromeda is Advantage+"	No. Andromeda works with *all* campaigns automatically. Advantage+ is a set of automated settings and a campaign type on top of it.
"Nothing to turn on or migrate"	True: the 2026 improvements arrive automatically META. But the old Advantage+ shopping type can no longer be created via the API, and legacy campaigns lose editing from API version 26 (p. 11).

Practical takeaway

The system is getting better at finding people for each ad. Your job is to give it a few genuinely different concepts, a clean conversion signal and enough data in one ad set. Fine-grained manual control of audiences and bids pays off less and less.

FEWER AD SETS — MORE DATA IN EACH

Consolidate, and see the details in breakdowns

Meta explicitly recommends combining ad sets and reducing the number of ads. Almost every "separate" split made for reporting can be replaced with breakdowns. Every split divides your conversion data, and Meta's models learn fastest when the data sits together.

Before	Now (Meta's recommendation)
A separate ad set per audience for reporting	One ad set + Breakdowns in reports
Ad sets for small cities or regions	Combine into a larger geography
Separate ad sets per placement	Advantage+ placements + asset customisation per placement in one ad
Separate ad sets per language	Several languages in one ad set; for catalogue — a language or country feed
Many ads per product	Advantage+ catalog ads
Separate ads per text variant	One ad with multiple text optimisation
Separate ads per creative variant	Flexible ad format (dynamic creative for the Sales and App promotion objectives has been unavailable in new ad sets since June 2024)
Separate ads per catalogue format	Advantage+ creative for catalog
Separate ads per store, property or car	Store location features, real estate ads, automotive inventory ads

When a separate ad set is justified

- A different objective or conversion value (for example, lead vs purchase).
- A clean test with a holdout group.
- It reliably gets ~50 results a week on its own.
- A different market with its own currency, prices or legal restrictions.

Meta's example: pet supplies

Splitting into "dogs", "dog toys" and "collars" ad sets can worsen results because it carves the shared audience into pieces. Better: one ad set and breakdowns in reports META.

If you do split, split by collection, product, persona or angle — not by age and gender for a report PRACTICE.

"Before / Now" table — based on Meta's "About managing ad volume"

ADVANTAGE+ SALES CAMPAIGN AS THE BASE

How many campaigns at which budget, and where your control remains

Structure by budget PRACTICE

- **Up to ~$100 a day:** one broad campaign, 1 ad set, 4–6 different concepts (at least 6 strong creatives). All energy goes into creative quality.
- **$100–300 a day:** a main Advantage+ sales campaign and a separate "sandbox" campaign for testing concepts (20–25% of budget).
- **$1,000+ a day:** the same, plus separate campaigns only for different objectives, markets or catalogues — not audiences.

E-commerce budget split PRACTICE

Campaign	Share
Advantage+ sales — main engine	60–70%
Broad testing (1–2 ad sets)	20–25%
30-day retargeting (if needed)	10–15%

What is known about Advantage+ sales campaigns

- They are the updated version of the former Advantage+ shopping campaign (ASC). The old type can't be created via the API, and legacy campaigns lose editing from API version 26.
- Since February 2026, new Sales, Leads and App promotion campaigns start in Advantage+ mode with creative enhancements switched on PRACTICE. Review each enhancement rather than switching them all off at once.
- Meta cites +22% ROAS for Advantage+ vs standard campaigns. Practitioners report −17% CPA and +15–25% ROAS vs manual structures, and that ~62% of e-commerce spend on Meta goes through ASC. The methodology behind these figures isn't disclosed PRACTICE.
- According to Meta, Advantage+ end-to-end solutions passed a $75B annual run-rate in Q2 2026.

Where your control remains

- **Geography** — the only targeting in a basic Advantage+ sales campaign.
- **Exclusions** via custom audiences.
- **The line between acquisition and retention:** new vs existing customers.
- **Creative, optimisation event, bid and budget.**

The testing lane and graduation

PRACTICE

A separate testing campaign gives new concepts impressions without competing head-on with proven winners. A concept that holds target CPA (or ROAS ≥ break-even) for 7–10 days moves to the main campaign. One that hasn't reached the threshold in 14 days is switched off. Move them in one batch a week so learning isn't reset daily.

CREATIVE IS NOW THE TARGETING

Concept ≠ variation: how to make genuinely different ads

The system picks people for each ad itself. So every concept effectively opens a new audience, while five colours of one image give you the same audience five times.

The ”one sentence” test

Describe each active ad in one sentence without mentioning colour, font or button text. Ads with the same sentence are one concept. Fold them into one ad as creatives (up to 10).

A new concept if ≥ 2 of 4 change

PRACTICE

- **Format:** UGC video, demo, static, carousel, comparison
- **Persona:** who is speaking or who it's for
- **Setting:** where and in what situation
- **Benefit:** which pain it solves or which desire it serves

Example: a founder in her kitchen explaining how the product saves time, and a customer on the street saying they feel healthier. Same product, two concepts.

What is NOT a new concept

PRACTICE

- Exports in different aspect ratios (1:1, 4:5, 9:16)
- A different background or button colour
- Editing only the text on the same visual
- 30 different hooks of the same video

Practitioners observe that the system groups such variations into one unit, and they compete with each other for the same impression rather than with the market. In Ads Manager — 30 ads; for the system — one.

Variety target

PRACTICE

10–15 genuinely different concepts spread across **3–5 buyer personas**. When your number of ads and number of concepts start to match, you are finally giving the algorithm something to work with.

Different motives — different concepts

Buyer type	What to show them	Example hook (furniture)
Price-driven	Comparison, savings, deal, instalments	"Like a €900 desk — for €390"
Premium	Materials, design, status, warranty	"Oak that will outlive your office"
Time-poor	Speed, simplicity, delivery and assembly	"Assembled in 12 minutes, no manual"
Has a problem	Pain, before/after, expert	"Back aching by 3 pm?"

META GIVES NO NUMBER — HERE ARE WORKING BENCHMARKS

How many creatives you need and which formats win

Benchmark	Value	Source
Number of ads per ad set	Don't inflate; diverse creatives inside ads (up to 10 per ad)	META
Advantage+ app campaigns	Up to 50 creatives in different formats	META
Genuinely different concepts per ad set	3–6 (at least 6 different ads — by another estimate)	PRACTICE
Concepts per campaign	8–12	PRACTICE
Active creatives in a strong account	15–20 at a time	PRACTICE
New ads per month	20+ (such accounts are observed to have noticeably higher ROAS than those testing fewer than 10)	PRACTICE
New concepts per week	1–3 with a budget from ~$5,000 a month	PRACTICE

Formats that work for e-commerce

- **UGC:** "customer-style" video shot on a phone. Usually works best.
- **Demo:** the product solves a real problem, before/after.
- **Testimonials:** only with specifics: "−6 kg in 8 weeks", not "loved it".
- **Static:** product on a background or lifestyle with bold text.
- **Carousels:** range or several benefits.
- **Reels:** 9:16, hook in the first 3 seconds, native look.
- **Founder stories:** trust, challenger brands, premium.
- **Comparison:** "us vs them", before/after.

Format scores from agency experience PRACTICE

Format	Score
Founder video / authentic UGC	9/10
Customer video testimonial	8.5/10
Problem → solution static	7.5/10
Polished brand video	6/10
Catalogue / product grid	5/10

Catalogue is mostly for retargeting; weak for cold audiences. Agencies report ROAS ×2–3 for founder video vs brand video; this is their observation, not a study.

A Meta study that agencies cite puts creative's contribution at 56% of campaign results — more than targeting, budget, placement and bid combined. We couldn't find the primary Meta report with this figure, so treat it as a guide, not a fact PRACTICE.

THE FIRST 3 SECONDS AND THE FIRST LINE

The hook and the ad copy

The hook decides everything

PRACTICE

The share of people who watch a video longer than 3 seconds (hook rate) is a key creative quality signal. Keep it **above 25%, target 40%**. If the first 3 seconds don't stop the scroll, the system deprioritises the ad.

How to open: intrigue, a bold claim, the problem, or something visually unexpected.

Copy is a signal too

Tone, how the problem is framed and language style affect who the system shows the ad to. Write the way your buyer talks.

Most people never tap "See more", so the key point goes in the first line of the primary text.

A copy structure that converts

Block	What it does	Example for an online furniture store
1. Hook	First 3 seconds or first line: pain or desire	"Back aching by 3 pm?"
2. Agitate	Makes the problem felt	"8 hours on a marketplace chair"
3. Solution	The product as the answer	"A desk that goes standing in 2 seconds"
4. Proof	Numbers, reviews, before/after	"4.9★ from 1,200 reviews"
5. Offer	What they get and why now (only real urgency)	"Free delivery + 100-day returns"
6. CTA	One clear action	"Choose your size"

THE AD GETS THE CLICK — THE LANDING PAGE CLOSES THE SALE

The offer and the landing page

Strong creative on a weak landing page just buys bounces more expensively. And the system sees that people don't buy after the click, and starts showing the ad less well.

Landing page

- Goes to the product or collection from the ad, never the homepage.
- Value proposition on the first screen.
- Social proof: reviews, rating, number of customers.
- Risk reversal: money-back guarantee, free returns.
- Only genuine urgency: stock levels, offer deadline.
- Fast loading: every second of delay hits conversion.

Offers that lift ROAS PRACTICE

- Free-shipping threshold (raises average order value)
- Bundle discount
- Subscribe and save
- First-order discount in exchange for an email

Make sure discounts don't become the only message (the "brand drift" risk, p. 6).

Where sales leak: reading the funnel PRACTICE

What you see	Where the problem is	What to do
Link CTR below 1%, hook rate below 25%	The creative doesn't stop the scroll	New hook or new concept, not the landing page
CTR fine, add-to-cart below 5%	Gap between the ad and the page: price, photos, promise	Land on the product from the ad; proof and price on the first screen
Add-to-cart fine, purchase below 2%	Checkout: delivery, payment, surprises in the cart	Show delivery cost earlier, remove return risk
Conversion fine, ROAS below break-even	Economics: order value or margin too low	Bundles, free-shipping threshold, higher average order value

CTR, add-to-cart and conversion benchmarks are from the metrics page (p. 23). Compare with your own account history, not only with averages.

WHEN TO CHANGE CREATIVE — ON DATA, NOT THE CALENDAR

A decision table for every ad set

Situation	Action	Source
Fewer than ~50 results a week	Merge with similar ad sets first, and only then add creative	META
Status "Creative limited" (cost per result above past ads, but < 2×)	Add one materially different concept, keep the original	META
Status "Creative fatigue" (≥ 2× past ads)	A new concept, not a variation; the original can stay; broaden the audience	META
One concept > 80% of 14-day spend and cost is rising	A new concept with a different message, persona or format	PRACTICE
Near-copies (same message, different colour or headline)	Fold into one ad as creatives or text options	META
Link CTR < 1.5%, CPM +25% week on week, ROAS falling 3+ days, frequency > 4–5	Change now, without waiting for a status or a schedule	PRACTICE
CPM rising while volume isn't	A signal to refresh creative, not a fixed date in the calendar	PRACTICE

Fatigue

The same people have seen the ad too many times. A new version that wins attention back helps.

Similarity

The ads are too alike, so the system shows them to the same people and they "burn out" as a group at the same time. Only a new idea helps, not a new version.

Status thresholds — Meta Business Help Center, "About creative fatigue recommendations"

A PIPELINE, NOT A ONE-OFF SPRINT

Refresh rhythm and creative budget split

Refresh rhythm PRACTICE

- **Weekly:** new hooks for working concepts (the top of the ad tires fastest)
- **Every 2 weeks:** a new angle or problem
- **Monthly:** a new format or new UGC creators
- **Quarterly:** review the whole library on data

The schedule is a guide. Every account has its own "burn-out" point: it depends on audience size, budget and format.

Creative budget split PRACTICE

	Stable account	Active growth
Proven winners	60%	20%
New concepts	30%	50%
Improved versions of winners	—	30%
Seasonal and promo	10%	—

Why you can't just pause the old ad

Meta calculates fatigue status counting all recent impressions of that image or video, including from other campaigns of your Page. Pausing a winner without a ready replacement resets learning and usually costs more than a few days of a "tired" ad running next to a new one.

The weekly batch brief: what every new concept needs PRACTICE

Brief field	What to fill in
Concept in one sentence	No colour, font or button. If the sentence matches an active ad, it's not a new concept
Persona	One of 3–5: price-driven, premium, time-poor, has a problem
What changed (≥ 2 of 4)	Format · persona · setting · benefit
3 hook options	Intrigue, bold claim, problem or visual surprise — as variations inside one ad
Proof and offer	A specific number or review + why buy now (only real urgency)
Export formats	1:1, 4:5, 9:16 of one creative — in one ad, not separately
Success criterion	Target CPA or ROAS ≥ break-even within 7–10 days; not at the threshold by day 14 — switch off

THE ALGORITHM LEARNS ONLY FROM WHAT YOU SEND IT

Conversion signal: Pixel, Conversions API, event quality

01 Foundation: a verified Business Manager and catalogue

Advertise only from a verified Business Manager, never a personal account. A product catalogue in Meta Commerce Manager powers dynamic ads for products a person already viewed.

02 Pixel + Conversions API together

The Pixel catches events in the browser, CAPI on the server, so blockers and cookie limits don't "eat" sales. Shopify, WooCommerce and most CMSs have ready CAPI integrations.

03 Deduplication via event_id

One purchase from Pixel and CAPI must have the same `event_id` (usually the order ID) and event name. Otherwise Meta counts two purchases and learns from inflated data.

04 The full chain of standard events

PageView → ViewContent → AddToCart → InitiateCheckout → Purchase with `value` and `currency`. For lead gen: Lead → QualifiedLead (from CRM) → deal.

05 Hashed email and phone via CAPI

Only with consent. They lift Event Match Quality the most. Target: 7+ out of 10 for Purchase; below 7 Meta matches events to people less well PRACTICE.

06 One optimisation event — the one closest to revenue

Don't switch the goal back and forth: a change resets what the system has learned. If purchases are too few for ~50 a week, temporarily optimise for AddToCart or InitiateCheckout, then return to Purchase.

07 A monthly Events Manager audit

The most common error is double Purchase: an app integration (often a Shopify plugin) and a server setup firing at the same time. It inflates results and teaches the system to look for the wrong people. Also check EMQ drops, events without value and foreign domains.

Lead generation

If you optimise for "Lead", Meta will look for people who fill in forms most easily. Send qualified leads and deals back from the CRM as separate events and move optimisation to them as soon as volume allows.

Attribution window

PRACTICE

The standard is 7-day click. For impulse purchases, 1-day click: less ROAS inflation. Choose by your real buying cycle and don't change it mid-test.

Shops ads META

To complete learning, Shops ads need at least 17 website purchases and 5 purchases through Meta.

SPAM UNDER AN AD HURTS DELIVERY

Comments under ads: hide, don’t reply

When there's spam under an ad, real buyers see "junk" and scroll on. CTR drops, and the system can't tell "didn't click because of spam" from "didn't click because the creative is irrelevant". It reads both as a poor audience match, and impressions get pricier PRACTICE.

Response to spam	Engagement signal	Effect on delivery	Recommendation
Hide	The comment still counts toward engagement	Buyers don't see spam, CTR protected	Do this first
Reply	The thread becomes "active", more feed impressions	Attracts even more spam; spam networks find live accounts through replies	Avoid
Delete	The comment disappears from the count	Clean thread, but the engagement metric drops	Only for abuse and misinformation
Ignore	Everyone sees the spam	CTR drops, the system considers the creative irrelevant	Avoid

Setting up the filter in 6 steps

01 Ad level in Ads Manager

Comment settings live at the level of an individual ad, not the campaign or ad set.

02 Find Comment Controls

In the ad editing panel, the Brand Safety and Suitability section. It exists only for formats with public comments: it won't be there for Stories or Reels-only.

03 Turn on word blocking and the spam filter

"Block comments containing certain words or phrases" plus "Hide comments that may be spam" as an automatic second layer.

04 Build the list from your own history

Comments from your most expensive campaigns over 60 days: "DM me", "make money", "earn from home", "$500 daily", "financial freedom", "click my profile", URL fragments, bot-like repeating names. Your history beats any generic list.

05 First 48 hours — check for false positives

Review hidden comments daily. If the filter hides "how do I order?" or "which size should I choose?", narrow the list: a buyer "silenced" by your filter is worse than visible spam.

06 Monthly list audit

Spam patterns change weekly. 15 minutes a month keeps the filter current: remove overly broad words, add new ones.

Set up the filter before launch, not after the first wave of spam. At high volumes manual moderation can't keep up — automatic moderation tools via the Meta API help.

THE MATHS PEOPLE SKIP

How much budget the algorithm needs to learn at all

Minimum daily ad set budget ≈ target CPA × 50 ÷ 7 ≈ 7 × CPA

Target CPA	Minimum per day	Minimum per month	What it means
$10 (cheap product, lead)	≈ $72	≈ $2,150	Realistic even for a small business
$30 (mid-range e-commerce)	≈ $215	≈ $6,450	More than 1–2 ad sets won't fit
$80 (high-ticket product, B2B lead)	≈ $570	≈ $17,150	Optimise for a higher-funnel event

Calculated from Meta's ~50 results a week rule. Agencies recommend at least $30–50 a day per ad set, but for a CPA above ~$5–7 that's not enough CALCULATION.

How to behave during learning META

- Don't edit an ad set while it's learning: results are unstable and not representative.
- Avoid unnecessary edits: only those meant to improve results.
- Avoid a large number of ads and ad sets.
- Set a **realistic** budget: both too small and inflated budgets give the system a wrong idea of who to optimise for. Avoid frequent budget changes.
- You don't need to avoid learning entirely: testing new things requires it.
- $100 → $101 is unlikely to reset learning; $100 → $1,000 might META

Budget and bid strategy

- **Campaign-level budget (CBO / Advantage+ campaign budget)** — for main campaigns. Ad set level (ABO) — only for isolated tests.
- **Highest volume** (lowest cost) — to start, while you don't know your CPA.
- **Cost per result goal (cost cap)** — when CPA is known and you need to scale without overspending.
- **Highest value / ROAS goal** — when you have steady purchases with different order values.

Break-even ROAS = 1 ÷ margin

MER = total revenue ÷ total ad spend

At a 50% margin, break-even ROAS is 2.0; at 30%, 3.3. A brand with a 60% margin is profitable from ROAS 2, while one with a 30% margin needs 4+. Set targets above break-even, and check the overall health of the business with MER: single-campaign attribution in Meta will never be exact.

WHEN YOU HAVE A PROFITABLE, STABLE AD SET

Four ways to scale, and when to add new channels

1 · HORIZONTAL

New concepts, not copies

New concepts in the working campaign instead of ad set copies. If you duplicate an ad set (3–5 times), only with genuinely new concepts: different hooks, formats, angles.

2 · VERTICAL

Gradually

+20–30% budget every 2–3 days, not ×2 overnight PRACTICE. Meta warns that large budget changes can send the ad set back into learning.

3 · BROAD + BIG BUDGET

Give the system room

At scale, a broad audience with a large daily budget and a diverse creative library consistently beats other approaches PRACTICE.

4 · ADVANTAGE+

Core budget in Advantage+ sales

Once profitability is confirmed, move the core budget into an Advantage+ sales campaign and give it the whole creative library.

The next channel — when Meta is profitable and still growing PRACTICE

Channel	What job it does
Google	Catches people already searching for your product. This is where demand created by Meta ads turns into sales.
TikTok	Rewards ads that look like TikTok, not recycled Meta ads. Needs its own creative.
Pinterest	People plan purchases weeks ahead, so you reach them before they pick a brand.
Snapchat	An under-35 audience in camera and chat, not in yet another feed.
LinkedIn	Only for B2B or high-ticket products, where decision-makers matter.

Add one channel at a time and judge by MER

Every platform credits itself with the same sale. So judge each new channel by the change in MER (total revenue ÷ total spend), not by the platform's own report.

BROAD, BUT UNDER CONTROL

Audiences: segments for reporting, exclusions for money

Basic setup

- Country and, if needed, a minimum age. Interests and lookalikes only as suggestions (Advantage+ audience), which Meta may ignore.
- In ad account settings define segments: **new** (everyone else; this is where growth comes from), **engaged** (site visitors, people who added to cart, profile engagers, followers) and **existing customers** (buyers from lists and Purchase events). Anyone in both lists counts as an existing customer.
- Segments give a spend breakdown in reports and don't narrow delivery.

Weekly check

- What share of an acquisition campaign's spend goes to existing customers? These are often "cheap" sales that would have happened anyway.
- If the share is high and the goal is new buyers, exclude existing customers via a custom audience. In 2025 Meta removed the old existing-customer budget cap, and exclusions are available again in Advantage+ sales.
- Retargeting is mostly covered by broad sales campaigns and catalogue. A separate campaign is needed only with a different message or offer (or 10–15% of budget on a 30-day window per the split on p. 11).

When lookalikes and interests still make sense PRACTICE

Situation	What to do
New account, few conversions (up to ~$5,000 a month)	A 2–3% lookalike of buyers as a temporary start, and once there's enough signal — move to broad. Plan that move in advance.
Narrow B2B niche or professional audience	Interests and job titles as a hint plus creative that names the audience directly
Local business	A radius around the location, broad otherwise; creative with local context
Large account with a stable signal	Broad, no lookalikes: the system will find better. 1/2/5% lookalike stacks, interest layers and age exclusions only slow learning.

Auction seasonality PRACTICE

November — December

CPM in November is ~41% above average due to Black Friday and the holidays. Priority: warm audiences, repeat purchases and offers for existing customers. Prepare creative in advance so you don't launch everything on one day.

January

CPM is ~22% below average — one of the best periods for aggressive acquisition and concept testing. When planning the year, shift acquisition budget into Q1.

CONTEXT, NOT HARD TARGETS

Which metrics to watch and where ”normal” is in 2026

Metric	What it shows	Benchmark
Link CTR	Does the creative stop the scroll	1–3%+
Hook rate (3 s)	Does the hook work	25%+, target 40%
CPC	Traffic efficiency	Depends on the niche
CPM	How competitive the audience is	Watch the trend
Add-to-cart rate	Does the landing page engage	5–10%+
Purchase conversion	Do the offer and checkout work	2–5%+
ROAS	Campaign profitability	Above break-even
MER	Health of the whole account: total revenue ÷ total spend	Know your target
CPA	Cost of acquisition	Below margin
Frequency	Fatigue indicator	Watch above 4–5

E-commerce benchmarks 2026 PRACTICE

Metric	Below average	Average	Strong result
CPM (e-commerce)	$22+	$16.80	up to $12
CTR (link click)	up to 1%	2.19% (median)	over 3%
ROAS (e-commerce)	up to 1.5	1.93 median / 2.98 average	over 4
ROAS Instagram Feed	up to 2	4.1	over 5

- E-commerce CPM rose ~20% year on year (WordStream 2026), so creative efficiency has to grow to protect margin.
- Median CTR is 2.19% (WordStream 2026), median ROAS 1.93, average 2.98 (Triple Whale).
- By placement: Instagram Feed ROAS ~4.1, Facebook Feed ~3.8; Reels are unstable and depend on creative format. For most brands it's better to leave placements to Advantage+ than to favour one manually.

Benchmarks: WordStream 2026, Triple Whale, agency observations. Your niche, order value and brand shift them a lot

WITHOUT DESTABILISING CURRENT DELIVERY

Rebuilding the account for Andromeda in 4–6 weeks

This isn't a one-day job. Do everything at once and the account will sit in learning for weeks. The sequence below keeps delivery going while you move to the new structure PRACTICE.

When	Step	What exactly
Week 1	**1. Signal audit**	Events Manager: duplicate events, CAPI redundancy, Event Match Quality. Rebuilding structure on dirty data only amplifies the problem.
Weeks 1–2	**2. Consolidation**	Fold lookalike ad sets into broad targeting. Merge campaigns that hit the same audience with different creative. Goal: fewer campaigns, more budget per campaign and more creatives per ad set.
Week 2	**3. Testing campaign**	A separate broad campaign on 20–25% of budget, at least 6 new concepts per cycle. Whatever holds target CPA for 7–10 days goes to the main campaign; whatever hasn't reached the threshold by day 14 — switch off.
Weeks 3–4	**4. Advantage+ sales as the main campaign**	Launch with the 6–10 best proven creatives on 50% of budget, then grow as it exits learning (usually 7–14 days). Keep retargeting, but with a reduced budget.
Ongoing	**5. Creative pipeline**	A repeatable process for producing new creatives, not a one-off sprint. This is where most brands under-invest.

What a typical "old" account looks like

- Too many campaigns and ad sets, age and gender splits
- 1/2/5% lookalikes and interest stacks doing the job creative should do
- Polished brand videos as the main creative
- CAPI installed and forgotten

What the account looks like after the rebuild

- 1 main Advantage+ sales + 1 testing campaign (+ retargeting if needed)
- Broad targeting, existing customers excluded from acquisition
- 10–15 different concepts across 3–5 personas, 20+ new ads a month
- Clean signal, monthly audit, comment filter

HONEST ABOUT WHAT'S DISPUTED

Where practitioners disagree — and how to choose

We combined several recent agency guides and Meta's help center. Where the numbers differ, we show the range and our recommendation.

Question	What different sources say	Our recommendation
How many creatives	Meta: no number. Practitioners: 3–6 concepts per ad set; at least 6 different ads per ad set; 8–12 concepts per campaign; 15–20 active	Count concepts, not ads: 3–6 per ad set, 10–15 in the account, the rest of the variations inside ads
Lookalikes	Some: "effectively dead", abandoned. Others: useful for accounts with little history	Temporarily 2–3% for new accounts up to ~$5,000 a month, then broad
Separate retargeting	Some: 10–15% of budget on a 30-day window. Others: not needed, broad campaign + catalogue cover it	Not needed by default; needed if there's a separate message or offer
Budget increase pace	15–20% a day; 20–30% every 2–3 days. Meta gives no percentage	+20–30% every 2–3 days; big jumps only deliberately, knowing learning may reset
Creative budget split	60/30/10 (winners / test / seasonal) or 50/30/20 (new / improved / winners)	60/30/10 in a stable period, 50/30/20 in a growth period
Refresh schedule	Fixed (hooks weekly, angles every 2 weeks…) vs "only on data"	The schedule as a minimum, and the fatigue signals on p. 16 as a trigger for an extra replacement
Minimum budget	$30–50 a day per ad set; ~$100 a day for Advantage+ sales	Calculate from your CPA: ≥ 7 × CPA a day per ad set
Advantage+ creative	"There's no scenario where turning it off improves results" vs "turn off text overlays and image expansion"	Review each enhancement separately, especially for a brand with strict visual identity

WHAT EATS BUDGET MOST OFTEN

Twelve mistakes we see in accounts most often

01 Daily edits

Every significant edit resets learning. Review weekly, not daily.

02 Many ad sets with small budgets

Fragmentation is one of the main result killers after Andromeda.

03 One creative until it ”wilts”

Fatigue comes faster. Change before the metrics collapse.

04 Traffic to the homepage

Always to the product or collection from the ad.

05 The wrong optimisation event

Few purchases — AddToCart temporarily, then back to Purchase.

06 No Conversions API

Without server data, the system learns from incomplete data.

01 Interest stacks

Creative is now the targeting — better to invest that energy in producing creative.

02 Two or three creatives for the whole account

Too few concepts — too few people the system can find.

03 Traffic or Reach objective for e-commerce

For sales — only the Sales objective with the Purchase event.

04 Double Purchase

Two plugins fire at once — ROAS "grows" on paper, the system learns from the wrong people.

05 Replying to spam comments

Hide them, don't reply (p. 19).

06 Pausing a winner without a replacement

Resets learning and costs more than a few days of fatigue.

The most important thing in one sentence

Fewer ad sets, more genuinely different concepts, a clean signal for one event, a budget big enough for ~50 results a week, and decisions once a week.

PRINT AND FILL IN

Your numbers: budget for learning and a concept matrix

A · Is the budget enough

Line	Example	Campaign 1	Campaign 2
1. Margin after product cost, delivery, returns	40%		
2. Break-even ROAS = 1 ÷ line 1	2.5		
3. Target CPA (profit per order × 0.8)	$30		
4. Minimum per day per ad set = line 3 × 7	**$210**		
5. How many ad sets you can actually fund = daily budget ÷ line 4	1		

B · Concept matrix (one sentence = one row)

Concept in one sentence	Format	Persona	Benefit	Status / decision
Example: "the founder shows how the desk saves your back"	UGC video	founder	health	winner

How to read it

If line 5 is smaller than your number of ad sets, consolidate: otherwise none of them will exit learning. If two rows in the matrix differ in only one column, they are variations of one concept — fold them into one ad.

A week of running the account, and a pre-scale checklist

Weekly routine

- **Mon:** 7-day results for every ad set and concept; what is "Learning limited"
- **Tue:** the one-sentence test, fold near-copies
- **Wed:** brief new concepts using the decision table
- **Thu:** launch new concepts in one batch
- **Fri:** Events Manager — duplicates, EMQ, value; hidden comments
- **Next Mon:** evaluate the full week, not the day

- [ ] Business Manager verified, domain confirmed
- [ ] Pixel + CAPI, same event_id, no double Purchase
- [ ] EMQ for Purchase 7+
- [ ] Catalogue synced
- [ ] Sales objective, one optimisation event
- [ ] Every ad set ≥ 7 × CPA a day, or merged
- [ ] 3–6 genuinely different concepts per ad set, 8+ in the library
- [ ] Near-copies folded into one ad
- [ ] Fast landing page that matches the ad
- [ ] Advantage+ sales launched and funded
- [ ] "New / engaged / existing" segments set up
- [ ] Break-even ROAS, target CPA and MER calculated
- [ ] Comment filter on before launch
- [ ] Changes once a week, in one batch

Want us to check your Meta Ads account?

ConvertLab360 sets up Conversions API, campaign structure and a creative pipeline for Meta, Google and TikTok. We'll audit your account against this manual for free and show you the 3–5 most expensive problems.

Get a free audit → convertlab360.com

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